

2010

# JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY OF SRI LANKA



*New Series, Volume LVI*

*The object of the Society is to institute and promote inquiries  
into the History, Religions, Language, Literature, Arts,  
Sciences and Social Conditions of the present and  
former peoples of the Island of Sri Lanka and  
connected cultures*

PUBLISHED BY THE  
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**EDITOR**

R.P.T. Jayawardana  
BA Hons. (Cey.) PhD (London)

**Publication Committee**

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## CONTRIBUTORS OF ARTICLES

**M.U.de Silva**, MA, (Vidyāṅkāra), PhD (Vidyāṅkāra)  
Emeritus Professor (University of Ruhuna,  
Sri Lanka)

**Pradeep Jayatunga**, Attorney-at-Law, Diploma in  
Archaeological Heritage (University of  
Kelaniya, Sri Lanka)

**Prasad Fonseka**, BSc (Colombo)

**Sirimal Ranawella**, BA (Hons.) (Cey), PhD (Lond), D Lit.  
(Honoris Causa) Emeritus Professor,  
(University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka)

**W.I. Siriweera**, BA (Hons.) (Cey.), PhD (London), D Lit.  
(Honoris Causa), D Sc (Honoris Causa),  
Emeritus Professor

**K.N.O. Dharmadasa**, BA (Hons.) (Cey.), MA (York,  
U.K), PhD Monash, Emeritus  
Professor, (University of Peradeniya)

**Susantha Goonatilake**, BSc (Eng.) (Cey.), AMIEE (Lond.),  
BA (Soc.) (Cey.), MA, PhD (Exeter),  
Fellow, World Academy of Arts and  
Sciences



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## **Resurgence of Buddhism during the Colonial Period**

by

**M.U. de Silva**

At the time when the Portuguese landed in Sri Lanka in 1506, Buddhist activities were concentrated in the South West coastal belt of the Island. Under the patronage of king Parākramabāhu VI (1415-1467) and the encouragement provided by the leading ministers, there was a remarkable efflorescence in the literary arts among scholar monks. Ecclesiastical colleges headed by famous luminaries at Vijayabā Pirivena at Totagamuwa, Padmāvathie Pirivena at Vidāgama, Gatāra Pirivena at Kelaniya, Sri Ghānānanda Pirivena at Vidāgama, Sunetrādevi Pirivena at Pepiliyāna, Irugal Kulatilake Pirivena at Mulgirigala flourished and enriched the creative talents of scholar monks like Totagamuwe Sri Rāhula, Kēragala Vanaratane, Vidāgama Maitriya, Mangala Sangharāja and Vēttēve. The efficient maintenance of these centres of learning and the excellence achieved by the creative and scholarly works of the period illustrate the near total dependence of learning and literary activity on the fortunes of Buddhasāsana.

The political anarchy that followed the death of Parākramabāhu VI and the fragmentation of the Kingdom, and the conflicts among the rival fractions of the royalty for power and supremacy continued unabated giving way to the establishment of the Portuguese hold in the littoral. The onslaught of Catholic missionaries unleashed under the patronage of Portuguese Generals and the willful destruction and plunder of Buddhist vihāras, pirivenas and Hindu kovils from 1574 onwards and the proscription of local religious practices when the Portuguese became the masters of the Kōtte Kingdom with the demise of Rājāsinha of Sitāwaka in 1593, forced the Bhikkhus either to seek shelter in the hilly areas under local rulers and chieftains, or to get disrobed. Buddhist



activities now shifted to areas under local rulers around Kegalle, Sabaragamuwa and Kandy.

The Franciscan missionaries were busy in proselytizing the subjects to the Christian faith through the establishment of schools and churches, a step by no means fair. There, followers became nominal Christians due to lack of proper guidance of the friars and continued secretly to follow Buddhist and Hindu rites. Later the Franciscans were joined in by the Jesuits, Dominicans and Augustinian missionaries in propagating the new faith. In conversion, the greatest pressure was exercised on those who were nearest to the Portuguese authority, who constituted the vital link between the Portuguese authorities and the people of Kōtte. Everyone or almost every one, who had a share in the administration or aspired to share in the administration, joined to embrace Christianity. For the rest of the converted community, it was a sure means of exemption from some of the taxes due to the government such as “marala” or death duty. To be a Christian was also to receive preferential judicial treatment, specially the right of inheritance of the property of the parents and also to access new prosperous vocations under Portuguese rule.

The close association of the monarchy with the sangha was vital for the maintenance of Buddhist institutions and in internal matters of “purification” of the sangha in a crisis. At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, there were differences in attitude of the royalty, as for example between Vidâgama and Vijayabā pirivenas. Buddhist vinaya provided a framework for self rule of monks in the sangha organization. But, it was through the surveillance of the royalty that kept Buddhist organizations in order. Once the guardianship of the monarchy was removed, the collapse of the sangha was inevitable under Portuguese threats. So the sangha deprived of all support in the littoral either got disrobed or went into the interior parts of the island for safety. With the gradual decline of the orthodox form of Buddhism, there was seen a growing popularity of the cult of deities who received veneration as supra



mundane forces capable of providing worldly benefits to their adherents and this practice got rooted in the society of the littoral.

In this context, was the emergence in the littoral of a resourceful, energetic and a dedicated set of Bhikkhus whom later generations identified as *Ganinnanses*. They were clad in white robes and observed *dasasil*, looked after the destroyed Buddhist monasteries and attended to the community needs of the Buddhists<sup>1</sup>. They were somewhat similar to the category of Achar in Cambodia. The *Ganinnanses* collected the classical Buddhist texts that had been salvaged during the period of destruction of the Pirivenas and ancient temples and had been passed in to a class of relatives who did not have a knowledge of the importance of these texts. They studied them with their disciples and compiled annotations. Some of them moved from teacher to teacher in search of advanced knowledge. The study and custody of canonical literature and knowledge of Pāli, Sanskrit and medieval Sinhala languages were now confined to a narrow circle of *Ganinnanses*, *Vedamahatmayas* (the local physicians) and a few schoolmasters.

These *Ganinnanese* were instrumental in keeping the Pāli, Sanskrit and Elu knowledge alive and they managed to train a sizable group of *Ganinnanes* needed for their avowed object to protect Buddhism. They wondered as a group for their safety while they engaged in their mission. They conducted temporary image houses in places where the famous viharas had been functioning for centuries and conducted occasional *bana* preaching and *pirith* chanting on *poya* days where the Buddhist congregation assembled and attended to Buddhist rites. When the missionaries got information of such dealings, they rushed to these places with soldiers and destroyed the temporary constructions. In such circumstances *Ganinnanes* had to move in to safe places.<sup>2</sup>

Portuguese direct rule in the Kotte kingdom was the most turbulent period in the history of the littoral. There were ten major rebellions within the short period of their rule from 1593-1638. They were spontaneous uprisings in which<sup>3</sup> *Ganinnanses* would



have played a major role. *Ganinnanses* would have perhaps encouraged the turbulent spirit of the locals against the cruelty of the Portuguese soldiers. The epicenter of these rebellions was the heart of the former Sitāwaka Kingdom and once when such an uprising took place, it spread soon to other areas in the littoral. These rebels attacked and destroyed churches built on the premises of former vihāras and devālayas.<sup>4</sup>

When the Dutch succeeded the Portuguese, their surveillance was mainly concentrated in the cinnamon belt extending from Chilaw to Matara along the coast and the interior regions. The hilly areas became safe places for *Ganinnanses*, especially around Galle, Matara and Hambantota districts. They attended to the community needs of the Buddhists in open violation of the orders of the Dutch rulers. They demanded the freedom to exercise their religious observances. There was also pressure from the Kandyan monarch for the free exercise of religious observances for the people of the littoral when the Dutch envoys met the king in order to obtain cinnamon peeling rights in the Kandyan hills. The Dutch officials and missionaries followed the same pattern of oppression. In these circumstances, the Batavian authorities made an independent survey of the situation in 1704, and on the advice of this secret mission, permission to practice local religions were permitted, provided it did not affect the loyalty of the citizen to Dutch rule<sup>5</sup>. *Ganinnanses* now got the opportunity to shed their white robes aside and adorn yellow robes thereafter.

Under these adverse conditions which continued for nearly two centuries in the littoral, the Buddhist order reached its lowest ebb. No *upasampadā* or higher ordination ceremony was held. Bhikkhus were highly disorganized and the *vinaya* rules were not cared for and a high degree of “secularization” took place. These Bhikkhus who fled to the Kandyan hills became cultivators and landlords. The majority of Bhikkhus became only Bhikkhus in name and led the life style of laymen. This was common to both Kandyan areas and the littoral.



The majority of the kings of the Kandyan hills were involved in the defence of the kingdom from the Portuguese and later the Dutch invasions. The royal palace was subjected to Christian influence as the majority of senior defence officials were foreign military personnel who were either captured and freed but volunteered to serve the Sinhala monarchy. Dona Catherina, the queen of both Vimaladharmasūriya (1591-1602) and Senarath (1602-1635) maintained a healthy relation with the Catholic monks who were involved in the education of the royal princes. The Christian environment continued to prevail in the palace until the accession of Nāyakkar princes to the throne. Then the Hindu Saivite tradition became powerful in the Kandyan Court.

Vested interests of the Bhikkhus reached greater heights in the Kandyan hills. The office of *Vihārādhipati* emerged and the *abajaniyavastu* or indivisible property of the community of sangha became the property of individual monks, who on their deathbed endowed the property of temples and their appurtenances to close relatives ordained under them. The private ownership of templelands emerged and the Sangha became more and more involved in the management of such lands and sometimes got involved in litigation. The Gazetteer of the Central Province refers to an incident in which Kirti Sri Rajasimha (1741-1784) appointed Hantiya Nilame to investigate all disputes regarding lands belonging to the Asgiri vihāre<sup>6</sup>.

Some of the chief monks who were much in royal favour received offices formerly held by laymen. Around 1740, Kobbekaduwa Ganebadāra, the chief incumbent of Poyamalu vihāra at Kandy held the office of Basnayake Nilame of the four devālayas in Udunuwara and also the Disāvaship of Puttalam<sup>7</sup>.

The growth of private ownership of temple lands not only undermined the earlier purity of the Buddhasāsana, but also led to the growth of a sectarian movement on caste lines within the community of sangha, a movement unparalleled in the earlier history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka<sup>8</sup>. The conditions that prevailed



in Kandyan society gave rise to an exclusive sect within the sangha, called the *Rajamahaviharadhipatiy* of *goyigama* caste of “good birth”. Admission to this section of the order was from good family or good birth. Gradually, caste differentiation began to infiltrate in to the earlier classless community of sangha.

The sangha as a partial class of veritable landlords, needed an organization by means of which they sought to secure the services needed for themselves and the temples. Out of this necessity arose the system of service tenure pertaining to *vihāragam*; and this system was founded on lines under the existing caste “feudalistic” norms of the state and society. Admission to the sanghahood of *Rajamahavihārādhipathy* became confined to those of good family or good birth. The term good family and good birth became synonymous with “high” caste, a hallmark which emerged due primarily to South Indian caste influences brought by the Nāyakkar kings. In the context of this caste dominated Kandyan society, it was embarrassing for a person of high caste to accord homage and salutation to a sangha considered low caste. The growth of an ecclesiastical manoral system on caste feudalistic principles made matters more difficult for the land owning sangha. Sectarianism on caste lines within the community of sangha was necessary to avoid embarrassment that was caused by social differences within the society.

But this was not the situation in the littoral. Caste consciousness had got weakened due to the establishment of a money economy under western dominance. Due to urbanization and the new avenues of occupation created in the littoral, a new class of moneyed persons from different castes emerged and consequently caste consciousness got weakened. Resourceful energetic intellectuals of different castes were absorbed into the fold of *Ganinnanses* and they continued their struggle for the freedom to exercise their religion.

When a decay set in the Buddha sasana, the Sinhala kings took certain reformative measures including the restoration of



*Upasampadā* or Higher ordination ceremony. The first ever *Upasampadā* ceremony had been held during the reign of Devānampiyatissa (247 B.C.) under the direction of Venerable Mahinda and basic tenants for the purity of the Sanghahood was established. The system continued uninterrupted till the northern part of the Island came under the occupation of the Cola kingdom in 1017. In the chaotic situation that took place, many viharas got destroyed and the learned sangha migrated to India and some to Burma. When Vijayabāhu I (1054-) restored suzerainty, he held the *Upasampadā* ceremony once again in 1096 which continued uninterrupted till the time of Sitavaka Rajasinha. In his sixth regnal year, 1589, Wickramabāhu of Kandy conducted another *Upasampadā* ceremony at Kandy with the assistance of Dhammakitti Thera and 35 other theras. By this time, Christianity had got established in Sri Lanka and the continuous clashes of Kotte, Sitavaka and the Portuguese had further disintegrated the Sanghahood. With this attempt, 355 Bhikkhus were given higher ordination and the Buddhasāsana was restored to its earlier purity. Those who were admitted to higher ordination were personally selected by the king from among the sons of “good” families<sup>9</sup>.

In the meantime Rājasingha died in 1593 and a new Kandyan dynasty was established at Kandy under Vimaladharmasuriya I (1592-1604). The rebellions of Akaragama Appuhami and Edirille Rala were suppressed, and the Portuguese launched a series of attacks against Vimaladharmasūriya. the Portuguese had to abandon these due to mass uprisings in the littoral. In this disturbed condition, many Bhikkhus got disrobed. The purity of the remaining Sangha too got diminished. Vimaladharmasūriya, became a Buddhist to get the support of the Kandyan. He managed to bring the Daladā (Tooth Relic) to Kandy from the Four Korals. In order to restore the Buddhist order, he could not find five higher ordained Bhikkhus in Sri Lanka at the time. Therefore, he had to get down Chanda Vilāsa Kirti Nandi Chakka and ten other Buddhist monks from Rakhangadēsa (in presentday Myanmar). This was the first foreign aided *upasampadā* to be held in Sri Lanka after the restoration of Vijayabāhu in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. The local monks were also selected



from “good” families and were of good birth. The deterioration of the sanghahood continued unabated due to the persistent political turmoil. Senerath, though he was an ex-monk, could not pay due attention to monastic organization. Rajasimha II, who succeeded Senerath was fully occupied with military offensives, first against the Portuguese, and later against the Dutch. When Vimaladharmasūriya II ascended the throne, he took steps to conduct an *upasampadā* ceremony in 1697 with the assistance of Rakkanga monks. The admission to *upasampadā* was once again confined to those sons of good birth. According to *Vimānavastuva* written by Gammulle Ratanapala, thirty three monks owned *vihāragam* and other villages as appurtenance were selected without investigation as to whether they were of good conduct and were conversant with the Dhamma and Vinaya rules, and were admitted to higher ordination. One hundred and twenty were admitted to the Sanghahood as Samaneras in consideration of their vested interests in villages and fields<sup>10</sup>.

In spite of the care and attention extended to the Sangha by royalty in these three *upasampadā* ceremonies, within the one hundred and ten years from 1587 to 1697, the *Buddha sāsana* continued its path of decline and reached its low ebb at the time of Sri Vijaya Rājasimha of the Nāyakkar dynasty. Of these thirty three higher ordained Bhikkhus, only two were instrumental in producing capable students to take a leading role in the purification of the *sasana* in the following years. Of the two, Suriyagoda Kitsirimewan Rajasundara was the *Rājaguru* and *Dhammānusasaka* of king Narendrasinghe, who ordained Vālivita Saranankara who later became prominent in the Buddhist revivalist movement in the Kandyan areas. The other was Kadurupokune Navaratne Buddharakkhita who resided at Tissamaharamaya and produced two able students namely Sitināmaluwe Dhammajoti and Vēhelle Dhammadinna who together with the *Ganinnanses* of the littoral carried the long drawn struggle demanding the free exercise of their religion from the Dutch. Suriyagoda Kitsirimevan Rājasundara was executed for an alleged conspiracy over the Queen with Gascon adikārama.



The prominence given hitherto to Vālivita Saranankara reveals only one aspect of the Buddhist revivalist movement in Sri Lanka. A close examination of the movement leading to the resurgence of Buddhism in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century reveals the culmination of the great struggle carried by *Ganinnanses* for two centuries. The role of Saranankara, we should note has been over emphasized. If the academic attainment of the country was so low and the knowledge of Pāli had reached the lowest ebb, it is very creditable that he could compose the scholarly work *Sararthasangrahaya*. Much Buddhist texts were necessary for consultation in writing such a treatise. It shows that those Buddhist texts were still available and had been systematically composed and studied by his predecessors. The literary awareness continued, though there was some stagnation with the destruction of the ecclesiastical colleges, but the vacuum was rapidly filled in by the *Ganinnanses* who continued throughout the period until it reached a peak in the Kandyan kingdom.

Although the great religious and educational centers of the littoral were destroyed in the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, there were literary works designed to evoke the religious sentiments in the mind of the people. Apart from the literary works of Alagiyavanne, there were other works such as *Vidurajātaka* Kavi composed by an anonymous author with the support of the chieftain Udapola Meda korale; *Padamānavka* Kavi was composed by an author supported by Ōville Atapattu; *Hastipāla Jātakaya* by the son of Dolosdahas korale; *Gaminiekanda Jātakaya* by Yatawatte Liyanameti. They were not the products of outstanding scholarship with a deep understanding of abstruse aspects of Buddhist teachings. They served a very urgent service as a popular medium of religious edification and as a mode of sustaining popular religious culture. What is clearly discernable from the contents of these works is the marked degree of emphasis that was brought to bear on the ethical aspect of Buddhism, a trend perhaps dictated by the times, when re-vitalation of religious interest in the people had become a necessity in order to prevent the national religion lapsing into a state of lethargy, due to turbulent political conditions.



All these writers were laymen, but there were also Bhikku scholars such as Palkumbure Attadassi and Kotthasa Maha Thera. In addition to them, there were Levke Rala and Urugomuwe Rajaguru. All of them would have been probably from the interior provinces where the freedom for exercising their own religion prevailed. The reign of Narēndrasinghe saw much literary activity for it was the period during which flourished such Bhikku scholars such as Sitināmaluwe, Kadiragoda, Ilpangamuve, and Vatanbulawe Maha Thera, besides Vālivita and also scholars like Kulasekare Appuhami, Dodanvela Kivindu, and Wickramasinghe Pandita. What in effect seems to have taken place in the time of Vālivita was not so much of a revival in religious literature, but its climax, begun by these predecessors<sup>11</sup>.

