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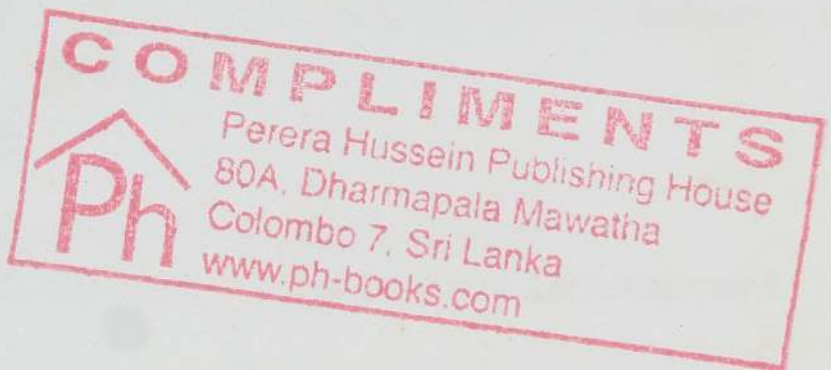
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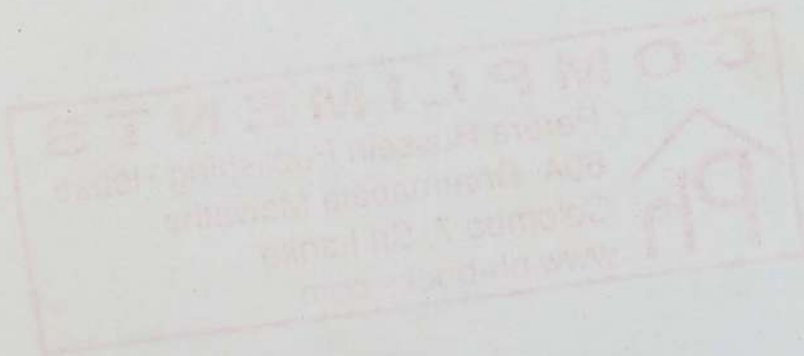
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Editorial

The Social Sciences carry some degree of responsibility in influencing the direction a society may move. One may even call the responsibility a burden. A journal of the Social Sciences does not merely chronicle, observe or analyse, it engages with the crucial questions facing society. It, therefore, provides real insight that can be a catalyst for real change in society. *IJESS*, hopes to be a source of scholarship and insight that can inform our understanding of society and inspire change.

Issues related to ethnicity are vitally important, not just in post-war Sri Lanka, where the ethnic issues related to the conflict holds a prominent place in political debate and academic analysis, but also in many other parts of the world. However, there are other significant aspects of society that require academic research, analysis and discussion; without these our understanding will be limited, and our influence reduced. The scope of *IJESS* has therefore widened to include not just ethnicity but all of society. While the commitment to the study of ethnicity remains, the Journal encourages contributions on the full spectrum of social dynamics and intends fostering research with an interdisciplinary focus.

IJESS has also made a move towards a peer-review process. The review panel of reputed scholars—local and international—which the Journal is building up will raise the profile of the Journal globally, so that it can be the international journal it declares itself to be. Such peer-review ensures that our articles will be assessed by those with expertise in the relevant fields of research, and assures the reliability and quality of the research we present to our readers.

As the title indicates, the scope of *IJESS* includes international scholarly research, widening the geographical range of contributors, perspectives, and subject matter. In this issue the articles from national and international contributors focus on four different nations, and

while three of the articles focus on issues related to conflict and war, one focuses instead on an industry that affects two of the nations.

Gananath Obeyesekere's article is timely, in the context of a post-war Sri Lanka, as it critiques the nature of cycles of revenge and violence and examines a way in which these cycles can be interrupted through gestures of trust. Andrew Ward's interdisciplinary examination focuses on a conflict-ridden Afghanistan, suggesting a development programme that will permit an increase in civil liberties and a growth in industry. An important fallout of war—the destruction of historical and cultural heritages of nations—is the focus of Nancy Wilkie's article, which examines the devastation occurring in Iraq during the wars of 1990 and 2003. Finally, Kalyan Das' article, arising out of research carried out in India and Sri Lanka, and of relevance to both nations, examines the nature of Tea Smallholdings, and the value of these alternative forms for the tea industry.

Scholarship is carried out for various reasons and with diverse motives. The highest of these, I believe, are the hope of contributing to our understanding of the world and the intention of encouraging further dialogue, with an ultimate hope of change. Jonathan Swift's satire of society in *Gulliver's Travels*, first published in 1726, does not exclude academic research. The satire sustains its potency through the centuries and includes a description of hopelessly impractical research to extract sunbeams from cucumbers, to be sealed in phials for later use in the Governor's gardens. It hardly needs to be stated that the vision of *IJESS* rests far from ambitions and research of this nature. We want, above all, to be engaged, relevant and useful. Our vision for *IJESS* is that it may sow seeds of academic thought and blow winds of change through the structures of society.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the following people for their investment in *IJESS*:

Dr. Nishan de Mel (the executive director of ICES 2009/2010), who took a keen interest in making the journal a reality.

Dr. Vijaya Samaraweera for his help in establishing a multidisciplinary editorial and peer-review board.

Dr. de Mel and Dr. Samaraweera were both involved in expanding the scope and reach of IJESS, and took the time to personally meet academics to solicit support and commitment to the journal.

Prof. Sirima Kiribamune and Dr. Camena Guneratne, both who acted briefly as editor during the initial stages of the setting up of *IJESS*.

Shamanthi Rajasingham for her design of the cover and her patience in working with us through various revisions.

We are also grateful to Prof. K. M. de Silva, who, as editor, invested scholarly expertise in the *Ethnic Studies Report* from its inception in 1983 to 2004.

Dr. Maithrie White
Editor, *IJESS*

About the Editor

Dr. Maithrie White graduated from the University of Peradeniya in 1995 with a 2.1 honours degree in English. During her undergraduate studies, Dr. White edited the Jubilee issue of the journal *Kaduwa* of the English Literary Association of Peradeniya.

After graduation, she lectured at the Department of English, University of Sri Jayawardenepura. She pursued interdisciplinary doctoral research in the School of Cultural Studies and Critical Theory, at the University of Nottingham, UK, during which time she co-edited the Department journal *Situation Analysis*. She returned to the University of Sri Jayawardenepura after completing her doctoral studies and was subsequently the Head of the Department prior to her resignation in 2008.

Dr. White is also a creative writer, and has been short-listed twice for the Gratiaen Award in Sri Lanka; she is now pursuing the publication of her novels both in Sri Lanka and the UK.

Message from the Editor of *Ethnic Studies Report*

The *International Journal of Ethnic and Social Studies (IJESS)* has taken over from the *Ethnic Studies Report (ESR)* as the research journal of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES).

The *ESR* was established in the early 1980s almost at the time of the foundation of the ICES. From its modest early years the *ESR* was the research journal of the ICES. Over 25 years or so it developed into a robust and vibrant publication. It published a selection of articles from seminars and conferences organised by the ICES. It also published articles from other scholars as well. The central theme of its articles was the issue of ethnicity and its ramification in troubled societies. Another focal point was the Sri Lankan situation in the country as it grappled with one of the oldest-standing ethnic conflicts in the world, watching a separatist movement taking on a terrorist form.

Now that the Liberation Tiger's of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE's) challenge has been successfully repelled, Sri Lanka will provide a rich lode of material for analysis on post-conflict issues and as a revival of democracy in areas once controlled by the LTTE; the complex processes of reconciliation; and the problem of dealing with minority rights in the whole issue of economic growth. The *IJESS* has a wide range of issues to deal with over the next few years. It also has the challenging task of maintaining the standards of scholarship set by the *ESR*.

Prof. K. M. de Silva

The Smallholding Tea Plantations of Sri Lanka and Assam

Kalyan Das

Abstract

The tea production structures in the dominant regions of production of the world show a shift from estate sector to smallholdings. What are the factors that could explain the growth of the tea smallholdings in recent times? Are small firms a more flexible and efficient answer in this competitive world? Does a rise in higher productivity and efficiency ensure wellbeing of the workers involved in the unregulated work environment of smallholdings? These are some important questions that arise when considering the emerging regime of tea smallholdings in Sri Lanka and Assam in India. This article tries to construct the space for smallholding as a production mode in the tea plantation sector, which, since inception, has been dominated by the estate sector. At present, it is evident that in the liberalised economic environment, countries are ushering more growth through the small firm variant flexible mode of production. This paper presents tea smallholdings as a flexible production mode, which nevertheless keeps the scope for regulatory supports to ensure sustainability. The factors leading to the origin, growth and consolidation of smallholding tea plantations in Sri Lanka and Assam, and a primary survey that explores the operational aspects of tea smallholdings reveal the need of institutional supports to ensure sustainability and wellbeing for the people involved in this sector. The paper concludes by suggesting recommendations along two lines. The smallholdings could be made efficient by the provision of real and regulatory services rather than financial incentives and subsidies. Regulations are also required in order to make a gain in wages and potential benefits feasible for workers through the efficiency gain in the smallholdings.

I. Introduction

This article is an outcome of field research carried out by the author during 2004 and 2005 in the tea smallholdings of Assam and Sri Lanka

respectively.¹ The field research was made possible through the financial support from International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Kandy. Arguments constructed in the paper are also based on data derived from the Annual Bulletin of Statistics of International Tea Committee (ITC), Tea Boards of Sri Lanka and India, and information collected from the Tea Small Holding Development Authority (TSHDA) of Sri Lanka. The highly competitive world market of tea has gone through significant changes in recent times and this could to an extent influence the findings derived from the field data.

Data on production of tea and its reach in the world market of recent years reveal significant changes. Countries like China and Kenya have emerged as major players in the market challenging the traditional domains of Sri Lanka and India. In 2006, China emerged as the largest producer of tea with a 28.7 per cent share in world production, pushing India to second position with a production share of 27.4 per cent. Sri Lanka occupied the third position with a production share of 8.7 per cent of the total world production of 3,577.2 million kg. In 2006, 1,588.8 million kg of tea (44.4 per cent of the world's total production) had reached the world market while the rest (55.6 per cent) was being used for home consumption in the producing countries. Among the tea exporting countries, Sri Lanka led the market with a share of 19.8 per cent, followed by Kenya (19.7 per cent), China (18.0 per cent) and India (13.8 per cent). These four countries altogether accounted 71.3 per cent of the total world market share. Data reveals that in 2006 Sri Lanka and Kenya had exported more than their internal production² to the world

¹ Please note that some of the data is relevant to the years in which the field research was carried out and the figures as of 2010 might be different.

² The import of bulk tea to blend with local tea for export through value addition is a new phenomenon among many tea-exporting countries at present. This strategy allows promoting tea with variations in tastes and prices for quality conscious and price sensitive consumers (IPS, 2006). During the year 2006, Sri Lanka imported 12.4 million kg of tea for blending and export (*The Sunday Times*, 11 October 2009). This had helped

market, while China and India had exported 27.9 per cent and 22.3 per cent of their total production respectively to the world market (Annual Bulletin of Statistics, 2008, ITC). China and India, mainly due to their huge population base, have been able to build a large internal market of the tea economy.

Along with Kenya and China, a few other emergent tea producing countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia offer stiff competition in the international tea market. These countries, because of their congenial climate, favourable topsoil and new plantations, have been able to reach higher productivity in tea, the subsequent rise of labour productivity enabling them to supply tea at a very competitive price to the world market.³ This has reportedly forced the lowering of the price offered by the Sri Lankan and Indian tea and the profit margin.⁴ It has also affected the generation of employment, particularly in the estate sector of the tea plantations in both countries.⁵ This issue is the basis

Sri Lanka to export 314.9 million kg, though the internal production was just 310.8 million kg.

³ In the year 2006, the average export prices per kg of tea offered/received by the major tea producing countries in the world market, were as follows –India US\$ 2.03, Sri Lanka US\$2.64, Kenya US\$2.09, Indonesia US\$1.41, Turkey US\$1.15 and China US\$1.88 (Annual Bulletin of Statistics, 2008, ITC).

⁴ In the year 2000, Indian tea fetched an average price of US\$2.04 per kg in the world market. This had declined to US\$ 1.79 in 2002, but regained to US\$ 2.09 in 2005. The prices fetched by Sri Lankan tea declined from US \$ 2.37 in the year 2000, to US\$ 2.24 in 2002 and eventually increased to US\$ 2.64 in the year 2006. The cost of production of Sri Lankan tea has increased significantly in recent times from SLR 135.6 per kg (about US\$ 1.35) in 2003 to SLR 236.5 (US\$2.4) in 2007 (Annual Bulletin of Statistics, 2008, ITC). Average cost of production of tea in India was US\$ 1.6 per kg in 2002 and was marginally higher in Assam than the country average. These are some indication of price ranges from the available data.

⁵ An estimate of People's Bank of Sri Lanka, in the year 1995 indicated 275,000 workers in tea plantations (out of 319,600 workers in all types of plantations) in Sri Lanka. In the year 2003, the estimated figures declined to 253,200 workers in all types of plantations and tea workers were

for the main argument in this study that suggests that the estate sector of tea plantations now finds a convenient and low cost option of outsourcing in the tea smallholdings restricting utilisation of its own acreage and employment opportunities.

Tea has been a major contributor to the Sri Lankan economy, while tea in Assam is also an important player in the Indian economy, as more than half of India's tea production comes from the state of Assam. More than 90 per cent of Assam's tea is being sold through Guwahati and Kolkata auctions, direct exports and stock transfers for consumption outside the state. Tea at present contributes to a very insignificant proportion of Gross Domestic Product in both countries (3 per cent in Sri Lanka and a tiny fraction in India). As a contributor to foreign exchange-earning, particularly in Sri Lanka (13.4 per cent in 2007) and as a major provider of livelihood opportunities in these two regions of production, the role of the tea industry is significant. The tea estates of Sri Lanka employ about 230,000 workers (about 3 per cent of the total workforce) and the unorganised smallholdings, accounting for 44 per cent of the total tea acreage, offer livelihood opportunities to another significant section. On the other hand, there are about 602,000 tea workers on the payroll in the estates in Assam and an estimated 140,000 workers in the smallholdings of the state, as reported by the All Assam Small Tea Growers Association. The tea sector accounts for about 25 per cent of the labour force in the non-agriculture sector in Assam. The owners of smallholdings and the dense forward and

estimated at 217,900. Overall, during 1994 to 2003, tea workers per hectare of estate plantation had declined from 2.1 workers to 1.9 workers. During a period of nine years, decline of the workforce in the estate sector of tea plantations was much sharper (-2.26 per cent), than the decline in tea acreages (-0.97 per cent) (Estimates are based on data released by Plantation Sector Statistical Pocket Book, various years, Ministry of Plantation Industries, Sri Lanka. The time series data shows that the involvement of workers per hectare of tea plantations in Assam had declined from 2.54 persons in 1995 to 2.06 persons in 2005 (Statistical Abstract of Assam, various years).

backward linkages associated with the tea sector ensure the livelihood of a significant proportion of people in both regions.

These figures show, in brief, the importance of the tea sector in the respective economies of Sri Lanka and Assam in India. Concern at any level of policy ensures the productivity, quality, profitability and decent livelihood in the sector which is sustainable in the long run.

The challenges faced by the two production regions arise because of low productivity and the associated high labour costs⁶ are now to a considerable extent dealt with by the outsourcing of production to the tea smallholding sector by the estate sector, which possess the processing facilities. As in the relatively new plantations of smallholdings, the productivity is high and this lowers the labour cost.⁷ In the tea smallholdings the labour cost is low also because of the unorganised nature of work, which does not come under the domain of the labour laws of both countries. The outsourcing to the smallholdings on one hand restricts the opportunities of work in the estate sector and subsequently limits the burden of providing certain compulsory pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits set by the labour

⁶ The estate sector plantations of Sri Lanka and Assam follow a system of payment to the workers, which are a wage as well as an output contract. To get the stipulated daily wage a worker in Sri Lanka needs to pluck a minimum quantum of 18 kg of leaves. The norm for the state of Assam is 21 kg. Labour demand, as well as fulfilment of the minimum plucking tasks requires maintenance of a certain level of uniform productivity over all the plantations. This ensures optimum work for the workers. The slope and altitude of the plantations as well as the climate are other determinants influencing the productivity of the workers. In the context of regular deployment of the workers, low productivity leads to underutilisation of workers and a higher cost of production in this labour intensive sector.

⁷ The old tea plantations need to be renewed by re-plantation in order to maintain the level of productivity. The annual required norm of re-plantations is two per cent of the total tea acreages, which was never followed in practice in Sri Lanka and Assam tea estates. On an average just about 0.5 acres of tea was replanted every year in the two countries.

ordinances. In the past few decades these two major tea producing regions have shown a distinct shift in their structure from the decline in acreage and production share in the otherwise dominant estate sector to the smallholding sector. The tea smallholding sector of Sri Lanka now contributes about 66 per cent of the country's total production with a productivity of 2,267 kg per hectare as compared to 1,399 kg in the estate sector (1,649 kg per hectare overall in 2006). Tea smallholdings in Assam, was initiated in the early 1980s and the number shot up to 48,292 in 2005⁸ (Tea Board of India, 2006). Tea smallholdings in Assam now occupy 22.7 per cent of the total 299,502 hectares, but the production share is still meagre at 18.6 per cent (Tea Board of India, Guwahati source cited by Nedfi data bank, 2009, www.nedfi.com). The reason for the present meagre share could be due to the fact that some acreage of Assam tea smallholdings is still at an immature stage.

What are the factors that could explain the favourable growth of the tea smallholdings in recent times? Are flexible small firms are more efficient and are they the answer in this competitive world? Does rise in higher productivity and efficiency ensure the wellbeing of the workers involved in the unregulated work environment of tea smallholdings? These are some important questions that arise in the emerging regime of tea smallholdings in the context of the two old and dominant tea producing regions of the world.

The introductory section of this paper (see above) reveals how the market has put the traditional producing giants of tea in a situation

⁸ The Tea Board of India considers a tea holding to be small if it is less than 25 acres. On the other hand, the state government of Assam exempts the tea smallholdings below the size of 10 acres from agricultural taxes and levies. The size class controversy is still a matter of debate in Assam tea smallholdings. Both the classification criteria, however, do not fulfil the principle that the smallholdings are for the rural peasantry and meant to be operated with family labour.

that compels them to change their production structure, and remain competitive in the world market. The second section of the paper tries to create the space for smallholding as a production mode in the tea plantation sector, which is otherwise dominated by the estate sector since the inception. The third section reviews the current status of smallholding tea plantations in the two study regions. Currently, in the liberalised economic environment, countries are ushering more growth through the small firm variant, flexible mode of production. The fourth section brands the tea smallholdings as a flexible production mode keeping the scope for regulatory supports to ensure sustainability. The fifth section analyses the factors leading to the origin, growth and consolidation of smallholding tea plantations in Sri Lanka and Assam. The sixth section, based on a primary survey explores the operational aspects of tea smallholdings and looks at the institutional factors necessary to ensure sustainability. This section also addresses the labour factor, which assumes prime consideration in this labour intensive sector. Finally, the paper concludes by raising a few recommendations for the sustainability of the smallholdings.

II. The Case for Smallholding Tea Plantations

The production and productivity trends of some pockets of tea producing regions in the world presently show an encouraging picture. Tea cultivation in Kenya, which is based primarily on smaller sized plantations with an average holding of about two acres, has emerged as a major tea producer of the world. The average productivity of Kenyan tea has now reached 2,100 kg per hectare, much higher than the average of India (1,767 kg) and Sri Lanka (1,649 kg). In India, productivity of tea is the highest in Karnataka (2,547 kg/hectare), where some districts like Hassan have achieved a yield of about 3,000 kg per hectare. The average size of tea plantations in Tamilnadu is merely an approximate 4.5 acres, and the state with a share of 14.3 per cent tea acreage contributes to about 16.7 per cent of

India's production. In Assam, where the bulk of the India's tea is produced, the emergent smallholding plantations have reportedly achieved productivity of up to 3,500 kg per hectare. In Sri Lanka, on the other hand, the tea smallholdings, 97 per cent of which are with less than 2 acres of land, accounting for just 44 per cent of the total tea plantation area, contributes 66 per cent of the country's total production (Census of Tea Smallholdings of Sri Lanka, 2005).

According to de Silva (1982), there is no criterion stating that the plantation has to be of a specific size. He points out that estates were larger sized not because of internal economies of scale since crop production technology could be divided and is equally applicable, and therefore even more suitable for smallholdings. The large plantations were in fact needed due to external economies of scale.

The colonial economy preferred the extensive plantations because the agency houses had to take over a wide range of tasks on behalf of the British absentee owners. Apart from this, ensuring a regular supply of low waged labour, which had to be secured from outside the country or region,⁹ caused the agency houses to keep the estates operationally large. Moreover, the premise was that tea production requires the

⁹ During colonial times the supply of local labour to the tea plantations of Sri Lanka was scarce and the planters had to depend on indentured labour brought from outside the region. Reasons for movement of labour from South India to Sri Lanka during the colonial times—included the growth of the population of landless agriculture labourers, a decline in agriculture productivity, frequent famines, downward trend in wages and a rise in price of food grains in India. These conditions in combination created a condition of chronic poverty, debt bondage and semi-starvation, which in turn contributed to the migration of labour to Ceylon (Wesumperuma, 1986). Similarly in the sparsely populated plantation areas of Assam planter labour had to be recruited from outside (Chotanagpur area of Indian mainland) as the easy going locals were living comfortably with their vast tracts of cultivable land. The Transport of Native Labourers Act of 1863 was introduced and was intended as a means of regulating tea labour recruitment and monitoring their welfare (For further information see Guha, 2006).

proximity of processing facilities and this is best facilitated in large plantations. This view has now been eroded as estate tea factories are increasingly opting for green leaf purchase (Sivaram, 1996).

These examples of success open up the case for smallholding tea plantations in a traditionally dominated estate based sector in this present competitive environment. It is now often pointed out that tea smallholdings are better managed and are the answer for productivity and profitability gain. However, prior to arriving at such a conclusion there is a need to look at the mode of operations of the tea smallholdings that have made them more efficient. The plantation crops are labour intensive and the process associated with tea production involves labour costs of about two thirds of the total costs of production. It may be that the unorganised smallholding tea plantations gain competitiveness through a flexible labour pool and low labour costs. The organised production sector of the estates now often sees labour costs as an excuse to their lack of competitiveness. Theoretically, it is argued that raising competitiveness through low labour cost is a low road approach (Sengenberger and Pyke, 1992), which may not be sustainable in the long run. Moreover, smallholding tea plantations are of comparatively recent origin. These are, mostly disease resistant high yielding vegetatively propagated (VP)¹⁰ saplings (in tea smallholdings of Sri Lanka 75 per cent of plantations are under VP tea, which is just 43 per cent in the case of estate sector tea plantations) and the younger age of plants results in more yields

¹⁰ Adoption of VP tea is crucial to raise the yield. Tea Research Institute of Sri Lanka has developed and recommended three popular cultivars of VP tea namely the 2000, 3000 and 4000 series. Realising the importance, the government of Ceylon in 1958 made it compulsory for tea estates to use approved cultivars in their new clearing. Now about 43 per cent tea in the estate sector of Sri Lanka is under VP tea. The area under VP tea in the smallholdings is more than 75 per cent and is one of the factors for higher productivity in this sector (Tea Research Institute of Sri Lanka update, December, 2004). In Assam plantations mostly Clonal tea is prevalent.

compared to the older estates. Apart from these factors, the tea smallholdings at present are brought under a definite institutional set up (the TSHDA in Sri Lanka and Kenya Tea Development Agency in Kenya) which boost up their performance. These aspects require attention in addressing the growth of smallholding tea plantation sector in Sri Lanka and Assam.

A review of the current status of the tea smallholdings in these two regions will provide a better understanding of the issues addressed.

III. The Present Status of Smallholding Tea Plantations

Sri Lanka

The tea smallholders in Sri Lanka now cover approximately 231,684 acres of land. There is a total of about 263,018 smallholdings with an average size of 0.88 acres each. Large proportions of smallholdings of Sri Lanka are located in the low country region with an elevation of less than 600 metres in the Southern Province (occupying 42 per cent of the area in Galle and Matara districts) and in Sabaragamuwa Province (31.97 per cent in Ratnapura and Kegalle districts). In the mid-country elevation of below 1,200 metres, the Kandy and Nuwara Eliya districts of Central Province has an area of about 8.1 and 4.3 per cent under smallholdings. The tea smallholding sector is presently the mainstay in the national tea production of Sri Lanka. It contributed 205 million kg out of the total 311 million kg of tea produced during 2005. The average yield of the smallholding sector is estimated to have been 2,187 kg per hectare in 2005 compared to the national average yield of 1,649 kg in 2005 (Census of Tea Smallholdings of Sri Lanka, 2005).

The tea smallholdings of Sri Lanka are presently well supported by institutions such as Tea Small Holding Development Authority (TSHDA). The TSHDA was established in 1975 under the

Parliamentary Act No. 35 with the primary objective of supporting the development of smallholdings, which do not have their own means of tea processing. The TSHDA's role presently ranges from protecting the smallholders in gaining a right price for their green leaves to assisting development and maintenance of their holdings by making provisions of subsidised incentive schemes for replanting, new planting and infilling, and distribution of fertiliser on credit. However, the major activity of the TSHDA is the extension services provided by its personnel. These personnel are trained in agriculture extensions and give smallholders guidance in soil conservations, soil and nutrients analysis, fertiliser applications, pruning and harvesting of tea.

Assam

In Assam, in 2005, there were about 48,292 tea smallholding plantations comprising about 67,911 hectares of land. The average size of tea smallholdings in Assam is 1.41 hectare or 3.5 acres. The area covered by smallholdings is about 22.7 per cent of the total 299,500 hectares of tea land in the state. It was estimated in 2000 that the smallholdings employed about 185,000 persons (Cha-Tsing, 2000). According to these estimates the smallholdings tea plantations in Assam employ approximately four persons per hectare as compared to the 2.06 persons per hectare overall employed in the tea sector. This unofficial figure shows a higher involvement of people in the smallholdings in Assam than the general norm of three persons per hectare. There is no authentic data on tea smallholdings in the state and the figures need some verification.

Most of the tea smallholdings (93 per cent of the total 48,292 smallholdings) in Assam are concentrated in undivided Dibrugarh and Sibsagar districts of eastern Assam. These two districts are dominant tea producing pockets of the state with favourable climatic and soil conditions. In these two relatively thinly-populated districts rural

people have a large acreage of homestead and upland land in their possession suitable for tea cultivation, which is now converted to this profitable venture of tea smallholdings. It is reported that there is also use of government land in the tea smallholdings of the state. There is no surveillance system to collect the information on production of tea smallholdings in Assam. The smallholders depend entirely on the factories of the estates or on the newly emergent leaf tea factories to sell their green leaves. There is no system at the institutional level to record the quantity of leaf brought to the factories of the estates from the smallholdings. This makes it difficult to comment on the production and productivity of the smallholdings tea plantations in the state.

By the end of the twentieth century, the tea smallholdings of the state started to face a crisis due to fall in the price of green leaves. The price fell from Indian Rupees (INR) 12-17/= in the previous year to INR 4/= per kg in the year 2000. This price was much less than the cost of production of one kg of green leaves, which was estimated at around INR 8/=. The tea industry attributed the slump in the price of tea leaves to the worldwide price of tea falling along with the import of cheap tea from countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam. The state government on the other hand blamed this on the mushrooming and growth of tea smallholdings and the consequent overproduction. However, there is scope to investigate this matter in the context of this populous country, which has its own large market.

IV. Are Small Firm Variants an Answer in this Competitive World?

Liberalised but not unregulated¹¹ economic approaches adopted at present across the countries in the world are ushering growth more

¹¹ There is debate as to what extent a liberal government could limit itself; and even in the unimpeded spontaneous processes of the market some institutions are necessary for servicing a free economy (Smith, 2002).

through the small firm variant mode of production. The small firm variants are said to be more efficient and productive mainly because of their flexibility. The flexibility argument is seemingly more applicable to the manufacturing sector activities but the human component in the production process (in an unregulated environment) too has relevance in the primary production of tea.