Modern researchers have identified two personalities, Vēhelle Dhammadinna and Vālivita Saranankara as the outstanding personalities in this movement. Much of the research had been based on ignoring the contribution of the innumerable *Ganinnānses* who were in the movement. However, it is difficult to reconstruct chronologically these aspects in detail due to the lack of written detail. These *Ganinnānses* who carried ahead with the knowledge of the Dhamma and the rich Pāli, Sanskrit, and Elu tradition of learning moved from place to place and teacher to teacher in search of higher knowledge. They worked independently of one another and hardly kept records of their dealings. Whatever they compiled has been lost. It is evident that some of these *Ganinnānses* were of encyclopaedic knowledge of the Dhamma and the Vinaya. In their endeavours, they managed to collect the majority of texts written during the Anuradhapura period and also of later years. They studied these texts with their followers, and at the later stage, they were attempting to bring back the Buddhasāsana to earlier purity.

There were many centres of *Ganinnānses* in Galle, Matara, and Hambantota districts, and the Sabaragamuwa Kotavāya, Kasāgala, Mulgirigala, Amangala, Vēhelle, Kahandawa, Tissamaharamaya, Kataragama, Totagamuwa, Pelmadulla,



Galpattāwala, Palābatgala, Kuruvita, Godakavela and Batugedera were some such places.<sup>12</sup> Apart from these, there were places close to the Dutch settlements from which *Ganinnanses* operated. In a crisis, they got the cover of the locals and the Dutch clergy with their few military personnel could not capture them or check Buddhist activities. The dedication of *Ganinnanses* in conducting the many-fold religious rites at the risk of their lives won the heart of the locals. By the middle of the eighteenth century, most of the destroyed vihares had been identified and temporary shelters were being constructed and thousands of devotees flocked to these centres during full moon days. They conducted special *poojas* on important days at the sites. Many *Ganinnanses* in the latter half of the eighteenth century received their education at Kandyan centres.<sup>13</sup>

Buddhism had been mixed with Hinduism for some time. Several Hindu deities were absorbed into the Buddhist pantheon of gods. Devales were constructed in temple premises. Poetry based on Jataka stories were composed for the upkeep of devotion of the lay devotees. Some of the Bhikkhus, like the Kapurālas of devalayas practised exorcism and made offerings to deities as a healing practice on behalf of the sick.<sup>14</sup>

Of the Kandyan *Ganinnānses*, Vālivita Saranankara got royal support in his endeavour to purify the sangha. He established the 1753 *upasampadā* with the royal support of Kirti Sri Rājasinghe. For this *upasampadā* ceremony, Kadurupokune Navaratne Buddharakkhita's two disciples, Sitināmaluwe Dhammajoti and Vēhelle Dhammadinna participated and got the higher ordination. At that time, Vālivita Saranankara was 55 years of age while Sitināmaluwe Dhammajōti was 81 years and Vēhelle Dhammadinna, 74 years old.<sup>15</sup> Sitināmaluwe and Vēhelle had been living in the Kandyan areas associating with Saranankara in his purification movement of the sangha for a considerable period of time. Sitināmaluwe had taught a part of Balavatara, the Pāli grammar, to Saranankara and learnt the other part from Saranankara who learnt it from Levke Rāla. Vēhelle had participated in the



*upasampadā* ceremony with twenty two *Ganinnanses* from Sabaragamuwa and twenty *Ganinnanses* from Mātara district. The list of these *Ganinnanses* compiled through official records and the records available in the ancient vihares, Kirielle Gnānavimala Thero mentions that they were from different districts of Sabaragamuwa and from the Southern provinces<sup>16</sup>. The majority of those who participated from Sabaragamuwa were monks originally hailing from Mātara and Hambantota districts. They were all referred to as *Ganennahe* while Vēhelle was referred to as *Gananayake*. Some of them belonged to the major castes in the area. After the *upasampadā* ceremony, they were instructed to conduct *upasampadā* ceremonies in their own provinces in keeping with the accepted and long followed *vinaya* rules which has been reestablished.

But due to some pressure from a section of the monks in the Kandyan areas,<sup>17</sup> Kirtisri Rājasimha had enforced a *Katikavatta* in 1762 limiting the eligibility of *upasampadā* only to those of *goyigama* caste<sup>18</sup>. He also limited the conferment of *upasampadā* only at Malwatta and Asgiri simas and ordered to summon all those who have been conferred *upasampadā* to Malwatta and Agiriya to examine their suitability.

Due to the energetic campaign of *Ganinnanses* in the littoral, there were several monks who had their higher education at Kandyan pirivenas and fulfilled the requirements for *upasampadā* according to the *vinaya*. According to the *vinaya*, a person should be admitted to higher ordination only after he had been subjected to an examination (*sodhetva pabbajatabbo*), the purpose of this examination was to ascertain whether he is a slave, a debtor or a soldier. No person from these categories, it was thought, would be in a position to follow the holy path with the requisite frame of mind.

The establishment of *upasampadā* in 1753 with the help of Siamese monks was the establishment of a new sect. Earlier though, the *upasampadā* was re-established with Rakkanghadesi monks,



they did not identify themselves as a separate category. The sectarian movement which grew within the Kandyan sangha had restricted the custodianship of vihara *devalagam* to a particular social group which they safeguarded through *gnātisisya paramparava*. The *viharadhipati* or the landed proprietary group of the sangha, seized the opportunity through the conferment of *upasampadā* exclusively to their descendents to save the *vihara devālagam* passing into the hands of others<sup>19</sup>. This was an attempt to turn the *siyam nikaya* into an exclusive sect of monks of Rajamahā vihares. At the head of this institution was Vālivita Saranankara who had now been conferred the sanghanāyakaship and was in charge of all the temples, both of the Malvatta and Asgiriya with all the appurtenances that went with this. Thus, the Siamese sect had established itself as an exclusive group confined to the *goyigama* caste, and assumed the position of a powerful religious institution vested with the ownership of a vast extent of land<sup>20</sup>. Vālivita Saranankara drew up a *Katikāvata* containing rules of conduct of the property of the sangha, which the early *katikāvatas* did not contain. Besides this *katikavata*, Saranankara wrote *anusasana vattōru* or moralizing guidance for the sangha.

With all the efforts of Vālivita Saranankara and the other revivalists of the Kandyan area, the Buddhist order appeared to have continued to be in a state of corruption. According to *Wagegoda Sandesaya* some of the Bhikkhus of the littoral had degenerated to the same extent. They continued to practice exorcism, astrology and medicine and engaged themselves in income earning agricultural pursuits such as keeping poultry and animal husbandry.

This was a period in which rapid changes were taking place in the socio-economic order of the littoral under western colonial powers. The caste-ridden, feudal social order got disturbed and confused and a sizable population was moving away from their traditional homesteads towards the emerging urban settlements in the coastal belt. Cultivation of cash crops like coffee, coconut and



other spices increased the money circulation. The headmen as a class became landed proprietors and their garden products led to steady growth of their wealth. Gradually, this wealthy class imitated a western lifestyle life. Religious tolerance was reestablished and the *Ganinnanses* shed aside their white robes and attired themselves in the traditional yellow robes of Bhikkhus. Several groups of learned and energetic sangha had emerged centering on the ancient temples which came under the Vēhelle fraternity. Vēhelle Dhammadinna is considered as the founder of the *siyam nikaya* in the littoral.

There were other centres of Buddhist revivalism such as Mulgirigala, Kahandava, Kasāgala, Tissamaharamaya areas where *Ganinnanses* lived. They were individually and collectively trying to bring the sangha into its earlier purity. Many of them worked with the Kandyan sangha in establishing the higher ordination and studied at the Kandyan pirivenas which were flourishing due to the energetic and devoted career of Saranankara Sangarāja and his associates. In the littoral, these bhikkhus belonged to different castes. Many of them had reached the age for *upasampadā*. But due to the enforcement of the Kirtisri Rajasingha *Katikāvata* by Malvatta and Asgiriya fraternities and the steps taken by them to examine the social suitability of those Bhikkhus who had received *upasampadā* at different *simas* established in various parts of the littoral they could not get the higher ordination. They questioned the validity of the *katikāvata* and also the purity of the *Siyam upasampadā* itself.<sup>21</sup> The encyclopedic knowledge of some of these Bhikkhus acquired through arduous encounters forced them to question the validity of such an order. Conservative minded *siyam nikāya* sangha identified the sangha of the littoral who were claiming for higher ordination as *nāttansamāgama* – the Company of Losers by way of an insult<sup>22</sup>.

A group of socially minded Bhikkhus who had received the *Siyam upasmpadā* at Kandy decided to hold an *upasampadā* common to all castes at the newly rehabilitated Totagamu Vijyabā



pirivena site. This *upasampadā* ceremony was held in 1773 for the novices who had reached maturity. It was headed by Vagegoda Dhammakusala, who had by then written a *Sandesaya* to king Kirtisri Rājasimha giving a detailed account of the pathetic conditions prevailing in the littoral and requesting him to intervene and restore the sanghahood to its earlier purity. Another section of the Siamese Bhikkhus complained to king Kirtisri against Wagegoda who then summoned Wagegoda to Kandy. On his way, Wagegoda died of dysentery at Kadugannawa. The *Upasampadā* ceremony held at Totagamuwa was not recognised either by the Malvatta and Asgiriya chapters or by the Siamese sect in the littoral.

In 1798, another attempt was made by another group of monks who had received their *upasampadā* at Kandy headed by Induruwe Indrajōti and several other monks. At a ceremony held at Katantota at Tangalle, they performed an *upasampadā* for all the castes. Many Bhikkhus who had completed their education at Kandyan pirivenas were among those who received this *upasampadā*. Like the previous attempt, the Katantote *upasampadā* was not recognised by the Malvatta or Asgiriya chapters. A request was made by Mihiripenne Dhammaratana to the King of Kandy to take necessary steps to redress this situation,<sup>23</sup> but this was not taken into consideration.

The restrictions imposed by the Siamese sect on non *goygama* castes from being admitted to the higher ordination prompted other castes to question the validity of the Siamese sect. The majority of these monks were the direct descendents of *Ganinnanses* who had struggled hard against the colonial powers for the religious freedom and who did not possess landed property or the position of *vihāradhipati* of the reputed vihares. But, they had studied Buddhist texts with their teachers and also had a higher education at Kandyan monastic schools. These non *goyigama* caste intellectuals questioned the validity of the Malvatta and Asgiriya *upasampadā*.



Sangharāja Saranankara and his close associate Tibbatuwāwe Buddharakkhita were charged for complicity in the plot to kill Kirti Sri Rajasingha along with Samanakkodi Nilame and others. They were imprisoned in Kehelwatta in Bimtenna, but later pardoned. Subsequently the Siamese monks who were in Kandy were handed over to the Dutch to be sent back to Siam for their complicity in the plot as *persona-non-grata*. This is revealed by the treaty concluded between Kirti Sri Rajasingha and the Dutch in 1766<sup>24</sup>. A.H. Mirando had remarked that it was indeed ironical that these Siamese monks who came to Sri Lanka for the purpose of assisting the restoration of the Buddhist order, and that too from a country where the Buddhist order was stated to have existed in its best condition, and modeled after the original Sinhalese Order should have been indicted of corrupt practices the like of which it was their aim to eliminate when they came to Sri Lanka to participate in the purification of the Buddhist Order. It is equally ironical that it is the leading monks of Sri Lanka like Vālivita Saranankara who were in the forefront of the revival activity and who had campaigned against the corrupt practices of monks to have come under a similar indictment<sup>25</sup>.

This incident further invigorated the non *goyigama* intellectuals among the monks. They questioned the validity of the *katikāvata* and the appropriateness of the royal decree to debar a section of the community to enter the Buddha sasana which sasana had emerged against the hegemony of Brahmanas in India. Admission to this sect at first was not confined to any particular caste because the monks from all castes actively participated in the revivalist movements, and so, one caste should not be discriminated against another when admission to the *upasampadā* was sought.

As has been stated earlier, there were several groups of Bhikkhus other than the Vēhālla fraternity operating in the littoral. The Vēhālla fraternity remained with the Siamese sect of Kandyan provinces and later became the main body of the Siamese sect in the littoral. The other groups of Bhikkhus after their effort to get



religious equality during the Dutch rule concentrated more on Buddhist studies and educating the newly reconverted congregation from Christianity. Their main role was the collection of Buddhist texts and manuscripts and supervision of copying them through their pupils and attending to the community needs of the devotees. They engaged in discussions with their elders and the exchange the knowledge they obtained with others.<sup>26</sup> Restrictions enforced by the Siamese sect in performing *upasampadā* on non *goyigama* caste monks antagonised them and they viewed that the Siamese sect *upasampadā* was contrary to vinaya rules. They were of the view that the Buddhist Order of earlier purity introduced during the Polonnaruwa period by the Sri Lankan sangha was still prevailing intact in Burma and other South East Asian countries. The best remedy to rectify the Sri Lankan situation was by sending a group of novices – Samanera to a *baddasīma* of one of these countries and get the higher ordination and introduce it back to Sri Lanka. It needed sea transport facilities which was very costly. The Kandyan King could get the services of the Dutch sea transport on the strength of permitting the cinnamon peeling in the Kandyan provinces. But the novices of the littoral could not get the support of the Kandyan King as they were acting contrary to his order.

The restrictions by the Siamese sect on other castes from being admitted to higher ordination motivated the students of Bōwala Dhammananda of the Mulgirigala fraternity.<sup>27</sup> He had three brilliant students belonging to the *Salāgama*, *Karāva* and *Durawa* castes. They all had got their education in the Kandyan provinces and had reached the age of maturity to receive *upasampadā*. Among them, Kataluwe Gunaratana was the son of a *Karāva* local physician who had received *upasampadā* of Totagamuwa and Ketantota but whose validity was not recognized by the Siamese sect. Another student, Mahakerewe Gnānawimala, who was named Gnānawimala by Vālivita Sangarāja himself, had his early education under him but could not get the *upasampadā* as he belonged to the *Salāgama* caste. Being determined to bring back the sangha to its earlier state of a caste-free congregation, he sought the assistance of his rich relatives who were officiating headmen of Mahabadda, and set sail



for Burma in a trading boat with five other novices and a upāsaka in 1798. He received the higher ordination under the tutorship of Mahādhammarājaguru Nanābhivamsa, the Sangharāja of Burma, in Amarapura, at the consecrated boundary Swarnaguhā in 1800. For five years, they studied the doctrines under Burmese tutors and also the Buddhsit traditions including the *pātimokka*, and later, after the higher ordination, they continued studies on the Dhamma and the Vinaya. He returned to Sri Lanka in 1803 with the Chief Monk Aggasara and three others from Burma together with his five companions and upāsaka, all after their ordination.

At a newly constructed *Udakukkhēpasimā* at Māduganga, under the guidance of Agganoora Nayaka Thero and in association with the three other monks of Burma, Gnānastmala and the six other bhikkhus who had accompanied Gnānavimala, to Burma, the first *upasampadā* ceremony in Sri Lanka was held on the full moon day of Vesak 1803. This was the beginning of the Amarapura fraternity established with the guidance of Burmese Chief monks. Thus the long drawn struggle for the establishment of the *upasampadā* common to all sections of Buddhists was achieved.

Gnānavimala was soon followed by his two *saddhivihārikas*, Kataluwe Gunaratana and Attudawe Sri Dhammarakkita, and also by two other groups under Bōgahapitiye Dhammajoti and Kapugama Dhammakkhanda who proceeded to Burma. Having obtained the *upasampadā* they and their companions returned to Sri Lanka, and established separate *upasampadā* ceremonies in consultation with Gnānavimala at Doddanduwa, Devundara, Kosgoda and Dadalla. Their area of activity was within the Christianized south west coastal belt of Sri Lanka. They named the various sections as Amarapura Samāgama with its headquarters at Ambagahapitiya. Due to travelling difficulties later, the decisions were allowed to be taken by them independently in keeping with the accepted *vinaya* rules.

Of these five sections of the Amarapura Samāgama, three were headed by the *Salāgama* caste Bhikkhus while the other two were



headed by a *Karawa* and *Durāwa* caste monks. Their centres of activities were also situated within the areas where these castes were in a majority. The major temples of the day were under the control of the Siamese sect of the littoral, and the Amarapura fraternity found it difficult to work together with them as the new fraternity followed a different way. Therefore, new dwelling places had to be constructed, and devotees volunteered to attend to such constructions. The viharas which thus sprang up under the guidance of the Amarapura Samāgama were comparatively small and had to depend on their devotees.

Practically, every vihāra occupied by the Sangha of the Amarapura Samāgama became small scale educational institutions where Pāli, Sanskrit and Sinhala, were taught to the novices as well as to the village boys together with English and South East Asian languages like Burmese, Siamese and Cambodian. Village temples also catered to the primary needs of the village boys to acquire a knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic and the required cultural habits of the good citizen. The temples where the leading monks dwelt, gradually turned to small *pirivenas* where *Dhamma*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* texts were studied in detail. The Bhikkhus who attained *upasampadā* concentrated more on *vinaya* and *abhidhamma* as their aim was to bring the sangha back to pristine purity.

Re-examination of the existing texts with copies brought from South East Asian countries brought to light many differences in practices and interpretations. This in turn developed into controversies among its own ranks and also outside the fraternity. Simultaneously, all the leading monks of the different sections of the Amarapura Samāgama produced intellectuals of eminence giving way to the foundation of centres of excellence in *vinaya*, *abhidhamma*, and languages like Pāli and Sanskrit within their region.

Hand in hand with the Amarapura Samāgama, the Siam sect of the littoral progressed steadily by producing a group of erudite



scholars. Vēhülle Dhammadinna and Sitināmaluve Dhammajōti ordained by Navaratne Buddharakkhita had been referred to as *ganinnanse* by king Narendrasimha (1687-1739)<sup>28</sup>. Vēhülle and Sitināmaluve were both referred to as *ganinnases* before they were given higher ordination in 1753. but curiously the Siamese *sangaparampārava* claimed their descent from Vēhülle Dhammadinna ignoring Sitināmaluve Dhammajōti. This may be due to the fact that Sitināmaluve was not of *goyigama* caste and was a controversial figure in the disputes which the Kandyan proprietary class of Bhikkhus raised.

Vēhülle Dhammadinna had produced a series of illustrious Bhikkhus who were instrumental in the restoration of most of the Rajamahā vihares that were destroyed by the Portuguese. Among those students, stand Kadurupokune Survannajoti, Kirineliye Ratanajoti, Pallattara Punnasara, Kamburupitiye Gunaratane, Malimbeda Dhammadhara, Dehigaspe Attadassai, Ransegoda Dhammadassi, Agalakada Dhammarakkhita, Kongastenne Dhammapala, Veva Indasara and Ketagoda Ratanajoti. They were instrumental in the restoration of famous Rajamaha vihares from Hambantota to Bentota; and each one produced a series of eminent scholar Bhikkhus who were associated with the Buddhist revival in the littoral with the Amarapura Samāgama. The Vēhülle paramparava had produced eminent scholar monks such as Karatota Dharmarama, Galle Medhankara, Indurare Sumangala, Valane Siddhatta, Kirama Dhammarama, Galagama Attadassi, Ratmalane Dharmaloka and Hikkaduwe Sumangala. With the Amarapura Samāgama they were instrumental in reconverting the majority of the population and educating them by providing religious instruction. Gradually, the educational standards were improved and the novices who were educated in their own temples were given the opportunity to get a higher education at pirivenas in close vicinity. Valāne Siddhatta was among those who gave the impetus for higher Buddhist education by establishing Valāne Siddattārāmaya in 1820s which in turn led to the establishment of Ratmalāne Paramadhammachētiya pirivena in 1839 and later the



Vidyodaya in 1873 and Vidyālankara pirivenas in 1875 which in turn were transformed into two leading universities in Sri Lanka.

The demise of Vālivita Saranankara in 1778 led to a downward trend in the ecclesiastical and educational activities in the Kandyan provinces. The majority of Rajamahavihāras passed on to a group of Bhikkhus who were more concerned with Buddhist temporalities. In the meantime, the revivalist movement in the littoral under the Siyam nikaya and the Amarapura Samāgama flourished and the attention of the novices who sought a higher education moved to the educational institutions in the coastal area. These centers were clustered around the temples where eminent scholar monks of the Siamese sect of the littoral and Amarapura Samāgama dwelled. Among the temples which played a dynamic role in the rejuvenation of Buddhist education during the last few decades of the eighteenth century were Veheragampita temple founded by Kadurupotane Swarnajoti, Pettangahawatta temple started by Bōwala Dhammananda, both at Matara and Pelmadulla Rajamahāvihāraya which and been restored by Galle Medhankara. They belonged to the Siamese sect of the littoral. These viharas developed into small scale higher educational institutions in Pāli, Sanskrit and Sinhala languages and Buddhist studies. Encouraged by the escalating enthusiasm generated by the *ganinnanses* of the past, the monks who studied in these institutions moved from teacher to teacher in the pursuit of the *Dhamma*, *vinaya* and *abhidamma* to bring back the Buddhasasana to its pre-Portuguese state. In this context, the establishment of the Amarapura Samāgama was another landmark in the Buddhist revival. It soon provided a fresh vigour for the increasing enthusiasm.

At a time when these changes were taking place, the Dutch possessions of the littoral of Sri Lanka passed on to the British who did not enforce proselytization to the extent the Portuguese and the Dutch did until Brownrigg assumed the Governorship in 1812. Energetic Bhikkhus could, therefore, reconvert the majority of the congregation which had turned Christian under foreign dominance.



In England this was the period of the highest evangelical enthusiasm. Dr. Claudius Buchanan who had traveled in South Asia during the governorship of North, and Wilberforce, a prominent evangelist in England pressed the colonial office to take concrete steps for the propagation of the Anglican religion against the fast spreading Buddhism and Catholicism in the littoral of Sri Lanka. The king's Advocate Alexander Johnstone collected vital information on Buddhist institutions through a series of questions placed before the chief Bhikkhus and handed them over to the Church Missionary Organization in London. He requested for a team of Anglican monks to propagate Christianity in Sri Lanka<sup>29</sup>. Within a short spell of time, missionary societies of England sent their teams of priests to Sri Lanka. London Society took a pioneering step in this direction in 1805 and soon after, came the Baptist mission in 1812, Wesleyan mission in 1814, the American mission in 1816 and the Church Missionary Society in 1817 along with their printing apparatus, a major means of propaganda.

Education occupied a pivotal position in this missionary strategy with schools becoming self supportive, self governing and self propagating units<sup>30</sup>. Schools were started in villages and principal towns with the support the officiating local headmen and government officials who provided official assistance built school buildings and provided the necessary equipment for education. These schools were often visited by the Governor, his Lady and higher officials including the Chief Justice and other presiding Judges and Collectors of the area rewarding students with valuable presents including new cloths.<sup>31</sup>

Schools for the locals were established in many villages along the coast, and a few schools imparting higher knowledge was also established. Unlike the Buddhist schools run by the Bhikkhus in temples, the village schools were open to both boys and girls. Teaching was done according to a fixed time table. Reading, writing and arithmetic were taught to the village boys and educational materials such as the globe was used in teaching geography.



Unknown countries were illustrated and described in these lessons. Instructions on moral and religious propagation was conducted regularly. Boarding schools were established in places convenient to a majority of school going children. Local teachers were selected from respectable families who had some education. The teachers were summoned to the Mission House on stipulated days where all business pertaining to schools were discussed. Religious education played a vital part, and special attention was paid to proselytization.

Missionaries started preaching in villages, in the bazaar, public markets and other places where people assembled. In very many places, people flocked to hear what the missionaries were saying, but soon left the place when the missionary introduced the message of the Christian "God"<sup>32</sup>. The character of Sri Lankans according to a missionary was, that "they appear to receive everything, in reality admits nothing"<sup>33</sup>.

The prevalence of deeply institutionalized religious and cultural norms amongst the locals tendered the propagation of Christianity far more difficult than the missionaries anticipated. Christian domination of the government was less than three centuries, yet the Christian culture was strong with the Christianized community of the littoral who were often associated closely with the government. In the rural areas where the *ganinnānses* had been active and subsequently where the Bhikkhus in yellow robes were functioning, the traditional Buddhist practices and rituals continued albeit in a weakened state.

Education, preaching and the press were three major practices resorted to by the missionaries against the local religions. In 1812 the Colombo Auxiliary Bible Society was formed and the translation of the Bible into Sinhala was carried out. The Wesleyan press was established in 1815 in Colombo and within a short time Christian printing presses were established in Kandy and Kotte. These presses were instrumental in printing more than 1.5 million tracts, books, pamphlets and other publications mostly attacking and condemning Buddhism and the sangha.



Missionaries from the very outset realized the importance of learning the local languages to read and understand Buddhist texts. When studying the local languages, they saw the need to compile glossaries and dictionaries. Charter, Callaway, Fox and Clough compiled dictionaries in Portuguese, English and Sinhala languages. They also realized the importance of learning Pāli as it gave access to Buddhist texts. In this endeavor, the Bhikkhus helped the missionaries to acquire a working knowledge in Pāli and Sanskrit. Among the early missionaries, John Gogerly and Spence Hardy became distinguished Pāli scholars who with that knowledge examined Buddhist texts to get at elements to comment and refute. The Royal Asiatic Society became a forum for Gogerly where he examined some of the texts.

The missionaries even entered the temples and addressed the devotees who had observed *dasasil* on the merits of Christianity and condemned the worship of “idols”, and distributed leaflets dealing with Christianity. But, their repeated encroachment on the ritualistic affairs of the Buddhists, disrobing some of the sangha in public and baptizing them, the condemnation of the religion by means pamphlets and proselytization through official patronage, gradually exhausted the patience of the sangha. The earliest reaction of the Bhikkhus was to complain to the governor through petitions expressing the pain of mind caused to them and urged the government to uphold religious tolerance and to order the missionaries to withdraw the offensive publications. But, the anticipated directives did not issue from the government.

The resurgence of Buddhist activities generated in the littoral due to the energetic efforts of *ganinnānses* were further strengthened by the newly formed Siamese sect and the religious zeal exerted by the Amarapura Samāgama. They were rapidly expanding from the Matara district towards the Colombo district in which the Galle district had become the epi centre. Temples were constructed in villages and towns where hitherto had been strong colonies of Christians. The Bhikkhus discouraged the devotees from sending their children to mission schools and advised them to send them to



the temples for education. Soon, they found that the number of schools were increasing but their congregation was diminishing. By 1838, the British missionaries who had laboured for 25 years with a team of 5 British missionaries and 9 Sri Lankan assistants could count for only 572 followers. The ceremonially converted Buddhist monks including the Mahānāyaka of the Dadalla group of Amarapura, added one after another to the list of baptized monks over whom the church was to regret. The once prospering flock became another barren spot. "Our work in going to ruin" lamented William Lalman, the first preacher who was raised as an assistant, while another remarked that "winning converts from Buddhism is like trying to wrest the pray from an angry lion<sup>34</sup>".

At Baddegama, the Church Missionary Society had a flourishing station for some time. By the third decade of the nineteenth century, a few monks started their religious activities by putting up a *bana maduwa* (hall of deliverance of doctrine) which brought thousands of devotees daily, and a *pansala* school for the education of the children. Attendance in the church mission school fell sharply from 69 in 1823 to 24 in 1824. Many students joined the *Pansala* for education<sup>35</sup>.

In the face of the growing resistance, the missionaries started issuing printed papers condemning Buddhism and Buddhist activities. This in turn gave rise to a number of publications from both sides attacking each other's religion. Both sections paid attention to study each others religion with a view to criticising them. This reached a climax when the British government took the decision to hand over the Daladā to Buddhist custodians and dissociate itself from its commitment to protect and support Buddhism assured in 1815 by several proclamations of the government in 1848. In the meantime, Gogerly published his "Christiyani Pragnaptiya" in Sinhala in 1848 in which he declared that Buddha was not omniscient.

This aroused the Bhikkhus who were engaged in a verbal confrontation with each other and were studying Chistianity in depth



and also mobilized the devotees to start printing presses. A number of leading Bhikkhus, Bentara Attadassi, Bulatgama Dhammāṅkara accused Gogerly for falsifying the Buddhist texts without a proper understanding of the Pāli texts. Public controversies began to take place in several places. Lecture series were conducted in churches at Colpetty, Wellawatta, Moratuwa and Panadura etc. by missionaries to justify these writings and to prove the falsity of the “heathen” religions. They used the printing press to publicize their discourses. Bhikkhus on the other hand started a counter attack through *bana* preaching and by writing which however had a limited circulation. They generated an excitement and interest on the examination of the trustworthiness of their religion along the coastal border from Devundara to Colombo. The people had demonstrated a positive commitment to their traditional faith, and their reaction to missionary propaganda was one of indifference rather than a positive opposition.

Missionaries kept the pressure on Bhikkhus with repeated publications of pamphlets and booklets condemning Buddhism. This led to the growth of a positive Buddhist resistance in several localities where influential families resided and took the lead. Several incidents took place at Waskaduwa and Etulkotte from where it spread to neighbouring villages and towns.

In 1852, the Governor Anderson cautioned the Archdeacon of Colombo, Benjamin Baily over the issue of a pamphlet dealing with the “connection of government with Buddhist idolatry in Ceylon” in a language which the Governor thought was violent and offensive to excite and exasperate the whole Buddhist population in Sri Lanka<sup>36</sup>. When the Archdeacon refused to comply with this advice, the Governor informed the Colonial office and got Baily to resign from the post of Archdeacon. But, such timely intervention at Colombo was rare, and the missionaries continued to enjoy a free hand.

Thus, it was left to the Buddhists themselves to face this challenge. By then, some resourceful, energetic, educated and



dedicated teams of Bhikkhus were coming to the limelight due to dedication of the Siamese sect of the littoral and the Amarapura Samāgama. Several small scale educational institutions on traditional lines were functioning in the principal vihares which were instrumental in producing a few strong intellectuals who took up the challenge. They followed the same tactics used by the missionaries with vigour and started publishing religious tracts counter attacking those of the missionaries. By then, several printing presses owned by the Buddhists were functioning around Colombo and Galle. Thus in 1863, Piggot remarked that "a great change has taken place in reference to the prevailing religion here, Buddhism. The Buddhists are no longer that apathetic, or an indifferent being, but an active opponent of the truth. A monk speak great swelling words and horrible blasphemies against the God of heaven and earth"<sup>37</sup>. In 1862, James Nicholson, the missionary in Colombo, reported about a religious festival at Kotahena and about series of lectures delivered by a Buddhist monk against Christianity. That was a new movement according to Nicholсан and the Buddhist monk had obtained and studied the works of Tom Peine and other writers on Christianity.

This was a reference to Mohottiwatte Gunānanda, the debator, who led the final struggle with the missionaries with the collective contribution of the Siamese sect of the littoral and the Amarapura Samāgama. Migettuwatte Gunananda, born at Balapitiya, had studied Christianity at Wesley College and joined the Buddhist Order. He succeeded his uncle Seenigama Dheerānanda as the incumbent of Dīpaduttamarāma temple close to St. Benedicts' College, Kotahena, and took the Buddhist movement forward by using the same tactics which the missionaries had used against the Buddhists. He filled the long awaited leadership for Buddhists. His dynamic and energetic leadership provided the Buddhist enterprise in the series of public debates ending with the great debate of Panadura where he had courage to face in 1873 the attacks of Kristiani Pagnapti of Gogerly. This was the culmination of the great struggle of *ganinnānses* for the religious liberty and tolerance.



## End notes

- <sup>1</sup> See for details, De Silva M.U. "Ganinnances of the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and their services to Buddhasasana and culture". *Rohana*, Journal of the University of Ruhuna, No.5 1994 pp. 23-48.
- <sup>2</sup> De Silva M.U. "Ganinnances of the 17 & 18 centuries and their services to Buddhasasana and culture", *Rohana*, Journal of the University of Ruhuna, No.5 1994 pp. 23-48
- <sup>3</sup> *History of Sri Lanka*, Peradeniya University, Vol. 2, 1500-1796, ed. de Silva K.M. 1993, p.127
- <sup>4</sup> Queyroz, Fr. Fernao de. 1930. *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*. p. 1052
- <sup>5</sup> Jurrine van Goor, 1983, "Protestanism and other Religions under the Dutch in Sri Lanka", *Don Peter Felicitation Volume*, 1983, p.118
- <sup>6</sup> *Gazetteer of the Central Province of Ceylon*, Vol 1, p.69
- <sup>7</sup> *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, Vol 1, pt. II, p.121, footnote 17.
- <sup>8</sup> Mirando A.H. 1985 *Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the 17th and 18th centuries*, p.127
- <sup>9</sup> *Culavamsa*, part II, p. 222
- <sup>10</sup> Gammulle Ratanapala, *Vimana Vastuva*: Or 6603 (20)
- <sup>11</sup> Mirando, A.H.op cit 1985, p.92
- <sup>12</sup> Kirielle Gnanavimala, 1975, *The Sasana History of Vēhülle Dhammadinna*
- <sup>13</sup> op cit. De Silva, M.U. 1994 pp. 34-36
- <sup>14</sup> Hevawasam, P.B.J. 1987, *The Matara Poets*, p.11



- <sup>15</sup> Kirielle Gnānavimala, 1975. *Vēhülle Sri Dhammadinna Sasana Ithihasaya*, p.26
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid, pp. 41-45
- <sup>17</sup> *Nitiratnavaliya*, British Museum, No. 14165, p.24
- <sup>18</sup> Labugama Lankananda Thero, 1958, *Lakdiva Katikavath*, Introduction. xiii-xv
- <sup>19</sup> *Gazetteer of the Central Province of Ceylon*, Vol.1, p.64
- <sup>20</sup> Mirando A.H. 1985, op.cit. p.137
- <sup>21</sup> Bryce Ryan, 1953. *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, p.39
- <sup>22</sup> *Nitiratnavaliya*, p. 24
- <sup>23</sup> ibid
- <sup>24</sup> Reimers, E. *The Treaty between the king of Kandy and the Dutch in Ceylon* Historical Journal, Vol. II, p.28
- <sup>25</sup> Mirando, A.H.op.cit. 1985, p.142
- <sup>26</sup> De Silva M.U.op.cit. 1994, p.33
- <sup>27</sup> Kirielle Gnanavimala,op.cit. 1975, p.xlv
- <sup>28</sup> ibid, p.54
- <sup>29</sup> Rajapaksa, R. *Christian Mission, Theosophy and Trade, A History of American Relations with Ceylon, 1815-1915*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, p.104
- <sup>30</sup> Clough to London officials, 27 September 1814. *Methodist Missionary records (M.M.S.)* deposited in the Library of the London school of Oriental and African Studies, 443



- <sup>31</sup> De Silva M.U. 1991. *A review of Caste consideration in the Public service by the Dutch and the British Officials in the Maritime Provinces of Sri Lanka up to 1850*, Rohana. p.54
- <sup>32</sup> *Surgen Kates Journal*. 7 February 1822, M.M.S. 442
- <sup>33</sup> *Church Missionary Society Monthly Register*. 5 May 1851, (CMSMR), p.cxcii-cii
- <sup>34</sup> Small J.T. ed. *History of Methodist Church in Sri Lanka*, 1814-1964, p.55
- <sup>35</sup> CMSMR, 3 May 1825. p.158
- <sup>36</sup> Malalgoda, K. 1976, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 1750-1900. p.214
- <sup>37</sup> *Report of the Baptist Missionary in Ceylon*, Colombo District. 1863, p.3



**Wolvendaal:**  
**An Etymological Study**  
by  
**Pradeep A. Jayatunga**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Wolvendaal church (the foundation stone of which was laid in 1749 and the building dedicated to public worship in 1759), is one of the best known and preserved Dutch period buildings in the island. In fact, it is the only Dutch period public building in the city of Colombo which is still being used for the same purpose it was built. However, despite its fame and the scholarly attention it has drawn over the years, the origin of the name of this place of worship seems to be still shrouded in mystery.

## **LOCATION**

Wolvendaal literally means “Dale of the Wolves” in Dutch language (JDBU, 1908, 109). However, the location of the church could not be called a “dale” by any stretch of imagination. It is in fact, one of the few hills or hillocks in the coastal capital city. An editor of the Journal of the Dutch Burger Union of Ceylon states,

..... Wolvendaal Church has stood on the summit of the hill which bears its name, braving the elements and commanding one of the finest views across the town and over the sea,....  
(JDBU, 1908, 117)

and L.E. Blaze puts it in to verse,

From this far height the noble church looks round  
On the fair city lying at her feet; (JDBU, 1949, 1).

According to Rajavaliya, during his attack on Colombo fort,



Rajasingha I encamped the besieging army in the area.