The basis of working with flexibility is that the western industrial countries started engaging in a decisive modification of the capitalist process of accumulation (Nielsen, 1991). The post-war economic boom was an intensive regime of accumulation centred on mass consumption and productivity gain. However, in a later phase, over-accumulation led to the worsening of market conditions, which in turn created innovative requirements for production planning. The transition was toward a flexible mode of production, or in more humane and institutional terms, 'Flexible Specialisation'¹² (Piore & Sabel, 1984), which has brought rapid and revolutionary technological as well as organisational change in the production process. Flexibility is the way in which business adjusts to the new structures of displacement. It is how the labour force adapts itself to the supply of jobs. It is about how local areas (tea smallholdings in our case!) are utilised in this adaptation processes (Nielsen, 1991). A flexible mode of production process is not common for an agrarian commodity like tea, but it has relevance when considering its value adding component apart from how the tea smallholdings are being used at present. There is also the need to argue that a sustainable mature regime of accumulation based on flexibility calls for an appropriate mode of regulations. A mode of regulation involves the assembling of

¹² The domain of the concept of Flexible specialisation is much larger than the term flexibility. Flexible specialisation is a high road approach of industrial reconstruction based on efficiency enhancement and innovation; it also makes wage gains and improvement in social conditions feasible (Sengenberger and Pyke 1992).

productive institutions, social and political relations that regulate the process of accumulation (Schoenberger, 1989). The regulations act will guarantee that a dominant accumulation system is sustainable through the accommodation, mediation and normalisation of crisis tendencies (the policies adapted and the institutions created for sustainability). Overall, flexibility in a production system may enhance efficiency in the short run but its sustainability depends on how the regulations ensure the gain of efficiency including the well being of the people involved. On the other hand, the 'pessimists' (Gough, 1986; Mitter, 1986; Gertler, 1988) see the flexible mode of production as having disproportionate benefits for capital, by dividing labour and intensifying the labour process more thoroughly than mass production ever did.

In certain parts of the Third World, the shift to a flexible mode may generate renewed growth opportunities for export-oriented production (Rogerson, 1994). The tea smallholdings (assumed to be flexible) were initiated without any planning,¹³ but institutional supports have been able to help them to minimise their weakness and helped regain a 'lost' niche market for their country. This is particularly true for Sri Lanka, which exports a large per cent of its internal production (see note 2) and here bulk of the production (66 per cent) comes from tea smallholdings. In our study context we shall try to consider these arguments and apprehensions with regard to tea smallholdings. However, prior to this, it is necessary to have an understanding of the consolidation of smallholding tea plantations in Sri Lanka and Assam in India.

¹³ Smallholdings were never expected to take a form of dominant producer mode. It was only meant for providing some additional earning to the rural peasantry. The process of consolidation, however, has two stages. One is the dependent subcontractor mode, where the smallholders just supply leaves to the estate factories and a more coherent mode is with emergence of institutions ensuring real and regulatory supports. It can be said that the tea smallholdings of Assam are still in stage one.

V. Origin, Growth and Consolidation of Smallholding Tea Plantations

The smallholdings segments in the tea sector in Sri Lanka have come a long way from a petty dependent subcontractor mode of production to a dominant parallel mode largely because of institutional intervention and collective efficiencies of those involved. However, such regulatory interventions are yet to emerge in the context of Assam tea smallholdings.

Sri Lanka

The origin of smallholdings in Sri Lanka can be traced back to the colonial period but the Land Reforms process adopted in Sri Lanka in 1972 helped to consolidate the position of tea smallholdings in a significant way. By 1815, the British had gained control over the island and all its lands were brought under the Crown. However, in a later period, communities started to receive land from the Crown. By 1833 over 50,000 acres of land were granted to the Ceylonese communities and during 1833-69 more than 1.3 million acres of Crown land were sold (Shanmugaratnam, 1981). Shanmugaratnam points out that Peebles, in 1976, noted that land grants tended to concentrate in relatively few hands and the practice created a category of landed proprietors with land holdings to an unprecedented extent. Moreover, Crown land sale was unequally distributed among the Ceylonese, and a few prominent families accumulated enormous estates. These factors led to growth and the creation of a class of native estate owners. However, there was no evidence of emergence of smallholdings from among the natives or the peasantry until the 1930s. The evidence of the 1930s shows that there were a number of smallholders who were more inclined to rubber cultivation than tea in areas less than 10 acres of land (Table 1). The evidence also shows that amid the land owning native bourgeoisies there were also some smallholders adopting

rubber plantation. During that period out of the total tea acreages only 3.4 per cent were under tea smallholding and tea was almost exclusively an estate crop.

Table 1: Ownership of tea and rubber lands in 1934 in acres

	Tea	Rubber	Total
Sterling Companies	200,000	145,000	345,000
Other Estates	355,000	336,000	691,000
Smallholdings <10 acres	20,000	140,000	160,000

Source: N. Ramachandran, "Foreign Plantation Investment in Ceylon 1889-1958", Central Bank of Ceylon, 1963.

Shanmugaratnam also suggests that the smallholders of rubber as well as tea had suffered since their inception because of poor operational knowledge, lack of working capital and processing facilities. Unlike in the estate sector, there was no evidence that smallholders were encouraged in terms of advances made for resource intensification—improved planting practices, replanting and on fertiliser application—for their economic betterment. The situation did not change much even after the Independence, and as the Tea Commissioner's Report in 1968 indicates,

The unviable position in which the tea smallholders find themselves is due to a number of unfortunate circumstances. Largely as a result of soil erosion many smallholders are now in an unfavourable position to raise their productivity. The advisory services have failed to persuade smallholders to adopt an improved cultivation method (Shanmugaratnam).

The Land Reform Commission, in 1974, reported that the average productivity of the smallholdings was approximately 650 kg per hectare compared to more than 1,000 kg of the estate sector, and the smallholdings were just considered as a mere seller of low quality green tea.

The Land Reform initiated in the country in 1972 had some definite impact in the consolidation of tea smallholding in Sri Lanka. Peiris (1982) noted that,

During 1948 there were 200,000 acres under small home gardens, increased considerably to 700,000 acres by the commencement of the reform in 1972. During the land reform period peasant ownership of plantation land did record increase in both absolute and relative terms, and that increase was due partly to new land in small units being brought under plantation crops and partly to fragmentation of large units resulting from distributive alienation of estates acquired from private sources. Evidences show that these home gardens started to adopt tea and by 1965 area under tea smallholdings was 98,458 acres or 19.3 per cent of the total tea acreages.

Under the Land Reform Law of 1972, privately owned agricultural land above a ceiling of 50 acres was deemed vested in the Land Reform Commission (LRC). By 26 August 1975, such expropriated land was divested from previous owners and distributed to various organisations and individuals. Out of the total of 559,377 acres, thus redistributed, 133,760 acres were tea lands. Of these nearly 14,000 acres were given to individual villagers (Peiris, 1982). There is reason to believe that the individual villagers with the acquired tea land continued to carry on with the same crop. The profit that the tea land-owning villagers earned had some definite impact on the fellow villagers in making a shift to tea plantations in whatever meagre land they had.

The proportion of tea area under smallholdings during 1965-80 had increased by just two per cent, though the total acreage had increased by about 31,700 acres (Table 2). This period also shows a rise in acreage of tea under estate plantation from 239,800 hectares in 1965 to 245,000 hectares in 1980. In the period after the reform of 1972, more particularly after 1980, the area under smallholdings was increased by more than 82,000 acres and by 1992 the proportion of total tea plantation had reached from 17.6 per cent to 39.8 per cent. Data released by the Census of Agriculture of Sri Lanka, 2002 reveals that there were 226,513 acres of land covering 43.4 per cent of tea smallholdings in the country. The data of the Tea Census (see Table 2

below) conducted during 2005 in Sri Lanka reveals further consolidation of tea smallholdings.

Table 2: Growth of tea smallholdings and decline of estate sector plantation

Year	No. of small holdings	Acreage of small holdings in acre	Percentage to total tea area	Average size of holdings in acre	Acreages under estate sector in acre
1965	107,393	98,458	19.3	0.916	411,687
1970	113,193	106,693	17.6	0.942	499,517
1972	114,387	107,667	18.0	0.941	490,483
1975	118,529	113,173	18.7	0.954	492,030
1978	129,058	124,938	20.6	0.968	481,557
1980	133,950	130,171	21.3	0.971	480,960
1992	206,652	189,740	39.8	0.918	286,993
2002	NA	226,513	43.4	NA	295,406
2005#	263,018	231,684	44.1	0.880	293,938

Sources: SLTB, Ministry of Plantation Industry, Department of Census and Statistics, various years.

Tea Census, Sri Lanka, 2005.

Assam

Development of tea smallholdings in Assam is of recent origin. In 1978, the agriculture minister of Assam announced at the state assembly that the state government would like to encourage the peasantry to take up tea plantations in their homesteads and fallow land. This was just an appeal to the peasantry to adopt the profitable venture in tea for their wellbeing.

Initiation of tea smallholdings by the peasantry in the early 1980s heralded a new era in plantation history of Assam. Tea, in general is considered to be a capitalist crop, and has become a peasants' crop in this dominant tea production region. The abundance of uplands, suitable soil and climate, availability of agro-technology services from

the extension centres of Assam Agricultural University, skilled surplus labour from the nearby tea estates, a convenient market to sell the green leaves in the estate factories, the advantage of plantation crops over the seasonal agricultural crops were the factors that encouraged the small and marginal farmers and even landowning people who were engaged in other economic activities to take up tea plantations. The initial success was phenomenal and at present there are more than 42,000 tea smallholders in Assam.

However, there is no institution set up to look after the interest of the tea smallholders in Assam. There is an association of tea smallholders, but is as yet unsuccessful in getting the approval of required regulatory supports from the state.¹⁴ Moreover, there is still confusion in terms of the determination of the size of the smallholdings. The state government defines a tea holding of less than 10 acres as small, and these holdings are barred from sales and agriculture tax. The Tea Board of India, however, sets the limit for smallholdings at 25 acres.

The expansion of the tea smallholdings shows a discernable trend in both regions. One can see two distinct periods of consolidation. The earlier phase showed expansion of smallholdings along with the estate sector. The contemporary period, however, shows expansion of the smallholdings at the cost of the estate sector. Table 2 reflects that acreages of estate sector of tea plantations declined significantly in Sri Lanka since 1980. In Assam, deceleration of growth of the estate sector is evident from the year 1992. The significant gain in tea acreage, since 1999, in Assam is largely due to consolidation of the tea smallholdings (Table 3). It is now evident that the tea sector of Sri Lanka and Assam is being pushed to a more flexible mode in the form of smallholdings. This production structure is more flexible in the terms of labour use and more efficient in terms of productivity gain. It can be said that the

¹⁴ One of the regulatory supports that the smallholders want is the fixation of a price formula for the raw leaves.

structural shift to the smallholdings is not policy-induced; rather it is market-induced. The prevailing tea economy has slowly begun to take advantage of the new structure because of its low overhead costs and new plantation led productivity.

Table 3: Acreages under tea estates and smallholdings in Assam

Year	Acreages under tea plantations	Extent of small holdings in ha
1971	182,325	NA
1981	203,038	NA
1991	233,284	NA
1992	233,658	NA
1995	226,280	NA
1996	228,205	NA
1997	229,598	NA
1998	230,978	NA
1999	257,735	NA
2005	299,502	67,911 (22.6 per cent)

Source: Statistical handbook of Assam, various years and Nedfi, Guwahati.

Against this backdrop, it may important to understand the aspects of production process of the smallholdings as well as the supports received from the institutions created for consolidation of the tea smallholdings. The next section addresses some of these aspects based on information generated from a sample survey conducted during the field research.

VI. The Operation of the Tea Smallholdings

The small surveys conducted for the study was among the tea smallholders in Assam (in 2004) and in Sri Lanka (in 2005). In Sri Lanka the survey was conducted in two agro-climatic zones—the low country and the upcountry, having definite variations in terms of input use and productivity. Productivity, however, is also influenced by

factors such as infilling, re-planting and fertiliser use. Moreover, guidance from the experienced or from the institutions in matters like soil conservation, drainage maintenance, soil and nutrients analysis, fertiliser application, pruning and harvesting are crucial determinants of productivity. As the tea smallholders live on supplying the raw leaves, it is also important to consider whether they have a convenient market that will bring in the right price. Analysis of the family background of the tea smallholders helps to understand the scope of labour supply in this family business. Occupational diversification to farm and non-farm jobs in the family has two different impacts. On the one hand, it helps to arrange the investment required for the plantation; on the other hand, it also diverts the family labour to other more gainful occupations. Hiring workers to work in the smallholdings, however, could neutralise the second aspect. This is possible, only if there is a sufficient supply of workers to work in this labour intensive sector. A cost benefits analysis of the tea smallholdings helps to assess the advantage of the tea smallholdings over the other farm and non-farm economic activities. Attempts were made to collect information on these aspects from the tea smallholders in Badulla district in the upcountry and in Galle and Matara districts in the low country region of Sri Lanka. In Assam, information on these aspects was gathered from tea smallholders in the undivided Sibsagar district, one of the large concentrations of tea smallholdings in Assam.

Sri Lanka

The reasons for initiation and age of the tea smallholdings

The research study conducted by us involved interaction with 15 tea smallholders each in low and up country regions of Sri Lanka. Nearly half of the smallholdings we visited in the Dehiwinna village in the upcountry region of Badulla district were more than 50 years old. Many smallholders have inherited the holdings from their parents. The

tea smallholdings are considered a good source of regular income compared to cultivation of other seasonal crops.

The low country tea smallholdings are relatively of recent origins. Altogether two thirds of the smallholdings in our sample were less than 20 years old with the oldest being 30 years old. Utilisation of unused homestead land and expectation of a weekly source of income were cited as the main reasons behind the initiation of tea plantations.

Input use in tea plantations

Leaving aside the labour component, the tea smallholders are required to spend a considerable amount of operational costs on fertiliser. In the upcountry smallholdings of Sri Lanka it was found that the tea smallholders on average apply 400 kg of fertiliser per acre per year. As reported by the president of the smallholders' society in the village, the guidance they received suggested the application of 200 kg of fertiliser per acre every six months. The composition of NPK varies in the mixtures of fertiliser bags depending on the requirements for general application, new plantations and for plantations with new leaves. This leads to differences of the price of fertiliser, and the quantity applied leading to variation in costs. The intensity of fertiliser used was found to be higher in the low country tea smallholdings. This is because of the thinner layer of topsoil in the region. Farmers in low country apply fertiliser every three months and the average quantity applied is around 600 kg per acre of land in a year.

The tea fertiliser credit scheme of TSHDA was launched in October 1990. The objective of the scheme is to raise the yield of tea by systematic application of fertiliser. The scheme now helps to make fertiliser readily available to the smallholders at a reasonable price. This scheme was considered necessary after the withdrawal of the fertiliser subsidy scheme by the Sri Lankan government in 1987.

Dissanayake (1982), referring to the recommendation made by the Tea Research Institute (TRI) of Sri Lanka, suggested that the tea smallholders should apply about 350 kg of fertiliser per acre annually to increase the yield. Fertiliser application in tea plantations also depends on productivity; productivity of the smallholding plantations has increased considerably since the 1980s and now requires application of fertiliser in larger quantity. The TRI of Sri Lanka over the years has made several experimental works on fertiliser applications and recommends the optimum application depending on yield and altitudinal variations. One present recommendation of TRI advocates annual application of 880 kg of fertilisers per hectare (356 kg per acre) in vegetatively propagated plantations in the low country region (Hettiarachchi et.al., 2003). The data of National Fertiliser Secretariat of Sri Lanka shows that during 1992 the smallholding tea plantations used 308 kg of fertiliser per acre. This figure of fertiliser application per acre had increased to 553 kg in the year 2003. These figures indicate that the smallholders are influenced in using fertiliser for raising the productivity level.

Support received from tea smallholders' society

In most of the tea smallholding areas there exists a tea smallholders' cooperative society at the village level. These societies act as a link between the smallholders and TSHDA at the apex. TSHDA regularly gets feedback from the societies, and its activities to a large extent are guided by these responses.

The tea smallholders' cooperative society at Dehiwinna village in Badulla district had about 380 members. In the tea smallholders' society in the Kamburupitiya village in Matara district there were 187 members. These societies collect tea leaves from the smallholders and supply it to the factories. In general, the societies guide the smallholders in soil conservation, maintenance, drainages, fertiliser

application, plucking practices and on transportation of the leaves. A technical official from TSHDA visit the societies occasionally to guide the smallholders. Interaction with the officials of TSHDA at Kandy in 2005 revealed that there are about 150 tea inspectors appointed by TSHDA in Sri Lanka.¹⁵ TSHDA has also introduced an insurance scheme called 'Tea Shakthi Insurance' for the smallholders. The one time premium of SLR (Sri Lankan Rupees) 2,500 has a risk coverage value of SLR 10,000 in the case of death. The TSHDA officials also had a plan of introducing a scheme for crop insurance in the tea smallholdings; this however, is yet to materialise. In Kamburupitiya village, the smallholders' cooperative society enables additional support by the provision of free implements required for operation in the smallholdings.

Financial assistance/subsidy for up gradation of tea land from the TSHDA

The older, more established tea plantations require regular upgrading to sustain their productivity. Infilling of plants is found to be the most common practice to maintain the smallholdings. There is provision of a subsidy of Sri Lankan Rupees (SLR) 10/= per plant for infilling to a maximum of 750 plants for a smallholding. There is also provision of subsidies for re-plantation and new plantation from the TSHDA through the village smallholders' cooperative society. In 2008, the TSHDA provides incentives for re-planting at the rate of SLR 200,000/= per hectare for the upcountry and SLR 190,000/= for the low country region. During the years 1981 to 2006, the TSHDA had issued 112,622 permits for re-plantations of smallholdings covering 33,252.51 hectares

¹⁵ The tea inspectors are diploma holders in agriculture extensions. The network of services of tea inspectors is one of the dense agriculture extension services being provided in developing countries. This is claimed by the TSHDA. During 2006 the official from TSHDA made 32,261 individual visits to the tea smallholdings (www.teaauthority.gov.lk).

at a cost of SLR 1,451.66 million. However, during this period the TSHDA could disburse 90 per cent of its allotted provisions. Nevertheless, the field visits—to tea smallholdings in the villages both low and upcountry—revealed that very few smallholders had received subsidy from the TSHDA. The establishment cost of one hectare of tea plantation is about SLR 725,000/= in the upcountry and SLR 650,000/= in the low country but as reported the subsidies received for new and re-plantations were not enough to meet even 50 per cent of the total cost incurred by the beneficiaries.

The entire operational fund of the TSHDA comes from the share of Cess (in general a tax, applied to local taxation—with a qualifying word prefixed—such as educational cess, tea cess, and the like) imposed on tea exported from Sri Lanka. In 2006, SLR 4/= is imposed as Cess for a kilogramme of tea. The TSHDA receives 37 to 40 per cent of the total Cess collected in a year (the proportion varies from year to year as determined by the Cess committee) for its various developmental works. Analysis of available data for the past 23 years reveals that the TSHDA fails to utilise a large section of its share (Table 4).

Table 4: Cess share of TSHDA, Sri Lanka and distribution as incentives

Year	Cess collected from Tea in SLR mn	TSHDA share of cess -37 per cent, in SLR mn	Distributed as incentives in SLR mn	Percentage distributed	Other administrative costs
1980	166.6	61.6	10.5	17.1	82.9
1990	656.8	243.0	79.6	32.7	67.3
2000	416.5	154.1	80.6	52.3	47.7
2001	1066.5	394.6	95.7	24.2	75.8
2002	767.5	284.0	141.0	49.7	50.3
2003	739.6	273.7	160.2	58.5	61.5

Source: calculations based on Ministry of Plantation Industries data, Sri Lanka, 2004.

Productivity trend and prices received for the tea leaves

The sample of upcountry tea smallholders revealed a stagnant productivity of their holdings over the past few years. The price of tea leaves, however, has moved up from SLR 20-22/= per kg in 2004 to SLR 25/= in 2005. As reported the price was not remunerative to the smallholders.

On the other hand, most of the smallholders in the low country sample reported rising outturns of tea from their holdings. The price that smallholders in the region received in 2005 was SLR 32-35/= for a kg of raw leaves. This price was satisfying, as it was higher than the previous year's price of SLR 28-30/=. The smallholders are just mere suppliers of tea leaves to the factories, and the gains from processed tea in the market are not always passed on to the smallholders. In an effort to ensure that smallholders share these gains, the Sri Lankan government operates a scheme, which makes it obligatory for the processing factories to pay the smallholders a price not less than that calculated according to a formula. The formula assumes that to make one kilogramme of dry tea, it requires 4.65 kg of green leaves and the cost component of producing one kilogramme of made tea in the factories is 32 per cent of the total costs of production. The price that the smallholders receive is linked to the Colombo auction, so that it helps to derive the benefits of any escalation of tea price. The price fixing formula is—price payable to green leaf producer is = net sale average of processed tea at auction $(1/4.65) \times 0.68$ (cost of production at field).

On the one hand, the formula serves as a protection against exploitation by the processing factories; on the other, the propagators of deregulation do not favour its continuance on the ground that it stands in the way of the smallholders improving their leaf quality standards. However, viewed in the wider context of an uncertain and vulnerable tea market, it appears that the system has its own merit (Sivaram, 1996).

Workers in the tea smallholdings

Most of the regulations adopted for supporting the tea smallholdings are for the well being of the peasantry involved. This means that the tea smallholdings that the rural peasants operate, in principle should be based on family labours. The tendency at present is to use hired casual workers in the smallholdings, and there is shift of family labour to other jobs, where the opportunity cost of shifting is low. On the other hand, hired labourers are not easily available to work in the tea smallholdings of Sri Lanka. The workers engaged in the tea smallholdings of the upcountry are primarily drawn from the nearby plantation estates, and come to work at their convenience. It is not possible to get their services whenever required. Moreover, only the elderly workers come to the village for work, as the younger generations of the plantation workers are increasingly moving out to other relatively better jobs in urban areas (CARE, 1998). The low country sample villages' tea smallholdings appear to have a crisis in terms of an available work force too. This crisis—the lack of a work force—at the lower end job markets like plantation sector is largely results of better human development in Sri Lanka compared to many other underdeveloped countries.

Benefits to hired workers and intensity of labour use in the tea smallholdings

The workers hired in the sample upcountry village are engaged on work rate basis. They are given on an average SLR 4/= for each kg of leaves they pluck. This means that in order for the workers in the smallholdings to receive wages on par with the estate sector, which is a minimum of SLR 200/=, they have to pluck more than double the quantity. In the estate sector of tea plantations of Sri Lanka workers are required to pluck a minimum of 18 kg of leaves to get the daily wage. This is 21 kg in Assam tea estates. On the other hand, a worker

occasionally hired for the entire day, for pruning and maintenance of the holdings need to be paid SLR 250/= a day.

The compensation package for labour is found to be different in the low country villages. In the village in Matara district, the hired workers are paid SLR 150/= for half a day of work. The reason for this is that there is insufficient work in the smallholdings to occupy a worker for a full day. In some holdings hired workers are called in for maintenance work only and the family members do the plucking of the tea. This is one way in which labour is being used in a flexible manner according to the amount of work available. It was found that in most of the smallholdings workers were hired for only 2-3 days per week.

Investment, yield and profit of the tea smallholdings

Productivity in the tea sector is to a large extent dependent on how the plantation is maintained, and maintenance involves the costs of labour and the applications of fertiliser to keep the land productivity intact.

The upcountry environ in Sri Lanka could yield at least 4,000 kg of green leaves from an acre of plantation in a year. This is equivalent to 2,200 kg of made tea in a hectare. The turnover expected from this is about of SLR 100,000/=, considering a price of SLR 25/= for a kg of green leaves. The operation cost associated with labour is estimated to be around SLR 16,000/= (SLR 4/= per kg of tea plucked) and an additional SLR 3,000/= for maintenance, if one worker is engaged, once per month, during the year. Annual application of 400 kg of fertiliser in an acre costs SLR 8,000/=. All cost components could add operational cost for an acre of tea plantations to SLR 27,000/= in the upcountry region. This adds up to a minimum net gain of SLR 70,000/= per year from an acre of tea plantation. The low country environ, on the other hand, could produce about 4,500 kg of green leaves per acre, and this leads to a bigger turnover. However, considering the requirement to

use fertiliser more intensely here, the profit margin is likely to be the same. The variation in investment, transportation cost, savings of labour cost, along with the factor how plantations are maintained have an effect on variation in earning in the smallholdings.

It was found that less than half of the sample smallholdings had been able to achieve a productivity equivalent to the national average of 2,267 kg per hectare. However, a majority of the smallholders (nine in the upcountry and 11 in the low country out of the total sample of 15 each) were making a profit of more than SLR 70,000/= annually from each acre of plantation. The minimum margin of profit, the smallholders earned in the sample was about SLR 40,000/= per acre of plantation (Tables 5 & 6).

Table 5: Yield of the smallholdings

Yield made tea per hectare	Up country	Low country
< 1,500 kg	3	2
1,500- 1,864 kg	2	4
1,864 – 2,267 kg	3	5
2,267 – 3,000 kg	3	1
> 3,000 kg	4	3

Source: Fieldwork, 2005.

Table 6: Profit made by smallholdings per acre

Amount in a year per acre	Upcountry	Low country
< Rs. 70,000	6	4
> Rs. 70,000	9	11
> Rs. 90,000	6	8

Source: Fieldwork, 2005.

Can we consider the income that flows from tea smallholdings as remunerative? Dissanayake (1982) estimated that a tea smallholder's earning was insufficient for an average family to live. Considering SLR 70,000/= as the average profit earned by the smallholders from an acre

of plantation in a year and with a tea smallholder planting two acres of tea the earning thus accrued could be said satisfactory. The official figure on the poverty line, estimated in 2002, given by the Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka is SLR 1,423/= per capita per month (SAARC Country Report, 2008). A family of five requires about SLR 85,000/= a year, to sustain itself and a smallholder planting tea in two acres could live comfortably. However, the average size of tea smallholdings in Sri Lanka is just 0.88 acres (Plantation Sector Statistical Pocket Book, 2008). A large section of smallholders cannot ensure their livelihood by depending entirely on tea plantations.

The prospect of labour supply in the tea smallholdings

Most of the smallholdings in Sri Lanka are less than two acres of land and can be managed by two family members. Our sample tea smallholdings revealed the use of labour in three combinations. Some rely entirely on hired labour, some operate with family labour and some hire labour occasionally to get done the additional jobs. The tea smallholdings are expected to generate additional income for the rural peasantry, and all rules and regulations are meant for their wellbeing, and do not address the wage earning class. However, it is seen that there is tendency of the eligible work force in some smallholders' family to shift to other jobs in the non-farming sector while hiring labour to work in their holdings. The shift is desirable in so far that it raises the resources to invest in the plantations and there is enough labour supply to work in the tea holdings. However, the crisis at present is, as discussed earlier, that people are not willing to give their labour to the lower end jobs in plantations. Moreover, the state supported regulations adopted for the tea smallholdings are tailored for the wellbeing of the peasants, and are not addressed to the hired workers. This makes the tea smallholding sector unattractive for a working class. The question arises as to whether it is possible to make better provisions for the workers engaged in the smallholdings or

whether such a flexible mode in the form of smallholdings is meant for using the labour force more thoroughly.

The survey revealed that tea is not the only source of income in the sampled households. In the upcountry village some smallholders have an acre or less of paddy, which is used for subsistence farming. Apart from paddy some households have half to one acre of vegetable cultivations for further income generation. Some smallholders, on the other hand, supplement household income from sources such as wage earning, shops, transportation jobs and private and government salaried jobs. There were, however, households (altogether nine in the sample) relying entirely on income from tea; of these three households had an income of less than SLR 70,000/= in a year. This reflects the need of supplementing family income from other sources. The low country sample showed that paddy, coconut and banana plantations, shops, and private and government services were the additional sources of income. Income generated from these services and occupation is so significant that the tea income constitutes an insignificant proportion of the total household income in many households (Table 7).

Table 7: Share of income from tea in total earning of the smallholding households

Income share of tea to total income	Upcountry	Low country
100 per cent	5	4
50-80 per cent	5	1
30-50 per cent	4	6
Less than 30 per cent	1	4

Source: Fieldwork, 2005.

These micro evidences indicate that the tea smallholdings are just sources of additional income for the peasantry adopting tea plantations. In most of the cases, the members in the smallholders' family look for opportunities in other job sectors. They attempt

simultaneously to generate income from the smallholdings using hired labour. However, failure to acquire labour in the appropriate time to work in the plantations, and the concentration and compulsion required in their own jobs compel the tea smallholder families to give inadequate attention in operation and maintenance. This ultimately leads to a fall in productivity and such cases were evident from the field.