.....; whilst Vickremasinha Mudali pitched his camp, having erected a stockade, at Lower Boralugoda. Senerat Mudali encamped on the plain of Boralugoda. Note that *Adirippu Palliya* stands on Boralugoda Hill; and that in Lower Boralugoda lies *Santhum pitiya*” (1954,78)

In a footnote to his translation of Barros and Couto, Donald Ferguson, referring to the aforesaid passage in *Rajavaliya*, states Although the name Adirippu Palliya ( in Tamil Asaruppalli) now denotes the Wolvendaal church, it has really been transferred to it from the Portuguese church that stood there previously and was called Nossa senhora de Guadalupe (after the famous church at Guadalupe in Spain), the Sinhalese and Tamil names being evidently corruptions of the last word. (1908,298,n5)

Ferguson here, opines on the derivations of the Sinhalese and Tamil names of the church (i.e. they arise from a corruption of the word Guadalupe), but does not explain how the Dutch name originated.

Clearly the original Sinhala name of the hillock had been Boralugoda hill and the surrounding area, the plain of Boralugoda, before the area came to be known by the name of the Portuguese church erected on the hill-top. Although many of the Portuguese Churches were built on Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim temples/ mosques they had destroyed, there are no references to a prior non-Christian place of worship on this site. It is interesting to note that Guadalupe is not the only foreign place name in the vicinity that had become ‘Sinhalized’. As quoted above, *Rajavaliya* (1954,78) says that ‘Santhum pitiya’ is in lower Boralugoda. Fernao De Queyros mentions a ‘field of San Thome’ near Colombo fort which, according to the translator S.G. Perera, was so called from the Catholic Church of St.Thomas that stood there (1992,903,n1). ‘Field of San Thome’ translates in to Sinhala as ‘San-thome-pitiya’.



Santhumpitiya was later corrupted into Ginthupitiya (ibid). At present, an Anglican church, St. Thomas's of Ginthupitiya which had been established in 1815, occupies this site.

It is clear that Wolvendaal church is located on the site of the earlier Portuguese Church dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe. In addition to the aforesaid explanation by Ferguson, several others have commented on the predecessor to Wolvendaal church.

Edmond Peiris in *Marian Devotion in Ceylon* (1948) says-

On the hill-top, where now stands Adilippu Palliya, was the church of Our Lady of Guadalupe,.. (13), and

Codrington states-

Javanese were allotted land at Wolvendaal (Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe) by Rylof van Goens the Elder for military service. (1947,155)

In addition to the Sinhalese Boralugoda hill, the Portuguese too, apparently, had another name for this hillock prior to the construction of their church. In a foot note to his translation of Queyros, S. G. Perera comments -

This is the 'Quarry' or 'Quarry Hill' of Couto. The Rajavaliya calls it Boralugoda Hill." On the Quarry Hill the Portuguese erected the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe whence the place was known as Guadalupe, which in Sinhalese mouths became Adirippu (Palliya) (1992,432 n1)

P.E. Peiris in his summary of De Couto (included as an appendix to chapter 5 of his translation of Rebeiro's *History of Ceilao* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 1909) wonders whether a "Stone Quarry" (a Pedreira) mentioned by De Couto, could be "Boralugoda, now Wolvendaal" (64,f.n.). Perera, translates 'a pedreya', as 'a Quarry' (Queyros,432). However, the 'Boralugoda' having the meaning 'pile of gravel' in Sinhala, it is conceivable that gravel was quarried there; hence, the Portuguese 'Quarry Hill'



In any event, it is clear that until the location began to be referred to by the name of a church, it had been called, as it should be (given its elevation), a “hill” – Boralugoda hill by the Sinhalese and Quarry Hill by the Portuguese. After the construction of the Church of Nossa senhora de Guadalupe, the name of the Portuguese place of worship may have extended to the locality, as Perera states (ibid,n1).

In 1707, Memoir of Cornelis Joan Simons, the Dutch Governor and Director of Ceylon, advises his successor, Hendrick Becker, that the Kandyan embassies “must be courteously received at Wolvendaal” (Simons,12) Becker, in turn, advises the next Governor Issac Augustyn Rumpf that “care must be taken that during their stay at Wolvendaal they are hospitably entertained and regaled..” (Becker,46). In notes to both of the aforesaid, R.G. Anthonisz comments that Government maintained a House at Wolvendaal for the accommodation and entertainment of the Kandyan ambassadors (ibid,50,n55 and Simons,29,n14).Both Simons and Becker wrote in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the neighbourhood would have been named Wolvendaal by the Dutch prior to the construction of their church in mid 18<sup>th</sup> century (1749-1759). At the time Colombo was being fortified by the Dutch after their conquest, the Wolvendaal had been uninhabited (Becker,27&31,n37). In the index to *The Orientalist*, Wolvendaal is given as “name of a portion of the Town of Colombo where there is a magnificent Church built by the Dutch” (1888-1889,227).The church was called the “Wolvendaalsche Kerk” in Dutch. (Lewcock,Sansoni & Senanayake,1998,211). The hill was and still some times is, referred to, rather oxymoronically, as Wolvendaal Hill - the **dale** of the wolves **hill**!

Quite apart from the geographical inaccuracy of the name, there is a zoological incongruity too. Wolves have never been a native species of animals in the island – at least not during historical times.



The incongruity of the name is commented upon by R. K. de Silva and W. G. M. Beumer.

Wolvendaal literally means “dale of wolves” and has probably been derived from the marshy lowlands haunted by jackals lying immediately outside the walls of Colombo. The name is quite inappropriate – the church itself crowns the top of a hill, and commands a splendid view, and there were no wolves! (1988,255)

There have been several attempts at explaining how a religious edifice on a hill in a “wolf-less” island came to be named “The Dale of the Wolves Church”.

## THEORIES

In his foot note quoted above, Fr. Perera continues to explain the derivation of the name.

The Dutch turned into ‘Agadalapa’ (valentyn); “Acqua di Lupo’ (Saar); ‘Quia de Lupo’ and Agoa de Lubo’ (Baldaeus); and finally they translated it into ‘Wolfendhal’. (432,n1)

Perera’s theory is that the Portuguese Guadalupe gradually corrupted by the Dutch in to a name which was then translated as Wolvendaal.

J. R. Toussaint, a president of the Dutch Burger Union of Ceylon and an editor of its journal had been a keen researcher of the subject. In 1938, Toussaint, who does not offer any opinion himself on this question, which “has exercised the minds of our leading local historians”, gives the two prevailing theories about the derivation of the name.

The generally accepted version is that the name is derived from the Portuguese “Agoa de Loupe” meaning the “dale of the wolves” or in other words marsh or swamp frequented by wolves or jackals”. Recently however, we have been told that the name has nothing to do with wolves or jackals.



Wolvendaal Hill, it is said, was originally known in Singhalese as Boralugoda Hill. When the Portuguese built on it the Church of our Lady of Guadalupe, the hill was called by the name of the church, viz, Guadalupe. The Dutch called it Agadalapa, the Singhalese Adirippu, or Adilippu, and the Tamils Asarupalli. Agadalapa soon became corrupted in to “Acua di Lupo”, “Quia de Lupo” and “Agoa de Lubo”, and it was this name which, it is said, was misunderstood and translated “Wolvendaal”. On the other hand it is not improbable that so definite a name as Wolvendaal should have been adopted by the Dutch as a suitable description of a place infested with jackals, with or without reference to the Portuguese Church which is said to have existed there. (JDBU, 1938, 60)

Toussaint’s “recent” version is almost identical to Perera’s theory on the etymology of Wolvendaal.

R.L. Brohier too, gives both theories. According to him, the popular opinion maintains that the lowlands in this area of Colombo was desolate marshes and swamps which were the favoured haunts of packs of jackals and a Portuguese who was not a naturalist and fancied the howling of the jackals at nightfall was raised by wolves prowling about for prey, named the locality *Agoa de Lupe*, which means ‘the Dale of Wolves’. The other theory was that Guadalupe (from the Portuguese church dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe) was rendered *Adilippu* by the Sinhalese, and corrupted by the Dutch to *Agoa de Lupe*. (Brohier, 2010, 10-11)

In 1913 J. Penry Lewis in his “List of Inscriptions on Tombstones and monuments” implies that the Portuguese named the area after the wolves/jackals.

The name “wolvendaal” is the Dutch rendering of the Portuguese “Agoa de Loupe” (modern *Lobo*), meaning “The dale of wolves” i.e. a marsh or swamp frequented by jackals. The hill on which the church stands must have taken its name



from the surrounding low ground. The church was built in 1749, probably on the site of an older building, Portuguese or Dutch. There was certainly a Portuguese “cloister” here, and no doubt a church. (101)

Obviously, Lewis had been unaware of the name of the Portuguese church; hence his interpretation of Agoa de Loupe as ‘the dale of the wolves’ in Portuguese. He believes that the Portuguese so named the hill after the surrounding low ground frequented by jackals, which conveniently explains the origin of Wolvendaal, whereas every other scholar, with only a couple of exceptions, has taken Agoa de Loupe as a corruption of Guadalupe, which may then have been misunderstood and translated as Wolvendaal by the Dutch.

Toussaint, apparently, had been interested in the derivation of the name for a considerable period of time. In 1908, he inquires from the editor of the JDBU as to the correct spelling and any application of in Holland of the word “Wolfendahl”. After stating that the correct spelling is “Wolvendaal”, the editor continues-

We do not believe that it has any special application in Holland and clearly refer to certain local circumstances. Wolvendaal, which literally means “the dale of the wolves”, is no doubt derived from the older Portuguese name of the locality, “Agoa de Loup”,...(JDBU,1908,109)

The editor, while stating that the Portuguese name of the locality was Agoa de Loup, however, does not connect it with Guadalupe. In any event, the possibility of Wolvendaal church being named after a locality in Holland could be safely rule out. The name should have an earlier local (or, in the least, non-Dutch,) origin. However, the theories of it being named (either by the Dutch or the Portuguese) for the jackals that were supposedly frequenting the vicinity at the time, or the name being a mistaken translation of a corrupted Portuguese word, should be carefully examined.



Later writers, have, more or less used either one or both of the following versions given by Toussaint, to explain the origin of the name Wolvendaal (e.g. Corea, 1988, 30&31 and Brohier & Raheem, 2000, Plate 19)

1. Named by the Dutch after the jackals infesting the adjacent marshy grounds, or
2. A Portuguese name corrupted, taken to mean 'dale of the wolves' and translated so into Dutch.

The only fact that seems to be indisputable is that Wolvendaal means "the dale of the wolves". It is quite conceivable that a swamp frequented by the jackals would have been named the dale or valley of the wolves. In the absence of real wolves, the jackals being promoted to the role would not be an unusual occurrence, given the inexactitude in naming animals at the time. Certain indigenous animals were cavalierly named after the European animals closest in resemblance or after the animals more familiar to the Europeans. The leopards were "tigers" or "cheetahs", the sambur deer, "elks" and the crocodiles, "alligators" to some of the authors writing as recently as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Bloemendaal (the dale of flowers), the plain adjacent to Wolvendaal, had supposedly been so named after the prolific flower gardens that existed there at the time. It is not at all illogical for the overgrown, swampy lowland surrounding the hill to be named after the animals (albeit, wrongly identified or named) frequenting it. However, why is the edifice situated on a **hill** named "**dale** of the wolves" church? If the location was a **hill** to the Sinhalese (Boralugoda Hill) and the Portuguese (Quarry Hill), how did it become a **dale** to the Dutch? If the hill was named after the wolves/jackals frequenting the surrounding low grounds, then why not "**hill** of the wolves"? If one is to believe that the Portuguese named the marshy locality Agoa de Loupe after the jackals (assuming that the meaning of Agoa de Loupe is 'dale of the wolves'), was the **hill** (which was Quarry Hill to them earlier) also known by the



same name despite its elevation? Or, was the entire area including the hill (naturally, the church built there would take the same name) called ‘the dale of the wolves’ by the Dutch because of the jackal infested marsh? Or, in the unlikely event that the Dutch called only the nearby marshy ground ‘the dale of the wolves’ - either because of the jackals living there or, as a translation or a mistranslation of a Portuguese term or, even for both those reasons – and, the hill assumed the name from the church they built there and not *vice versa*, then why was the **hill-top** church named after the **marsh**? Whichever way one looks at it, the one inescapable fact is that there is a building constructed on a high elevation called ‘the dale of the wolves church’.

#### Brohier comments-

“Wolvendaal”, the Dutch rendering of the Portuguese name for the surrounding low ground, seems to have been loosely applied to the hill as well, although ironically inappropriate since a hill-top can hardly be a ‘valley’ and there are no wolves – and never have been any in Ceylon – this name has been perpetuated. (2010,11)

The theory of a corrupted Portuguese name being mistranslated into Dutch is more plausible than the one of Dutch naming the hill or the church ‘the dale of the wolves’ on their own; although, the question still remains why they would use such an inappropriate name for the hill and especially, their hill-top church merely because the Portuguese had named the locality so. One has to keep in mind here that Wolvendaal clearly means ‘the **dale** of the wolves’ in the Dutch language. To the Dutch, it was not a foreign place name with an ambiguous meaning that could have been mistakenly applied to an unsuitable location, but an entirely Dutch name with an obvious meaning.

Even if one is to take the gradual corruption and mistranslation as the best explanation, there appears to be an aspect to the process of evolution or corruption as given by some theorists,



which is rather puzzling. According to S.G. Perera the Dutch turned Guadalupe into 'Agadalapa' (*valentyn*); 'Acqua di Lupo' (*Saar*); 'Quia de Lupo' and Agoa de Lubo' before translating into Wolvendaal. Toussaint says Agadalapa, "soon became corrupted" into Acua di Lupo, Quia de Lupo and Agoa de Lubo which was misunderstood and translated as "Wolvendaal". Here a Portuguese word (Guadalupe) becomes corrupted by the Dutch (into Agadalapa) and by a process of further corruption returns to being a seemingly Portuguese term (Agoa de Lubo etc.) which the Dutch mistakenly translate into Wolvendaal. It is confusing, to say the least! Ferguson of course, gives a plausible derivation of Sinhala Adilippu from Portuguese Guadalupe but silent on any corruption by the Dutch.

Valantyn (sic) is cited by S.G. Perera (Toussaint does not give references) as the authority for Agadalapa -the word the Dutch supposedly turned Guadalupe into. Although Wolvendaal church has the distinction of been the only land mark in Colombo shown in "The New Map of the Island" (*Nieuwe Kaart Van Het Eyland Ceylon*) drawn by Valentijn (1978, f.p374), the present author has been unable to find any mention of the name Agadalapa in Sinnappa Arasaratnam's 1978 translation of Francois Valentijn's Description of Ceylon.

For the process of further evolution of the name, Perera sites Baldaeus and Saar. Writing of the siege of Colombo, Baldaeus mentions the church of Quia de Lobo (721 & 725), while in his map of the siege the church Agoa de loepo is marked as the quarters of the Dutch Major van der Laan (761). In Baldaeus' translation of a Portuguese record (he calls it "An Account of the Siege of Columbo taken from their own Journals ...." (761)), the hill of Aqua de Lupe (767) and a gun battery at Agua de Luphe (763,) are named. According to Paul E. Peiris, Wolvendaal is Agoa de Lopo of the Portuguese (Ceylon and Hollanders, 1995, p 22 and Portuguese Era, 1983, 377).



Saar who participated in the siege of Colombo, refers to the place as *Acqua di Lupo* (294). He is the earliest of the Dutch writers quoted by the previous researchers in the study of this subject and, appears to be the first to have referred to the location by name. He had first-hand experience of the locality during the campaign. Saar mentions *Acqua di Lupo* as a monastery in his description of the Dutch encampment surrounding the fort. He fought against the Portuguese during the siege and left the island shortly thereafter.

While a Portuguese name could have been misspelled or mispronounced by Saar, there would not have been sufficient time for any evolution of the name during the few months of his stay in Colombo. The names *Agua de Luphe* and *Aqua de Lupe* are given in the Portuguese account translated by Baldeaus and, Peiris says it is *Agoa de Lopo* of the **Portuguese**. The evidence points to *Acqua di Lupo*, or a word/s very close to it, being the name of the church and/or the locality under the Portuguese. Furthermore, Lewis(1913,101) and Editor of JDBU(1908,109) thought the Portuguese name for the locality was *Agoa de Loupe* and *Agoa de Loup* respectively. Those names could hardly have been derived from *Agadalapa* (the supposed Dutch rendering of *Guadalupe*) as claimed by Toussaint's sources and Perera. If at all, it has to be the other way around viz. *Agadalapa* being a derivation from *Agoa de Lupo*, etc.

*Agoa de Loup* (or a similar name) has to be either the original Portuguese name itself, or a derivation/corruption from/of it. Obviously, the occurrence of the slightly different versions of the same name (*Agua de Lupe*, *Agoa de Loupe* etc.) is due to the eccentric and irregular spelling employed by the Dutch writers attempting to pronounce a foreign word or term.

In his introduction to Hendrick Becker's *Memoir*, R.G. Anthonisz comments

The quaint spelling of the names of places has been retained throughout the translation no attempt having been made to



alter the spelling even where the same name appearing differently spelt in different places. (Becker,v)

Agua de Lupe sounds almost identical to Guadalupe. The Dutch may have heard, pronounced and written the Portuguese name Guadalupe as Agua de Lupe and perhaps, also as Agadalapa, but Agua de Lupe *et al* could not possibly have been the progeny of *Agadalapa*.

Perera who brought in, Valentijn's (supposedly) *Agadalapa* in to the process of derivation, gives a clearer explanation in his Historical Sketches (Ceylon Church History) (1962) without the name swinging back and forth between Dutch and Portuguese corruptions.

On the next hill-top the church of Our Lady of Guadaloupe. That name was generally pronounced by the people without the first inconvenient guttural, and became *Adilippu*, which is the name still used by in Sinhalese for the church. The Dutch imagined that the name represented 'Agoa-de-lupo' which they imagined to mean the "marsh of wolves" and translated 'Wolvendaal' or 'dale of the wolves: and Wolvendaal is still the name of that quarter, a curious survival of a Catholic name in disguise (80).

In The Jesuits in Ceylon (1941) too, Perera gives a similar explanation without the confusing Agadalapa.

Wolvendaal which is a Dutch translation of a corrupted form of the name Guadelupe in "Our Lady of Guadelupe"... (124) Wolven-daal, 'dale of the wolves', a translation of Agua de Lupo, a corruption of Gaudelupe. (ibid,n1)

Raheem also, is of the same view regarding the translation into Dutch, but, omits the original name, Guadalupe, and thinks the Portuguese themselves named it after wolves/jackals,



The name Wolvendaal is Dutch translation of the Portuguese “Agoa de Loupe” meaning “the dale of the wolves” (Brohier & Raheem, plate 19).

Perhaps influenced in this conjecture by Lewis (1913, 101), Raheem goes on to say,

The hill on which the church stands took its name from the low lying marshy swamp which was infested with jackals not wolves (a species not represented in Ceylon).

Considering all available evidence one can safely assume that Agua de Lupe or a variant was the corrupted form of Guadalupe. It need not have derived (and almost certainly did not) from or through Agadalapa. It was quite common for the writers of the time to corrupt foreign words. The words of oriental languages, more often than not, became mauled at the hands of European writers. Even European words did not entirely escape this fate when written in another European language. Ferguson mentions numerous instances of Portuguese names/words being recorded inaccurately or, turned into a version more familiar or closer to their own language by early Dutch visitors, e.g. ailadeira (dancers) as ‘bailliarderse’ (1998, 33), Manuel de Sousa Coutinho as ‘Emanuel Sosa Cottin’ (ibid, 34), Mathias Albuquerque as ‘Matteo Abercke’ (33 & 34), flecha or frecha (arrows) as ‘flesio’ (36), de Azevedo as ‘des Ovedo’ (37), Christovo Jacome, Alberto Pinhiero and Joao Pereira as ‘Christaen Jacobino’, ‘Albert Primero’ and ‘Ian Pererro’ respectively (394). Anthonisz comments on the Portuguese Chialupa (sloop) becoming ‘Chialoup’ in the Dutch records (2003, 16, n2). This mutilation of foreign (albeit, fellow European) words to make them easier on the writer’s tongue or, in the case of names, the conversion to the form used in the writer’s own language, was not an exclusive Dutch practice. There are instances of reciprocation by the Portuguese writers. Rebeiro calls the Dutch generals Jan Maetsuycker and Gerald Hulft as ‘Joao Mansucar’ (1999, 150) and “Giraldo Holfot” (ibid, 185) respectively, and turns Van der Mayden into ‘Uvandremed’! (ibid)



It is almost certain that Agua de Lupe is derived from Guadalupe (either as a gradual corruption or as a mispronunciation by the Dutch) and Wolvendaal probably is a mistranslation of *Agua de Lupe* or one of its variants. However, none of the scholars who have hypothesized that the Dutch name derived from the corrupted Portuguese name and, concluded that the reason for the incongruity of naming a hill as a dale was a mistranslation, appear to have analyzed the original name of the Portuguese church. Although, there is a copious amount of material on various subsequent corruptions and/or mistranslations of the name Guadalupe, surprisingly, the authors have failed to enquire into the meaning of the word itself.

### ‘OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE’

The name of the Portuguese predecessor to the Dutch Wolvendaal church was *Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe* or Our Lady of Guadalupe. It had been named after the famous church in Cáceres province of the Extremadura autonomous region of Spain..

This famous monastery (declared a world heritage site by UNESCO), had been founded in 1340 to house a statue of Mary, an image of her holding the Christ Child in one hand and a crystal sceptre in the other, discovered in the locality of the River Guadalupe. The statue had been hidden by the bishop of Seville when the moors invaded Spain in 711 and found in supposedly miraculous circumstances by a shepherd in 1326. Soon after the foundation it “became the most celebrated shrine in Spain”. ([www.holymary.info](http://www.holymary.info))

The Chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Algarve is one of the earliest to be dedicated to *Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe* in Portugal after the discovery of the statue in Spain. ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)). There is a statue of Virgin Mary, also known as the Virgin of Guadalupe, in Mexico. It is believed to have miraculously appeared on a hill near Mexico City in 1531 ([www.sancta.org](http://www.sancta.org)).



## ETYMOLOGY OF GUADALUPE

Guadalupe River is a tributary of the Guadiana, one of the major rivers of Spain and Portugal. According to the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, in the etymology of Guadiana both Arabic and Latin roots appear. Guada=*Wadi* is Arabic for river and *Wadi Ana* means “River *Ana*”. The word *Ana* is not Arabic but a part of the original Latin name *Fluminus Anae* meaning “River of Ducks”. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guadiana>). The tributary (Guadalupe) too, appears to have derived its name from a combination of the same two languages as the Guadiana.

Guadalupe, or Guadeloupe is given in Wikipedia encyclopedia as

(Spanish pronunciation: [ɣawaḷaˈlupe]) was originally a Spanish toponym that derives from the Arabic word for “valley” or “river” (*wadi*) and the Latin word *lupus*, meaning wolf. The name referred to the river Guadalupe in Spain. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guadalupe>), and

Guadalupe or Guadalupejo River is described as,

a tributary of the Guadiana, in Spain. It gave its name to the town of Guadalupe, and by extension to the monastery of Santa María de Guadalupe. The name derives from the Arabic word for “valley” or “river” (*wadi*) and the Latin word *lupus*, meaning wolf. (ibid).

Charnock’s ‘Local Etymology: A Derivative Dictionary of Geographical Names’ says,

GUADALOUPE {gwada-loop), an island in the W. Indies, called Guadalupe by the Spaniards, from the resemblance of its mountains to a chain in Spanish Estremadura, which, as well as a town and a small river, bear that name. The name of the river is probably derived from the Arab, *wadi* a



river, and Sp. Loba (from L. iupa) a she-wolf. Varac calls it in L. Aquce Lupice.

GUADALQUIVIR, a river in Spain flowing by Seville and Cadiz. The name is corrupted from the Arab. Wdd-ol-lmbir, "the great river," from <sup>^j\</sup>. **wddi - a river, also the channel of a river, a valley**, W al the -\^ /edbir great. The names of many rivers in the Peninsula are compounded of wddi and other Arabic words..... (1859,121-122)

Blackie in 'Geographical Etymology', while agreeing with the above as far as 'Guada' is concerned, gives an entirely different derivation for the second part of Guadalupe,

GUADA, the name given to the rivers in Spain by the Moors, from the Arabic wddy (the dried-up bed of a river) ; e.g. Guada- laviar, i.e. Ar. Wadi-l-abyadh (the white river) ; Guadalete (the small river) ; Guadalimar (red river) ; Guadarama (sandy river) ; Guadalertin (the muddy river) ; **Guadaloupe (the river of the bay, upl)** ; Gadiana (the river of joy), called by the Greeks Chrysus (the golden) ; Guadalquivir, i.e. Wad-al-kebir (the great river) ; Gualcazar (of the palace) ; Guadalhorra (of the cave, ghar) ; Guadalbanar (of the battlefield) ; Guadaira (of the mills). (1887,95).

This is the only instance where 'lupe' in Guadalupe is considered to be derived from the Arabic "upl".

In one of the leading Catholic (Marian) websites, John Riedell explains the "Elements of the Word Guadalupe" –

An etymological dictionary of geographical names listed **guad** and **guadi** as Spanish in origin for "river." This in turn originates from the Arabic **wad** and **wady** meaning river or valley. A variant spelling of wady is **wadi**, which the



*World Book* defines as “a gully or ravine through which a stream flows in the rainy season,” and says is Arabic for ravine. Apart from Guadalupe, there are other rivers in Spain that have “Guad” in them, including the the Guadalquivir River (Arabic “Wadi al-Kebir” [kebir means great or large]), and the Guadiana River which forms parts of the border between Spain and Portugal. On a present-day map, the river running near the monastery is shown as the Guadalupejo.

Now let us look at the latter part of the word **-lupe**, with the aforementioned meanings in Latin: hidden, light and wolf. Latin **lateo,ui** means “to lie hid,” Latin **latebra,ae** means a hiding-place, Latin **latens, entis** means “hidden”; Latin for light is “**lux, lucis**”; and Latin masculine for wolf is **lupus** (**lupa** is a “she-wolf”). One of these leaps out at you as the likely answer of the three. It is the wolf. The greater part of **-lupe** is found in **lupus**. And that greater part, **lup**, is the word stem of **lupus** which gives the word its “wolfness” meaning. If you add an “i” to the stem **lup**, you get **lupi**, which renders it a possessive form of the word, meaning “of the wolf.” Eventually wolf would become “el lobo” in Spanish but we’re talking here about the mother tongue Latin. Compare this to **lucis**, meaning “of light” the genitive or possessive form of **lux**, added to **gaudi**. You get **guadilucis**. Looking at what we see here, “River of the Wolf” presents the most persuasive case, as to the origin of the name **Guadalupe**. ([www.holymary.info](http://www.holymary.info))

There does not seem to be much doubt that the second part of the word Guadalupe means ‘wolves’ or ‘of wolves’ and the first part is derived from the Arabic wadi. . The Spanish culture has been heavily influenced, linguistically and in many other ways, by the Moorish invaders. During the Moorish occupation of the Spanish territories, the Arabic word wadi had become Guada in the Spanish tongue to denote rivers and/or river valleys in the region.



The website thefreedictionary.com gives the following entries for wadi in several dictionaries.

wa·di also wa·dy (wādē) *n. pl.* wa·dis also wa·dies

1. a. A valley, gully, or streambed in northern Africa and southwest Asia that remains dry except during the rainy season.

b. A stream that flows through such a channel.

2. An oasis.[Arabic wdi; see wdy in Semitic roots.] (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition 2009. Houghton Mifflin Company).

**wadi, wady** [ĒwRdI] *n pl -dies* -(Earth Sciences / Physical Geography) a watercourse in N Africa and Arabia, dry except in the rainy season [from Arabic] (*Collins English Dictionary* –6th Edition 2003. William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd)

**wadi** (wādē) -A gully or streambed in northern Africa and southwest Asia that remains dry except during the rainy season (*The American Heritage Science Dictionary* 2005 Houghton Mifflin Company).

**wadi** - gully or streambed in northern Africa and the Middle East that remains dry except during rainy season

gully - deep ditch cut by running water (especially after a prolonged downpour) (WordNet 3.0, Farlex clipart collection. 2003-2008 Princeton University, Farlex Inc.)

Taking into consideration the above definitions, derivations and explanations it is safe to assume that the word Guada derives from the Arabic wadi meaning a channel of a river, a valley, a gully, a dry river bed or a river/stream that flows through such terrain.



The Guadalupe (the river of the wolves), which may have been so named due to the valley it flows through being frequented by wolves, had given its name to the monastery and the town. Interestingly, the mountain range in the province too, bears the same name - Sierra de Guadalupe. The monastery became one of the most important in Spain and as a result, a Caribbean island and various churches, cities and towns in Central and South America, as well as a number of places of worship in Portugal, have been named after it.

## CONCLUSION

The Portuguese church on the hillock just outside the fort of Colombo was dedicated to Nossa Senhora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe). Both the church and, by extension, the hill (and probably, the surrounding area) would have been called Guadalupe by the inhabitants. The word may have turned in to Agoa de Lupe, Acua di Lupo, *etc.* over time or, it may have sounded so to the Dutch. On the site the Guadalupe church (which would have sustained damage during the siege of Colombo when it was used for military purposes by the besieging Hollanders) used to stand, the Dutch built what came to be known as the Wolvendaal Church.

The name Wolvendaal, which means “Dale of the Wolves” does not have any apparent connection to a church or a locality in the Netherlands. There is no clear and definite answer to the question of the name’s origin, other than to assume that it would have been named for a feature of the locality or, a translation of an already existing name. If it was a name coined by the Dutch for the jackal-infested low-lying area as some of the writers assume, the question arises why the hill too was known by the same name. It could be argued that the hill in the Wolvendaal area was known as the Wolvendaal Hill. This would hold true in the present times since Dutch is not a language spoken or understood by the populace any more. But, to the Dutch, Wolvendaal would not have been merely a name, but a descriptive term as well – the dale of the wolves! It is



hard to imagine a Dutchman referring to a hill as Wolvendaal without being aware of the incongruity.

The other explanation (given by Ferguson, Perera, Peiris *et al*) is that the name of the Portuguese church and/or of the hill had been responsible for the origin of the name Wolvendaal. Perera has given a convoluted evolution of the word through Agadalapa and a supposedly mistranslation from Agua de Lupe. The writings of Saar and Baldeaus suggest that either the name of the Portuguese church and/or the locality may have, by that time, evolved in to Agua de Lupe or, the name Guadalupe sounded so to the Dutch ears. Later writings of Perera too, support this conjecture. According to the editor of JDBU the older Portuguese name of the locality was Agoa de Loup, while Peiris simply says Wolvendaal is Agua de Lupo. Agadalapa which too, sounds similar to Guadalupe, may have been another Dutch pronunciation. The theory is that the term Agua de Lupe or a variant was translated (albeit mistakenly) as “Dale of Wolves” by the Dutch.

In Lewis’ version (and also Raheem’s), the Portuguese are responsible for dragging wolves into the name, *viz.* the Portuguese Agoa de Loupe meant dale of wolves and it was named so due to the surrounding low-lying marsh being frequented by jackals. Lewis’ knowledge of the original Portuguese church seems to have been rather sketchy. Not being aware of the name Guadalupe, he assumes that Agoa de Loupe was the original name for the neighbourhood.

Agoa de Loupe, as a corrupted form of Guadalupe (or less likely, as the original Portuguese name for the locality frequented by jackals) would have been the term translated, most probably mistakenly (due to the existence of jackals), by the Dutch in to “the dale of the wolves”. Since the entire area, including the hill, was known by the same Portuguese name the Dutch would have continued the practice with their Wolvendaal, ignoring the oxymoronic aspect of the name when applied to the hill. The church, naturally, would take the name from its location.



In conclusion the history and etymology of the name Wolvendaal could thus be summarized:

1. The Boralugoda hill was called by the Portuguese the Quarry hill.
2. On the Quarry hill the Portuguese built the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, named after the famous monastery at Guadalupe in Extremadura, Spain.
3. After the construction of the church, the hill and the surrounding area too, came to be known as Guadalupe.
4. In time, Guadalupe corrupted into Agoa de Lupe, Agua de Loupe *etc.* (in addition to the Sinhalese Adilippu, and probably, the Dutch Agadalapa) by the non- Portuguese or, over the passage of time the Portuguese themselves may have referred to the locality (probably not the church, but the hill and the plain) by such a derivation of Guadalupe or, such may be how the name Guadalupe sounded to the Dutch ears. In any event, there does not seem to be much doubt that Guadalupe is the root of all subsequent names (Guadalupe = Aguadalupe = Agadalapa(D), Adilippu(S) and Agoa de Lupe, Acqua di Lupo, *etc.*).
5. The Dutch, who may have been unaware of the correct/ original name of the Portuguese church, (Baldeaus *et al* refer to a monastery/church/hill named Quia de Lobo, Agoa de loepo, Acqua di Lupo Agua de lupe, *etc.*, but never mention the name Guadalupe), would have assumed (probably taking in to account the Latin words for water-*Aqua* and wolf-*Lupus*) that the locality had been named Acqua di lupe, *etc* after the marsh of frequented by wolves (jackals) and, simply translated it as ' the dale of the wolves ' in Dutch..
6. Since, as far as the Dutch were aware, the hill (and the ruined Portuguese church situated there) bore same name as the surrounding area, they (in ignorance of the fact that the name



evolved from Guadalupe and not from the jackal infested swamp), called the entirety of that portion of the city Wolvendaal (somehow managing to ignore the incongruity of the name when applied to the hill) and named the church they built on its highest point, the Church of Wolvendaal (Wolvendaalsche Kerk).

However, what all the writers who analyzed the derivation of Wolvendaal through a tortuous process from Guadalupe, have failed to consider or notice is that the original Portuguese name may not need any such evolution, corruption or mistake to mean “The Dale of Wolves”.

Almost all authorities agree on the derivation and the meaning of the name Guadalupe. It is “River of Wolves” and could also be “Valley, Gully, Ravine or Riverbed of Wolves”. Wolvendaal is indisputably “Dale of Wolves”. A dale is a valley (Pocket Oxford dictionary, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed). Wolvendaal would be a fairly accurate translation of Guadalupe into Dutch. There was no necessity for the Portuguese name to evolve prior to being translated into Dutch as Wolvendaal, although in all probability, it **did** go through a process of evolution and corruption and then was translated **under a misapprehension**.

Another curious fact in this saga of a church name is that, if the Dutch are guilty of foisting an incongruous name on a hill, their predecessors too, are not entirely free of oxymoronic terms. If Guadalupe means river or valley of wolves, it too, can hardly be applied to a hill. However, the difference between the Dutch and Portuguese names is that, Wolvendaal is purely Dutch word free of any ambiguity as to its meaning whereas Guadalupe is a word with a combination of Spanish/Arabic/Latin ancestry. After the establishment of the Spanish monastery dedicated to the statue discovered near Guadalupe River, and named ‘Our Lady of Guadalupe’, a number of Catholic religious sites around world and a Caribbean island have been named for it. In fact, Spaniards themselves, call a mountain range in Extremadura region Sierra de Guadalupe of which a pedantic translation would be ‘river (or



valley) of the wolves mountain’! However the churches and monasteries were not named simply ‘Guadalupe’, but dedicated to “Our Lady of Guadalupe’ which is the title of the statue. The Portuguese church on a Colombo hillock too, was named for this Spanish icon of Marian worship. The Dutch name Wolvendaal has no such significance or precedent to mitigate the incongruity when applied to a hill. It has to be either descriptive of a geographical feature or a translation of a former name.

The puzzling failure by the previous writers to consider the meaning of the word Guadalupe in the study of the derivation of the name Wolvendaal, could be due to the fact that unlike the obvious “Lupe”, the first part of the word (“Guada”) does not have a Latin root and, the researchers may have been unaware of its meaning, and the derivation from Arabic.

Irony in the etymology of Wolvendaal is that, although it happens to be an accurate translation of the name of the earlier Portuguese church, the Dutch would not have been aware of the meaning, or even of the existence, of the original name Guadalupe at the time of naming that part of the city or subsequently, their church. The ignorance resulted in a corrupted Portuguese term being mistakenly translated into a name which turned out to be a correct translation of the original after all!

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# The Ancient City of Kōṭṭe and its Fortification

by

Prasad Fonseka

## The Ruins of Kōṭṭe

The only visible ruins of Kōṭṭe at present are Vehera Kanada, Aḷakēśvara tomb, some ruins at Pārakumbā Pirivena, inner moat and parts of the rampart. The outer moat at the Pita Kōṭṭe Junction which is seen as an eroded landscape is not considered as an important place.

Kōṭṭe was the capital of Sri Lanka for 150 years [1415-1565 A.D.] and therefore, the ruins of Kōṭṭe should be comparable with that of Polonnaruva, which was the capital of Sri Lanka for little more than 150 years. A researcher who has studied the chronicles would expect to see much more ruins in Kōṭṭe. One has to go through the descriptions of Kōṭṭe by Couto (1552-1616 A.D.), Queyroz (1688 A.D.), Valentijn (1722 A.D.), Ribeiro (1685 A.D.), and also what is mentioned in the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* (1396 A.D.), *Saddharmaratnākaraya*, (Kōṭṭe Period) *Aḷakēśvara Yuddhaya* (c.1550 A.D.) and *Rājāvaliya* to visualise what kind of a city it was. Where were the deadly deep moat and the very tall rampart constructed by Aḷakēśvara? Where were the four dēvālas of Aḷakēśvara? Which was the road the Portuguese used to go to Colombo passing the *ambalama*? Where was the drawbridge? Where were the passes? Where were the bastions of Aḷakēśvara and the extra fortification built by the Portuguese at Piṭa Kōṭṭe? Where was the ditch the Portuguese once used to attack the army of Rājasiṅha? Where was the dam built by Aḷakēśvara? Are there any traces at least of such monuments reported in the chronicles? These are some of the questions that would come to the mind of a researcher.