Assam

The tea smallholdings sector in Assam is yet to emerge as a dominant production mode in the tea economy of the state. The initiatives of peasantry in tea smallholdings are yet to be complemented by appropriate regulatory supports from the state. The history of smallholding plantation is just 25 years old in the state, but one can see three distinct phases of accumulation in this short span. The year 1981, shows the initiation of tea smallholdings and the consolidation phase slowly continued till 1991, the year of liberalisation of the Indian economy. The smallholding plantations boomed during the 1990s, and the enthusiasm of the peasants continued till 1999 with fairly rewarding returns from the plantations. The crisis phase started after 1999, when tea prices started falling abruptly. The tea smallholdings are considered as profitable ventures giving a dignified opportunity for self-employment, particularly for the unemployed youth, compared to the subsistence agriculture sector. These are in general the reasons for initiation of the smallholdings in the state. The tea smallholdings in Assam, however, did not remain in the form of peasants' smallholdings with the entry of rich and landowning natives, relying on an unlimited supply of cheap labour. This is evident from the size class of our sample smallholdings (Table 8). It can be mentioned that the average estimated size of tea smallholdings of Assam is about 3.5 acres as compared to 0.88 acre in Sri Lanka.

Table 8: Size class and workers engaged per acre

Size class	Number of holdings	Permanent workers in number	Seasonal workers in number
Less than 10 acre	15	0.67	1.98
10-25 acre	5	0.89	1.47
All Class	20	0.79	1.73

Source: Fieldwork, 2004.

We met with 20 tea smallholders, randomly selected in Sibasagar district of Assam. The size of the sample smallholdings was between 0.5 to 20 acres. We discovered that the smaller sized holdings depend more on casual workers, and that the intensity of permanent workers is relatively more in larger sized holdings (Table 8). A reasonably larger concentration of casual workers in the smallholdings is due to the fact that more workers are used to clear the flush during the peak plucking season. This flexible use of labour is possible because the labour supply is not constrained in Assam. The smallholdings are located in the zones, where most of the tea estates are concentrated. The surplus workforce from the workers' family and workers retired from their jobs constitutes the labour force working in the smallholdings. It must be noted that involvement of family labour in Assam tea smallholdings is rare. The workers in the smallholdings are paid just INR 35/= to 40/= a day. The workers of a somewhat permanent nature get about 8 to 10 per cent more, in addition to their total income or a lump sum of INR 600/= to 800/= as bonus in a year. There are no other benefits for the workers engaged in the smallholdings unlike in the estate sector plantations.¹⁶

¹⁶ A tea labourer in Assam is paid a daily wage of INR 58.05 apart from ration, free housing and medical facilities. Most companies had paid a 16 per cent bonus in the year 2007. The average daily wage in the tea plantation sector of Sri Lanka was SLR 375 for male and SLR 263 for female workers during 2007. There is no provision of subsidised ration for Sri Lanka tea workers.

Assam tea smallholders depend on the large estates to sell their green leaves. The sale is mostly done through agents or middlemen. At the time of the field survey in March 2004, the smallholders were receiving around INR 6/= for a kilogramme of green leaves (the price is much more favourable at present and fetches an average INR 12-14/=). Cost of production, however, varied between INR 6-8/= for a kilogramme of leaves. The general belief, among the smallholders was that inflow of tea from other countries had led to the fall in prices. According to the statistics released by the Tea Board of India during the period 1998-99 to 2004, the inflow of tea from countries like Kenya, Indonesia and Vietnam to India had increased by 21.87 million kg; from 8.93 million kg in 1998-99 (Tea Board of India, 2000) to 30.8 million kg in 2004 (Tea Board of India 2007-08). It may be noted that, internal consumption of tea in India, had also increased by 138 million kg during the same period (Tea Board of India, 2009). This raises the question of the impact of the low cost import to the country, which needs to be addressed critically. It is, however, true that the smallholders do not have their own processing facilities and have little bargaining power to sell their perishable produce.

In 2005, the yield in the tea smallholdings of Assam was just 1,332 kg per hectare (Tea Board of India, 2009). The information was extracted from a bulletin released by Tea Board of India, Guwahati Office in 2009. This is significantly low by any standard of tea plantations. The reason for a low yield could be due to the fact that the new tea smallholdings are still at an immature stage to reap a harvest. The average productivity of our sample smallholdings is estimated at around 3,000 kg per hectare, some reaching a productivity of up to 3,500 kg per hectare.

It is estimated that the operational cost of the sample tea smallholders in Assam is more (average INR 23,350/= per acre) than the Sri Lankan counterpart (SLR 40,950/= or INR 18,613/=) in low

country and SLR 28,754/= or INR 13,070/=) up country. The estimates, however do not take into account the cost component of family labour. The labour cost component in the total operational costs in the sample smallholdings of Assam is estimated at around 70 per cent, with variations from 47 per cent to 84 per cent in the 20 samples. On the other hand, the labour cost component of the total operational costs in the Sri Lanka sample tea smallholdings is estimated at 64 per cent in the upcountry and 62.5 per cent in the low country. The tea smallholders with a relatively larger size of holdings have greater access to resources and the capacity to invest in some critical inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides and other capital inputs. These are determinants that raise yield and competitiveness while leading to variation in labour use and cost.

The average annual profit from an acre of plantation in majority (altogether nine) of the sample smallholdings is estimated at around INR 18,000/=. There are, however, a few (altogether three), who could make decent profits of more than INR 30,000/= from an acre of tea plantations. To the stated official figure of the poverty line in Assam, a family of five in rural areas would require a minimum of INR 22,980/= annually to sustain itself. This means that a smallholder, relying entirely on one acre of tea plantation, is not able to ensure a decent livelihood. The average size of tea smallholdings in Assam, however, is about 3.5 acres and there is the possibility of ensuring a decent income, even with the constraints regarding access to a remunerative market.

The falling prices of tea in the post-1999 period and the declining rate of profit created difficulties for smallholders to raise their operational cost. This could, in future, affect the accumulation regime requiring regular maintenance. According to a press release on the revival package of the tea industry, the government of Assam as well as the government of India in 2004 had responded to the situation by announcing an offer of working capital in the form of loan to bail out

the smallholders (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 21 July 2004). The outcome of this proposal is not known at present. The Tea Board of India, in January 2007, had announced a special purpose tea fund for rejuvenation of the tea plantations and a sum of INR 3,000/= million is allocated for the 11th Plan period, 2007-12 by the government of India. The smallholders in Assam, however, are sceptical about operations of such schemes. This is because the land of most of the smallholdings is not officially registered, a prerequisite to obtaining a loan, while many of them are operating from land owned by the state.

VII. Concluding Remarks

The relative success of tea smallholdings over the estate sector plantations could support the argument that smaller holdings are better managed. Further the institutional support has transformed the peasants' smallholdings in Sri Lanka to a form of ordered force, ushering collective efficiency (Schmitz, 1989). This has led to individual entrepreneurial effort becoming a part of an organised production system, a good contributor to the national economy. However, the tea smallholdings in Assam, despite all the promises showed in the initial phase, failed to consolidate largely due to the absence of the required institutional supports. In Sri Lanka, the scenario has grown gloomy too. The gradual shift of the members of the tea smallholders' family to other economic sectors has created a non-peasant class which is still entitled to enjoy and benefit from the advantages of the institutional incentives and regulations (subsidies and price supports) made for the rural peasantry. The smallholders hired labourers to work in the plantations to compensate, to some extent, for this shift. It is obvious that the hired workforce in smallholdings do not benefit from the productivity and profit gain ushered in by the institutional and regulatory supports. The overall result is that the tea smallholdings are limiting the expansion of the estate sector in both study regions

and show a return¹⁷ to a low waged tea economy in the form of smallholdings.

Undoubtedly, as theoretically argued and empirically evident (in Sri Lanka), the role of institution is important in an accumulation regime. However, it could be better served through provisions of real and regulatory services (Brusco, 1982), than the financial incentives. The non-financial real services could be more effective to usher in the development, and keep the moral high ground of the entrepreneur class. It has emerged from the field surveys and secondary data gathered that large numbers of smallholders in Sri Lanka operate without any subsidy and less than half of their contributory Cess is ploughed back to the tea smallholdings (Table 4). This means that a large section of the tea smallholders are capable of surviving without the benefits of financial incentives and the regime could operate effectively only by regulatory supports. The fixation of a price formula of raw leaves that is linked to the monthly Colombo auction is a good example of the regulatory support. Moreover, the extension services provided by the TSHDA in Sri Lanka are good example of real services.

Despite all these favourable trends in Sri Lanka, the sustainability of such a vibrant regime is presently threatened by the labour factor. Ideally, the tea smallholdings are considered to be generators of income/additional income for the rural peasantry, as well as opportunities of employment for rural surplus labour. The tendency of the younger generation of people in the tea smallholding areas to shift to other and better economic sectors can be considered a rational move,

¹⁷ The Wage Board Ordinance No. 27 of 1941 in Sri Lanka ensured legislations relating to payment of salaries and wages, hours of work, leave superannuation benefits and other terms and conditions relating to the plantation sector workers. In Assam, the Plantation Labour Act of 1951 ensures these. The pattern of labour use at present in the tea smallholding in this context can be termed as the return to the unregulated and low road regime that prevailed in the colonial times.

so long it raises the investment required for the smallholding plantations, and there is a supply of workforce to work in the plantations. However, at present, the deficit in the supply of labour to the lower end plantation job sector leads to an alarming situation in Sri Lanka, even though there is prevalence of high unemployment. It is obvious that with the attainment of higher human development people prefer not to invest their labour in lower end jobs. Now, the Sri Lankan tea smallholdings indicate a limited labour supply, whereas Assam smallholdings are still a case of unlimited labour supply to the lower end jobs. The limited labour supply case in Sri Lanka could have serious repercussions as the tea sector now depends on the smallholdings to a large extent. It may be noted that tea smallholdings are for the personal gain of the rural peasantry and they have no obligation to carry forward the regime, unlike the organised sector of tea plantations, where livelihood security of a large section is involved. This aspect might be a factor that does not allow the neglect of the estate sector plantation (as reflected by data, the consolidation of smallholdings is at the cost of decline in acreages of the estate sector) and the furtherance of the smallholding regime in an unregulated environment on the labour front. The low road approach on the labour front indicates that the smallholding tea regime, even in Sri Lankan context, is not complete with a mature regime of accumulation. This requires regulations to make gain in wages and benefits feasible from the efficiency gain in the tea smallholdings.

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The Demoness Kālī and the Lord Buddha: Sense and Reference in a Buddhist Text on Revenge and Violence¹

Gananath Obeyesekere

Abstract

This essay deals with a popular story from the Buddhist tradition, which presents two women who, owing to their vows of vengeance, are born and reborn as enemies, perpetuating a long cycle of violence. This cycle can only be broken by a gesture of thrust, in this case initiated by the Buddha. The paper examines the immediate meaning or 'sense' of the text and the 'reference' of the text that opens a window to our contemporary society, embroiled in political violence. It further deals with issues of conscience expressed in storytelling and the demise of that tradition. It concludes by examining the current trend of planting of Buddha statues all over the Island and the Buddha becoming, as it were, the flag of an imagined Sinhala-Buddhist nation.

This essay contains a critique of revenge and the futility of violence expressed in a Buddhist story which I believe will be meaningful in the present context of omnipresent violence in a Buddhist nation just

¹ This lecture was originally delivered at the "The Sri Lanka Conference on Peace and Development" on 23-25 August 2009 in Kandy, Sri Lanka organised jointly by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) and the University of Peradeniya in cooperation with the School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg and The Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University and with Swedish South Asian Studies Network (SASNET).

recovering from the traumas of war. This war has further relevance for us in the sense that inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts are by no means over and even the last war ought to help us focus on what one might call 'totalising ideologies', that is, all-embracing belief systems that have no tolerance for dissent or opposing views. These ideologies entail the splitting up of the world into irrevocable oppositional categories and a refusal to recognise the importance of the grey areas in between that blurs these very distinctions. Hence this paper on the tale of the demoness Kālī comments on a Buddhist story that makes a case for blurring such categorical oppositions. The Buddhist text that we examine is from the *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* ("The Jewel Garland of the True Doctrine"), the great compendium of Buddhist stories written in Sinhala rather than in the sacred language of Pali and meant for a lay audience of listeners or readers. These 'intermediate texts', as we call them, attempt to render intelligible and personally meaningful abstract and abstruse ideas of Buddhist doctrine. When I began field work in the late 1950s such stories were told and retold in homes and alluded to frequently in the sermons of monks. They were also read aloud by literate village laymen at gatherings of lay devotees on Buddhist *poya* days (holy-days) and at pilgrimage centres during their annual festivals. But, alas, no more!

The *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*, has a long, well-documented, and fascinating history. It is a thirteenth-century translation of a fifth-century CE Pali commentary which was in turn a translation of an original Sinhala work that had been in circulation for several generations prior to that period. Each translator specifically refers to the earlier work in a prologue and also indicates the nature of the transformation or 'trans-creation' he chose to make of that original. Both works were intended to illustrate the ethics of Buddhist doctrine, but the methods adopted are crucially different as are the audiences to whom the works are addressed. The fifth-century Pali version was addressed to the world of Buddhist scholars well versed in the

doctrinal texts. In it each story begins with a reference to a well-known stanza from the *Dhammapada*. The whole stanza is not quoted but only the first few words that act as a mnemonic device, followed by an account of the context of the original narration and then a recital of a story as an illustration of the *Dhammapada* stanza. For example, the Kālī story of the Pali version begins thus: “For not by hatred. This religious instruction was given by the Teacher while he was in residence at Jetavana with reference to a certain barren woman” (Burlingame, 1979: p. 146). By contrast listen to the Sinhala *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* version:

As a bush fire burning out of control stops only when it reaches a vast body of water, so the rage of one who vows vengeance cannot be quelled except by the waters of compassion that fill the ocean of omniscience. We shall illustrate this with the story of the demoness Kālī (Obeyesekere, 1991: pp. 97-110).²

Here the Pali epigraph is re-converted into an image, vivid and powerful to a villager’s imagination familiar with the reality of bush fires. That contextualisation is achieved through an expansive telling that locates the story, through image and idiom, in the familiar everyday reality of the villager. This reality includes the well-known goddess Kālī, seen as a demoness in the Sinhala text whereas in the Pali she is given no name or specific identity. The story proceeds thus:

There was once a young man who on the death of his father had no choice but to take on the responsibilities of the household himself. He ran the farm and the house and cared for his widowed mother. She saw what hardships he underwent and thought, “I cannot relieve him of the whole of his burden but if I were to arrange a marriage for him, at least he can leave the household chores to his wife and so take a little rest himself. Besides, if I am to go on enjoying the benefit of his

² “The Demoness Kālī” in *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* of Dharmasena Thera, translated by Ranjini Obeyesekere, *Jewels of the Doctrine, Stories of the Saddharma Ratnāvaliya*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1991, pp. 98-110. Hereafter all references will be to this edition.

care and attention I had better see 'to his welfare'. So one day she said, "Son, shall I arrange a marriage for you?"

He answered, "Mother, I don't want that. Let us not introduce any such complication. I will care for you myself as long as I live. Give me the opportunity to perform that act of merit".

"Son, don't say that. How can I be happy when I see you work so hard?" The mother continued to bring the matter up again and again, so finally he fell silent.

Sensing that he had agreed to her proposal, the mother prepared to go to a certain household to make inquiries on behalf of her son. The son, seeing her go directed her to one of his choice.

One cannot but be impressed by the shift in the ethical position from the transcendental ethics with which the story begins (the ethics of the doctrinal tradition as represented by the monk-translator) and the pragmatic ethics of the farming communities living in the world of economic want and hardship. Buddhist values do enter this world, but they are not the lofty values such as compassion that quenches vengeance but the more practical values of duty, obedience, and merit—all of which have a situational base in everyday life. The mother's need for a daughter-in-law is expressed in terms of concern for her son working too hard; the son's original refusal to complicate his life is stated in terms of 'an opportunity to perform an act of merit'. Then as well as now 'merit making' constitutes the basis of Buddhist ethics in village society.

A bride is brought for the son. Unfortunately the woman proves to be barren. The mother, now concerned with the practical problem of perpetuating the lineage, says: "I live happily because I have you to care for me. When you are old and feeble how will you manage without a child?" She suggests he take another wife. The son refuses, but his wife overhears the conversation and realises that "since it's wrong to disobey, it is not unlikely that he will finally give in to his

mother". She then decided to choose a second wife herself for her husband and hypocritically approached a family to ask for their daughter.

At this point the translator introduces a sermon on dissimulation, and it hits squarely at the very morality exhibited so far by the characters in the story.

Deceit breeds in sin just as good needs knowledge to flourish. Further, because deceit is itself vile and needs to associate with vileness, it associates with vile women (since deceit often resides in women). Sometimes what one speaks, thinks, and acts is largely mixed with deceit; and what may seem done entirely in the interests of another is in fact done only for one's own welfare. Very often one is aware of the inadequacies of a certain action but does not reveal it to others. So [deceitfully] the wife selected a young woman of good family for the position. Since it was not a regular proposal the young woman's parents did not agree. To convince them she said, "I am barren. If your daughter were to bear [my husband] a child, that child would become heir to great wealth and comforts. What use are riches to a barren woman like me?" So like a person in disguise, thinking one thing but saying quite another, she arranged a contract and brought the young woman to her husband.

'Sin' is our translation of bad karma or *akusal*, and 'deceit' is our inadequate translation of the Sinhala *māyāva* itself derived from the Sanskrit *māyā*, 'illusion'. To get the full flavour of the text one should re-read the above paragraphs, substituting 'illusion' for 'deceit' as the secondary meaning of *māyāva*.

Let us continue the story. Lest the second wife bear a child and thereby pose a threat to her, the barren wife pretends friendship and asks to be told when the second wife conceives so she can prepare the special foods customarily given to women in the first trimester of pregnancy. The woman does so and the barren wife secretly introduces dangerous substances into the food she prepares for the co-wife and thus causes a

miscarriage. The co-wife conceives again and for the second time the barren wife causes her rival's foetus to be aborted. Finally the co-wife realises what is going on and says: "You brought me here and gave me to your husband. When you disliked my staying on, instead of sending me back to my parents' home you fed me deadly medicines and caused me to miscarry. Tell me what kind of friendship is that?"

The barren wife now realises that her deception is known and resorts to desperate measures.

"Whatever has happened so far, since she now knows everything, I am ruined", thought the barren wife and waited for an opportunity during childbirth. When she got the chance, she gave the co-wife the medicine during labour. The pregnancy was now full term, so instead of being aborted the child lodged horizontally [in the womb]. The young wife's labour became excruciatingly painful and her life hung in the balance. As she was dying she said, "Alas, your deception was very great. Three children have died and now I too am about to die. You have killed four people. When I die may I be reborn as a demoness powerful enough to devour you and the children you bear". With that fervent rebirth-wish (*prārthanā*) she died and was reborn as a cat in that very household.

When the husband realised what the barren wife had done he did what some villagers would do—he beat his wife. "Finally he let her go since there was no sense in killing her". At this point the story undergoes a definite shift of focus.

She (the barren wife) died sometime after and was born as a hen in that household. The hen reached maturity and was ready to lay eggs. Three times in succession the cat ate the eggs. The hen seeing that said, "As a man who eats up all his seed grain and when that too is over consumes even the discarded grain for lack of better, so she who three times ate up my eggs, will she not eat me too when there are no more eggs? When I die [and am reborn] may I too be able to eat her and her young".

With that rebirth-wish the hen died and was reborn as a tigress. The cat died and was reborn as a doe. Three times the tigress ate up the young of the doe. Finally when the tigress was about to eat up the doe, the dying doe made a rebirth-wish. "Three times this tigress has eaten the young I bore. Now she eats me too. May I die and be born a demoness so that I can eat her and her children". So the doe was reborn as a demoness during the lifetime of the Buddha.

The tigress was born as the daughter in a certain nobleman's household in the city of Savatti. On coming of age she was given in marriage and went to live in a village some distance from her hometown. She had a son from her marriage.

Note that the narrative structure consciously blurs the distinction between victim and aggressor. Once caught up in the cycle of violence such distinctions cease to exist.

The demoness, checking on households where children were born, heard of a birth from members of that household and came to it in the guise of a friend. "Where is our dear friend?" she asked. When informed that she had given birth to a child, she asked, "Did she have a son or a daughter? I would like to see her".

Thus deceitfully worming herself into the inner chamber, she took the child in her arms as if to look at him, promptly ate him, got up and left. The second time too, when a child was born, she came and ate him up. On the third occasion when the young woman was pregnant, she said to her husband, "Twice in this place a demoness devoured the children I bore. Are not one's parents the best people to care for one's welfare? I will go to them to have my child". So saying, she went there and gave birth to a child of great merit who was destined to live long.

In yet another turn the narrative now focuses on the demoness as she functions in the demon world.

During this time it was the demoness' turn to carry water from the lake Anotatta for King Vessamuni [Vaiṣravaṇa, the overlord of demons and the god of the northern quarter]. She did this task for four months and again for another five months. Some demons even

died of the hard labour. This demoness carried water for the prescribed time. Then having completed her task, just as a ravenously hungry person hurriedly places her water pot on the pot stand in the inner room and rushes to the kitchen to grab some food, so she rushed to the labour-room which had been her one goal all this time. Pretending to be a friend, she inquired where the woman was. They said, "On two earlier occasions a demoness ate up the children she bore in this place. She knew of no other way to protect them so she has gone to the home of her parents".

"Wherever she is it cannot be as far away as the heavens up amidst the stars. Besides if the child is already born, it will make it all the easier to find him and eat him, like eating a plate of ready-cooked rice". So the demoness thought. Thus calling up that other demon, her long standing vow of vengeance, she set off immediately for the inner city.

Note the ethical thrust here: the demoness is a real creature living in the demon world and serving the demon king Vessamuni; yet the last sentence says that the demonic is, at the same time, the embodiment of her vow of vengeance, a part of her inner being. The demoness appears in the human world in the guise of a friend and is indistinguishable from any other person, except for her cruel appetite. She could eat a child "like eating a plate of ready-cooked rice". It is not "the banality of evil" that is presented here. Quite the contrary: the horrendous nature of the hate is vividly captured (as Jonathan Swift does in *A Modest Proposal*) by the very commonplace nature of the act of "eating a plate of rice".

The story continues:

The woman, who had twice given birth and twice been left childless, now completed the naming ceremony for her son and decided that it was time to return to her own village. She was passing through the temple premises of the Devramvehera [Jetavanārāma] monastery when she decided to bathe in the pond not far from the monastery, and gave the child to her husband to hold. She finished her bath,

climbed back on to the bank and was sitting suckling her child while her husband took his bath, when she saw the demoness approach. Having seen her twice before, she recognized her instantly. She shouted, "Quick come ashore, the child-eating ogress is coming", and without waiting for him, she ran to the temple and rushed in through the door.

At this time the Buddha, accompanied by his fourfold retinue of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, was seated [in the Jetavanārāma] preaching in the temple. The terrified woman cut through the crowds, went right up to the Buddha and, as if placing a water pot on a pillow covered in a wondrously coloured spread, laid the tiny infant by the Buddha and placed the young child's head on his feet, which were resplendent with the one hundred and eight auspicious marks. "Though I may never hope to be a Buddha, this child I give to you. I see him in great danger. Just as you once granted Prince Alavi the gift of a life lasting one hundred and twenty years, and just as you protected Alavi from demons, I now beg you, protect this child from the demoness that seeks to hurt him". Her fear being so great she pleaded with the Buddha as with a friend or intimate.

Meanwhile, the entrance to the temple was guarded by the god, Sumana, who though his name meant "the pleasing one" was displeased with the demoness and did not allow her to enter. As a beggar woman, dressed in rags, afraid to come too close, hovering around at a distance from the place where a meal is in progress, is invited in and offered a plate of rice, so in order to give this flesh-eating demoness the food of nirvana, the Buddha called up Ananda, the senior monk, and said, "Go invite that demoness standing outside the door and escort her in".

Seeing the demoness enter, the mother of the little one, ignorant of the power of the Buddha and terrified that even though the child was lying with his head on the feet of the Buddha, the demoness might still snatch and eat him, said, "Lord, there comes the demoness I spoke of".

As a mother hushes a hungry child with soothing words until the pot of rice is cooked, so the Buddha comforted her with words until he was ready to preach a sermon: "She comes but you need not be

afraid. If you two had not met, then there would have been a reason for fear". Thus he calmed her. He then said to the demoness, "Why do you do this? As truth and justice are forgotten if they never come in contact with those who know what is right and just, so if you two had not happened to come to me, your vengeance would have lasted over eons.... It was a good thing I met you".

The crucial event then is the woman laying the child at the feet of the Buddha. Any Buddhist knows that this must change the situation radically. The idea that the demoness is physically indistinguishable from ordinary people is now continued. The Buddha invites her in a matter-of-fact manner. The metaphor of a rice meal is now put to different use, for the flesh-eating demoness is to be given the rice meal of salvation or nirvana. The text, without our being aware of it, has moved from the initial pragmatic village ethic to the universal ethics of Buddhism, from merit making toward something transcendental. The woman, her child, and the demoness can be saved, but the Buddha must serve as the catalyst. The Buddha now advises the demoness in the familiar language of the sermons, part of which is quoted below:

"Listen demoness, when your body is filthy with spit, phlegm, and snot, you cannot clean it with that same spit, phlegm, and snot; in fact it will only get filthier. So when you abuse those who abuse and revile you, or kill or beat up those murderers who beat you up, or indulge in criminal acts against those who do criminal acts against you, it is like adding fuel to fire; enmity on both sides never ceases. Just as iron sharpened on steel cuts ever more keenly, so your rage increases. How then can that enmity be made to cease like a fire that is put out?"

"As spit, snot, and so on, are washed off with clean water, and that water because it is pure can cleanse a filthy body, so hatred that burns on the fuel of justifications must be drenched with the water of compassion, not fed with the firewood of reasons and causes. Compassion is fundamentally right, free of malice, and is the source for all good actions. Good, founded on compassion, destroys malice and puts out the fire of enmity. When that fire which is most difficult to extinguish is put out, then the ten other fires kindled by the various

types of passions, such as the desire for wealth, will also die. When there is no more wood, even fires that have been burning for long years die down. Once all eleven fires are extinguished, just as rice plants thrive in flooded fields, so in the rice field of the mind softened with the waters of compassion, seeds of goodness such as discipline and contemplation will sprout and a rich harvest of blessings, both in this world and the next, can be had”.

So he spoke and encouraged the demoness who, exhausted by her previous terrible crimes such as the taking of human life, had no strength left to enter the city of nirvana. He set her on the first stage of the path to Awakening (enlightenment), that of the Stream-Enterer [*sotapanna*] and until, at some future date, she was able to pound, husk, and prepare the rice meal of the Path and the Fruits [*mārga-phala*] which would sustain her in her journey through the desert of continued rebirth [*samsāra*], he gave her a handful of rice called *sotapanna* [Stream-Enterer] for the journey.

That demoness, being a demoness had no fixed abode but now she acquired a small room (since there were many others also there) in the nine-storied palace of the nine Supramundane States. She was allowed to live there since she now had the heavenly body of a noble being. Thus she gave up eating human flesh, which was in every way despicable, and acquired a taste for nirvana.

The piling up of metaphors of fire and water, and especially of rice—growing in water, its harvesting, the separation of chaff from grain, its cooking—all of these give an immediacy and intimacy to the abstraction of the doctrine and the sermonising tone of the text. The demoness who had no fixed abode (in a literal sense) now can live in the ‘nine-storied palace of the nine Supramundane States’. All this, of course, does not happen in a moment. The text anticipates what is to come. People believe that by seeing the Buddha they can achieve instant nirvana. Hence the popular rebirth wish, then and now, that they be born in the time of the next Buddha Maitreya and realise nirvana by listening to his sermon. The present text must be seen in that popular village context. The Buddha delivers a sermon, and then

the text says that the demoness became a 'Stream-Enterer' (i.e., she took the first step in the nirvanic path).

As if the weight of the child lying on his feet was too heavy for him, the Buddha now turned to the mother and said, "Give your child to the demoness to hold".

"Lord, I'm afraid to give the child to her", she replied.

"Do not fear. Angulimāla, the great Thera, once said, 'I will cut a thousand fingers to perform my sacrificial rites', and killed many people and caused much trouble. I tamed him. Now he does not harm so much as an ant. The water with which they wash the seat where he recites the Protective Stanzas [*pāritta*] is now used to ward off all dangers. Women in labour drink this sanctified water and give birth painlessly.... Did you think that I, now a Buddha, would ask you to carry your child to that demoness if she still ate human flesh? No harm will come to your child from her. No demon can harm one who has touched my feet".