Before making an attempt to locate the ruins of Kōṭṭe, one should have a clear idea that it was not an ordinary city but a highly fortified city. So effectively fortified, that no enemy was ever



able to enter the city. That means everything had been carefully considered and logically planned. As such, to locate the ruins of the fortifications today, one should think in the same logical manner. For instance, a pass should always be located adjoining a bastion.

The key to unlock the secrets and identifying the locations of the other monuments is the identifying of the defile [passage], the flat land at Piṭa Kōṭṭe described in the Portuguese records which should be about 200 ft. wide and the location of the *ambalama* pass. 'Google Earth' could be used as an additional tool to identify the defile at Piṭa Kōṭṭe. In addition the width of the defile could be measured, which confirms that the figure given by Couto, 40 paces [200 feet] is correct. There is no difficulty in identifying the *ambalama* pass, where the drawbridge was, since the *ambalama*, which was destroyed some decades ago, is marked in the maps of mid twentieth century. After locating the above two monuments, one could identify the front section of the inner city, the entire outer moat and the rampart, and the bastions of the inner rampart without much difficulty.

A systematic study is required to locate the dam. Logically, it could be located at a place after the two rivers flowing on the east and the west of Kōṭṭe meet. It is clear that it should have been on the other side of the Diyavannā Oya. On the other hand, it should be within the range of an archer from the peninsula so that it could be defended. After such an analysis there is no difficulty in locating the dam in the premises of the present 'Water's Edge Hotel'.

The ditch should be located towards Kōṭṭe Rāja Mahā Vihāra, based on the tunnel entrance at the Ānanda Sāstrālaya premises. Logically, the narrow ditch should be the exit passage of the tunnel. With that it is possible to locate most of the strategic components of the fortification of Kōṭṭe.

Thus, merely a ground survey can bring to light a substantial portion of the ruins that still exist in some form. Most of these remains are now destroyed almost up to the ground level and the land is occupied by various individuals or institutions. The objective of this paper is to describe some of the main components



of the fortification of the ancient city of Kōṭṭe and their present state of affairs.

## The City of Parākramabāhu VI

It could be assumed that the city of Kōṭṭe was in a fairly developed state when Parākramabāhu decided to move in. However, before moving in, Parākramabāhu built the abodes for the monks, a [three storied] house for the Tooth Relic and a [five storied?]<sup>1</sup> palace for himself in addition to the [inner] fortifications<sup>2</sup> [*Rājāvaliya* p. 218], all appear to constructed using cabook [laterite]. The streets and the other infrastructure had been improved. Thereafter, it was fortified with four strategic means, put in place the three forces, and included the seven features needed for a city (*Aḷakēśvara Yuddhaya* p.21), according to ancient traditions. That means, it was no longer a garrison town but it became the fortified capital city of the country. The fortification of Parākramabāhu in cabook is still visible at several locations although starting from the Portuguese to those living there at present have removed them to be used as building material<sup>3</sup>. In 1396 A.D., when *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* was written, the fortification of Aḷakēśvara would have been there in perfect condition. In addition, a capital city needed some more facilities such as palaces and residences for the officials. Valentijn reports<sup>4</sup> that the palaces and the dēvālas had been built with blue coloured stones (p.223). Although the Portuguese and the others may have removed most of these, it is said, that occasionally<sup>5</sup> pieces of lapis lazuli<sup>6</sup> are found in the area. Many literary works of the period mention about this stone.

The verse No. 18 of the *Sāḷalihinī Saṇḍēśaya* is as follows

ගනරන් කොතින් දිලිසෙන මිණි රැස්	විහිදු
පවතින් ලෙළෙන පල අග මුතුලැල්	සිතිඳු
සඳකැන් මිණින් බඳ යුතු බිතු පෙළින්	රුදු
එතතින් ගොසින් සැණෙකින් රජ විමන්	වදු

The third line states that the walls of the palace<sup>7</sup> were made out of a kind of moonstone gems. From the description of Valentijn,



it can be concluded that the moonstone used by Parākramabāhu was the best quality which was of blue colour. The contents of the verse 21 of the *Girā Saṇḍēśaya* suggest that the using of blue stones is not an exaggeration. The first line reads as follows:

සොබන නොයෙක් පහ මිණි බිහිනි මනහර

That means the walls of many palaces were made out of gems.

From the following verses, it is apparent that the blue colour semi-precious gems were used in many decorations as well.

1. Kōkila Saṇḍēśaya

ඇති දොර දොර ඉඳුනිල් මිණි රන් තොරණ

The entrances at the doors were decorated with blue gems

උස්ව පෙනෙයි නිල් මිණි පහ කුළු පතර (verse 128)

The bluish edifice appear lofty

2. Girā Saṇḍēśaya (verse 22)

සියල් සිරිත් පිරි මෙහි පහ කැරලි අග

තුමුල් සුනිල් මිණි පැහැ පැතිර සුර මග

The bluish gems of the pinnacles on the top of the palaces were shining like a passage to heaven.

3. Parevi Saṇḍēśaya

මිණි නිල් කැරැල්ලෙන් නැගී රැස් නුබ වැසිය

The sky was shining with the rays emitted from the bluish gems of the pinnacles.

4. Haṇsa Saṇḍēśaya

පිරියන සිට බබලයි පිළි මිණි පවුර (verse 15)



When all the above mentioned literal works refer to the walls and pinnacles of blue gems, it could be assumed that the mention of Valentijn is true.

### The Ruined and Vandalized City of Kōṭṭe

The sections of the inner city fortification built by Parākramabāhu VI is the only substantial structure that remains, which is also highly vulnerable due to high demand for land and building material. The palace and the House of Tooth Relic had been completely destroyed and not even a trace could be found at present. It is said that the present Polythene factory occupies the main area of the former palace. The site most probably where the Temple of Tooth Relic existed is currently used as a cemetery. The road leading to the cemetery has been incorrectly named as the palace road. The palace would have been situated between the present cemetery and Pārakumbā Pirivena.



(A virtual Tour of Kotte available at [http://defonseka.com/hist\\_kotte03.htm](http://defonseka.com/hist_kotte03.htm) [Accessed on 15 October 2010])

**Figure 1: The name board that indicates that once there was a palace**

After the restorations in 1949 by Paranavitana, two stūpas of Koṭavehera type, said to be the monuments of Parākramabāhu VI and his queen, remain in a satisfactory condition. This identification appears to be correct as it is situated outside the city. The foundation



of a building known as the mausoleum of Aḷakēśvara has been restored. It is very unlikely that it is a building of pre-Kōṭṭe period since the material used had been cabook. The landmark buildings mentioned by Couto as '*Ambola*' [*Ambalama*, which is the Sinhala word for a rest-house] (p. 217), which was situated at Welikada had been dismantled a few decades back to build a hotel (de Alwis, p. 26). The other landmark building, another *ambalama* which was in the vicinity of many major battles between Rājasiṅha and the Portuguese, situated at Piṭa Kōṭṭe had been dismantled and rebuilt nearby, due to road development work. It is very close to the outer fortification and the access road from Sītāvaka connects to the road leading to Mount Lavinia, at this place.

### The Fortified City

The word Kōṭṭe itself means a fortress. However, it is little known how the fortification really worked. What was the importance of the ramparts and the moats, the usual components of any fortification during that time? What was the combined effect of the water surrounding the city? What were the hidden components of the fortification? Perhaps the full depth of the fortification cannot be understood without a proper archaeological survey. Yet, a careful study of the chronicles and a ground survey could help to understand some of the critical points of the fortification of the city.

According to the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* the City of Kōṭṭe was founded by the Minister Alagakkōṇāra, who can be identified as Niśsaṅka Aḷakēśvara, during the reign of Vikramabāhu IV (1360-73 A.D.), of Gampola. It had been built as a garrison town, to expel the tax collectors, appointed by the ruler of Jaffna. This matter is again reported in a similar manner, in the *Aḷakēśvara Yuddhaya* and the *Rājāvaliya*. The matter of tax collectors is confirmed by the Maḍavala Rock Inscription dated the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Vikramabāhu IV (*Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. V, No. 47), in which an agreement between the king and Martāṇḍam Perumāḷ, the ruler of Jaffna is mentioned, allowing Martāṇḍam to appoint tax collectors in five districts. It is apparent that the tax collections were not limited to



the areas mentioned in the inscriptions. According to the *Rājāvaliya* (p. 216) Ārya Cakravarti collected taxes from the Low-Country and the nine sea ports as well. It seems that the fortress of Kōṭṭe was built c. 1365 A.D., when, after inspecting the army, [Niśsaṅka] Aḷakēśvara decided that tax should not be paid to the ruler of Jaffna when they had such a strong army (*Rājāvaliya* p. 216).

The Kōṭṭe Period was one of the most prosperous periods of Sri Lanka, though the end was a tragedy. As mentioned above, all Saṇḍēśa poets describe that the walls of the palaces were made out of blue gems, which indicates the amount of wealth possessed by the Sri Lankan kings. Unfortunately, one of the reasons for the destruction of the monuments in Kōṭṭe could be the lure for blue Lapis Lazuli which made it beautiful. Since it is a semi-precious stone, when dismantling the palace in 1565, the Portuguese may have removed the bulk of it. Valentijn [published in 1722] had mentioned that the city of Kōṭṭe was in ruins (p. 172). Rebeiro (1685) had reported that the city was in ruins and only the foundations of many buildings were remaining even in his time (p. 4). Queyroz has reported that the city was dismantled at the time of evacuation in 1565 (p. 420).

### **Literary Information and Evaluation of the Sources Relating to the Fortification**

There are many sources relating to the period of Kōṭṭe but ironically the facts reported in those sources defer from each other. For instance according to the *Rājāvaliya* (p. 222) the king who reigned during the arrival of the Portuguese was Dharma Parākramabāhu (1488-1510 A.D.), but the general indication in the work of Barrows is that he could be even Vīra Parākramabāhu (1485-88 A.D.), the father of Dharma Parākramabāhu. Due to lack of visible remains, no detailed archaeological excavations had been carried out in Kōṭṭe and therefore there are very little archaeological sources on Kōṭṭe. As a result at present, very little is known about the ancient city of Kōṭṭe.



It can be shown that all the chronicles including the Portuguese chronicles have given a mixture of facts and incorrect data, fiction and legends. When *Rājāvaliya* says that the father of Parākramabāhu VI was Vijayabāhu VI (1510-21 A.D.) or when Couto says that Kōṭṭe was divided among the three brothers before 1517 A.D., one should not necessarily take those as facts. Similarly the present printed *Aḷakēśvara Yuddhaya* and the *Rājāvaliya* state that Vijayabāhu VII and his brother Rājasinha kept a common wife, but such a story is not found in the Palm Leaf copy of the *Aḷakēśvara Yuddhaya* kept at the British Library. It is more logical to come to the conclusion that Vijayabāhu married the young widow of his brother, who had three small children as stated by Couto (p. 71). Due to such discrepancies when extracting data from the chronicles, a validation criterion is required to be followed.

Some of the details of the fortification are available both in, Sri Lankan chronicles as well as in Portuguese chronicles. In regard to the outer rampart and the moat, the most descriptive chronicle is the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya*. It had been written in 1396 A.D., perhaps within 25 years of building of the fortress. It reveals that Aḷakēśvara dug a deep moat and constructed the [outer] rampart [along the moat] out of granite stones. The outer rampart can be identified as the one that existed near the Piṭa Kōṭṭe junction, which was completely removed during the British Period [c.1788] to obtain granite blocks, for road construction (preface, de Alwis, Observer 9<sup>th</sup> November 1900). The methods used in the fortification are described in the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* (pp. 31-32). It included a deep and deadly moat, a rampart made out of granite stones from the base of the moat, fortified with iron spikes, a mechanism resembling the mouth of a tiger and tools similar to horns, made out of iron [caltrops?], security posts on pillars, installation of poisonous panels, machines that kills any person coming close and posts on wooden pillars, bastions and a defences strategy at different levels consisting of one floor to five floor buildings and stairs

Though some of the above methods cannot be understood fully at present, it is clear that a deep moat and a rampart with some



defensive mechanisms were built. In addition, Aḷakēśvara built temples, houses, roads and four Dēvālas, on the top of the rampart.

According to the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* when building the fortress of Kōṭṭe, Aḷakēśvara was inspired by the techniques used during the ancient times by Vajjis, one of the Mahājanapada, in their capital Mithilā (p. 32). These techniques are found in a Buddhist work, called *Ummagga Jātaka*. The fortification of that city is explained as follows:

*... and he (Mahauṣada) encircled the city with a white rampart 18 cubit high (27 ft.), like a wreath of waves rising in the milky ocean; adjoining this wall, to strengthen it on the outside, he built a buttress all round, and upon the rampart he erected hundreds of towers covered with arabesque, while every gate was adorned with grotesque carving on the outside; and strongholds were established here and there. Outside the encircling rampart he dug three moats, the first full of water, wherein grew five kinds of lotuses, and infested monstrous crocodiles and sharks; around this was the second moat full of mud; and around this again the third moat full of earth. .... (p. 98)*

Some of the above details are comparable with the description of Kōṭṭe in the Portuguese and Sri Lankan chronicles. There is no doubt that there were many similarities between the fortification of Kōṭṭe and the legendary city Mithilā. However, there were certain differences in Kōṭṭe due to the specific geographical properties, which will be discussed later.

Out of the Portuguese chronicles what is stated by Couto is crucial in identifying the features of the fortification. Without his description (pp. 216-217, 224) it is almost impossible to identify many features. His description on page 216 is given below:

*The city of Cota is of a circular form, and is situated as it were in an island, entirely surrounded by a fair size river,*



*which can only be crossed by boat. It will be some 2000 paces (one pace=5 feet, which means about 3 km and the actual circumference of the inner city is about 4 km) in circumference, and has no access to the outer world except by a passage like a man's neck, which would be some 50 paces in width. This defile our people had fortified with a vallation of thick walls at each end, and two walls besides that ran across this defile, one outside, and the other nearer in, and this passage is called Pera Cota (Piṭa Kōṭṭe). There is also over the bridge, which they call the pass of Ambola, which goes towards Colombo will be a league and a half. There is another pass, which they call that of the Mosquito, and two others, in which our people had made their tranqueiras, and provide them with everything. The manner in which Gonçalo Guedez and the king provided this and the captains whom they placed in these passes I do not know, nor do I find any records; I only know that in Pera Cota, which was the most dangerous pass, was a captain with 40 men, and in all the other passes each had its captain and 30 men.....*

The seven passes to Kōṭṭe, as listed by Couto (pp.224-225) are given below:

1. The entrance to Kōṭṭe over the bridge from the direction of ambalama [Welikaḍa]
2. The pass in front of the islet that the river formed there, called the islet of challenges [Kontagantota]
3. The pass of Mosquito [Aṅgampitiya]
4. The pass of Andre Fernandez
5. The pass of *Pachās* [Vāddāhs]
6. The pass at the Wall of Piṭa Kōṭṭe [land access].
7. The pass of *Mainotos* [the washers – this should be connected to the area where the people of that caste lived]

The description of Queyroz (p.29) is also interesting and supplements to, what is given by Couto.



*Cota is one league distance from Colombo, being situated like a peninsular in the midst of a lake of fresh water which were in it plenty of alligators, so that it could not be crossed swimming, because of the ferocity with which they killed any living thing, swallowing calves and other animals as if they were but a small mouthful. They say that the first ruler of Cota ordered them to be cast into it, because there escaped by swimming the people whom he employed to build the city. It had a circumference of 20,000 geometrical paces surrounded by mud walls (taypa) and bastions of stone at shallow passes, without any other way by dry land save a sort of Isthmus of 70 paces in breadth fortified with a curtain and a moat which defended Parea-Cota a strong place at a short distance from the city, with a wooden drawbridge where, they say, was obtained a great victory over the emperor of Rajāpurē, who seeking to subdue this new town, being ignorant of the preparations and mistaking for land what industry had turned into a lake, instead of the victory he looked for, found himself defeated. This pass is called (the pass) of ambalam, and the Portuguese made use of it on their journey to Colombo. Another pass is called (the pass) of the Mosquitoes, the common plague of places low and marshy. There were seven others sometimes dangers, which was all fortified in time of war. ...*

From both Couto and Queyroz it can be seen that Kōṭṭe was a peninsula of about 4 km in circumference [the figure of Queyroz, which is 30 km is incorrect] surrounded by a lake infested with crocodiles to prevent people crossing the lake by swimming. It [the inner city] was surrounded by a wall of cabook. Kōṭṭe cannot be accessed other than through the passes which indicate the existence of mud and there were bastions made out of granite stones at shallow passes. At the Piṭa Kōṭṭe pass there were walls built by the Portuguese [a curtain]. There was a defile [isthmus] at Piṭa Kōṭṭe which had a breadth of over 200 ft. There was a wooden drawbridge at the *ambalama* pass.



Although the *Aḷakēśvara Yuddhaya* which had been written c.1550 (p. 20) and the *Rājāvaliya* (p. 216), do not mention all the above details, have given two important strategies of Kōṭṭe. One is the construction of a dike to fill the water [which Couto has reported existed (p. 228)]. The other was storing of foodstuff sufficient for several years [since Aḷakēśvara had the wisdom to identify the main weakness of the fortress, that there can be a long siege, though the defence was formidable, which the Portuguese could not realise].

Both the *Aḷakēśvara Yuddhaya* and the *Rājāvaliya* provide the details of fortification made by Parākramabāhu VI. Since it was already a fortress, the additions of Parākramabāhu were mainly to improve it as the capital city of the Kingdom. For this purpose, Parākramabāhu built the inner moat and the inner rampart, palaces, Temple of the Tooth and widened the roads. The building material was cabook. Perhaps the inner moat from the bastion No.7 to 8 [please refer the Sketch of the Ancient City of Kōṭṭe], which is comparably smaller in length but having a similar depth was built by Parākramabāhu.

It is clear from the Sri Lankan sources that the city of Kōṭṭe was built in two stages i.e. by Niśsaṅka Aḷakēśvara - c. 1365<sup>8</sup> and by Parākramabāhu VI (1412-67 A.D.) - between 1412-15

## **The Sophisticated Fortification System of Kōṭṭe**

### **The Passes and the Bastions**

As mentioned earlier, Mithilā had 7 passes, but according to the geographical location of Kōṭṭe it is very likely Kōṭṭe had only 2 passes, when it was first built by Aḷakēśvara. Those should have been the main pass at Piṭa Kōṭṭe and the other one at the Northern tip which was later known as *ambalama* pass. It is also very likely that the northern pass was kept as a secret pass to vacate in an emergency. The *ambalama* built with cabook in the vicinity [Welikada] indicates that it was put up during the Kōṭṭe period.



When Kōṭṭe became the capital city, only two entrances were not enough but had seven entrances. Out of the seven passes, four can be identified. They are the ambalama pass [No. 1], the pass near the islet [No. 2, Kontagantota], the Piṭa Kōṭṭe pass [No. 6] and the pass of *Mainotos* [the washers] [No. 7]. The pass of *Pachās* [Vāddāhs] which is No.5 also could be identified as one of the two passes on the western side [other than the ambalama pass] since the Portuguese used that pass to go to Colombo with the assistance of the Vāddāhs during the sieges.

Logically, the passes should have existed at the places where there were bastions. If the passes existed without any protection at the entrance, it would be a security risk. Such feature can be seen at any fort of any origin. By analysing the plan of Kōṭṭe, one can identify the places where the bastions were located. It should be at the entrances and the corners. In fact, as stated above, Queyroz mentioned that there were bastions made out of stone at shallow passes. The bastions No. 5, No. 6, No. 7 and No. 10 are marked in an old Dutch map [this is given at the end]. With the help of correct observations and indications in the Portuguese records, it can be concluded that there should have been exactly 7 passes, at the 8 bastions [at Piṭa Kōṭṭe it was actually in between two bastions] of the outer perimeter of the fortress.

The bastions of Kōṭṭe that can be identified are as given below: [The relevant passes that may have been associated with them are also indicated. Please see the sketch map of Kōṭṭe]

1. Four bastions built-in to the outer rampart [Piṭa Kōṭṭe]
  - a. No. 1 at the western corner [pass No. 5]
  - b. No. 2 at the left of the Piṭa Kōṭṭe entrance [pass No. 6]
  - c. No. 3 at the right of the Piṭa Kōṭṭe entrance [pass No. 6]
  - d. No. 4 at the eastern corner [pass No. 7]
2. Four Bastions built-in with the front inner rampart
  - a. No. 5 at the western corner [pass No. 3]



- b. No. 6 at the left of the entrance to the inner city
  - c. No. 7 at the right of the entrance to the inner city
  - d. No. 8 at the eastern corner (pass No. 4)
3. No. 9 near the palace (Kontagañtoṭa) (pass No. 2)
  4. No. 10 at the pass of *ambalama* (Welikaḍa) (pass No. 1)

Note: The passes are numbered according to the order given by Couto and the bastions are numbered by the present researcher.

Accordingly, at the main entrances of the outer rampart (considering the wide entrances of 200 feet, one bastion was not enough) and the inner rampart, there should have been two bastions at each place. At the other passes, there was one bastion. When Aḷakēśvara built the fortress, theoretically there was no need for another pass since in the absence of the inner city wall, it was possible to escape from any place by boat or land to any place of Kōṭṭe. This is because there was no rampart other than at the vicinity of the main entrance at Piṭa Kōṭṭe. It can be shown that in reality, this was not the case, (which will be discussed later in detail). Since the entrance to the fortress was possible (though practically difficult) from any point when there was no rampart, Aḷakēśvara had built security posts right around the fortress. Certainly passes Nos. 2, 3, 4 would have been established after the construction of the inner city. The passes No. 5 and 7 may have existed from the inception due to the presence of the bastions, but there are no clues to prove or disprove the fact. As stated earlier, it is very likely that pass No. 1 existed before the Kōṭṭe period which means Aḷakēśvara may have built the wooden drawbridge as the rear emergency exit point. This is quite probable considering the strategies used by Aḷakēśvara.

Another feature of the passes appears to be the presence of a well. The usual Kōṭṭe period terracotta ring [*‘ūrākāṭa’*] wells can be seen at two passes namely No. 2 and No. No.3. It is quite



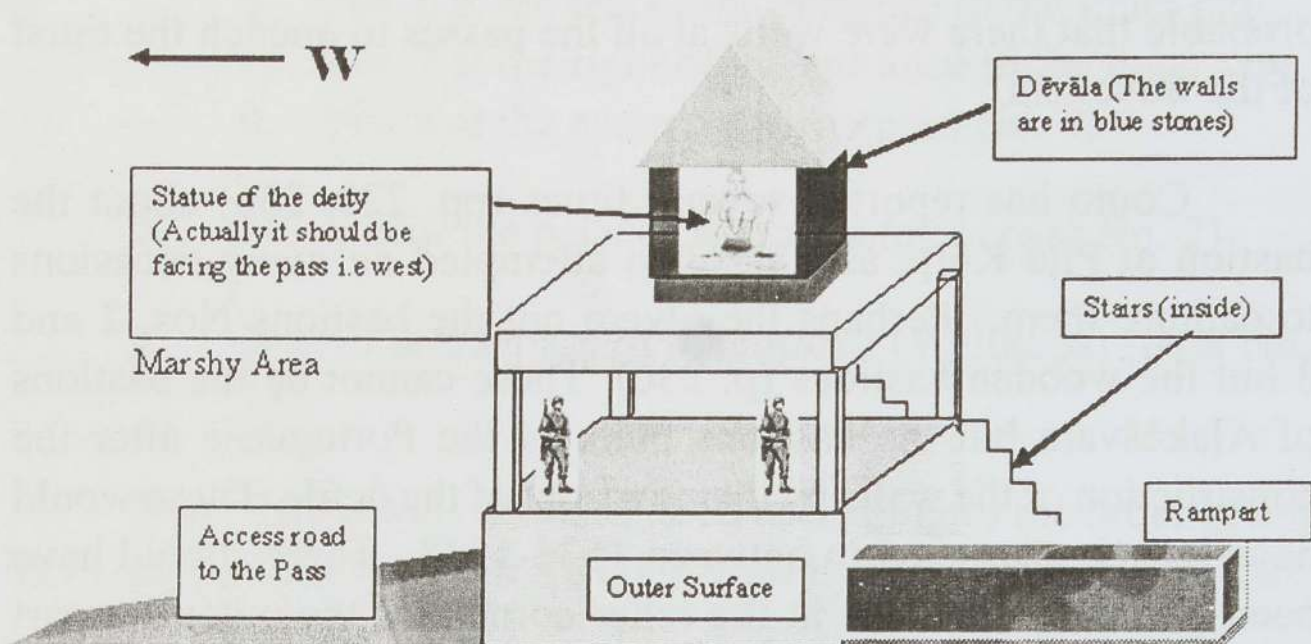
probable that there were wells at all the passes to quench the thirst of the travellers.

Couto has reported several times (pp. 229, 236) about the bastion at Piṭa Kōṭṭe as Rājasiṅha attempted on many occasions to capture them. Perhaps they were not the bastions Nos. 2 and 3 but the wooden bastions (p. 236). These cannot be the bastions of Aḷakēśvara but the bastions built by the Portuguese after the construction of the walls by them in front of the defile. These would have been constructed in between 1536-1538. There should have been two more bastions at the other corners of the outer rampart [Nos. 1 and 4]. Logically, a rampart cannot end abruptly. There should be a security post since always the enemy would attempt to enter at such points due to the absence of a rampart. As such, there should have been altogether 4 bastions on the outer rampart.

On the inner rampart also there is evidence for the existence of the bastions. In the southern section, which is the front of the inner rampart, there are signs of at least 3 bastions. Two should have been at the entrance [Nos. 6 and 7] and the other two at the two corners [Nos. 5 and 8]. The bastion No. 5 at the western corner [Aṅgampitiya Road] looks like a mound at present. It is clear that the material that paved the rampart, very likely was granite as reported by Queyroz (p. 29), had been removed from it. Some granite stones can be seen on the rampart about 15 metres to the east, surrounded by cabook paving. As stated earlier, this bastion is marked on the Dutch map. The two bastions at the entrance to the inner city is part of the gate and are marked on the Dutch map.

Another feature that can be identified as connected to the bastions is that there were dēvālas at each bastion. It is stated in the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* that there were four dēvālas on the 'top of the [outer] rampart'. It is not difficult to surmise that the four dēvālas were on the top of the four bastions since the guarding sentries would not have been placed above the statues of gods. In regard to the outer rampart, they were dedicated to Upulvan, Saman, Vibhīṣaṇa and Skandha. It appears that, in addition to the





**Figure 2: A Sketch of a Bastion (No. 1)**

soldiers that guarded the bastions, they believed in some form of “divine guard” as well. This has another strategic importance since the fort was originally meant to face the Tamil invaders who were Hindus. There was no doubt that when the Hindu statues were at the top of the bastions, the Hindus would have been hesitant to attack their gods.

From the above, some of the salient feature of the defence of Kōṭṭe connected to the bastions can be identified as:

1. Bastions at each corner of the rampart and entrances,
2. A Dēvāla at the top of each bastion , and
3. The passes were located connected to the bastions

### **The Ramparts and the Moats**

As mentioned earlier, the outer rampart was built by Aḷakēśvara c. 1365 A.D. out of granite stones and the inner rampart was built by Parākramabāhu VI out of cabook. According to the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya*, Aḷakēśvara dug the deep moat which could be identified as the outer moat. The outer rampart was limited to the section where the landmass was earlier connected to the



mainland through which Aḷakēśvara dug the deep moat up to a point where it could be defended [i.e. the defile of 200 ft. wide]. The rest was surrounded by water and swamps and Aḷakēśvara had only built watch towers. However Parākramabāhu had to build an inner rampart which was a requirement of a capital city for further protection. Except on the southern side, there was the marshy area outside the rampart. From the description of Couto (pp. 234-39), it can be assumed that water was there, right up to the inner city wall [actually mud except at the passes]. The Dutch map also reveals that the area outside the rampart was marshy and marked as paddy lands but that should be after the reduction of the water level, due to damage to the dam.

Though the granite stones had been removed by the British road builders, the foundation of the outer rampart may be available unless they removed that as well. According to de Alwis, the stones have been removed by Public Works Department in late 19<sup>th</sup> century to construct a bridge at Hādala (preface). Perhaps the stones may have also been used to construct some culverts as mentioned in the Administrative Reports of the Archaeological Department (1909 and 1930). As a result, no archaeological remains can be found today in the area and there have been encroachments up to the boundary of the outer moat. At present, many buildings and parapet walls have been constructed up to the moat or perhaps even a portion of the moat have been encroached upon.

When inspecting the area, it could be seen that no inner moat had been dug on the left side of the inner entrance. It seems that the lake was so close that there was no need for a moat as in the case of the right side. On the right side, the moat is deep and wide and comparable with that of the outer moat.





Figure 3 : Granite paved section of the inner rampart near Bastion No. 5



Figure 4 : Remains of the Bastion at the western corner (No. 5) of the inner rampart



Note: This is at the end of Angampitiya Road. Paving material had been removed. A few granite stones are seen which cannot be identified if they belong to the bastion

## Identification of Passes and Bastions

### Pass No.1, *Ambalama* - and the Bastion No.10

Both Couto and Queyroz have mentioned that this was the main pass used by them for travel to and fro from Colombo. There had been a drawbridge at this pass as mentioned, which would have enabled them to use carts etc. and also travel on horseback. Perhaps the remains of the lower parts of the bridge which missed the eyes of the road builders would be found near the present Wälikada Bridge. The reasons why the Portuguese always used this pass were the close proximity to Colombo and the pass could have been more defensible since attacks came mainly from the east. From the description of Couto, it is clear that there were several access roads to the bridge. Perhaps in addition to the road to Colombo connecting near the *ambalama*, there were two other roads connected from the north and the south, as the present Wälikada Junction. The suffix

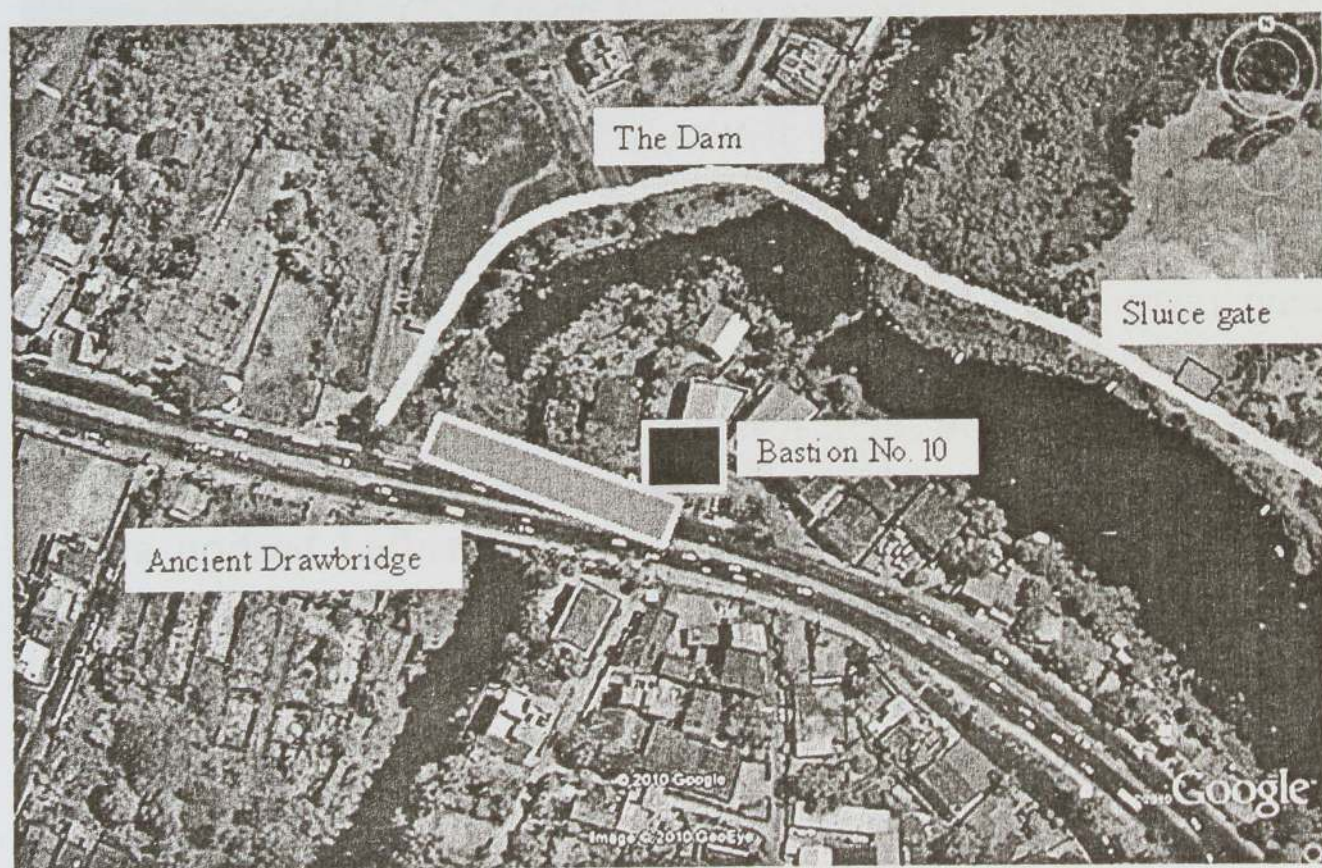


Figure 5: The *Ambalama* Pass



‘kaḍa’ perhaps indicates the place where the roads meet. Rājasiṅha at times had even taken control of these roads blocking all the accesses to Kōṭṭe (Couto, p. 219).

There is no difficulty in identifying this pass since it was close to the ancient Welikada ambalama, which was destroyed recently as stated earlier. This would have been before 1976. Since the ruler for the north is Kuvēra, it is possible that the Dēvāla at the ambalama pass, which was at the northern tip, was dedicated to Kuvēra. However there are no indications in the literary works of the period who the deity was.

### **Pass No.2 –At the islet and the Bastion No. 9**

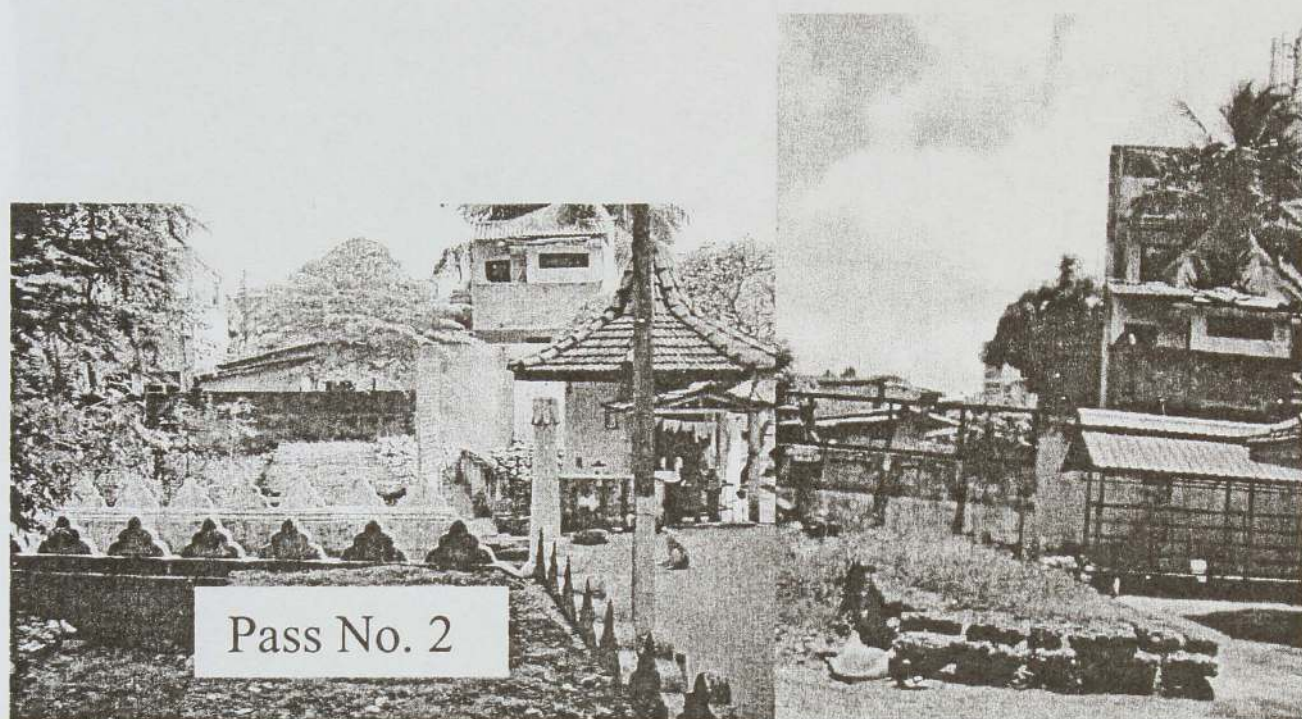
This pass could be identified as Kōṅgahatoṭupala or Kontagantōṭa. The royal palace area starts perhaps near the premises of the present Pārakumbā Pirivena. It can be seen that, there is a gap in the rampart at this point, perhaps indicating that the real pass was situated there.