As he spoke, the demoness was given the child to carry. She hugged and caressed the child as if to gather to herself some of that radiance the child had got from the blessed body of the Buddha, and handed him back to the mother. Then, as eyes struck by a powerful radiance gush forth tears, so she burst into weeping.

A point is being made in a beautiful twist to the central symbolism of the circle as in Brecht's 'Caucasian chalk circle', itself based on a Buddhist text. The cycle of hatred and violence can only be broken by an extraordinary gesture of trust. The woman must give her child to the very demoness who twice before devoured her children. The Buddha who is outside human conflict can initiate this supreme act of trust. On the one hand, he tames 'evil'—if we use the word advisedly—as in the case of murderous Angulimāla, 'the Finger Garland demon'. It is pertinent that the *Angulimāla Sutta* is recited to bring relief and blessings for women in labour. Hate, we know from both stories, is a demonic force. It is in the 'labour room' that the

demoness Kālī devoured the woman's children. In their former lives too hatred had destroyed the fruits of pregnancy. So it is apposite that the taming of the demonic in the story of Angulimāla should be used as a magical charm to allow safe delivery for mothers in labour.

But this is not all. There is also a social role that the Buddha shared with all genuine world-renouncing virtuosos. The Buddhist renouncer is 'homeless' (*anagārika*). The act of renunciation, strictly speaking, does not remove him from society; it removes him from home, that is, from the powerful ties that bind us to spouses, children, families, and larger kin groups. The ideal of the renouncer is the Buddha himself. He mirrors the calm and detachment from worldly ties that traps most of us in the round of everyday existence. The attitude to the monks, the son's of the Buddha, even when they are venal, is largely a projection of the public attitude to the Buddha. Because he is outside human conflict the Buddha can initiate the act of trust necessary to break the cycle of hatred and vengeance.

Both women have lost children; this might have happened in past births, but for Buddhists past births are present karmic realities, as this text and others clearly show. Both women committed terrible wrongs; but the act of giving the child and the act of receiving compensates for the guilt of the past and can produce what might tentatively be labelled 'awareness'. This is not the 'self-awareness' of our modern introspective ruminations that have an inevitably solipsistic character. Rather it is an idea or a thought or an intuitive knowledge that hits you without deliberate self-consciousness. The significance of the Buddha's statement, "if you two had not met, then there would have been reason to fear", must be seen in this light. The demoness holds the child and her long pent-up emotions springing from a variety of motives—such as deprived motherhood, cannibalism, and violence—now surface, and she weeps. The context makes clear one motive for her weeping: the child in her arms releases her own frustrated maternal love and, *we* might add, her feelings of guilt.

The Buddha, seeing her weep, said, "Those who come to me leave happy, having obtained the wealth of nirvana none leave weeping. You weep because you miss your worldly pleasures".

The demoness answered, "Lord, formerly I ate living beings just to satisfy my stomach and yet I was never full. From now on, since I will no longer kill living things, the taste of nirvana although it will delight my mind, may not be sufficient to satisfy the hunger in my body. Therefore I weep, thinking 'how will I live from now on'".

To the audience this will appear quite humorous and characteristic of the irony often found in Buddhist texts—all this nirvana stuff is fine and good for the mind but what about my body, used as it is to pleasures of the flesh (literally speaking!).

This part of the text ends when the Buddha admonishes the woman to take the demoness into her house. "The Buddha comforted the demoness and said to his lay devotee [the mother], 'Take this person to your home and without fear keep her there. Give her the first serving of whatever you cook and look after her well'. The cycle of violence can be broken by a symbolic gesture of trust and generosity—but a single gesture however powerful and symbolic is not enough. It must be translated into the realm of continuing daily action. The woman must take the demoness into her home and care for her for the rest of her life.

There is also a not so obvious aspect to this statement that an audience unfamiliar with village beliefs might overlook and that is an old, continuing custom for people to leave aside a fistful of food (*pinḍa*) for the spirit of a particular ancestor, or a guardian spirit, or spirits in general. In this text the demoness is to be given the best food and the first serving. The implication for the audience would be that the demoness has now reverted to her spirit guise. She is no longer in the visible human form she had earlier. This is confirmed in the next section of the text when the two women are in effect back in their

former situation—once more resident in a single household. But everything ethical in their relationship has changed. Deceit and dissimulation have been replaced by trust. The pragmatic morality of consequences has been tempered by the universal ethic of compassion in its Buddhist sense. However, the outward life of a village household continues on in its ordinary course. This is not a story of world renouncing. It is about living in the world. Therefore, the ethic of merit-making continues to prevail.

After the oppressiveness of the cycle of hate and revenge, we noted the emergence of another touch of humour, another twist as the narrative moves to its conclusion.

She took her home, set her up under the rafters, and whatever she cooked she gave first to the demoness and ate only after. However, when the rice was being husked by spreading it on the ground and pounding it with long pestles, the raised wooden pestles kept hitting against the demoness' body. Bothered by this, but being now set in the path of righteousness and so unable to act otherwise, the demoness called her friend, the woman lay devotee, and said, "This place is not convenient for me. Put me somewhere else".

The now invisible demoness occupies a place under the rafters. But invisibility does not guarantee freedom from pain! Why so? Although the demoness is set in the path of righteousness and cannot go back to her old ways, she is not exempt from the karmic consequences of her past deeds. They have to work themselves out, and so the pestles used by women pounding rice hit her as she is lodged in the rafters. She is then moved to a room at the far end where the pestles were stacked.

Each time the pestles were thrown into the room, they struck her on the head. She then said that that place too was unsatisfactory, so she was put at the end of the hall where they kept the water for washing. However, small boys, rinsing their hands and mouths, splashed dirty water on her head. She complained that this was not satisfactory either, so she was put behind the hearth. Dogs shivering from the

cold and having no other comfortable place gathered there as if for company; so that too was unsatisfactory. She was then taken and placed by the corner under the eaves. Little boys urinated and defecated there; hence that too was not satisfactory. She was then put out in the yard, by the garbage heap. People would bring whole basketfuls of garbage and throw it on her head, so that too was troublesome. She was then taken and placed at the entrance to the village. There, young boys learning to shoot arrows seemed to use her as their target, so that too was unsatisfactory. She was finally taken outside the village to a place far from the public thoroughfare and there looked after and given rice gruel.

What is going on here? It is something more than an expiation of karma. Again there is an implicit reference to a ritual sequence that is practiced in Sri Lankan villages even today and must, in all likelihood, have come down from very ancient times. In contemporary rituals demonic presences or the residues of such things as the evil eye are removed from the house by the priest or exorcist in several stages, generally by the demon *Garā*, the remover of such misfortunes. For example, from the rafters, to the hearth, to the hall, then to the eaves, and beyond the stile to the stream, and from the stream into the mouth of *makara*, the mythical dragon in Buddhist thought. This ritual sequence, familiar to villagers, is incorporated into the text in reference to the progressive movement of the spirit from the house into the outside world. There, having expiated her karma, the demoness becomes a benevolent deity, initially of the woman's household and then of the whole village.

The text continues:

She suffered no further discomfort and so remained there. She began to give advice to the household that brought her rice gruel. "This year there will be heavy rains so your mud-fields of rice will rot. Cultivate grains that grow on high land such as *mineri* and *tana* [varieties of millet]". Or she would say, "This year there will be little rain so your highland plantings will all die. You should farm your wet rice fields". As a result of her good advice, their farming was always carried out with foreknowledge, and was successful. All the town folk too began

to render similar service to the demoness and because of her association they too lacked neither rice nor other grains. She in turn got much devotion, was given eight Ticketed Offerings and became famous as Kālī Barandhi.³ This practice continued until the writing of these commentaries.

The original malevolent demoness is now a benevolent deity and as a result of performing good actions she acquires good karma, which will in due time and after many rebirths result in her eventually realising nirvana. The text does not tell us this, but it is part of the implicit knowledge contained in the text itself and in the consciousness of Buddhist lay-folk. The terrifying Kālī of the Hindu tradition has become a force for good in the Buddhist version. Thus the tale must be seen in the context of Hindu myths of the goddess that were probably current in thirteenth-century society as they are today. The Hindu goddess is displaced from her predominant place in Hindu worship into the lesser, but recognisable, position of a village guardian deity or *grāma devatā*.⁴

³ The Sinhala *lā bat* means literally, 'ticket-rice' or food that was distributed by tickets or tokens, as for example, the practice in Sri Lanka where offerings to monks by households were decided by drawing of lots.

⁴ The Buddhist Kālī: As with the Hindu tradition there is no single iconic, mythic or ritual representation of this goddess in popular Buddhism. Until very recently the famed goddess of the Hindu tradition appeared in Buddhist rituals as a *yakini*, demoness; in others her *imago* is split into two, *Sohon Kālī*, "the Kālī of the graveyard" and *Bhadra Kālī*, "the good Kālī". Detailed information of the incorporation of Hindu deities into the Buddhist fold is found in ritual texts of the post-sixteenth century and I have discussed them at great length in my scholarly articles (Obeyesekere, 1984). In the beautiful ritual drama that deals with the resurrection of her dead consort by Pattini, Kālī appears as Pattini's servant following the goddess and carrying a little suitcase! The recent revival of her cult is described in Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988). Additionally, I have shown that in the great Hindu shrine of Munnesvaram in the north of Sri Lanka near Chilaw, there is a shrine for Kālī where the rituals are performed by non-Brahmin *pusāris*. Here animals are sacrificed regularly and Buddhists come to the shrine for one purpose only, to practice sorcery or cursing that I describe in my article (Obeyesekere, 1975: pp. 1-23). For an updated account of the Munnesvaram temple see Bastin (2002). I have discussed at great length the role of Kālī in contemporary exorcisms in my

And so the story ends with a verse and homily in a manner familiar to readers.

Thus vengeance is an extremely vile sin. Therefore give it up. A mind full of compassion is good and paves the ways to obtain the powerful eleven blessings. As it is said:

There is no act too sinful for one who lacks compassion. There is no act too good for one who has compassion.

Therefore, set yourself in that way and purify your mind to go into the presence of the Buddha. Even though that Buddha is presently dead, *come into his presence by means of these stories of the Jewelled Garland of the True Doctrine*. Give up terrible hatred such as you have heard and seen. Fill your mind with compassion as he advised, and thus obtain blessings in this world and the blessings of Spiritual Attainments (my italics).

The sermon must be seen in the context of the story. The text commenced with a metaphorical presentation of an abstract Buddhist doctrine. It then contrasted this with the pragmatic ethics of lay concerns in the context of village life. Now at the end of the story the limitations of these pragmatic concerns are revealed, but more important, the abstract doctrine of compassion and trust has been made comprehensible. The goals spelled out here are not, however, those of the world renouncer but the more immediate, comprehensible and realisable goals for laymen. Actions inspired by compassion result in good karma which in turn leads to blessings in this world as well as enabling one to acquire Spiritual Attainments that lead to final release, nirvana. This is a clear distinction constantly made in Buddhism, especially in sermons to popular lay audiences.

long essay (Obeyesekere, 1977: pp. 235-96) and in even more recent times in the case studies described in (Obeyesekere, 1981). Right now there are many Hindu shrines for Kālī in several parts of Sri Lanka patronised by both Buddhists and Hindus but where the priests are Tamil-speaking Hindus while most of the clients are Buddhists, both groups perceiving the goddess in differing ways within the same temple complex.

In the preceding exegesis we have kept fairly close to the *sense* of the text, and we have for the most part contextualised the text in terms of Buddhist values and that of village folk living in the world. These folk would immediately recognise the ethical significance of the text: the futility of vengeance, violence, hatred and their consequences in the after-life along with the hope for salvation by living a life free of these. They would recognise the significance of the Buddha presence. With the Buddha the whole context changes and the cycle of violence ends. But can we extract more meanings from this text by moving to its *reference* by asking ourselves the implications of the text for us living in our difficult and violent times.⁵ To put it differently: what are the worlds of meaning opened up by the reading of the text specifically in relation to the political, moral and existential situation that we are in today, beginning with the problem of oppositional thinking that is endemic in ordinary living and exacerbated in the discourse of ethnic separatism, those totalising ideologies that we spoke of earlier? Village audiences until recently might have been aware of some of the worlds of meaning that I will open up, but as our analysis progresses I will present some of the larger moral and sociological implications of this text.

1. When the text was first translated the word 'evil' was used in several places, but soon the use of the English term 'evil' needed to be reconsidered. There was the realisation that the Sinhala words must more accurately be translated as 'base' and 'vile' or 'malevolent'. Thus there is no notion of 'evil' in this text or in any other we are familiar with. The demonic is not 'evil', in the Oxford English Dictionary meaning of the term as "the antithesis of good in all its principal senses" or in Max Weber's formulation of the Christian theological view of evil as 'radical evil' tending toward an alienation from God. To

⁵ 'Sense' and 'reference' as I have employed in this article is close to Paul Ricoeur (1974, 1970 & 1976) and elsewhere.

say that the Buddhists do not have the Christian notion of evil is an obvious truism, for how could they, given their soteriology of karma, rebirth, nirvana, and the absence of God? But there are deeper problems that our text unfolds, and these we shall now consider.

2. The story does not conform to Western Aristotelian norms of structural unity. There is no central protagonist, no tightly knit plot, and the story drifts in different directions before it comes to its conclusion. There is also no stereotypical good hero/bad villain compartmentalisation such as those occurring in many Western tales. If there is a hero it is the Buddha who straddles all the stories of this genre and transcends the conflicts that beset the characters of the tale. What is striking about this story is that it flouts the norms of the conventional folktale, which, even in Sri Lanka, has very often a villain, a bad, if not unequivocally evil, person. In this Kālī text, however, there are no consistently good or bad characters. The progression of the tale is such that the reader soon loses track of who it was that committed the original act of hatred and injustice. By the time we reach the end of the story we have to sit down and work out the 'who's who' of the karmic chain. But the resolving of this puzzle with pen and ink is not the point of the tale. In the normal folktale one would expect the cruel, barren wife to end up as the demoness. This does not happen. The second wife is, at first, an innocent victim, but because of her vow of vengeance she too is caught up in a cycle of hate. From that point onward the two women are indistinguishable. By the time we reach the middle of the story we have lost track of who is the good, who the bad, who the originally guilty, and who the wronged one. The text deliberately blurs the distinctions. The central question then is: how is it possible to stop the spiral of hate unleashed by vengeance? The Buddha himself gives the answer, "The fire of vengeance continues to

burn on the fuel of justification". They must "pour the waters of compassion over the fires of justification" and perform generous acts of trust.

3. How is it that the Buddhist tale can blur the black and white distinctions we make in ordinary life? We cannot fully answer this question, but we can once again open up the text to posit a moral and methodological doubt. Contemporary linguistics and structuralism have noted that such things as phonemes, sememes, and mythemes make sense only as binary or oppositional contrasts. This is not unique to myth but constitutes the basis of semantic discriminations we make in language and in thought. While this is not the only mode of semantic or morphological discrimination, we know that ordinary discourse often resorts to binary distinctions and splits the world into black and white, right and wrong, good and evil and so forth. In times of crises we are especially prone to reify such oppositional contrasts. Sinhala-Buddhists are no more exempt from this mode of thinking than anyone else—except for one difference. Their religion strikes at the very foundations of binary thought. Thus Buddhist stories, such as the one we have narrated, question whether the categorical oppositions that we make in fact reflect the true nature of the world we live in or the ethics that ought to govern our everyday lives. Unhappily, in situations of ethnic and religious conflict we tend to split the world into those very oppositions that popular Buddhist stories question. Angulimāla, the violent killer, becomes an arahant; Devadatta, the arch enemy of the Buddha through countless rebirths, will end up as a Buddha after expiating his sins.
4. The Buddha, the charismatic being who stands outside of human conflict, tells the mother to give her child to the demoness and initiates the act of trust. When the demoness

holds the child, her own guilt and frustrated maternal needs surface and she weeps. But with our present hindsight we know from clinical evidence that loss of symptoms of a mental illness can be very distressing because of the compensation they provide and unsurprisingly patients often weep when this occurs. So with the demoness: the sudden loss of her cannibalistic desires produces a sense of deprivation and causes her to weep. The demoness herself recognises this, as we noted. The weeping reaction is, from a psychoanalytic point of view, over-determined, that is, conditioned by multiple meanings and motivations. More important, for considerations of ethnic distrust and violence, is the Buddha's statement: "If you two hadn't met, then there would be a reason for fear". Ordinary villagers of yesteryear would easily grasp the sense of the text, that is, it is the Buddha who can bring the enemies together and create an enduring trust between erstwhile enemies. Perhaps the text in its referential dimension can extend to ethnic conflict and wars: the reason to fear is that enemies do not converse and realise their common human-ness, the basis from which one can build trust. I am not naïve enough to believe that simply bringing conflicting parties together will automatically build trust. I can only affirm that *without* bringing them together trust is not possible.

5. In our text that act of trust must be mediated by the Buddha himself. Yet, in the world we live in there is no living Buddha, except the image of him that we have in our minds. But that image itself is being contaminated by the fervour of totalising ideologies. Nevertheless, the tale of the demoness Kālī might provide us with an insight relevant for our own times, not only with a critique of totalising ideologies and the oppositional categories enshrined in them but also with a hope. In the absence of the Buddha one must at least hope for a political

leader who, like the Buddha, can inspire trust and help heal the oppositional rifts that have caused so much violence and bloodshed.

While there is little hope for such a charismatic being to emerge in our own nation, one cannot live without hope. Hence I will draw your attention to political figures that have helped to change the world by their combination of charisma, compassion and political astuteness. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, who it is true, were killed for their beliefs. Yet their beliefs did not die and they helped change their worlds. Nelson Mandela, another great human being, who initiated a moral and political revolution in South Africa and with the characteristic generosity of a *mahā purusa* (a great being) refused to hate his enemies or wreak vengeance on them. And who could forget the present Dalai Lama, another great and truly learned human being who does not hate those who hate him and drove him into exile. So, one can live with hope.

6. Let me now extend the reference of the text to draw some its implications for the human sciences. The tale of the demoness Kālī is a Buddhist version of what Gregory Bateson called schismogenesis or the genesis of schisms in human society. When one person or group in a dialectical relation to another affirms a particular value stance, the other person or group responds with an opposing stance and this process develops into an incremental differentiation between the two, ultimately resulting in a schismatic opposition (Bateson, 1965: pp. 171-97). The Buddhist tale adds another dimension to schismogenesis that is relevant to the world of conflict we live in. Each person or group takes on the negative characterisation of the other. I have no sympathy with the LTTE whatsoever, but, in the process of conflict the two groups in opposition with each

other mime each other's negative characterisations. This is better seen in the 1980s conflict between the JVP and the government of President Premadasa. The JVP practiced enormous atrocities but this was nothing in comparison with the parallel atrocities committed by paramilitary forces that according to most estimates led to the deaths of over 60,000 people. There are no 'good or bad guys' in this kind of situation. Today, we are appalled by the violation of human rights by shadowy paramilitaries but surely the model was created in the 1990s. Owing to its political utility, such a model continues to exist like a ghost which cannot be exorcised.

I want to conclude this article by going back to our perception or imagination of the Buddha figure or *imago* that appears in our text and its relationship to the larger issue of the Buddhist conscience, in an admittedly speculative manner. The Buddha is an unusual figure of the human imagination of divine beings because as one who has realised nirvana he is no longer alive and can have no say in the affairs of the world. In this sense he is quite unlike God the Father or the Son or Śiva or Viṣṇu. He cannot grant favours. Hence in Theravada Buddhist nations all sorts of local gods and *devas* from Hinduism serve that role. The so-called prayers addressed before an image of the Buddha is commemorative, not propitiatory. On a psychological level the Buddha *imago*, like Jesus, is a composite of both male and female, an androgynous being. How does one bring the Buddha alive in our minds and consciences? Buddhists routinely worship the Buddha and in one sense we could say that through this act, repeated time and again, the figure of the Buddha *imago* is rendered alive in our minds as a totally benevolent figure, the embodiment of *karuṇā* (kindness, empathy) and *maitri* (compassion). Unlike conventional deities, he cannot inflict punishment in the doctrinal tradition; and rarely so even in popular everyday beliefs. It

is impossible for the Buddha to say “Vengeance is mine; I will repay” says the Lord” (Romans: 12:19).⁶

The public attitude to the Buddha is also totally non-erotic. Erotic feelings as well as negative attitudes to parents and significant others are projected on to gods, demons and other supernatural beings in the operative pantheon. In so far as the Buddha is not a punitive deity or eroticised deity, there is little in the Buddhist religious literature that deals with a tormented religious conscience as, for example, in Christian mystical and penitential religiosity or in the Sinhala popular beliefs. I am not suggesting that people in Buddhist societies do not suffer the torment of the conscience but it is rarely expressed in a Buddhist idiom.⁷ Contrast this with the Freudian notion of the conscience based on a Judeo-Christian model. According to Freud, the superego is essentially negative and “manifests itself in a sense of guilt” (Freud, 1981: pp. 58). He adds: “it may be said of the id that it is totally non-moral, of the ego that it strives to be moral, and of the superego that it can be super moral and then becomes as cruel as only the id can be” (p. 54). While the superego can be excessively harsh in some individuals who turn their aggression inward, even “ordinary morality has a harshly restraining, cruelly prohibitive quality. It is from this indeed, that the conception arises of a higher being who deals with punishment inexorable” (p. 54). I am not sure how far this model is applicable even to contemporary Western societies but it was certainly true for many in Freud’s time and perhaps among today’s Evangelical Christianities. I believe that Freud was wrong in generalising from this model to all human minds in different cultural and religious traditions. In Buddhist Sri Lanka, and other Buddhist nations, the totally benevolent Buddha figure is constituted as a part of

⁶ New King James Version of the Bible.

⁷ There are exceptions, one of the most powerful ones is the guilt of the parricide Ajatasattu about whom I have a discussion in my book (Obeyesekere, 1990: pp. 148-56).

one's conscience and Buddhist ethics were inculcated in children through story-telling and related kinds of collective representations, helping them to internalise or 'introject' these values, to enshrine them in their consciences.

We now return to our Buddhist story and other similar stories in the Buddhist tradition, especially the Jātaka tales and popular story-telling about the life and dispensation of the Buddha. The moment you enter into a Buddhist temple, you are confronted with frescoes that depict these stories in easily comprehensible pictorial form. The virtues of the Buddha known as *pāramitā* or exemplary moral actions and his self-sacrifice for human beings during his many past births are also sung in exorcistic and communal thanksgiving rituals and most notably in *bali* or planetary rituals that endlessly recite the virtues of the Buddha. Even during periods when the ordination of monks had lapsed, it is these stories that helped in the fostering and continuity of the Buddhist ethical tradition and the formation of the Buddhist conscience. Even when we were engaged in fieldwork in pilgrimage centres in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was common to see people in small groups listening to these stories recited by elders who often read them aloud from printed texts. These texts not only concretise the abstract ideals of doctrinal Buddhism but they also communicate notions of what I have called 'species sentience', the idea that all living creatures are bound together by common sentience. To traditional Buddhists this is obvious because we can be reborn as animals and this is exemplified in the Jātaka tales where the Buddha was born as an animal from the lowly rat or dog to the noble elephant.⁸ All of these help develop sensitivity to animal life, as part of the whole samsaric process. No such thing

⁸ Here are a list of such births: an elephant, a lion, a monkey, a lizard, a parrot, a pigeon, a hawk, a swallow, a cock bird, a peacock, a dog, a hare, a fish, a deer, a water buffalo, a bull, a horse, a goose, an antelope, a mallard, a frog, a garuda, an iguana, a snake, a sea sprite, a partridge, a vulture, a woodpecker, a quail, a rat.

exists today and recent newspapers tell us the story of the kidnapping of baby elephants, wrenching them from their mothers, with the likely connivance of a veterinary surgeon and politically influential persons (*The Mirror*, 2009). It is therefore not surprising that in the contemporary period hardly any one tells these stories to their children. Yet we know that children love stories and this loss of the story-telling tradition in my view is one of the prime reasons for the current dismantling of the Buddhist conscience.

The dismantling of the Buddhist conscience has a complicated genealogy and only one important historical condition can be dealt with here. The rise of modernity led to a denigration of the popular story-telling tradition in favour of a more doctrinally informed view of Buddhism and, one might say a Euro-rational view of Buddhism. This position is neatly exemplified in the statement of Colonel Olcott, the Buddhist Theosophist who proclaimed in 1880: "Our Buddhism was in a word, a philosophy and not a creed" (Olcott, 1974: vol.2, p. 169).⁹ There is some substance to this assertion but Olcott heralded a Euro-rational view of Buddhism that denigrated popular rituals and the whole tradition of Buddhist stories that are now seen as folk tales. A key event in the recent history of Buddhism is the publication in 1881 of Olcott's *The Buddhist Catechism*. "Finding out the shocking ignorance of the Sinhalese about Buddhism", Olcott wrote in his diary, "I began, after vainly getting some monk to do it, the compilation of a Buddhist Catechism on the lines of the similar elementary handbooks so effectively used among Christian sects..." (Olcott, p. 298). He adds:

It was such a novelty, this, to condense the essence of the whole body of Buddhist Dhamma into a little hand-book that one might read through in a couple of hours, and their [monks'] inherited tendency

⁹ See also (Burlingame, 1979: p. 146) for more information on the decline of the story-telling tradition in the context of modernity.

towards passive resistance to all innovations upon the fixed order of things was so strong that I had to fight my way inch by inch, as one might say (Olcott, vol.2, p. 301).

What he did not realise was that the distillation of the 'essence' of Buddhist doctrine in the form of a catechism was to them a totally novel idea, the only text that even remotely resembled it being the *Dhammapada*. Olcott also believed that the philosophical essence of Buddhism had to be taught in schools. He was unaware that the main vehicle for communicating the nature of this religion to the doctrinally unmusical masses was the story and the parable. Yet, it is to the credit of the monks that they endorsed the *Catechism*, perhaps anticipating that, with the development of an educated lay population, a more doctrinally informed view of Buddhism was both necessary and inevitable.

The Catechism, despite many exclusions, contains much that is found in modern Buddhism. Insofar as Olcott used French and English translations and exegeses of Buddhist doctrine, it was inevitable that the *Catechism* should be oriented to a Western intellectualist view of Buddhism. Olcott noted that the missions "taught that Buddhism was a dark superstition" and that the few government schools that existed did not teach the religion at all (Olcott, vol.2, p. 299). Consequently he made a not unusual outsider's inference that "our Buddhist children had but small chance of coming to know anything at all of the real merits of their ancestral faith" (p. 299). Olcott was ignorant of the fact that Sinhala children were traditionally educated in Buddhism in a variety of ways. Like many contemporary intellectuals he seemed to implicitly accept the missionary critique of Buddhism. Olcott speaks of *devales* or shrines for the Hindu derived gods (*devas*) adjacent to Buddhist temples as an "excrescence on pure Buddhism, left by the Tamil sovereigns of former days...". (Olcott, 1974: vol.3, p. 316). This condemnation of popular religion is carried over into the *Catechism* everywhere. The most conspicuous example is Olcott's denigration of

communal thanksgiving and healing rituals (*bali-tovil*) that he labelled 'devil dancing' following the missionary discourse whereas we have already shown that they are replete with events from the Buddha's life and dispensation.

Olcott came from a strong Protestant background, and in addition to this was interested in reconciling theosophy and science. It should not, therefore, surprise us that he introduced a Protestant and 'purified' form of Buddhism. He also used the words of the missionary lexicon—idolator, pagan and so forth—a vocabulary further developed by his errant disciple Anagarika Dharmapala to castigate the Christians themselves. He did not concern himself with public morality but he must surely have noted the existence of both polygyny and polyandry in the society of that period. The British had already introduced new laws of marriage and divorce that undermined the traditional rights of women existing under what is erroneously called Kandyan law. They also had forbidden polygamy, and Sri Lankans, in the coastal areas at least, were beginning to accept both the morality and the laws (via the courts) pertaining to monogamy and divorce. But it is not likely that the Sinhalese would have forgotten that the Buddha's father himself practiced (sororal) polygyny and that their kings were polygynous and that polyandry was extensively practiced both in villages and among the Kandyan aristocracy.

Conclusion: The Presence of the Absent Buddha

In 1970 I wrote a paper entitled "Religious symbolism and political change in Ceylon", (1972: pp. 58-78) a piece of ethnographic prophecy based on my witnessing years earlier a monument in the city of Colombo, erected I believe, after Bandaranaike's majoritarian triumph in 1956. It was a huge concrete map of Sri Lanka erected at the junction of Turret Road, expectably renamed Dharmapala Mawatha. On the four sides of the map were written in English script

the four great Buddhist virtues: *maitri* (compassion), *karuṇā* (loving kindness), *upekkha* (equanimity) and *muditā* (tenderness). In the middle of the map was a representation of the Sinhala flag, the lion holding a sword. To me, being a Buddhist of sorts, the symbolism was somewhat disconcerting, the lofty sentiments of doctrinal Buddhism being contradicted by the image of violence in the middle. But soon the obvious struck me, namely what was being expressed here is the idea of the Sinhala-Buddhist nation. That map was soon removed but I noted that Buddha statues were being erected in similar road junctions and outside a few public buildings. Formerly in Sri Lanka, Buddha statues were found in temples and these temples were recessed from the normal village setting, somewhat cut off from the hub of communal living, expressing through spatial symbolism the salvific distance of the monk from the village and the lay folk that inhabit it. I went on to say that it seemed to me that the Buddha was being brought out of its seclusion right into the market place, a sign of things to come.

By the 1980s the Buddha in the market place was an ubiquitous presence: he is found everywhere, outside public buildings, in every major road junction, at the entrance to towns, in almost every school, at the entrance to University campuses, at hospitals, and disconcerting, to me at least, even in parts of the tea country where the population is almost exclusively Tamil and Hindu. Catholics have always erected statues of Christ, the Virgin and the saints in the Catholic areas of the coast. Unlike in the Eastern Christian churches where Christ and the Virgin are unashamedly brown skinned, the Sri Lankan Catholic images have what I call in my prejudiced fashion a Scottish complexion. The Buddhists have imitated the Catholic example in their expressions of projected nationhood but in recent times they have even invaded the Catholic market place with Buddha statuary. There is a kind of warfare between religions through their statue construction. The aesthetic ugliness of these statues, in contrast to the traditional

signifies, I think, the uglification of the Buddha's spiritual message and the inner uglification of the Buddhist conscience.

Buddha statues can be erected without recourse to permission; only Buddhist business-monks can build temples wherever they want, often encroaching on prime government-owned property or archaeological sites. There is a statue on the road to my house sponsored, as is common practice, by local Buddhist businessmen. So is it with the private buses and trishaws owned by Buddhists: in front of the buses for all to see are slogans such as the following: 'this is the country of the Buddha'. *The Buddha has now become the flag of the imagined Sinhala-Buddhist nation.* Hence it is to be expected that the Buddha pictures, often lit with electric bulbs, are found in homes once again producing a breach in the idea of the Buddha as *anagārika*, homeless and also replacing the image of the arahant Sivali whose full-bowl signified prosperity and abundance and appeared at entrances to Buddhist homes.

It appears that Buddha statues are present everywhere in the nation, but what happened to the *presence* of the Buddha?

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Addressing the Past and Considering the Future: An Interdisciplinary Examination of Afghanistan's Development

Andrew M. Ward

Abstract

Afghanistan¹ is in dire need of an efficient and effective, broad-based, sustainable development programme. This study seeks to examine the possible contributions that certain key development theorists could make to such a plan. The paper is divided into three sections: Part One: 'Background', Part Two: 'Analysis of Four Theoretical Frameworks', and Part Three: 'The Model'.

Part One: 'Background' describes the past events that are most relevant to Afghanistan's currently abysmal development performance. Drawing from a multitude of sources within a broad selection of academic disciplines, a clear understanding of the historical, political, social and economic factors that led to the Afghanistan of today is gained. Such an in-depth description of Afghanistan's history is vital to this study as, "the devil really is in the details [and] summary arguments may be more persuasive after digesting the empirical details" (Kohli, 2004: p. 9). It is important to be fully aware of the patterns of state construction and intervention that have occurred over the generations which have contributed to the 'core character' of the Afghan state. The section ends with a detailed description of the nation's current standing according to a number of indices.

Part Two: 'Analysis of Four Theoretical Frameworks' examines the ideas put forth by prominent theorists Atul Kohli, Amartya Sen, Arjun Appadurai and William Easterly concerning development. Their theories will be considered in

¹ See Appendix I for map.

light of the specific issues plaguing Afghanistan detailed in Part One. It is precisely because there are substantial differences between the speculations of these four writers that they have been chosen; somewhere betwixt the extremes must lay the truth.

Part Three: 'The Model' proposes a development programme which addresses the needs of Afghanistan from an interdisciplinary standpoint. Aspects of each of the theories discussed in Part Two are combined into this single model which incorporates a large number of country-specific strategies. A three-step process which allows for increased civil liberties as industrial growth accelerates is proposed. It is the opinion of this writer that each of the four theorists sees a portion of the process of development correctly; the goal, therefore, is to combine them, each in the proper proportion. Even then the process is not complete, and the dimension of a timescale is included to maximise the effectiveness of the planned model. A short conclusion follows.

I. Background

Since the time of Alexander the Great, Afghanistan has been a flashpoint of major powers striving for hegemony. Unlike most of Africa and Asia, however, Afghanistan was not swallowed up by the colonial powers to the extent that other countries were. The British lost three wars attempting to maintain control of the country in 1842, 1881 and 1919 (O'Ballance, 2002: p. vii). The legacy was not one of competent bureaucracies and a sense of national identity as was the case in India. Instead, warfare and a total distrust of the central government were the residual effects which have lasted most of this century.

After its third victory over the British and now in a power vacuum, the Afghan tribes² turned on each other and internecine fighting retarded the country's political, social and economic growth. Over time King Amanullah managed to quell the violence to some degree using a loyal military force, but his policies favouring swift, western-oriented modernisation were a rallying-point for further unrest. "He ordered ministers to wear western dress, and his wife (Queen Soraya)

² For a description of the tribes, see Part 1: Background.

appeared in public unveiled. These policies offended a great number of people", (O'Ballance, p. 74) and eventually led to his being forced to abdicate in 1929. He was succeeded by three more kings in a period of four years; one was exiled, the next executed and the third assassinated (p. 74). These events indicate the lack of political stability and great social upheaval in the country at that time. Only when 19-year-old Mohammed Zahir Shah ascended the throne in 1933 did any semblance of normalcy reign in the tumultuous kingdom.

King Zahir had the support of most of his people—at least in the urban areas—and in a 1934 speech, told them of his desire that, "Afghanistan continue to combat its socio-economic retardation and catch-up with progress" (Gregorian, 1969: p. 375). By progress he did not mean, as so many Western European reformers had, westernisation and secularisation. His predecessor, King Amanullah had alienated the conservative religious elements of his society and lost the throne because of such reforms. King Zahir remained respectful of both Shi'ia and Sunni citizens and their need for recognition of Islamic law and traditions, and cautiously embarked on modernisation and industrialisation.

Between 20 and 30 Afghan students were sent by the government to study in Western Europe and the US every year from 1933-73. Specialists from Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Japan, Britain, the USSR and Poland, with expertise in everything from engineering to warfare, from petrology to medicine were invited as consultants. Large amounts of investments came from many countries, notably Italy, Germany and Japan (Dupree, 1980: p. 477). It is important to note that until this time Afghanistan had never accepted any money from its neighbours, the USSR or Britain (India) for fear of giving them too great an influence over Afghanistan's domestic affairs (Rasanayagam, 2003: p. 25).

Due to the outbreak of World War II in 1939, investment stopped coming from the other, non-neighbouring nations, military experts returned to their homes, and neutral Afghanistan's fragile economy began to weaken once more. Inflation had reached 35.5 per cent by 1946 and, in desperation Afghanistan began to look anywhere it could to find aid (Gregorian, p. 390). "The United States, which was in a position to help, was indifferent, or rather insensitive to the peculiarities of the Afghan situation after the British withdrawal from India had left the field open for the Soviets to exploit" (Rasanayagam, p. 27).

Fear of a Soviet attack led the Afghans to repeatedly request arms, equipment, training and funding from the US, but both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations refused. US emphasis had been placed on Pakistan as a potential ally at the time, and Afghanistan was embroiled in a border dispute with them, thus rendering them unworthy of aid. Incensed, the Afghan government,

turned immediately to the Soviet Union, whose offers of military aid had long been rejected as a matter of policy. In December of 1955,... Khrushchev visited Afghanistan—an unprecedented gesture towards a small and seemingly insignificant country. They not only offered to train and equip the Afghan army and air force, but also to grant economic assistance on a large scale—the first such Soviet programme in the so-called Third World (Rasanayagam, p. 31).

In a headlong leap towards modernisation and industrialisation, unexpected and undesired influences began to sneak in, much to the delight of the USSR.

Economic penetration is the easiest and most logical way to influence all institutions in a society... a nation does not accept technology without ideology. A machine or a dam is the product of a culture, and the method of manufacture, the way a nation markets its machines, the way people learn to operate the machines, how they are used cannot be ignored... the way they teach other people to use these tools becomes a part of the recipient culture's way of life (Rasanayagam, p. 31).

Afghanistan wanted to take its place among the world's nations that controlled their own destinies, but it lacked the capital, savings rates and infrastructure to do so. It initially sought assistance from the geographically distant and therefore perceptibly innocuous US, but, after meeting with refusal, appealed to its rival, the USSR. The result was that Afghanistan finally joined the new Great Game, the Cold War. While claiming neutrality, Afghanistan had sympathetic elements for both sides within her borders and in her government halls.

Over the years, thousands of young Afghans received education abroad, both in the West and the Eastern Bloc, and shared new skills and perspectives with their fellow countrymen upon returning (Rasanayagam, p. 33). In the 1960s novel concepts were being considered and experimented with, often fostered by the many resident foreign nationals who had come to advise, to build, to train and to trade. Most of the country, however, did not benefit from these exchanges. At the close of the 1960s, a full 90 per cent of Afghanistan was illiterate, and an equal percentage employed in agriculture or animal husbandry (p. 41). Loyalty to the central government was still tenuous at best, as tribal codes continued to dominate the minds of most Afghans.

A word must be said here regarding the precise nature of the fractured society that existed within the geographical unit of Afghanistan. It has never been a single *nation* in the modern sense, i.e. that all the citizens of the country envisioned themselves as members of the same group with at least an ideological homogeneity. Afghanistan has always been a loose confederation of semi-autonomous states under the rule of a tribal chieftain or rampaging warlord (Roberts, 2003: p. xii). With 45 languages being spoken within its borders, the country is diverse, and because, "certain languages or families of languages are generally associated with particular ethnic groups, it is most useful to examine the *ethno-linguistic* groups" (Palka, 2004: p. 44).

The Pasthu-speaking Pashtuns (also known as Pushtuns, Pakhtuns or Pathans) are the largest group, comprising 38 per cent of the population. They are overwhelmingly Sunni, but adhere to their own tribal law alongside *Shari'a* law, namely, *Pashtoonwali*, or, 'the way of the Pashtuns' (CIA World Factbook, Afghanistan). This unwritten system of values often contradicts the principles of Islam and serves as a divisive force between the Pashtuns and other Muslims.

The second largest group is that of the Dari-speaking, Sunni Tajiks who amount to 25 per cent of the population. "Tajiks have millions of ethnic brethren in neighbouring Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and China... and formed an important part of the groups that challenged the majority Pasthun Taliban" (Palka, p. 45). Hence, their loyalty is substantially greater to ethnic groups in other countries who share their tribal identity than to fellow Afghans.

The next largest group is the Hazara who, numbering about three million, compose just over 10 per cent of the population. While they speak Dari, like the Tajiks, they are Shi'ites, which creates a rift in their relations. The other 27 per cent of Afghanistan is Nuristani, Turkmen, Uzbek, Kirghiz, Chahar Aimak, Brahui and Baluoch. Each of these groups has its own language and its own code of conduct, religious interpretation and way of life (Palka, p. 45).

Afghanistan is a rugged landscape with currently sparse and historically non-existent forms of mass transit. This allowed many of the tribes to live in relative isolation for centuries at a time, developing their traditions and remaining ignorant of all others. Contact between the tribes was predominantly martial in nature and resulted in ancient blood-feuds, many of which persist to this day.

Traditionally Afghans are unwilling to sacrifice their tribal identity or perceived autonomy to a single government, even if it might serve

their own long-term interests (reality means little in terms of ethnic conflict; the crux of the matter depends on what each warring faction *believes* to be the case). The only factor that unites all Afghans is a fierce sense of independence from outside forces. This includes other Afghans. This refusal to accept authority from any other tribe has led to the near impossibility of instating a strong, central government that administers the entire country. "The lack of central authority has rendered Afghanistan an easy state to invade... it is perhaps the classic example of Machiavelli's 'state of many princes', in that while easily entered, it has proven impossible to subdue" (Roberts, p. xii). Regardless of this historical reality, countless nations have attempted to meddle in the affairs of Afghanistan. The USA and USSR were no exceptions.

The outlook was far from brilliant for Afghanistan at the opening of the 1970s. A prolonged drought began in 1969 and lasted for three years, leading to a catastrophic famine. With over 85 per cent of the country employed in agriculture, the effects were devastating. The economy crumbled and between 50,000 and half a million impoverished Afghans died. The US supplied 200,000 tons of wheat to alleviate the country's starvation, but, "much of it was squandered through pilfering, profiteering and a corrupt and inefficient administration. Thousands of herders lost their flocks through lack of fodder or their lands to money lenders" (Rasanayagam, p. 60).

What little industry there was existed entirely around the capital, Kabul, and three other 'growth poles'³—Herat, Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sharif—and had been confined primarily to natural gas production, cement works and cottage industries (O'Ballance, p. 87). In the entire

³ This is in reference to the theories of Perroux whose analysis concluded that there were geographical centres of dynamic industrial activity, which he dubbed, 'growth poles', and that they would spur development in the more passive areas that were dependent on them.

country only a handful of intellectuals existed, and more than 90 per cent of them dwelt within ten miles of Kabul University (Dupree, p. 558). These intellectuals were frustrated at the lack of opportunities open to them domestically. As an educated Afghan, one had one choice between two alternatives: to be employed in the civil service or the education sector. Without money or clout, the former was entirely unattainable. These disgruntled few banded together in 1965 and formed, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), or *Khalq* ('people') for short (Rasanayagam, p. 48), an illegal socialist party with funding and support from the Soviets. In less than two years the party was split by ethno-linguistic differences.

Famine, disorganisation, a decided lack of solidarity, gross disparity between the rich and the poor, and disunity even amongst the organised, educated dissenters set Afghanistan off down a long, hard road through the turbulent 1970s. Aid continued to pour in from both major superpowers, developing the military, laying roads, building tunnels, educating a portion of the society and training labourers for the eventual shift and 'take-off'⁴ into a modern industrial existence.

Lacking the institutional depth and social and political cohesion necessary to use the sudden flood of new-found wealth effectively in promoting long-term economic growth, there was a tendency in [Afghanistan] towards widespread inefficiency, corruption and wanton waste.... The huge sums spent on arms also contributed to this waste and to precipitate recycling of funds back to the industrial countries, leaving little of permanent benefit in terms of development potential (Adams, 1997: p. 139).

Furthermore, the newly modernised and mobilised military, like the government itself, split along ethno-linguistic, religious, political,

⁴ This is in reference to Rostow's five stages of development: 1) The traditional society 2) The establishment of the preconditions for take-off 3) The take-off stage 4) The drive to maturity 5. The époque of high mass consumption.

ideological and economic fault lines. When the Soviets saw the country to which they had dedicated so much time and energy falling to pieces, they mobilised their own army, and the tanks rolled down Russian-made roads all the way to Kabul. All development programmes came to a screeching halt. The 200 American Peace Corps volunteers, teachers at Kabul University, diplomats and all development workers were withdrawn. The justification for invasion was that the Afghan Communist party, the PDPA, could not stand alone without 'aid' from the Soviets. The Islamic traditionalists united with moderates and secular homeland-defenders. Calling themselves *mujahadin*, or 'holy warriors', their resistance to the Soviet incursion characterised the following decade.

The entire country fell quickly to the invading Soviet force, but massive resistance sprang up almost immediately afterwards. President Taraki was shot and the Soviets installed a new puppet ruler, Babrak Karmal. He attempted to placate the *mujahadin* by building 34 mosques in Kabul and renovating over 500 more around the country. He even made special concessions of land reform for *mullahs* and former fighters. A general amnesty was granted to all former PDPA opponents and Resistance members (Rasanayagam, p. 95). All for naught, however, as the *mujahadin* vowed to settle for nothing less than total withdrawal of Soviet forces and the installation of a traditional Islamic government. The demand for withdrawal was supported by a UN resolution passed in 1980 (O'Ballance, p. xvii).

The Soviet army had not anticipated the kind of war that it had to fight for the period between 1979 and 1989. The original assumption had been that the Red Army would serve only as an impressive showpiece of force and an auxiliary entity for the Afghan army. The Afghan army, totalling about 100,000 at the time of the invasion, was expected to do all the real fighting. Within a year of the invasion, however, three quarters of the armed forces had deserted, taking their arms with

them, and joined the *mujahadin*. A further disappointment for the Soviets was the backfiring of a major strategy. They had deployed an entire brigade of Soviet Muslim troops in the hopes of winning over the populace and curbing violence. Much to the officer corps' horror, nearly the entire brigade switched sides and joined the *jihad* (O'Ballance, p. 97).

The Soviet Union quickly realised that the war would have to be fought almost entirely by themselves and on a multitude of fronts. Initially 30,000 troops had been deployed, but the number quickly swelled to 100,000, and over the course of the entire conflict, close to 200,000 Russian soldiers were mobilised inside Afghan boundaries (www.encyclopedia.com). Thinking in a more long-term manner, the Kremlin authorised the implementation of various plans designed to secure the future of Afghanistan along the lines of its own national interests.

More than 4,000 school children were sent to study in the Soviet Union each year, half of them for a minimum of ten years. Soviet influence was also felt in the Afghanistan education system:

School children [in Afghanistan] were encouraged or forced to enrol in the 'Young Pioneers' at the age of ten, and trained, among other things, to spy on their classmates or even on their families. A nationwide membership of 40,000 for the Young Pioneers was claimed in 1982 (Rasanayagam, p. 98).

Russian language courses and Marxist-Leninist political science became compulsory in all schools. All newspapers, radio and TV stations and cinemas were state-controlled, and put forth an unrelenting stream of pro-Soviet propaganda throughout the decade. The tribes, *mullahs* and *mujahadin* were not at all swayed by these tactics, however, as was demonstrated when Karmal's minister for tribal affairs, Mohammed Faiz, attempted to pacify the tribal elders with money and fattened sheep; "The tribal elders feasted themselves on lamb and then shot him dead" (Rasanayagam, p. 100).

Karmal himself quickly fell out of favour with the remaining Afghan loyalists owing to his lecherous and drunken ways, and in May 1986 yielded to Soviet and local pressure to step down. He was replaced by Mohammed Najibullah, the former head of the KHAD (KGB-modelled Secret Police) who led the country until 1992 (O'Ballance, p. xviii).

The United States, operating on the theory that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, launched an enormous assistance project for the *mujahadin*. Starting at \$30 million a year in 1981, the US was providing more than \$280 million annually in military aid to the fighters by 1985. Saudi Arabia matched American expenditures dollar-for-dollar throughout the decade, funnelling money through the Cayman Islands and Switzerland (Rasanayagam, p. 106).

The Soviets tried everything to suppress the resistance including wiping out whole villages, laying millions of land-mines and executing countless political prisoners, yet nothing would quell the fires of *jihad*. The Soviets, like the British, Mongols, and Greeks before them, did not have a chance. Even with military control of the main cities and strategic locations, the Soviets had little if any control over the remote rural regions where holy warriors organised, planned, launched attacks, retreated to and regrouped.

Gorbachev's new policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* marked the beginning of the end for Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan. The Russian public was displeased with the growing number of casualties and few tangible results. In April 1988, accords were signed in Geneva and the first Soviet units left Afghanistan. By February 1989, the Soviet-Afghan War was over.

When the last Soviet soldier departed, he left behind the mere shell of a nation. By 1990 over six million Afghans, more than a third of the entire nation, had fled the country (Rasanayagam, p. 193). Five

thousand out of 15,000 villages in the country “were destroyed outright or made economically unsupportable by destruction of all economic resources such as fields, wells or roads” (www.encyclopedia.com). Approximately \$50 billion of damage (or roughly one third of the country’s entire value) had been done including the destruction of 50 per cent of agriculture, 50 per cent of livestock, 70 per cent of the roads and 10 per cent of the population, or 1.5 million people, with a further five million wounded (www.encyclopedia.com). The Soviets had sustained 22,000 dead, 75,000 wounded and spent more than \$200 billion (1986 dollars) in the process with desperately little to show for it.

Worse perhaps than the initial destruction were the lasting effects of such factors as land mines, lack of infrastructure and a crippled population. Two per cent of the country was riddled with more than 20 million land mines, and most of them in the sparse patches of flat, arable land. This hobbled later efforts to renew agricultural development. Less than two million Afghan men were left fit and able-bodied in the country following the Soviet withdrawal, leaving the prospects of rebuilding at a very low point. With poverty, disorganisation and civil strife running rampant, Afghanistan was primed not for a peaceful renaissance, but rather a second period of bloodshed and mayhem.

The power vacuum left after the Soviet withdrawal allowed for the *mujahadin* to seize abandoned caches of weapons and take control of what remained of the capital. A second power struggle ensued with inter-tribal fighting dominating the scene for two years. On 27 April 1992, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was declared. Two more years of instability followed before the ultra-conservative, fundamentalist Islamic force known as the *Taliban* launched its offensive.

Born of the radical Islamic *madrasas* along the Pakistani border where hundreds of thousands of young male Afghan refugees were schooled,

the black-turban-clad *Taliban* were a formidable force. Led by the one-eyed *Mullah* Mohammed Omar, they managed to gain control of 90 per cent of the country by 1998 (Rasanayagam, p. 197).

During the period between 1998 and 2002, the *Taliban* were responsible for reverting the country to a point not seen since the Middle Ages. Women were banned from working and forced to wear the *burqa* while men were compelled to grow beards, abstain from drinking, gambling, listening to radios and even playing music. The *Taliban* were swift to conquer cities and to mete out punishments for infractions of *Shari'a* law, but next to worthless in terms of actually sustaining and developing the state.

No reliable indicators exist for Afghanistan during this period. The UNDP dropped it from their rankings in 1997, and the World Bank simply made no effort to formulate data. Industry had collapsed, telecommunications barely existed, information was limited and wholly undependable when collected (Rasanayagam, p. 199). A single UN entity called the UN Office of the Coordinator for Afghanistan (UNOCA) was then established which coordinated all humanitarian efforts concerned with the country. UNOCA was administering more than 70 NGOs with a combined budget of \$80 million by the end of the 1990s (p. 199). Had it not been for the efforts of these NGOs, untold numbers of Afghans would surely have died. The only trade that existed to any significant degree was that of opium on the black-market. It comprised 30 per cent of all trade in 1998, or 300 billion rupees, and by the time of the US invasion, 90 per cent of the world's heroin originated as Afghan opium (p. 183).

After the attacks of 11 September 2001, the US and UK launched air strikes on the *Taliban*. By December the Allies, working in conjunction with the Northern Alliance, were victorious. In December 2001, The Bonn Agreement was reached which established the process of

reconstruction, and on 9 October 2004, Hamid Karzai became the first democratically-elected president in the nation's history. The country he was charged to lead was in dire straits.

Today 77 per cent of the nation lives in rural areas employed in agriculture or animal husbandry. Only 12 per cent of Afghans have access to clean water, the fertility rate is at an alarmingly high 6.78 per woman and life expectancy is barely more than 42 years (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html). Scarcely more than half of the men and only 21 per cent of woman are literate. Five thousand tons of opium are still being exported each year and the only effort against it is a USAID programme which pays farmers \$175 per hectare of destroyed opium fields. This programme simply encourages farmers to start planting opium so as to destroy it for the reward. The 1.7 million refugees remaining in Iran and Pakistan and their impending return will put further strain on the already desperately impoverished nation (www.undp.org.af/). In Bonn, pledges were made for reconstruction and development, by more than 60 countries, and international financial institutions agreed in January 2002 to a total sum of \$4.5 billion until 2006. However, it was estimated that \$45 billion would be necessary for the complete reconstruction of Afghanistan. The US, Japan and Saudi Arabia signed over \$180 million for an all-weather road linking the four major cities of Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, and the capital of Kabul. The World Bank promised \$460 million for two years, the EU 9.25 million euros for refugees, Iran \$526 million and Pakistan \$100 million for roads and \$10 million for civil servants' salaries. Ninety three per cent of the 2005 reconstruction budget of \$4.75 billion is financed by foreign governments (Duparq, 2005: p. 1).

In 2005 the UN, the government of Afghanistan, and the international community forged the Afghanistan Compact, a political commitment serving as the next stage in the country's development following the

conclusion of the Bonn Agreement. "The compact set ambitious goals for comprehensive state-building, setting benchmarks in all sectors of security, governance and development, including the cross-cutting goals of counter-narcotics and regional cooperation" (ANDS, 2008: p. 2) From this compact arose the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) two years later which is meant to serve as the nation's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) represents the combined efforts of the Afghan people and the Afghan Government to comprehensively address, with the support of the international community, the major challenges that face the country.... The ANDS reflects the government's vision, principles and goals for Afghanistan, which are organized under three pillars: (i) Security; (ii) Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights; and (iii) Economic and Social Development. The strategy is based upon a careful assessment of current social and economic conditions; it offers clear intermediate objectives; and it identifies the actions that must be taken to achieve these national goals. The ANDS focuses mainly on the next five years, but it also reflects Afghanistan's long-term goals, which include the elimination of poverty through the emergence of a vibrant middle class, an efficient and stable democratic political environment and security throughout the country.

Despite the full commitment of the Government and the considerable assistance being provided by the international community, it will not be possible to fully achieve all of these objectives during the next five years (ANDS, p. 5).

The reconstruction of Afghanistan is a truly vast endeavour, and the international community will be charged with it for decades to come.⁵

⁵ While no thorough examination of the situation in Afghanistan is complete without consideration of ANDS, it is not the goal of this paper to evaluate the strategy in and of itself. Rather, the purpose of this paper is to present the ideas of four development theorists in the context of Afghanistan at present. Direct reference to the ANDS will be sparing and only when vital to the discussion.

Having a firm understanding of the historical orientation of Afghanistan, we turn now to a discussion of four key development theories, in the hope that they might shed some light on possible solutions to this Central Asian conundrum.

II. Analysis of Four Theoretical Frameworks

This section describes and analyses four theoretical frameworks posited by eminent development theorists. Atul Kohli's efforts, "to explain why some developing countries have industrialised more rapidly than others" (2004: p. 367), will be summarised and considered with regard to Afghanistan's particular circumstances. The work of Amartya Sen (1999) is outlined next. His "development as freedom" approach is explained and then similarly applied to the situation. Arjun Appadurai's work (2004) concerning the 'capacity to aspire' follows and undergoes the same consideration. Lastly, William Easterly's (2001) argument in favour of economic growth as the key to solving third world poverty will also be considered.

Atul Kohli

Kohli (2004) identifies three historical patterns of how state authority is organised and used in the developing world: cohesive-capitalist states; fragmented multi-class states; and, neo-patrimonial states. Afghanistan is the last of these (p. 9).

Cohesive-capitalist states (he holds up South Korea and mentions Taiwan as near-ideal examples) are modern states in which "centralized and purposive authority structures that often penetrate deep into the society..." (Kohli, p. 10) prioritise rapid economic growth above all else. With a competent bureaucratic machine, codified ideology, and close partnership with producer groups, cohesive-capitalist states foster faster growth than the rest of the developing world.

The origins of such states lie predominantly in the nature of their colonisation. With the case of South Korea, the Japanese had used their own powerful state to activate economic development, cultivate production-based relationships with the business elites and control the lower classes. When the Japanese departed, the South Koreans carried on with the model they had been shown with fantastic economic outcomes. It is argued by some that these results came at the cost of civil liberties.

Viewed from a liberal standpoint, such cohesive-capitalist states resemble the fascist states of yore, and thus are not very desirable political forms. Nevertheless, it is these states that have succeeded in generating considerable power to pursue rapid industrialisation in the developing world (Kohli, p. 22).

Fragmented multi-class states are those in which power is not highly concentrated, not through any democratic idealism, but rather as a product of "weak political institutions that encourage intraelite divisions and limit a state's downward authoritative reach in society" (Kohli, p. 22). Kohli points to Brazil and India as examples. These states tend to have diverse populations with fair to middling bureaucracies in terms of corruption and efficiency. The largest problem plaguing these states is a lack of consistency. When coalition parties manage to legitimately gain power, they are fractured upon arrival though the scramble to meet the disparate needs of various constituencies. Even the best-intentioned reformers must struggle to balance the short-term demands of the citizens with broader and more far-reaching development plans. Because rulers are constantly trying to justify their positions by answering the requests of a free and vocal public, they do not have the authority to impose near-exclusively growth-oriented policies. As a result, fragmented multi-class states are not as economically robust as cohesive-capitalist states.

Afghanistan is a neo-patrimonial state; As P. Heller (2005), in his personal correspondence, describes it, 'It is the Nigeria of Asia'. Much of Kohli's commentary on and description of Nigeria accurately applies to Afghanistan. He contends that the country was, "profoundly backward to begin with" (Kohli, p. 326) before the British made their attempts at colonising her. At that time, British colonial goals were basic: to keep other European powers (i.e.—Czarist Russia) from gaining a foothold closer to their cash-cow of India. As a result, "rather than undertaking any significant economic interventions, the colonial state presided over ongoing backwardness" (p. 327): and left behind none of the tools that could propel Afghanistan into the modern age. In contrast, when the British left India and the Japanese left Korea, both colonisers had set in place the foundation upon which the fledgling state would grow.

These historical influences gave rise to a distorted state with scarcely any sense of national identity, a weak bureaucracy, personalistic rulers and civil servants who routinely treated public resources as their personal accounts. In all twelve of the administrations that ruled Afghanistan from 1919 to 2004, corruption was rampant and there were disturbingly low levels of loyalty to the government itself. The federal system had control over Kabul and other large urban areas, but the vast majority of the country remained (and remains) out of the reach of the distant and impersonal bureaucrats. Tribal and *Shari'a* law remain dominant. Because the central government has such a weak support base, tax revenues are low which means that government expenditure is also low, and the government's ability to develop the country is thwarted.

Afghanistan's possible transition from a neo-patrimonial state to a cohesive-capitalist state will be explored in Part Three.

Amartya Sen

Sen, in his landmark book, *Development as Freedom* (1999), suggests that development be viewed as an integrated process of expanding the substantive freedoms of people to lead the kind of lives they have reason to value (pp. 8-10).

He illustrates how freedoms of one kind can strengthen others⁶ and that the combination of freedoms not only improves quality of life but boosts economies as well. Freedoms are not just ends in themselves, but also the means with which to attain them i.e. freedom of one sort breeds more of another. Sen recognises that the “exercise of freedom is mediated by values, but the values in turn are influenced by public discussions and social interactions, which are themselves influenced by participatory freedoms” (p. 9). He also notes that there is a distinct link between unfreedoms (such as extreme poverty). The establishment of one form such as economic unfreedom, can lead people into another, such as social or political unfreedom.

Therefore, in this hyper-interconnected web of economic, social and political freedoms, a paradigm shift is occurring: Sen clearly states that economic development is not enough; GDP growth rates and income increases are not sufficient measures of development.⁷ Here he uses the famous example of African Americans being wealthier but *absolutely* more likely to die younger than their ‘poorer’ counterparts in

⁶ E.g. “Political freedoms (in the form of free speech and elections) help to promote economic security. Social opportunities (in the form of education and health facilities) facilitate economic participation. Economic facilities (in the form of opportunities for participation in trade and production) can help to generate personal abundance as well as public resources for social facilities” (Sen, p. 11).

⁷ It should be noted that Kohli addresses this sentiment, “There is clearly more to development than industrialization, however. A successful program of development ought to aim at strengthening... capabilities that enable individuals and groups to live meaningful lives” (Kohli, p. 367).

Sri Lanka or China (Sen: p. 6). For Sen, development is more than raising health and economic indicators; it is a highly moralistic process that should be acknowledged as such. Indeed, he insists that crucial value judgments should not be avoided (p. 110) and invites them on his own ideas.

This freedom-centred, ethical code of development values no one kind of freedom above others and argues that all should be provided at once. For decades, the development community has struggled to balance more urgent basic needs such as poverty and hunger with political rights and civil liberties, usually agreeing that economic needs are a higher priority. Sen views all freedoms as fostering each other and believes that increased civil liberties will promote benefits such as economic growth, health and education (pp. 146-59). Although policy recommendations will be made in Part Three, it may be noted that in the past radical attempts at granting all these freedoms at once to the populace in Afghanistan have resulted in coups, assassinations, civil wars and grinding poverty. Without exception, reformers who granted too much too fast were ousted, and the citizenry left in a worse position than before.

Arjun Appadurai

Appadurai, in his article "The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and Terms of Recognition" (2004), gives a cultural perspective of the development process. He contends that one dimension of culture, specifically its orientation to the future, "could have radical implications for poverty and development" (p. 60). Here too we see a major paradigm shift as there has long been a rift between Anthropology and Economics regarding temporal appropriateness. While Economics is widely viewed as the science of the future, Anthropology is seen as locked in the past and present with historical rituals and immediate cultural trends as the foci (p. 60). Appadurai attempts to "bring the future back

in" (p. 62) and alert us to how the poor are limited in their mobilisation as a result of their stifled capacity to aspire. It is explained that:

aspirations form parts of wider ethical and metaphysical ideas which derive from larger cultural norms. Aspirations are never simply individual (as the language of wants and choices inclines us to think). They are always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life (p. 67).

Therefore, with a social life restricted by economic factors, one's aspirations will be narrower in scope. With less knowledge of the available options, it is only natural that people take less action to alleviate their suffering. On the other hand:

The better off you are (in terms of power, dignity, and material resources), the more likely you are to be conscious of the links between the more and less immediate objects of aspiration. Because the better off, by definition, have a more complex experience of the relation between a wide range of ends and means, because they have a bigger stock of available experiences of the relationship of aspirations and outcomes, because they are in a better position to explore and harvest diverse experiences of exploration and trial, because of their many opportunities to link material goods and immediate opportunities to more general and generic possibilities and options (Appadurai, p. 68).

This was clearly the case in Afghanistan. For centuries isolated tribes lived in near vacuums and never experienced the diverse set of interactions and cause-and-effect relationships that enhance one's capacity to aspire. When a select few were educated abroad and had these kinds of aspiration-building encounters, they returned to the country and started revolutions. For the first time in their lives they had seen a world outside of their valleys or the behaviours that accompany subsistence living. The reaction was always radical and often violent.

Appadurai holds Sen in high esteem and regards his work as, "a major invitation to anthropology to widen its conception of how human

beings engage in their own futures" (p. 63). Appadurai claims that Sen's 'capacity to aspire' and his 'capabilities' are two sides of the same coin; without the horizon of hopes and wants in view, freedoms have no meaning. That is to say that people cannot strive to gain what they desire unless they know what they want in the first place.

At present the Afghan people are aware of a life without the *Taliban*, without oppressive Soviet indoctrination, or an archaic monarchy. With this range of experiences they are in the process of expanding their capacities to aspire and, it is hoped, will endeavour to broaden the scope of this capacity even further in the years to come.

William Easterly

In *The Elusive Quest for Growth* (2001), Easterly argues that economic growth is the single most effective panacea for poverty. He specifically acknowledges that, "Poverty is not just low GDP; it is dying babies, starving children, and oppression of women and the down-trodden" (p. 15). These are what Sen referred to as 'unfreedoms' and Appadurai identified as 'limiting aspirational capacity'. As was shown in Part One, they are commonplace in Afghanistan.

Easterly contends that many single solutions to the problem of making poor countries rich have been tried and failed miserably. They included efforts at population control, democratic governance, debt relief, education and transitional capital accumulation. Such attempts failed because, he argues, each of them is dependent upon growth in order to succeed. In most cases, growth itself is the best solution. For example, he cites that, "The poorest fifth of countries have on average 6.5 births per woman, while the richest fifth of countries have on average 1.7 births per woman" (Easterly, p. 95). Afghanistan is the fifth poorest country and has a fertility rate of 6.78 births per woman (p. 95)

Easterly routinely insists that people respond to incentives. If a country's government is legitimate and its citizens industrious, it will attract foreign investors. If citizens see their country becoming wealthier, they will be inclined to participate in it more fully. If economic, social and political options are available to people (Sen's freedoms again) they will not opt for violent struggle and will channel their desires (Appadurai's aspirations) through the state. A state struggling to implement civil liberties, with problems in its education system, and constantly requiring debt relief will become too distracted. The state that Easterly appears to be advocating would fall under Kohli's cohesive-capitalist heading. Easterly demonstrates that growth is the magical salve for liberating countries from poverty and the cohesive-capitalist state is the one with single-minded focus on just that.

Afghanistan has been the victim of many of the attempts that Easterly mentions as failed panaceas. Easterly cites Ravallion, Chen, Dollar and Kraay's finding when he writes,

...there are two ways the poor could become better off: income could be redistributed from the rich to the poor, and the income of both the poor and the rich could rise with overall economic growth... growth has been much more of a lifesaver to the poor than redistribution (Easterly, p. 14).

In an effort to redistribute wealth, Afghan governments (on occasion at the behest of international regimes) instituted land reforms numerous times throughout the last century. These efforts angered wealthy, powerful and influential *mullahs* and chieftains and led to upheaval which always hampers growth.

We now turn to the natural result of these examinations: a comprehensive development plan for Afghanistan which draws on the ideas of the four theorists summarised above.

III. The Model

After reviewing all of the above the facts and theories, it is now possible to combine them in a single model that would best serve the development needs of Afghanistan. This model leads to a plan which places rapid industrial growth at the forefront of its immediate needs. Once sustained economic progress is achieved, the other areas of development will follow. With decreases in poverty, capacities to aspire increase which lead to more meaningful pursuits of freedoms. This is a three-part programme and follows a basic timeline measured not in years, but stages at which certain levels of development in key areas are reached. They shall be referred to as T₁ (the present) T₂ and T₃.

Phase I - T₁

Afghanistan needs something it has never had before: a legitimate, efficient, centralised government that commands the loyalty of its citizens. As the earlier discussion of ethno-linguistic divisions (see section on Background) demonstrates, the difficulty in this is understood. Currently the isolated, traditional and xenophobic tribes see no value in allegiance to a centralised government and therefore make no moves to profess it. If the government manages to provide incentives, as Easterly suggests, they will respond. If the current budget and donor aid were to be used almost exclusively for promoting growth, we could expect an exodus from the agricultural sector (80 per cent of labour force) to the industrial (10 per cent) sector focusing around the growth poles of Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif and Kandahar.

The ANDS is also heavily economic-growth-focused. In the very first paragraph of the first chapter it states,

The overriding objective of the ANDS is to substantially reduce poverty, improve the lives of the Afghan people, and create the foundation for a secure and stable country. This requires building a strong and

rapidly expanding economy that is able to generate abundant employment opportunities and greatly increased incomes (p. 5).

A significant difference between the ANDS and what is being proposed through Kohli's theories is that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) is not looking to create a cohesive-capitalist state. They hope to solidify a more 'bottom-up' oriented nation fostering economic growth through, "decentralization, participatory processes, market-based approaches, and improved regulations" (ANDS, p.10). It is my contention that Afghanistan is not prepared for this type of strategy, nor will it be in five years' time.

Phase I builds most heavily on the ideas of Easterly and Kohli. Easterly insists that growth is the superior means by which to spur development, and Kohli demonstrates how cohesive-capitalist states are the best-equipped to foster such growth. With increased production, there will be increased tax revenues with which further growth can be fostered and the proceeds can be increasingly allocated to areas such as education. The government must keep a close partnership with business elites and labour tirelessly to stamp out corruption. Higher levels of stability, growth and production coupled with decreased rent-seeking will lead to two substantial improvements: increased foreign investment and increased loyalty to the central government.

With the Afghan government ever increasing in size, capability and legitimacy, its resources will expand and enable it to act in the model of Korea's cohesive-capitalist state under Park Chung Hee. The tribes can be united under the government's legitimisation of the process as necessary for national salvation (Kohli, p. 390). After many decades of instability and insecurity, the only thing that brings Afghans together is the threat of an outside force dominating them. If they can be shown that rapid economic growth is in their security interests (regional, national and local), the tribes will unify, mobilise, and industrialise.

Once this process is fully underway, investment patterns will change. *Mullahs* and land-owners, wealthy from before the reforms, will join with the newly-emerging middle class and increase private savings and investment. The government can encourage their investments by offering positive real interest rates and then channel those funds into preferred areas which will foster even further growth.

During Phase I we see no overt signs of development in a Senian framework. His argument had been that there should be no hierarchy of needs and that all freedoms should be provided at once. This idea has been regarded as mere 'fantasy' by, among others, Kohli (p. 421). One argument against Sen's 'all-at-once' approach is that in the cacophony of countless disparate interest groups' squawking for satisfaction, the already struggling state will be mired down in—at best—a fragmented multi-class state, or—at worst—abject chaos and total collapse. If we look deeper, however, we see that, to some extent, Sen's requests are being honoured after all. Maybe not as flamboyantly as he would like, but honoured just the same.

A wealthier citizenry with increased opportunities tends to have lower fertility rates, longer life expectancies and a lower incidence of violent crime. The simple process of moving from the country to an urban area increases the number of freedoms available to people, not to mention their ability to wish for more. This ushers in Phase II.

Phase II - T₂

T₁ comes to an end once Afghanistan has established itself fully as a cohesive-capitalist state which has penetrated all levels of society and established full legitimacy. This is done using rapid industrialisation as both a means and an end, much as Sen perceives freedom. With higher wages and investment, and employment outside the agricultural sector, the government will have substantially more resources with

which to implement human development schemes. In Phase II the government lays the foundation for its own graceful withdrawal.

What is being advocated here is nothing short of a temporarily authoritarian state. It must be made perfectly clear, however, that the intention of this state should be, "to put itself out of business". Most effective authoritarian regimes do precisely that. Pinochet's brutal legacy in Chile left the country, "in better shape than its neighbours for dealing with the equity and development issues it inherited", (O'Donnell, 1993: p. 1366) and it was as a direct result of South Korea's military dictatorships that they now have the 11th largest economy in the world. Furthermore, Moore and White point out that authoritarian regimes made more progress than fragmented democracies in implementing pro-poor policies (Moore and White, 2003: p. 84).

During Phase II Afghanistan must secure human capital. In order to accomplish this, "the population has to be first disarmed and the warlords put out of business, and secondly, a federal system established under which tribes and ethnic groups become partners, and not the rivals, of a national government" (Rasanayagam, p. 266). Children will be educated as *Afghans* first and not as members of tribes. A strictly-regulated, federal education system will be implemented to nationalise the country's youth, and labour tirelessly to broaden their aspirational horizons. Phase II is Appadurai's terrain. It is here that the government begins to shift from a strict growth-orientation to one that educates and empowers the populace. With richer inter-tribal relations, superior education systems, substantially greater opportunities and better health, the Afghan people will have a far more complex and meaningful capacity to aspire.

At present the GoIRA places many of its hopes for increased aspirations on the Inter-ministerial Commission for Capacity Development (ICCD), which will serve "as a single reporting point for both government and donors. The ICCD will provide a coordinated

approach to... capacity development and assistance programs" (ANDS, p. 14). Adding another bureaucratic body is not always the best means of attaining greater opportunities for all, but at least the GoIRA is considering these matters at high levels.

Phase III - T₃

Phase II draws to a close as a full generation of peaceful, educated and ambitious Afghans (as opposed Tajiks, Hazaras and Pashtuns) enters the workforce and government. With growth already attained through Kohli-Easterly methods, and a heightened level of possibilities realised as per Appadurai, a Senian approach can finally be adopted. Those in power, albeit gradually, cede power to others. This is not so unusual when we consider, as Evans states, that,

Power lost due to the greater transparency introduced by deliberative democracy does diminish the scope for using public works as clientelistic rewards; however, it is likely to be more than compensated for by the power and legitimacy gained by the increased ability to deliver public goods in general, and by the increased engagement of constituents in the political process (2004: p. 43).

What we see in this third and final phase is the emergence of a fully modern state; one which not only assures economic prosperity for its citizens, but allows for an educated population—one that identifies itself as distinctly *Afghan*, rather than a conglomeration of tribes—to assemble and deliberate and further advance the state of its nation. After two phases, the citizenry has been prepared for a glacial shift to a free, open and deliberative democracy.

Reviewing all that has been presented, the four theorists, though they may have disagreed with each other, had the right idea—in part. Easterly definitively stated that growth and providing incentives were the solutions to poverty and Kohli demonstrated how a cohesive-capitalist state most efficiently delivered the said growth. Phase I is

predicated on the operation of these mechanisms. Phase II, based on Appadurai's model, ensures that the poor have their capacities to aspire enriched through services provided by a benevolent and authoritarian government. Thus, at Phase III, the Afghan people are prepared to embrace the Senian conception of, 'development as freedom' and responsibly pursue the lives they have reason to value.

Conclusion

After an extensive description of the historical, political, social and economic context in which Afghanistan has been set, several patterns emerged: outside forces often invaded with ease but never maintained control; many attempts have been made, but a single, centralised government has never managed to pacify the tribes; radical reformers were met with fierce resistance.

The ideas of Kohli, Sen, Appadurai, and Easterly were combined to form a single model appropriate for the development of Afghanistan. The proposed plan calls for a singular and authoritarian focus on growth as a means to achieving further development as well as an end in and of itself. Eventually the authoritarian regime will lay the foundation for its own replacement and, in time, an industrialised, mobilised and unified Afghanistan will be home not to starving, illiterate rustics, but to healthy, educated and empowered citizens.

Radical reforms have been attempted previously in Afghanistan's history, but most were based on making the people politically free or socially equal, hence they failed. This model focuses on economically empowering people. Although this will not happen soon, and may be not even in the next generation, if implemented now, this plan should not fail. The application of this plan to Afghanistan would be enormously difficult. The high prevalence of corruption, ethnic hostility, blood feuds and tribalism, entrenched warlords and terrorist groups, as well

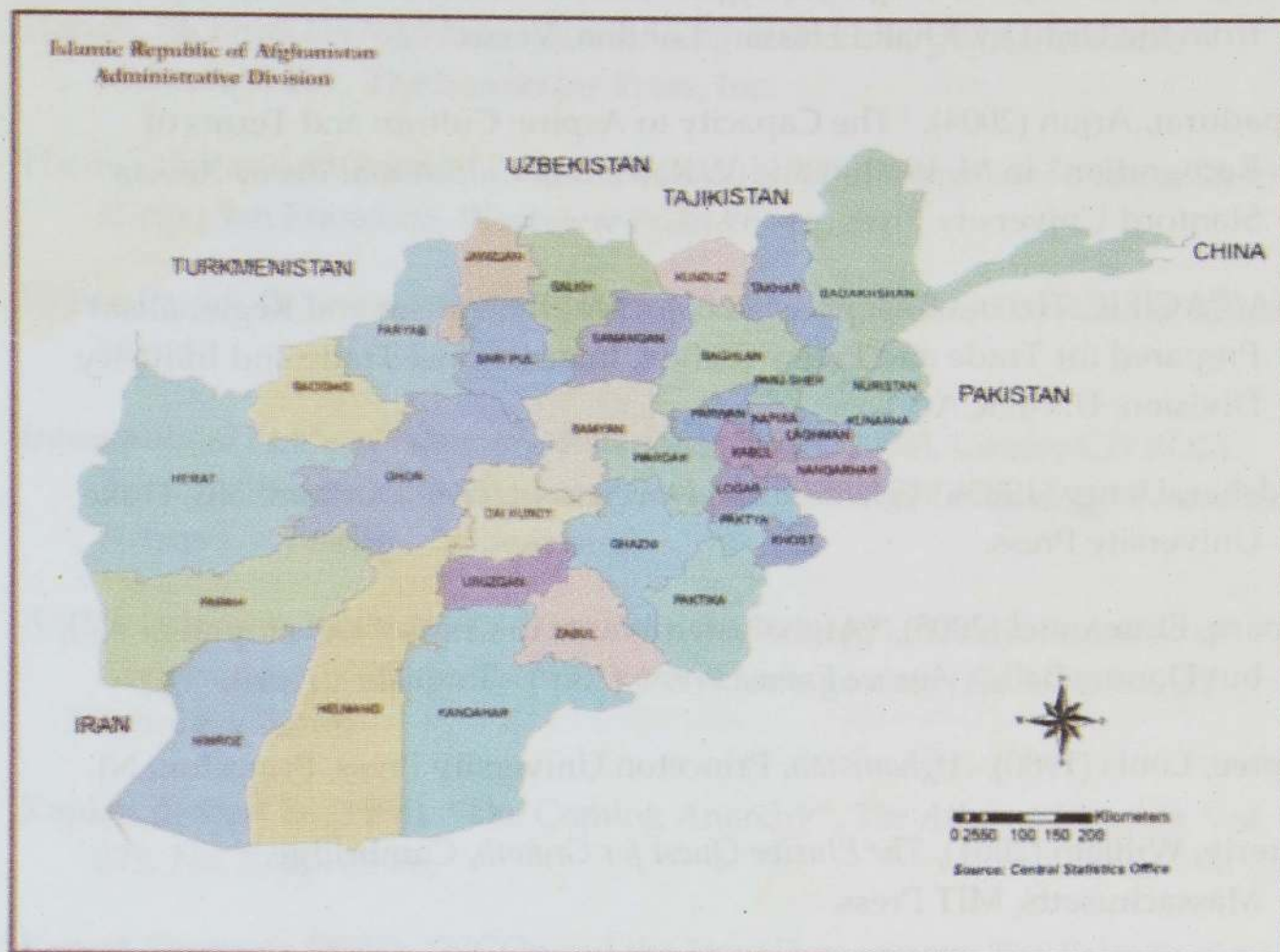
as deeply entrenched conservative and misogynistic practices would present massive obstacles to the desired outcome. While it is highly likely that the incentives of peace and prosperity might be enough to overcome those difficulties, a more thorough examination of the matter would be a fascinating topic for a future research paper.

The ANDS has been completed and is in the process of being implemented. Similar to the theoretical framework presented here, ANDS values economic growth highly and tends to focus on it above all else. However, the GoIRA does not believe that a cohesive-capitalist state is best-equipped to spur such growth. Time will tell if they are correct. Here also it is understood that there would be extraordinary impediments to the creation of the said cohesive-capitalist state—not the least of which is the outrage of the international, specifically western, community over a prolonged suspension of democratic and civil rights-focused development. As evidenced in cases such as the West's relationship with Saudi Arabia and China however, many governments demonstrate a surprising willingness to cooperate with stable, economically mobile governments despite the gross suppression of civil liberties within them. One can imagine the situation would be no different with Afghanistan.

In this context the words of former Afghan Prime Minister, Daoud Khan, ring particularly true: "Any measure for the sudden overcoming of centuries of backwardness and the immediate reforming of all affairs is a futile and immature act" (Rasanayagam, p. 62). The road to development in Afghanistan will be a long and arduous one; and the journey along it has only just begun.

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Appendix I: Map of Afghanistan



Source: <http://www.ands.gov.af/ands/jcmb/site/src/Meetingper cent20 andper cent20Documents/Thirdper cent20JCMB/10bper cent20-per cent20Afghanistan per cent20Mapper cent20-per cent20English.jpg>

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www.encyclopedia.com

<http://www.undp.org.af/>

Abstract

Threats to the preservation of cultural heritage have increased worldwide in recent years, due in part to an increase in globalization and technological advances that have made it easier to transport and store artifacts. The article examines the destruction of Iraq's heritage during the Gulf War of 1990, and especially during the Iraq War of 2003. The first section of the article discusses the looting of the Iraq National Museum and subsequent efforts to recover stolen artifacts. The article then looks at the damage done to archaeological sites, both as a result of military activity and through war-torn looting. Next, it examines the circumstances of looting and the impact on cultural heritage and discusses the importance of local authorities in protecting cultural heritage. The article concludes by arguing that if the future of Iraq's heritage is to be preserved, there must be better ways to protect it. Cultural heritage, but even more importantly, market-oriented goods, bring in much of the investment and sale of unprovenanced antiquities within their borders.

The First Gulf War of 1990 and its Aftermath

Prior to the First Gulf War in 1990, Iraqi archaeologists, fearing that the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad might be looted, moved work items

¹ This paper is a revised version of a talk that was presented by the author at the October 2005 meeting of the Association of American Geographers in San Francisco, California.

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World Heritage at Risk: The Destruction of Iraq's Cultural Heritage¹

Nancy C. Wilkie

Abstract

Threats to the preservation of cultural heritage have increased worldwide in recent years, due in part to an increase in agricultural and development activities but even more significantly as the result of military conflict. This article examines the destruction of Iraq's heritage during the Gulf War of 1990, and especially during the Iraq War of 2003. The first section of it discusses the looting of the Iraq National Museum and subsequent efforts to recover antiquities stolen from it. The article then looks at the damage done to archaeological sites, both as the result of military activity and through wanton looting. Next it examines the effectiveness of legislation intended to protect cultural heritage and of restrictions on the importation of Iraqi antiquities, suggesting that blame for the destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage must be shared by many parties including the former Baathist regime, archaeologists who participate in the art market, and museums and collectors who buy unprovenanced antiquities. The paper concludes by arguing that in the future 'source countries' such as Iraq must find better ways to protect their cultural heritage, but even more importantly, 'market countries' must bring an end to the importation and sale of unprovenanced antiquities within their borders.

The First Gulf War of 1990 and its Aftermath

Prior to the First Gulf War of 1990, Iraqi archaeologists, fearing that the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad might be looted, moved more than

¹ This paper is a revised version of a talk that was presented by the author on 28 October 2008 at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

150,000 objects from the museum to more secure places. Smaller, more valuable objects were placed in the vault of the Central Bank, while objects that were too large to be moved were wrapped in foam and protected by sandbags. As a result, little damage was done during the six weeks of intensive bombing that began on 16 January 1991. During the civil war that ensued, however, 11 of the 13 regional museums in Iraq were looted, and more than 4,800 objects were lost, of which only a few have been recovered (Lawler, 2001; Gottlieb and Meier, 2003).²

After the war, UN economic sanctions imposed on Iraq made the preservation of Iraq's cultural heritage even more difficult (Russell, 1997; Hassan, 2006).³ The inability to import essential equipment such as computers, cameras, and materials for conservation of archaeological objects, as well as vehicles to enable archaeologists to visit known archaeological sites and record newly discovered ones, brought a halt to most archaeological research by Iraqis and most foreign archaeologists. Moreover, the loss of oil revenue resulted in lack of funds both for archaeological research and most importantly for payment to site guards. Finally, as rural people became impoverished, many who had previously worked for archaeologists turned instead to looting, both individually and as organised gangs protected by men armed with machine guns (Lawler, 2001; Farchakh-Bajjalay, 2008).

Eventually antiquities from Iraq began to appear on the international art market, even though the government in Iraq had enacted

² In a correction published on 2 May 2003, the *New York Times* acknowledged that the headline for Gottlieb and Meier's (2003) article was incorrect. It should have stated, as did the article, that 'no more than six' objects had been recovered.

³ Hassen (2006) notes the "detrimental, long-term effects of the multilateral UN sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1990". Moreover, he suggests that the result has been "a compelling case against the future implementation of comparable, comprehensive sanctions".

legislation prohibiting the export of antiquities and imposing severe penalties for the looting of archaeological sites.⁴ For example, in 1997, looters from Mosul were discovered trying to sneak fragments from the head of a massive stone statue from Khorsabad across the border. The head had been sawn off the statue and cut into pieces for easier transport. After they were apprehended, ten members of the group were executed for the crime (Lawler, 2001).

Building of Dams

Other threats to the archaeological heritage of Iraq during this period came from the building of dams.⁵ For example, the site of Ashur, the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire with remains dating from ca. 2500 BC to 614 BC when the site was sacked by an invading Median army, was threatened by flooding from the construction of the Makhool Dam on the Tigris River. Not only was Ashur to be flooded, but more than 60 other important archaeological sites were threatened as well (Lawler, 2002). Archaeologists from Heidelberg University, not constrained by sanctions against working in Iraq as were those from the US and Britain, began excavations at Ashur in 2000. They suspended their work in the fall of 2002, however, when the threat of war became imminent (Lawler, 2003a). Fortunately, the site was spared destruction when the US officials stopped work on the dam in August 2003, saying that "Makhool simply didn't rank high" on their post-war priority list (Lawler, 2003b).

⁴ Iraq passed its first Antiquities Law in 1924. The 1924 and 1936 versions of the law allowed antiquities to be exported when accompanied by a permit or license issued by the government of Iraq; but as amended in 1974 and 1975, the law eventually restricted the export of all antiquities from Iraq (Republic of Iraq, 1936; Bernhardsson, 2005: p. 215).

⁵ Earlier dam projects also had destroyed ancient and medieval sites. In 1987, for example, flooding from the newly constructed al-Qadisiyya dam on the upper Euphrates submerged the old town of 'Ana, which had been inhabited since ancient times (Fethi, 2005: pp. 116-18).

The Iraq War of 2003 and the Looting of the Iraq National Museum

Cessation of work on the Makhool Dam may have been one of the only benefits of the latest Iraq war. For, as noted above, looting of the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad began almost immediately after the first US tanks entered the city on 7 April 2003. The looting occurred despite warnings to senior military officials from the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance that there were 16 institutions in Baghdad that “merit securing as soon as possible to prevent further damage, destruction and or pilferage of records and assets” (Martin, Vulliamy and Hinsliff, 2003). Of these, the museum was second only to the Central Bank. Yet the museum was left unguarded even as the looting took place, while US troops stood guard at the Oil Ministry, which was 16 on the list.

Although most news coverage of the looting of the Iraq National Museum focused on the damage to and looting of the antiquities in its care, equally disturbing was the ‘wanton and absolute’ destruction that took place in the administrative offices and archives of the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage where every one of the 120 offices was ransacked (Bogdanos, 2005a: p. 488). Furniture was destroyed, computers stolen or demolished, and records scattered everywhere, making an accurate assessment of thefts by the looters very difficult. As a result, initial reports claimed that 170,000 objects had been looted from the museum (Burns, 2003).⁶ The total number of looted objects is now known to be far less—approximately 15,000—although an accurate count is impossible since some items deposited in the museum had not yet been catalogued (Bogdanos, 2005a: pp. 509, 522). Moreover, a single catalogue entry sometimes represented more than one object, as for example beads belonging to a single necklace. On the other hand, each bead might have been catalogued as a separate item.

⁶ The number of looted objects reported in the press soon became inflated even more. For example, Martin, Viluammy and Hinsliff (2003) reported that 270,000 objects had been looted.

The thieves who ransacked the museum did not take only small items that could be carried away easily. Rather, gangs of looters must have operated to steal some of the largest and heaviest items from the museum, the very items that the museum staff had not removed for safe keeping because of their size. As in the earlier Gulf War, many of these large pieces had been wrapped in foam and protected by sandbags, perhaps making them even easier to steal.

Governmental and NGO Efforts to Recover Objects Looted from the Museum

Almost immediately after the looting of the Iraq Museum, many organisations rushed to publish photographs and descriptions of the most significant missing objects, in the hopes that this would aid in their quick recovery. For example, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) quickly made available a list of the 'top 30' missing artifacts (FBI 2003). To date, however, only four of them have been recovered: the Mask of Warka (Number 1); the Bassetki Statue (Number 2); the Statue of Entemena (Number 5); and the Brazier from Nimrud (Number 28).⁷

The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) also published a poster of 'The Most Wanted Works of Art' depicting six items looted from the Iraq Museum (INTERPOL, 2003). INTERPOL posters such as this one provide details of six most-wanted stolen works of art and are produced every six months. Although the Iraq poster is no longer available, INTERPOL does produce a DVD every two months that provides information on 'Stolen Works of Art' and includes objects still missing from Iraq (INTERPOL, 2009).

One item on both the FBI and INTERPOL lists that is still missing is a small (9.8 cm high) plaque from Nimrud (ca. 720 BC) made of wood

⁷ See page 115, "Recovered Objects", for the circumstances under which each of these items was recovered.

overlaid with ivory and gold, i.e., in a technique termed chryselephantine. The plaque is inlaid with precious stones and depicts a lioness attacking a Nubian in a meadow of lotus and papyrus plants. It was listed as Number 3 on the FBI list (FBI, 2003), Number 4 on a list assembled by US Customs (now part of the Department of Homeland Security), and Number 6 on the INTERPOL poster. Presumably it would be difficult to sell this object on the art market because it is so well-known and its theft so well-publicised. Yet its small size, which makes it easy to conceal, combined with the rarity of similar chryselephantine objects in private collections, could make it a desirable acquisition for certain unscrupulous purchasers.

Complete information about many looted objects, including the Nimrud plaque, can be found in a database of 'Lost Treasures from Iraq', compiled by the Oriental Institute (2008). The list, last updated on 14 April 2008, now depicts 1,483 objects and can be searched by material, object type, Iraqi Museum Number, and Provenience/Excavation Number. The site also includes photographs of archaeological sites in Iraq as well as those taken by Joanne Farchakh-Bajjalay of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad shortly after the looting in April 2003.

Rather than focusing on individual looted objects, other organisations assembled data bases of *types* of objects most subject to theft. For example, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) published an Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk. In this list the top four categories of objects from Iraq most commonly found on the international art market are clay or stone tablets with cuneiform writing, cones with cuneiform writing, cylinder seals, and stamp seals (ICOM, 2003).

Finally, the *Art Newspaper* (2003) posted a database of 300 illustrations from the only published catalogue of the Iraq Museum (Basmachi 1975/76) on its website. It provided no information, however, about which of the catalogued objects were still missing or unaccounted for following the looting of the museum.

Recovered Objects

An amnesty programme put in place in May 2003 resulted in the quick return of numerous stolen objects. The most important of these was the so-called Warka Vase, which was brought to the museum in the trunk of a car along with 95 other objects (Bogdanos, 2005a: pp. 495-97). This alabaster vase is 105 cm high and dates to approximately 3000 BC. Four zones of relief decoration surround the vase, one of which depicts a cult scene in which the ruler of Uruk (modern Warka) delivers items from the land's produce to the temple of Inanna, goddess of fertility. During the looting, the vase was cut from its modern plaster of Paris base and badly broken, so that when it was returned on 12 June 2003, the vase was in 14 pieces. However, the breaks were along ancient fractures that had been mended in the past, so complete restoration of the vase was possible.

By the end of December 2003, a total of 2,027 objects had been returned as the result of raids and seizures within Iraq (Bogdanos, 2005a: p. 498). One of the largest caches recovered was a group of 465 objects confiscated on 26 April 2003 by Iraqi National Congress forces at a checkpoint in southern Iraq. Most of the items were small amulets, pendants, and cylinder seals, but there were also numerous cuneiform tablets from a collection of fakes that were stored in the museum. In November 2003 another 820 objects were recovered by the Iraqi Italian Institute of Archaeological Sciences, which had purchased them during a clandestine operation, a tactic not usually employed since such payments set a bad precedent that often leads to further looting (Bogdanos, 2005a: p. 514).

One of the most extraordinary items taken from the Iraq Museum was the Mask of Warka, the world's oldest example of representational sculpture. This life-size marble head of a female, perhaps the goddess Inanna, came from the ruins of an ancient (ca. 3100 BC) temple at Uruk. On 23 September 2003 the US Military found it buried in a shallow pit during a raid on a farmhouse north of Baghdad (Bogdanos, 2005a: p. 498).

Another important seizure was that of the Bassetki Statue, one of the earliest examples of the lost-wax process of metal casting. Made of pure copper, the statue weighs 150 kg (Bogdanos, 2005a: fig. 5). Depicting the lower torso of a seated nude male (the top half was broken off in antiquity), its pedestal bears an Old Akkadian inscription stating that the statue once stood in the doorway of the palace of Naram Sin, the king of Agade (2291-55 BC). After the thieves smashed the glass case in which the statue was displayed (Bogdanos, 2005a: fig. 4), they apparently had difficulty removing it from the museum since noticeable cracks in the floor indicate where the looters apparently dropped the statue several times (Bogdanos, 2005a: p. 508 n. 113). US Military Police, working in conjunction with Iraqi police, recovered the statue outside Baghdad on 3 November 2003. It was hidden in a cesspool after being coated with axle grease, presumably in an attempt to preserve it until a time when it might be sold more easily (Pl. 2; Bogdanos, 2005a: pp. 498-99).

Recovered at the same time was a ninth century BC wooden brazier with four spoked wheels from the palace of King Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC) at Nimrud (Russell, 2003: pp. 1-2; Bogdanos, 2005a: p. 498). The bronze-clad sides of the box depict the crenellated towers of a city wall. This brazier is the only known example of its type, although the existence of such mobile fire boxes had long been suspected since 'tramlines' etched into limestone slabs have been discovered running down the centre of Assyrian throne rooms.⁸

Not all of the recoveries, however, have taken place in Iraq, since many items made their way out of the country and onto the international art market. For example, in May 2006, US authorities recovered a 150 kg diorite statue of Entemena, King of Lagash (ca. 2430 BC) from the

⁸ For a virtual reality rendering of the throne room of the Northwest Palace at Nimrud showing the wheeled brazier in the foreground, see Paley and Sanders (2006).

ancient site of Ur (Meier and Glanz, 2006). Cuneiform inscriptions on the back and shoulder of the statue make it one of the most valuable items stolen from the museum. The headless statue had been smuggled out of Iraq to Syria, and subsequently offered to Hicham Aboutaam, a Lebanese antiquities dealer with galleries in Manhattan and Geneva. Some time later Aboutaam aided US authorities and an Iraqi expatriate businessman in its recovery, the terms of which remain obscure. The statue, which had been damaged during the looting, was returned to the Iraqi government at a ceremony in Washington DC, where it now resides in the Iraq Embassy awaiting a safer time for its return to Baghdad.

Major recoveries from outside Iraq also include a large limestone head of King Sanatruq I of Hatra, the second century BC ruler of the magnificent fortified Parthian city that is the only World Heritage Site in Iraq. Four years after its theft the sculpture was seized by police from the home of a well-known Lebanese decorator following a tip from an Italian archaeologist, who recognised the sculpture in an al Jazeera television programme about the decorator and informed INTERPOL of its location (CAIS, 2007).

News reports of seizures of Iraqi antiquities in countries throughout the world are becoming quite common. For example, in November 2008, more than 100 Iraqi antiquities were seized in Dubai (McClenaghan, 2008). A month earlier authorities seized dozens of artifacts that had been smuggled from Iraq through Syria and into Lebanon, a well-known trafficking route (AFP, 2008).⁹ The return of 701 antiquities by Syria in April of the same year demonstrates the scale of this network (AP, 2008a). Another equally large smuggling route runs through Jordan, where 2,466 stolen antiquities, seized on 22 different occasions, were turned over to the Iraqis in June 2008 (AP,

⁹ Photographs of these objects by Joanne Farchakh-Bajjal are available at <http://ancientworldbloggers.blogspot.com/2008/10/photographs-of-iraqi-antiquities-siezed.html> and <http://ancientworldbloggers.blogspot.com/2008/10/more-photographs-of-iraqi-antiquities.html>.

2008b). Finally, in Egypt, at a January 2009 press conference, Zahi Hawas, Secretary General of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, returned a bronze statue, commenting that his office had recovered approximately 5,000 objects stolen from Iraq (AP, 2009).

Many objects looted from Iraq eventually made their way to western Europe, the US, and countries even further afield. For example, in a ceremony on 15 September 2008 at Iraq's embassy in Washington D.C., US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE, 2008) handed over 1,046 seized antiquities, including fragments of cuneiform tablets that were retrieved from the ruins of the World Trade Center (Bowman, 2008). Earlier, on 24 July 2008, Italy returned 13 antiquities to Iraq (Reuters, 2008), and even more recently it was announced that three cuneiform tablets had been discovered in the luggage of an American in Lima, Peru (Kukis, 2009). These cases represent some, but not all of the most recently reported instances of antiquities repatriated after their illegal export from Iraq. Many more are sure to follow.

Treasures of Nimrud and Ur

The most spectacular archaeological discovery ever made in Iraq is a treasure from Nimrud unearthed by archaeologists from the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage between 1988 and 1990. The antiquities, which date to the eighth and ninth centuries BC, were found in three queens' tombs located in the Northwest Palace of the ancient Assyrian city of Kalkhu (modern Nimrud). Although many Assyrian tombs had been excavated prior to that time, these were the only ones found intact.

The Nimrud treasure had been on display in the Iraq National Museum for a few months before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, after which it was placed in storage. The whereabouts of the treasure were a secret—only five people knew—and all had sworn on the

Koran not to reveal the treasure's hiding place. Eventually it was learned, however, that the objects had been moved to the Central Bank for safekeeping ten days after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait (Bogdanos, 2005a: p. 516). Even so, there was confusion about the exact location of the treasure since the Central Bank had two buildings—an old and a new one. Eventually it was learned that five boxes containing the Nimrud Treasure as well as objects from the Royal Tombs of Ur were had been deposited in the old Central Bank building but later moved to the new one. This posed an immediate problem, however, since the basement of the new building had been flooded when it was struck by a US missile that burst one of its water pipes (Luhnow, 2003). Approximately 640,000 gallons of water had to be pumped from the basement before the correct vault could be opened and the boxes containing the treasures from Nimrud and Ur revealed. When the boxes were finally opened on 5 June 2003, those who witnessed the event were ecstatic to find these exquisite objects undamaged.

Among the objects from the Royal Tombs at Ur (ca. 2600 BC), excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley in 1929, was the so-called Gold Lyre of Ur. It was found in a corner of one of the graves in a pile of deteriorated musical instruments that included the remains of three lyres and a harp. After the instruments were restored, some were given to the institutions in the US and Great Britain that had participated in their excavation. At the time, such a division of finds (*partage*) was still possible since the law prohibiting the export of antiquities from Iraq had not yet been enacted.¹⁰ Yet, as was

¹⁰ James Cuno, the President and Director of the Art Institute of Chicago, is the leading proponent among dealers, collectors and museum officials for the reinstatement of the practice of *partage*. He argues that nationalistic policies of retention and reclamation of antiquities hinder our understanding and appreciation of the past. He further believes that antiquities belong to all mankind and should be shared worldwide, not held only by countries in which they were found. See Cuno (2008) for a full exposition of his argument.

appropriate, the finest of the instruments remained in the Iraq National Museum. Unfortunately, when the museum was looted, the Gold Lyre of Ur was stripped of its silver and gold sheeting as well as of the gold and lapis lazuli bull's head that once adorned it (Pl. 3). Fortunately, the bull's head was only a replica. The original was one of the objects that had been deposited in the Central Bank many years earlier and rediscovered when the vault was opened after the invasion. For a few hours on 2 July 2003, these and many other treasures that had been stored in the Central Bank were once again exhibited in the Iraq National Museum, only to be returned to the vault shortly thereafter.¹¹

Damage to Archaeological Sites

Not all damage to Iraq's archaeological sites has been the result of looting. Damage also occurred as a consequence of military activities both during and after the war. For example, the Ziggurat at Ur, built by King Ur-Nammu (2112-2095 BC), suffered nearly 400 bullet holes during the First Gulf War, when it was also badly shaken by bombs that exploded nearby (Global Heritage Fund, 2006). Further damage was caused when a car park was constructed nearby, destroying buildings in the ritual complex. During the latest Iraq war US troops stole fired bricks from the site and spray-painted the ruins with the Marines' motto, 'Semper Fi'. As a result, the site was placed off-limits by the military. Nonetheless, on New Year's Day 2005, West Virginia National Guardsmen held a re-enlistment ceremony at the ziggurat (US DOD, 2005). The expansion of the nearby Tallil Air Base also resulted in the total destruction of a small site called Eridu 13 to the east of the base (Stone, 2008a: 76) and threatens to damage the ancient site of Ur itself (GlobalSecurity.org, 2006).

¹¹ Stunning photographs of the opening of the vault in the Central Bank and of the boxes containing the treasures from Nimrud and Ur, as well as their display in the Iraq Museum, can be seen on the Iraq Museum International web site (Feeney, n.d.).

At the ancient site of Babylon, Coalition forces levelled parts of the site to construct a helipad and parking lots for heavy vehicles. Sandbags used to protect the site were filled with soil from Babylon itself as well as from other nearby archaeological sites, not only destroying parts of those sites but also causing contamination of the archaeological record at Babylon through the introduction of foreign archaeological material. Substantial damage to the Ishtar Gate at Babylon, originally constructed ca. 575 BC and rebuilt in 1982 by Saddam Hussein, occurred when bricks making up the moulded figures of 'dragons' that originally decorated the gate were removed by souvenir seekers. Bricks from the reconstructed portion of the gate also were removed, either by Iraqis or Coalition forces, apparently because they bore an inscription boasting of Saddam Hussein's rebuilding of Babylon (Curtis, 2005). This was not the first time that bricks had been removed from the Ishtar Gate, however, a portion of the gate was dismantled and reassembled for display in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin in the 1930s. In addition, glazed brick figures of lions, dragons, and bulls that once adorned the gate can be found in many museums around the world.

Looting of Archaeological Sites

Although damage to archaeological sites by the military, and especially the theft of antiquities from the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad, has captured much of the media attention, even more devastating has been the intentional looting of archaeological sites, mainly by gangs of Iraqi citizens. It is now known that there was heavy looting of archaeological sites in the south of Iraq in the months leading up to the war, as the security situation began to deteriorate (Stone, 2008a: p. 75). The looting intensified once the war began. In fact, there were reports from Umma that looters drove off guards and began looting the site on the day the war began (Rothfield, 2008: p. 18). As reported on 23 May 2003 (Andrews, 2003), hundreds of men armed with shovels, knives, and sometimes even semiautomatic weapons,

tore through archaeological sites searching for anything that they might be able to sell, often digging through the night aided by lights powered with electrical generators (salon.com, 2008).

The looting of archaeological sites was not unexpected. Well before the war began, archaeologists from the US and abroad, in a "Statement on Cultural Heritage at Risk in Iraq", pleaded with military and government officials "to stop the illicit digging and smuggling of antiquities that have occurred during the period of the embargo".¹² To this end, they provided the US Department of Defence with a list of more than 4,000 archaeological sites to be avoided and protected should war occur. In addition, they warned that "even if [the Iraq National Museum and the Museum in Mosul] survive the bombing, any period of chaos or uncertain control during or after the fighting will render both institutions vulnerable to looting" (Gibson, 2003: p. 1849).

The scale of the looting that took place following the outbreak of the war can only be appreciated by viewing photographs of the looted sites themselves. Analysis of satellite imagery from before and after the 2003 invasion has shown that "the total area of intensive looting... [was] many times greater than all the archaeological investigations ever conducted in southern Iraq" (Stone, 2008b: p. 137). Aerial photos of many looted sites taken by the Italian Carabinieri show large excavated sites that are riddled with looters' pits both in the areas surrounding previously scientifically excavated sites and within the excavated sites themselves (Ho, 2004). Other photographs even show looters at work, waving at officials flying overhead in a helicopter (Russell, 2008: fig. 7).¹³

¹² See Gibson (2003: p. 1849) for the complete text of the "Statement on Cultural Heritage at Risk in Iraq" and its signatories. The letter was sent to President George W. Bush, UN Secretary Kofi Annan, and Prime Minister Tony Blair.

¹³ Also see photographs taken by Farchakh-Bajjalay in 2003 at the site of Umm al-Aqarib, available at <http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/dbfiles/farchakh/sitephotos.htm>.

The only significant efforts by any of the Coalition forces to stop the looting of archaeological sites in Iraq were those by the Italian Carabinieri (a military police force), whose special Unit for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage was formed in 1969 (Carabinieri Unit, 2008: pp. 135-36). Fortunately, these Italian forces were assigned to Dhi Qar governorate in southern Iraq, where the worst looting was taking place. With 591 officially registered archaeological sites and thousands of others that are unregistered, the area was difficult to patrol and protect. However, the Carabinieri quickly instituted Operation 'Antica Babylonia' in an attempt to stem the looting. When surveillance on land turned out to be ineffective because looters were able to see patrols approaching from far away in the flat landscape, the Carabinieri turned to using helicopters for reconnaissance as well as for raids (Russell, 2008: pp. 34-36).

Although the US military did little to stop the looting of archaeological sites, the State Department has made efforts to mitigate some of the damage that arose because of lack of planning prior to the war (Wilkie, 2008). On 14 July 2003, it convened an inter-agency working group to assist in rebuilding the cultural infrastructure of Iraq. Despite a few modest successes on the part of some of the agencies involved, however, most of these efforts ceased soon after the turnover of the government to the Iraqis on 28 June 2004 due to the deteriorating security situation. One can only wonder what would have occurred had there been a military unit such as the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives teams ('Monuments Men') that were deployed to protect cultural property during World War II. After the war, these teams remained in Europe for up to six years to oversee the restitution of works of art (Nichols, 1995).

Although the looting of the Iraq Museum is deplorable, the looting of archaeological sites is an even greater tragedy. Because most of the objects taken from the museum had been inventoried, and many also

had been published, they are difficult to sell on the international art market, which likely has contributed to the return and/or seizure of many objects. Antiquities freshly looted from the ground, on the other hand, have no provenience. There is no record either of the objects or the contexts from which they came. More importantly, all of the information that could have been gleaned from their careful excavation and study has been lost forever. Objects found *in situ* have the potential to yield information about their function and the function of the context from which they were derived. But without knowledge of their provenience, this is impossible. Moreover, because most of the ancient architecture in Iraq is of mud brick construction, looting also destroys the remains of the buildings themselves (Hanson, 2008: p. 47).

Forgeries

One of the most vexing problems posed by unprovenanced objects, i.e., objects without a known history of ownership, is the possibility that they are fakes. If accepted as genuine, these objects can corrupt our knowledge of the past.¹⁴ Without clear evidence that an archaeological object derives from a well-documented, legitimate excavation, its authenticity, and thus its value in contributing to our knowledge of antiquity, will always be open to question. A detailed account of the damage, both potential and real, done by fakes and forgeries of Near Eastern artefacts has been presented by Muscarella (2000). He has catalogued more than 1,000 objects that he believes are forgeries, even though they have been identified and published by scholars as ancient Near Eastern in origin. In most cases, Muscarella is forced to judge the authenticity of these objects on stylistic rather than scientific grounds, but this is to be expected since many objects, such as those made of stone, cannot be dated scientifically, even if the source of the material

¹⁴ A photograph of one of the fakes returned to the Iraq Museum can be viewed at http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/dbfiles/farchakh/farchakh_005.htm.

from which they are made can be determined. Their authenticity will, therefore, forever remain in doubt.

Legislation for the Protection of Cultural Property

The 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was the first international convention to deal exclusively with cultural property (Gerstenblith, 2008a: p. 79; Hague Convention, 2008). This Convention, which entered into force on 7 August 1956, regulates the conduct of nations during times of war and military occupation in order to assure protection of cultural property. Although Iraq had ratified the main Convention and its First Protocol at the time of the invasion, neither the US nor the United Kingdom had done so. Nonetheless, the policy of the US Department of Defence has been to follow the terms of the Convention, accepting it as customary international law (Wegener, 2008: p. 166).

Under the terms of the Hague Convention, contracting parties are obligated to protect both their own cultural property and that of their adversaries during times of war. Moreover, sites lose their protection if they are used for military purposes. This became a problem at the time of the Iraq invasion since, for example, the Australian Department of Defence reported that satellite images of the museum complex at Ctesiphon taken in mid-March 2003 revealed the Blue Shield (the symbol of protection under the 1954 Hague Convention) on its roof, yet military vehicles also were clearly visible in the adjacent car park (GlobalSecurity.org, 2003). In addition, when US forces entered the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, they discovered weapons, grenades, and other military items in the compound, in clear contravention of the Convention (Bogdanos, 2005a: pp. 502-03). Yet Iraq was not the only side to violate the terms of the Hague Convention, since Coalition forces also used portions of archaeological sites for their installations following the invasion (see above, "Damage to Archaeological Sites").



Pl. 1: Looters at Isin, January 2004. Photo courtesy of John Russell.



Pl. 2: Remains of the bull-headed Lyre of Ur after looting of the Iraq National Museum. Photo courtesy of John Russell.



Pl. 3: The Bassetki Statue base as found in a cesspool in Baghdad, coated with axle grease. Photo courtesy of John Russell.

One result of the international outcry over the looting of the museum and archaeological sites in Iraq was a renewed effort among cultural preservation organisations for the US to ratify the 1954 Hague Convention (Gerstenblith, 2008a). Although the US was a signatory to the Convention, and President Clinton had submitted both the main Convention and its First Protocol to the Senate for ratification in 1999, the US Senate had never given the necessary advice and consent. This finally happened on 25 September 2008 (*Congressional Record*, 2008). The United Kingdom, on the other hand, signed the Convention in 1954 but never ratified it. Fifty years later, in May 2004, the government publicly announced its intention to ratify the convention and accede to both of its protocols, but it still has not done so.

As mentioned above, the Blue Shield is the international symbol specified under the 1954 Hague Convention to mark cultural property for protection during armed conflict. In 1996, four cultural heritage organisations joined together to form the International Committee of the Blue Shield in order “to work together for the protection of the world’s cultural heritage by coordinating preparations to meet and respond to emergency situations”.¹⁵ Yet neither the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) nor any of its national committees that had been organised in countries that were States Parties to the 1954 Hague Convention responded to the dire situation in Iraq. Although cultural heritage personnel were badly needed in the wake of the looting that took place in many of the cultural institutions in Baghdad, not just the Iraq National Museum, individuals with no attachment to the military were not allowed to enter Iraq because the military could not provide for their security (Wegener, 2008: p. 165).

¹⁵ These organisations were the International Council of Museums (ICOM), International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), International Council on Archives (ICA), and International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). A fifth organisation, the Coordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations (CCAAA) joined in 2005. See <http://icom.museum/emergency.html#mission>.

The situation might have been different had there been a national committee of the Blue Shield in the US at the time of the invasion, since members of similar international organisations such as Red Cross were recognised by the military and allowed to work in Iraq. However, it was only after Corine Wegener, a major in the US Army Reserve, returned from her tour of duty in Iraq that the US Committee of the Blue Shield was organised. Having witnessed first-hand the devastation caused by the looting of the Iraq National Museum, where she was assigned, and the inadequate response by the US military to the situation, she became convinced of the need for the military to play a more active role in protecting cultural property during war operations. To that end she helped write a guide to cultural property that could be distributed to members of Civil Affairs units of which she was a member (*Civil Affairs*, 2005). Immediately upon retiring from the military, she turned to organising the US Committee of the Blue Shield (USCBS), which was officially recognised by the ICBS on 19 June 2007. A principal activity of the USCBS has been to provide cultural property training to civil affairs units about to be deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, in conjunction with the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) and the American Institute for the Conservation of Artistic and Historic Works (AIC).

Import Restrictions on Iraq Antiquities

After the First Gulf War, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 661 (UNSC, 1990) placing a ban on all imports, including cultural property, from Iraq. It stipulated that only material accompanied by documentation of its export from Iraq prior to the date of the sanctions could be imported by member countries. Fortunately, when the sanctions were lifted after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, import restrictions on cultural property were retained (UNSC Resolution 1483, 2003). In the following year the US President issued Executive Order 13350, which declared a state of emergency with

respect to Iraq (Federal Register, 2004). He renewed the order in May 2005, thereby assuring that import restrictions on cultural material as described in UN Security Council Resolution 1483 remained in place.

As an added precaution, the US Congress passed the Emergency Protection for Iraqi Cultural Antiquities Act on 19 November 2004, giving the President authority to make emergency determinations under the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA) regarding archaeological and ethnological material from Iraq (Public Law 108-429, 2004; Gerstenblith and Hanson, 2008: pp. 107-08). It was not until 30 April 2008, however, that the US State Department announced that the Department of Homeland Security had placed import restrictions on cultural material from Iraq under the authority granted to the President under that act (US DOS, 2008a).

The Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA, 1983; Gerstenblith and Hanson, 2008: pp. 104-06) is the means by which the United States implements Articles 7(b) and 9 of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (UNESCO, 1970). The former article allows the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to seize stolen cultural property at the border if it was documented as part of a collection of a museum or other public institution of another State Party to the 1970 UNESCO Convention. Article 9, on the other hand, applies only to archaeological and ethnological materials, for which such documentation is usually lacking. Countries that are parties to the convention can request that the US enter into a bilateral agreement, under which the US will prohibit importation of materials covered by the 1970 UNESCO Convention that lack an export license from their country of origin. However, these restrictions are not retroactive. In addition, bilateral agreements are in force for a maximum of five years, although they can be renewed for additional five-year periods.

Because Iraq and the US did not have diplomatic relations in 2003 when the war broke out, Iraq could not request a bilateral agreement with the US, even though both countries were States Parties to the 1970 UNESCO Convention. Following the invasion the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) did not have the authority to do so as it did not represent the Iraqi nation. Since the turnover of the government to the Iraqis in 2004 there also has not been a request, presumably because the Iraqi government has had more important issues to deal with, and because other restrictions on the import of illicitly exported antiquities from Iraq to the US are still in place.

Another US law that has been successfully applied to cultural property is the National Stolen Property Act (NSPA), which prohibits possession of, and trading in any stolen property that has a value of more than \$5,000. In the case of undocumented antiquities, i.e., those looted from archaeological sites, the application of the law relies on national ownership laws in the countries from which the objects originated.¹⁶ Iraq, for example, enacted such a law in 1936 (Republic of Iraq, 1936), vesting ownership of undiscovered antiquities in the state, thereby denying title to anyone who sells or purchases looted antiquities.

The United Kingdom also took steps to prohibit the importation or exportation of items of cultural property illegally removed from Iraq. On 14 June 2003 the Iraq (United Nations Sanctions) Order 2003 came into force. According to this Order, "Any person who deals in any item of illegally removed Iraqi cultural property shall be guilty of an offence under this Order, unless he proves that he did not know and had no reason to suppose that the item in question was illegally removed Iraqi cultural property". However, only objects removed from Iraq since 6 August 1990 are covered by the Order.¹⁷

¹⁶ The application of the National Stolen Property Act to undocumented stolen cultural property was affirmed in a case against Frederick Schulz in 2003 (Gerstenblith, 2008b: p. 85; Gerstenblith and Hanson 2008: pp. 105-06).

¹⁷ A complete text of the Order is *available at* <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031519.htm>.

The Antiquities Market

Objects from Iraq began to flood the antiquities market soon after the end of the 1990 Gulf War (Gibson, 1997; Brodie, 2008). In addition to documented sales by auction houses, there was a flourishing 'invisible' market of private sales to collectors. For example, relief fragments that came onto the market in the 1990s were recognised by Russell (1997) as coming from the Assyrian palaces at Nineveh and Nimrud (ninth-seventh centuries BC). As Russell noted, "These fragments would be poor investments. Since they are documented as belonging to a museum in Iraq and have no export permits, Iraq would have clear legal grounds to reclaim them from any purchaser". And in fact, this is exactly what happened when a prominent London collector, who had purchased one of the reliefs, applied for a permit to export it to Israel where he hoped to display it in the Bible Lands Museum. When experts in London reviewed the request, they recognised the piece and alerted the Iraqi government, which filed a suit for its return. In the end the suit was settled when the purchaser, who claimed not to know that the piece was stolen, relinquished it after being reimbursed by the government of Iraq (Gottlieb and Meier, 2003). Although such settlements are infrequent, they set a bad precedent, as they do nothing to discourage the looting of antiquities and their subsequent sale to those who can claim to be 'good faith purchasers' once their activities become known.

Another consequence of the looting of the palaces at Nineveh and Nimrud has been the destruction of entire sculptured slabs when their central portions were cut out to make them more attractive to potential purchasers. After these fragments were mounted on bases without concern for their original orientation, their original context was further obscured. For example, a fragment depicting two archers shooting toward a city on top of a mountain was mounted so that the archers shoot horizontally rather than upward toward the citadel as in their original orientation (Russell, 1997, figs 16-18).

Sales of unprovenanced antiquities from Iraq at auction houses in New York and London have virtually ceased since the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483 lifted sanctions on Iraq in 2003. Much of the trade seems to have moved instead to the Internet where sales of objects from Iraq have continued at the same pace as earlier. An internet search by Brodie (2008: pp. 69-70) on 5 December 2006 uncovered 55 websites offering 78 cylinder seals and 147 cuneiform tablets for sale, although many sites claimed that this was only a portion of their inventory. In contrast to large auction houses, it is particularly difficult to track internet dealers as they can easily close down their websites and reopen under a different name whenever their illegal activities are exposed.

One ploy frequently employed by sellers of antiquities to give their activities the appearance of legality is the creation of a false provenance, i.e., history of ownership. For example, Johnson (2005: slide 12) illustrates three cuneiform texts that were offered by Bonhams in a sale on 14 May 2003. The tablets were said to be “from a private collection formed in the Middle East in the 1960s and taken to Canada when the owners immigrated there in 1970, then imported into this Country (i.e., the UK) in 1990”. This attempt to cover up the illegality of the sale was uncovered by scholars at the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI) of the University of California, Los Angeles when they discovered that three of the tablets previously had been offered for sale through Amman, Jordan in September 2000.

Guennol Lioness

The sale by Sotheby's Auction House in New York on 5 December 2007 of an ancient (ca. 3000-2800 BC) statue of a 'Standing Lioness Demon' (known today as the Guennol Lioness) highlights the exorbitant amount of money that antiquities whose provenance is not flawed by questions of illegal acquisition can fetch (Sotheby's, 2007). This

miniature (8.26 cm high) stone sculpture had been expected to fetch \$14-18 million; but presumably because the sculpture could be documented as far back as 1931, five years prior to the time that Iraq passed its national ownership law, the piece sold for a record \$57,161,000. According to Sotheby's, the sculpture was "said to have been found at a site near Baghdad" and soon afterward, in 1931, purchased by Joseph Brummer, a New York art dealer. Brummer sold the piece to Alastair Bradley and Edith Martin in 1948, who loaned it to the Brooklyn Museum of Art, where it was on display until its purchase by an anonymous English bidder at the Sotheby's auction. Although the phrase "said to have been found at" normally raises questions about the legality of purchasing an object, the fact that this piece almost certainly left Iraq before 1936 surely enhanced its value—a clear demonstration that legislation against the trade in illicit antiquities is having an effect, despite the protestations of some dealers and collectors to the contrary. Now that the piece is in the hands of a private individual, it may be a very long time before members of the general public will have another opportunity to view it.

Who is to Blame?

Many factors contributed to the breakdown of security and the looting of sites and cultural institutions in Iraq. Although this article has focused on the looting of archaeological material, other places such as libraries, archives, art museums, and religious buildings suffered as well. The Baathist regime's bloody suppression of the Shi'a uprising in 1991 completely alienated those who lived in the southern part of the country. In addition, the no-fly zone imposed by the UN after the Gulf War made it difficult for Saddam to control that part of the country. When counterproductive UN sanctions led to greater poverty and the cessation of work by foreign archaeologists, peasants in the countryside readily took to looting archaeological sites, both as a means of livelihood and as a way to retaliate against Saddam Hussein,

who liked to portray himself as the direct descendant of ancient Sumerian and Babylonian kings (Farchakh-Bajjaly, 2008: pp. 54-55; Russell, 1997). The closing of Iraq's regional museums after the Gulf War also took away opportunities for education of local populations about the importance of preserving their past.

Yet, archaeologists also must share in the blame. While they trained local peasants to excavate sites, they never gave them proper instruction in the importance of scientific archaeological excavation or the preservation of their cultural heritage. Instead, archaeologists created a cadre of looters who knew exactly what objects were most appreciated by the archaeologists for whom they had worked and thus most valuable on the antiquities market (Fisk, 2007). Furthermore, archaeologists and scientists willing to authenticate unprovenanced antiquities encouraged the illicit trade since their scholarly opinions add greatly to the value of an object (Gibson, 1997). For this reason, the Code of Ethics of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) states that members should "refuse to participate in the trade in undocumented antiquities and refrain from activities that enhance the commercial value of such objects". The publication policy of the AIA's scholarly journal, the *American Journal of Archaeology* (*AJA*), also states, "The *AJA* will not serve for the announcement or initial scholarly presentation of any object in a private or public collection acquired after December 30, 1973, unless its existence is documented before that date, or it was legally exported from the country of origin" (AIA, 2009).¹⁸

Museums that acquire unprovenanced antiquities by purchase, loan or bequest also are to blame. It was only in 2001 that the Association of

¹⁸ In this context, undocumented is taken to mean any object that is "not documented as belonging to a public or private collection before 30 December 1970, when the AIA Council endorsed the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Property, or which have not been excavated and exported from the country of origin in accordance with the laws of that country".

Art Museum Directors finally modified its Code of Ethics to address this situation (AAMD, 2001). The code now reads, "A museum director should not knowingly acquire or allow to be recommended for acquisition any object that has been stolen, removed in contravention of treaties or international conventions to which the United States is a signatory, or illegally imported in the United States". Yet the activities of dealers, collectors and museums that have participated in the illicit antiquities market are too extensive to be recounted here. Suffice it to say that without their complicity, the looters and their middlemen would not have access to markets to sell their goods.¹⁹

The Future

In October 2008, the US Department of State announced the award of \$13 million to International Relief and Development (IRD), a charitable NGO, to implement the Iraq Cultural Heritage Development Project. Funds will be provided to establish a Conservation and Historic Preservation Institute in Erbil, to improve the Iraq National Museum, and to implement a professional development programme for employees of various cultural organisations in Iraq (US DOS, 2008b). More recently, Italy announced that it was prepared to help Iraq train a new police force whose goal is to halt the illegal trading of antiquities from Iraq (ANSA, 2009).

On 23 February 2009, the Iraq National Museum reopened with much fanfare, as well as much controversy when officials from the Ministry of Culture boycotted the event, saying that the security was still inadequate and that much of the museum was still in disarray. Only eight of the 26 exhibition halls were opened, and only photographs, not the real objects from the Nimrud Treasure were on display (Myers,

¹⁹ Several recent accounts of the trade in illicit antiquities include Atwood (2004), Bogdanos (2005b), Renfrew (2006), Watson (2007) and Waxman (2009).

2009). Only dignitaries were allowed into the heavily guarded museum complex for the opening, and it is certain that this will be the case for some time to come.

What we have witnessed in Iraq is 'the murder of culture', as Walter Alva, a Peruvian archaeologist has called the looting of archaeological sites in his own country (Doole, 2000). Likening looting to the murder of animal, Alva added, "If you love culture, don't buy antiquities... animals can always be raised and reproduced, but not culture. Once the history of humanity is gone, it's gone forever" (Atwood, 2004: pp. 53-54).

Only with a change in attitude of those in countries that are the major markets for antiquities will finally be able to prevent what happened in Iraq from taking place again. We all must cease being 'myopic consumer[s] of heritage', as Russell (1997) has so aptly termed it. In addition, those in so-called 'source' countries also must do a better job of protecting and preserving their own cultural heritage, both for themselves and for the entire world, if we are to avert tragedies such as the looting of Iraq in the future.²⁰

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²⁰ Rothfield (2009) argues that since the international community has not learned from what took place in Iraq, it is likely that the destruction of cultural property will occur in future conflicts. This has, in fact, already happened during the recent conflict in Gaza, where the Antiquities Museum of Gaza was badly damaged and major damage to archaeological sites is likely to be revealed once proper assessments have been completed (Feldinger, 2009).

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Plates

- Pl. 1: Looters at Isin, January 2004. Photograph courtesy of John Russell.
- Pl. 2: The Bassetki Statue base as found in a cesspool in Baghdad, coated with axle grease. Photograph courtesy of John Russell.
- Pl. 3: Remains of the bull-headed Lyre of Ur after looting of the Iraq National Museum. Photograph courtesy of John Russell.

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REVIEW ARTICLE:

Sri Lanka's War Inflicted Economy

Nimal Sanderatne

Saman Kelegama, *Development Under Stress: Sri Lankan Economy in Transition*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, India, 2006.

There is a current tendency to downplay the impact of the war on the economy. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka's estimate of economic growth at 7.4 per cent for 2006 is put forward as evidence that the economy has not been scathed much. The notion that the economy has developed a resilience to face up to war conditions is also advanced by sycophants and those politically biased towards the incumbent government. It is argued that the economy could achieve even higher rates of economic growth despite the continuing war. There is also a wave of thinking that the economy and the war are two fronts where battles have to be fought simultaneously.

These theories lack an understanding of economic growth, the sources of growth in the economy, the impact of the war on several key sectors, the effects of war expenditure on the public finances, monetary policy and the balance of payments. In fact the dire economic consequences are even more than all these, as it is cancer eating into the body politic and affecting the country's political economy and future economic growth. It has done this damage for the past 25 years, is one of the most important causes for the present economic difficulties and a

serious constraint to rapid economic and social progress of the country.

In this context Saman Kelegama's recent book *Development Under Stress: Sri Lankan Economy in Transition* has a special significance. It gives an assessment and analysis of how the economy has had to perform under the stresses and strains of a war. Three chapters of the book deal with the management of the economy in the stressful conditions of a costly war. It places the economic impact of the war in proper perspective. Kelegama argues that, "The 17 year war was costly and deterred foreign and local investment, reduced tourist arrivals, caused immense damage to the country's infrastructure, and above all led to many deaths and brain drain of skilled labour". The book captures both direct and indirect costs of the war. He suggests that the war may have cost at least the equivalent of twice Sri Lanka's 1996 GDP. Such an estimate has several problems and its precision may be contested. Nonetheless, treated as an ordinal measure, it places the severity of the war's impact on the economy in perspective.

He elucidates the economic consequences of the war in these words:

The costly war, among others, led to large budget deficits (exceeding 8 per cent of GDP) during the 1990s. Large scale domestic and foreign borrowing to finance the budget deficit accumulated as large public debt over the years, so much so that by the year 2000, public debt to GDP ratio had exceeded 100 per cent. In 2001, the country faced an economic crisis consequent to the war escalating and international oil price hike in the year 2000.

This broad impact of the war on the economy is what must be recognised even more than its impact on specific areas, sectors and sub-sectors of the economy that have previously been recognised as being adversely affected by the war—areas such as fisheries and

cultivation of food crops in the North and East, tourism, foreign investment and economic and social infrastructure.

He points out very specifically the impact of the war on foreign investment:

The uncertainty created by the war was the main deterrent to foreign investment--which acted as a catalyst to the growth process. Some examples would suffice to indicate the missed opportunities. Two major electronic multi-national companies--Motorola and Harris Corporation--had finalised plans to establish plants in the Export Processing Zone prior to the change in the political climate in 1983. Harris Corporation even started building a plant with an initial employment capacity of 1,850 workers. Both these companies withdrew from Sri Lanka after the 1983 ethnic riots. Motorola shifted to Malaysia and Harris Corporation went elsewhere leaving a half-built plant in Sri Lanka. Besides these two Corporations, Marubeni, Sony, Sanyo, Bank of Tokyo, Chase Manhattan Bank were in the pipeline to invest in Sri Lanka in the early 1980s. All these big companies decided against investing in Sri Lanka after 1983. Sri Lanka lost a major opportunity of taking a big leap forward because, if these investments had materialised, they would have given a strong signal to other large multi-national companies to start industries in Sri Lanka.

He points out that the

...missed opportunities were many" owing to the ethnic conflict. He contends that "1983 was a turning point in regard to missing big international investors. All hopes of becoming the new investment centre of Asia faded away. In the mid-1980s Sri Lanka missed the chance of attracting some portion of the Japanese surplus due to the war related uncertain political climate. The South East Asian economies really made a kick-start from this recycling surplus during the mid-1980s.

He cites several other examples of missed opportunities for attracting foreign investment as well. There can be little doubt that the security

situation is the single most important explanatory variable in the country being unable to attract substantial foreign direct investment. Tax concessions, financial incentives and ministers going hither and thither in praise of Sri Lanka as an attractive venue can hardly offset this drawback. The fact that the Japanese, the highest aid givers and an important trading partner, are not large investors in Sri Lanka is a telling example, as it is counter to the usual practice of aid, trade and investment moving in tandem.

Another significant impact of the war is on tourism. Despite all the rhetoric of increasing tourists, the fact remains that the security situation is the serious impediment to the progress of tourism. In 2007 we faced this problem seriously. Despite the statistics of tourist arrivals hotels are empty for no other reason than security. Kelegama's assessment of the impact on tourism in historical perspective is as follows:

The conflict also acted as an impediment to attracting more tourists to Sri Lanka (the third largest foreign exchange earner to the nation after garment exports and remittances). Sri Lanka's tourist industry that started picking up since the early-1970s peaked, as stated earlier, just before the 1983 ethnic riots... since then the tourist arrivals have been on the decline until the mid-1990s when there was an improvement. Sri Lanka is perhaps the only country in the world that offers the unique biodiversity of sea beaches, mountains, ancient cities and wild life within short travelling distance. Many tourists attach a premium for this uniqueness; unfortunately Sri Lanka has not been able to make use of this because of the ongoing conflict. Late starters in tourism such as Mauritius which has less biodiversity to offer was able to overtake Sri Lanka in terms of tourist arrivals per annum by the early-1990s (annual tourist arrivals in Mauritius in mid-1990s was 450,000 compared to the Sri Lankan average of 380,000).

An interesting point made by Kelegama is that the ethnic crisis could have been managed better through economic policies. He cites the example of Malaysia, where good governance and better economic

management, "has been quite successful, compared to Sri Lanka, in maintaining harmony between the two ethnic groups--52 per cent Malays and 37 per cent Chinese at the time of Independence—via fine tuning economic policies".

He makes the interesting point that "Sri Lanka's liberalisation was almost halted during 1983-88". Consequently new-comers to liberalisation in South Asia were able to catch up with Sri Lanka's lead and reduce its chances of becoming a hub.

This review article has thus far focused on the sections of the book that demonstrate how the ethnic conflict and war resulted in serious consequences to the economy and resulted in the government having to grapple with serious macro-economic instabilities. This aspect would be of particular interest to readers of this journal. However, *Development Under Stress* makes a much broader contribution to the understanding of Sri Lanka's economic development experience. It attempts to answer the question: What went wrong in Sri Lanka? The book provides a useful analysis of both the country's economic development experience, as well provides an analysis of the most problematic issues.

The book is divided into five parts. The first part, titled "Fifty Years of Economic Development and Challenges," places the subsequent parts of the book in perspective and dwells on the theme of the book "development under stress". It brings to bear a political economy perspective to the economic development experience. One of the important stresses or constraints he identifies is that placed by political considerations in economic policy formulation and implementation that resulted in weak leadership for economic decision-making.

The book begins with an overview on why Sri Lanka failed to live up to its initial promise based on much more favourable conditions than

those prevailing in most other Asian countries. Kelegama points out that at the time of regaining her Independence in 1948 the country had the highest per capita income outside Japan in Asia. However, by 1997, South Korea had a per capita income that was 14 times higher than Sri Lanka and Thailand's per capita was four times higher while Indonesia had marginally overtaken Sri Lanka. He cites Colin Clark, the Oxford statistician who visited Sri Lanka in 1947 observing that bar Japan, Sri Lanka had the highest per capita income in Asia. Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaysia had expressed in 1956 that his aim was to equal the economic performance of Sri Lanka. Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore had stated, on his return from Cambridge after pursuing higher studies, that Singapore would be doing extremely well if it could imitate Sri Lanka. This celebrated statement turned so sour that Lee Kuan Yew later used the slogan: "Don't let what happened to Sri Lanka happen to Singapore". Donald Snodgrass of Harvard titled the lecture he gave at the Central Bank of Sri Lanka seminar to celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of Independence, "Missed Opportunities".

The three important constraints Kelegama identifies are the welfare state that led to excessive politicisation, export pessimism and the ethnic conflict. He observes that:

The Sri Lankan development story since Independence is an uneven one characterised by slow adjustment to internal and external shocks, missed opportunities, and policy errors. Unlike some East Asian success stories, the Sri Lankan economy progressed over the years under a stressful environment. Three key factors could be identified. First, the environment associated with the welfare state (that) led to a highly politicised electorate. This electorate did not permit Sri Lanka to disassociate itself from the welfare state culture for most of the post-Independence period. The welfare measures were maintained more on the basis of competitive political pressures rather than sustainable economic growth.

Second, Sri Lanka was also stricken by the doctrinaire of export pessimism and delayed moving towards an export-oriented strategy

by overstaying as a closed economy for nearly two decades. When economic liberalisation began in 1977 it was a late comer to the export-led industrial world and thus could not stage a significant break-through like the East Asian Tigers. Third, concerted effort was not made to address the ethnic animosity between the two major communities that erupted time and again... and culminated as a civil war in North/East Sri Lanka during 1983-2001. This conflict substantially disturbed the economic management process”.

He has also brought out the stresses arising from the rapid population growth that constrained investment. Perhaps one could add a few other constraints such as social and cultural values that are inimical to growth and a foreign aid dependency syndrome.

Nonetheless, Kelegama is mindful of the human development achievements of the country and points out that “Despite the stressful environment, there were some achievements about which Sri Lanka is well known internationally. Sri Lanka came to be known as an exception among developing countries in improving physical quality of life”. He also refers briefly to the international controversy on whether there was a trade-off between human development attainments and economic growth.

Kelegama identifies and discusses the factors that impeded economic progress. He argues that Sri Lanka’s failure to achieve higher economic growth was due to an “inability to get out of inter-locking initial conditions of the 1950s till late 1970s due to political economy factors rooted in the country’s five year electoral cycle: policy errors—where postponement of crucial policy initiatives until a crisis engulfed the economy being a hall-mark, and missed opportunities”.

It is essential to underscore Kelegama’s thesis that the country’s development experience demonstrates, “the limitations of the State-led direct method of enhancing social welfare, and the ability of a liberal

trade and investment regime to generate reasonably high growth rates even in a chaotic war situation in a developing economy". This position is unfortunately still not appreciated by certain shades of political opinion and many sections of the population that are stuck with moribund ideologies. He asserts that Sri Lanka's adoption of a closed economy during the late-1950s to mid-1970s period was not appropriate for a small economy with a limited market and limited natural resources for industrialisation.

The discussion on preconditions for achieving NIC (Newly Industrialised Countries) status stresses the lack of political will and the range of policies needed to achieve higher levels of industrialisation and economic growth as fundamental factors for the inability to achieve the goal. It demonstrates that increased domestic savings as well as increased foreign investment of a significant amount are needed to generate the desired high rates of growth to resolve the country's economic and social problems of poverty and employment that is discussed in part 5 of the book. Various scenarios of savings, investments, and capital-output ratios and the required strategy to enhance investment and increase the efficiency of capital to achieve higher economic growth are presented in the book.

An important position taken by Kelegama is that strong political leadership proved crucial in the second wave of reforms during 1989-93. He is also careful to point out that governance issues were very questionable although economic reforms were implemented by a strong political leadership. Kelegama contends that the state in Sri Lanka is not strong, not well coordinated and is neither cohesive nor disciplined in organisational terms. Although this may be so, it is arguable whether a strong political leadership necessarily ensures the correct economic decision-making. The strong executive presidency has not led to the resolution of the ethnic problem, the abandonment of

wasteful expenditure, proper prioritisation of expenditure or the pursuance of stringent fiscal discipline and good governance.

He argues that the remedial measures that were implemented in response to the economic crisis in the turbulent years 2000-01 were inadequate. Kelegama contends that “the IMF package started falling apart and macro-economic management had gone haywire by end 2001 (budget deficit was 10.8 per cent of GDP and the rate of inflation was 14.2 per cent) with the economy receding to negative growth (-1.5 per cent) for the first time since Independence”. He contends that “Although external and internal shocks contributed to the situation, the economy receiving directives according to political imperatives aggravated the situation”.

The new government that came into power in 2002 “had to rescue the IMF package, instil some order in macro-economic management, and implement reforms”. The rescuing of the economy from this crisis was a staggering task that could not be accomplished without a cessation in the war and relative peace. Hence the peace package was adopted in the hope of providing an economic dividend through aid mobilisation and revival of the economy. However, as it turned out, the peace process has stalled and the costs of the war are increasing.

The fourth part of the book is on industrialisation, agricultural policy and the much misunderstood subject of food security. Kelegama who has written extensively on industrialisation over the last 15 years gives an overview of industrialisation in Sri Lanka and looks at the take-off of the ready-made garment industry and the challenges it faces in detail. The discussion on industrialisation and the garments industry are in-depth analyses and provide useful insights on past efforts at industrialisation as well as provide perspectives on future industrial policy.

The book also contains an overview of Sri Lanka's agriculture that focuses on the issues of WTO related market reform and agricultural diversification. The discussion on the food security situation shows that although at the macro-level food security is maintained, it is a serious problem at the micro-level as the average dietary energy intake in Sri Lanka falls below minimum requirements of 2,200 calories with 33 per cent of women and 37 per cent of men suffering chronic energy deficiency and 33 per cent of children under five years being malnourished. He points out that food and nutritional inadequacies are concentrated among the poor, children, and the population displaced by the war for nearly two decades and suggests the strategies that are required to address the problems.

The final part of the book deals with two of the most important and intractable problems of the economy—employment and poverty. The chapter on employment discusses the issue of structural adjustment and employment creation, and deals with some of the popular prejudices on this issue. It shows that most of the employment generation during the 1977-88 period was not from liberalisation policies but rather from state-led programmes. It examines Sri Lanka's employment generation under the structural adjustment programme during 1977-94 in order to highlight the problems of employment generation in the economy. Nonetheless, during 1989-94, liberalisation measures were more effective in generating employment with facilitation measures provided by the state.

He points out that unemployment has been an explosive issue in Sri Lanka. Two youth insurrections in 1971 and 1988/89 and the youth uprising in North/East Sri Lanka have their root causes among other factors, on unemployment. Kelegama argues that there are a number of characteristics in the Sri Lankan labour market that act as impediments for employment creation. Among others, three hypotheses are noteworthy. First, the skill mismatch hypothesis which

argues that the type of skills produced by the Sri Lankan education system is not suitable for the job market. Second, is the job queuing hypothesis which argues that Sri Lanka's unemployment is voluntary because youth wait for public sector jobs and in the interim depend on family income. Third, it is argued that unemployment is due to the rigidities in the labour market resulting from outdated labour legislation that prevents smooth labour exit. Kelegama asserts that all three explanations, among others, are well-founded and that although Sri Lanka managed to reduce unemployment to a single digit level in the late 1990s, some of the key impediments of the labour market still prevail. He is of the view that until these are addressed, the forces of liberalisation will find it difficult to create the required jobs in the market.

The last chapter of the book on poverty points out that Sri Lanka's population below the poverty line has fallen from 29 per cent in 1980 to 23 per cent by late-1990s. However, the level is high compared to South East Asian countries. Besides, there are regional variations on poverty and income distribution that is highly skewed in favour of top two deciles of the population which are concentrated in the big cities. This approaches poverty from a macro-economic perspective. It shows that poverty has declined little during the 1990s and that it is characterised by regional and sectoral variation with marginal decline in income inequality. Despite a number of safety nets for the lower income groups, it points out that the poor seem to be highly vulnerable to income fluctuations. It looks at the poverty-related strategies and the political economy factors that are influencing them and concludes that the impediments for the effective operation of poverty-related strategies are both structural and political. He argues that due to the prevailing macro-economic situation, the government is reluctant to undertake reforms that may be costly in the short-run and advocates the de-politicisation of the poverty programme, and structural and market reform that he believes will go a long way in making the

existing poverty-related programmes more effective and in reducing poverty in Sri Lanka.

The current trend of the government to soft peddle the impact of the ethnic conflict is of serious concern. The inability to put forward a reasonable and acceptable solution to the problem portends serious dangers to the political economy. Kelegama's analysis is a reminder that the ethnic conflict and the war has been perhaps the most important single factor for retarding the country's economic development. It is also a work that places the reasons for inadequate growth and missed opportunities on misdirected economic policies, lack of a proper political leadership and internal and external economic stresses.

Nimal Sanderatne, a social scientist and agricultural economist, has been teaching at the Post-graduate Institute of Agriculture (PGIA) and the Department of Agricultural Economics and Business Management of the University of Peradeniya for the last ten years.

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We are searching for a diverse type of academic writing: main articles, review articles, or notes on research in progress, review essays, reports on conferences, symposia and workshops. Since the journal is multidisciplinary, contributions should be accessible to a diversity of readers and therefore overtly technical and specialised language should be avoided. Submissions are accepted throughout the year and should be made by email to the Editor, *IJESS* at editor.ijess@ices.lk and to Managing Editor, *IJESS* at icesky@sltnet.lk or iranga.silva1@gmail.com.

Instruction for authors and the required Style Guide for submissions can be found on the ICES website www.ices.lk together with the Author Agreement document that needs to be duly-filled and submitted together with your article. All submissions will be acknowledged prior to confirmation of their publication. The copyright of all material published will be vested in *International Journal of Ethnic and Social Studies (IJESS)* by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES). The authors may use the articles elsewhere after publication provided that prior permission is obtained from International Centre for Ethnic Studies. Near-final page proofs of all submissions to be published are sent to the author, who must return them within the specified deadline to *IJESS*. Requests for

amendments must be kept to a minimum and the Editor's decision will be final. Final page proofs are checked by the *IJESS* editorial team.

The review process normally takes two to three months. Authors are encouraged to provide a list of suggested reviewers (with institutional affiliations and email addresses), though the Editor uses them at his/her discretion. All submissions will be anonymously reviewed by at least two referees. Authors of articles and review essays will receive two free copies of the journal and book review authors will receive one copy.

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ICES PUBLICATIONS

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