This pass was the closest to the palace as could be identified from the *Sāḷalihiṇi Saṇḍēśaya* (v. 21 and v. 22). The poet instructs the bird Sāḷalihiṇi to first worship the king and leave from the Kontagantōṭa. This shows it was situated close to the palace. As such Kontagantōṭa could be identified as the pass near the palace. De Alwis states (p. 14) that a foundation of a tower [circular] has been restored by the Archaeological Department. A photograph of the circular foundation is given by de Alwis but at present, no foundation could be seen. It is doubtful whether it was one of the towers built by Aḷakēśvara since the foundation appears to be of cabook. There should have been a well-fortified bastion at this point being closer to the palace. Perhaps the bastion was fully destroyed as in the case of some others. However, the small well outside the rampart confirms that the pass was at this point. From old maps, it could be seen that there had been an islet close to the place. As such, this pass can be identified as the pass of the islet of Couto. Couto says this islet was also known as islet of challenges



since the soldiers challenged each other. Perhaps that indicates the soldiers of Rājasiṅha were there on the islet while the Portuguese were at the entry point near the palace.

The Dēvāla at the Kontagantōṭa was dedicated to Īśvara, as stated in the *Sāḷalihiṇi Saṇḍēśaya* (v. 21 and v. 22). Douglas Ranasingha has mentioned that Battaramulla was the area where the cooks were residing and hence known as Battotāmulla (pp. 32-33). It is just on the opposite bank of the lake.



**Figure 6: Pass No. 2 Kontagantōṭa**

Note: The recent photograph on the right shows that the entrance to the pass had been modified [Pārakumbā Pirivena]. The Photograph on the left is from (*A virtual Tour of Kotte* available at [http://defonseka.com/hist\\_kotte03.htm](http://defonseka.com/hist_kotte03.htm) [Accessed on 15 October 2010])



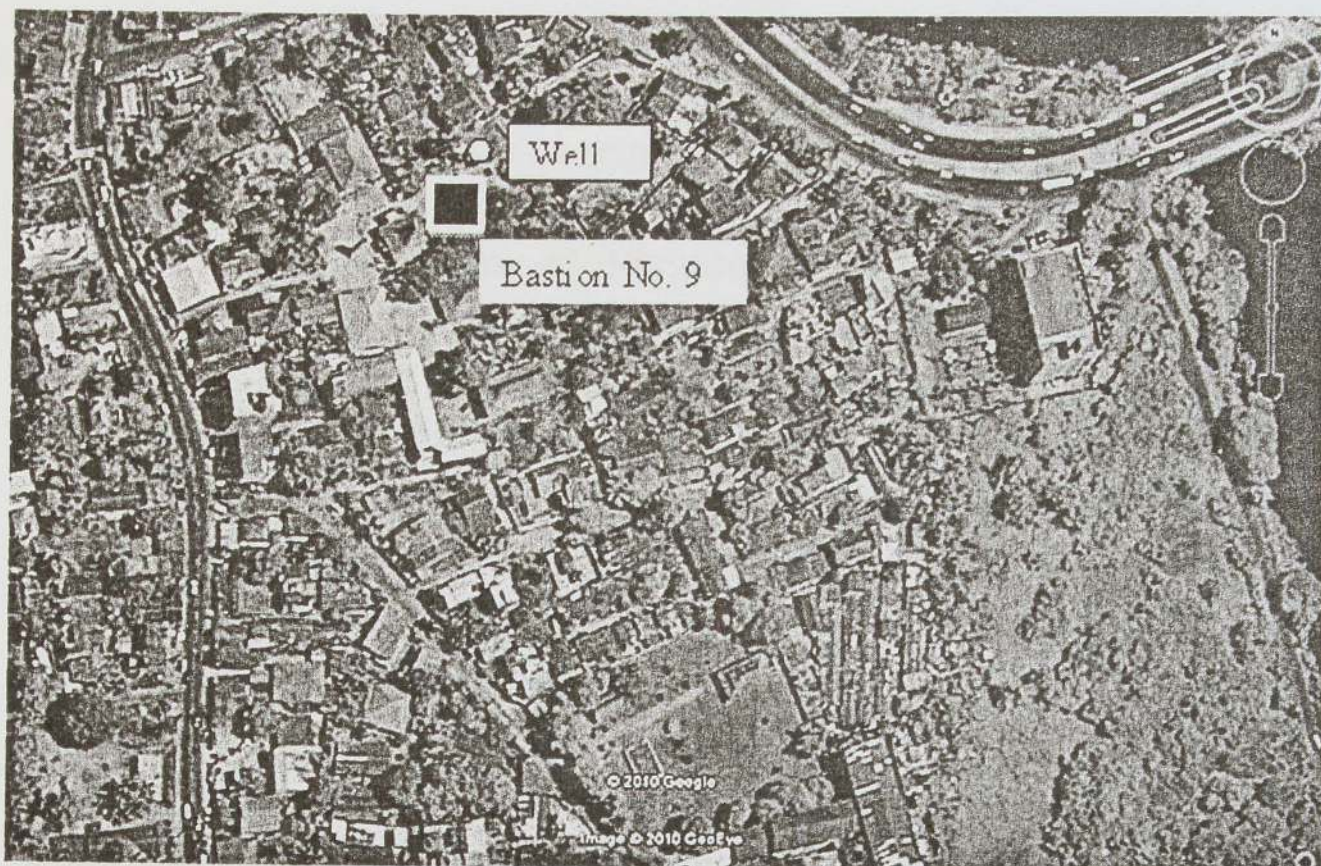


Figure 7: Palace Complex and Kontagantota

### Pass No. 3 - Mosquitoes and Bastion No. 5

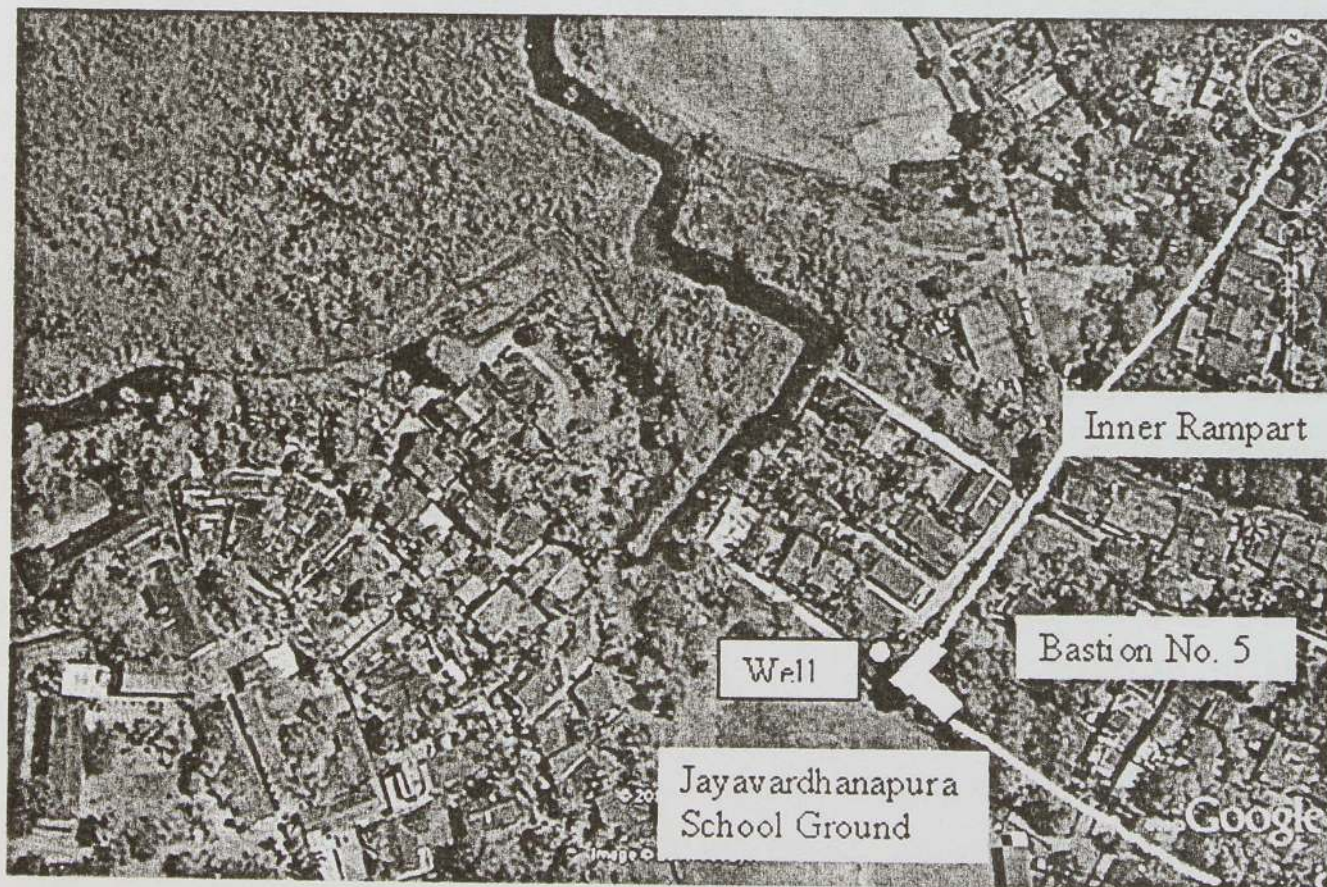


Figure 8: Pass of Mosquitoes (No. 3) (Gunawardhana Road & Angampitiya Road)



If it is assumed that Couto has given the passes in some order, the 3<sup>rd</sup> pass appears to be the one at the western corner of the inner rampart on the southern side, presently at the end of Aṅgampitiya Road. The mound of this bastion is about 3 metres high and a side is about 10 meters. The paving of either in cabook or very likely in granite had been removed as shown in the picture. The location of the pass is confirmed by the well outside the rampart as in the case of Pass No. 2.

#### **Pass No. 4 - Andre Fernandez and Bastion No. 8**

The remains of a bastion can be seen at the eastern end of the rampart road. This is one of the bastions on the southern inner rampart. Two sides of the foundation of this bastion can be seen and the other two sides are not visible above the ground level. Houses have been built at the site presumed to be the base of the bastion. The present path which gradually rises up to the rampart level very likely be the former pass. The deity, which the dēvāla of the bastion was devoted, cannot be identified.



Figure 9: Bastion No. 5 [Aṅgampitiya Road]



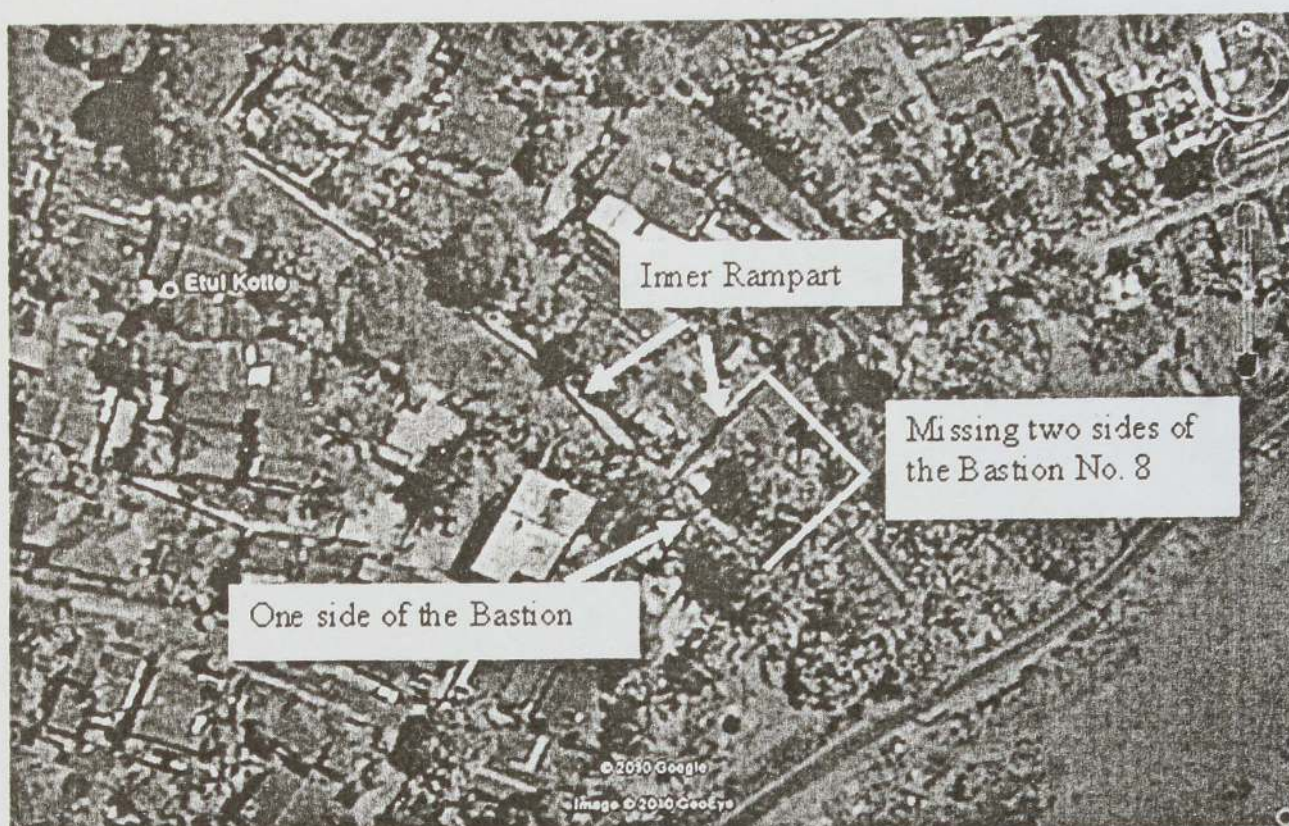


Figure 10: Pass of Andre Fernandez (Pass No. 4)

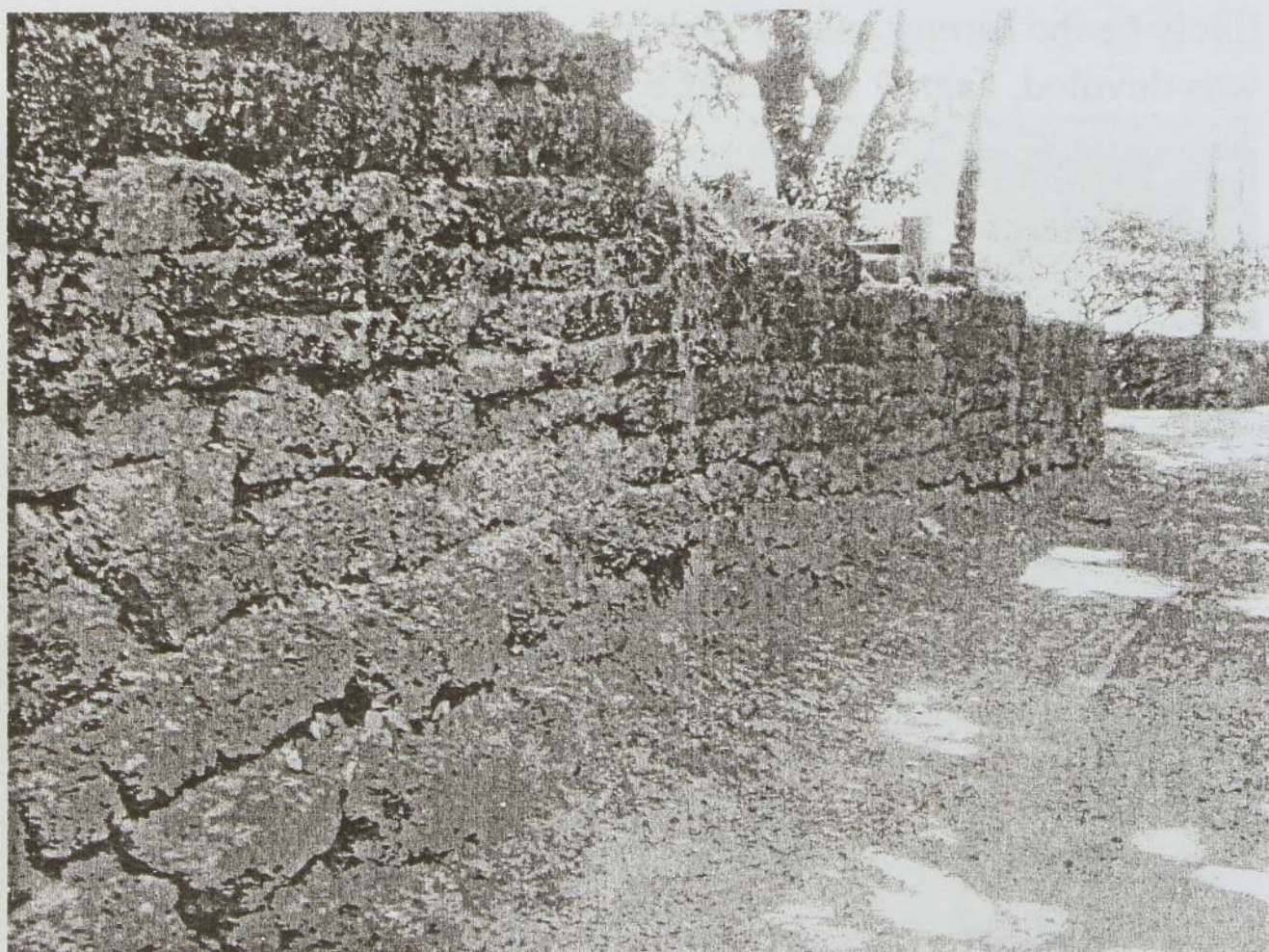
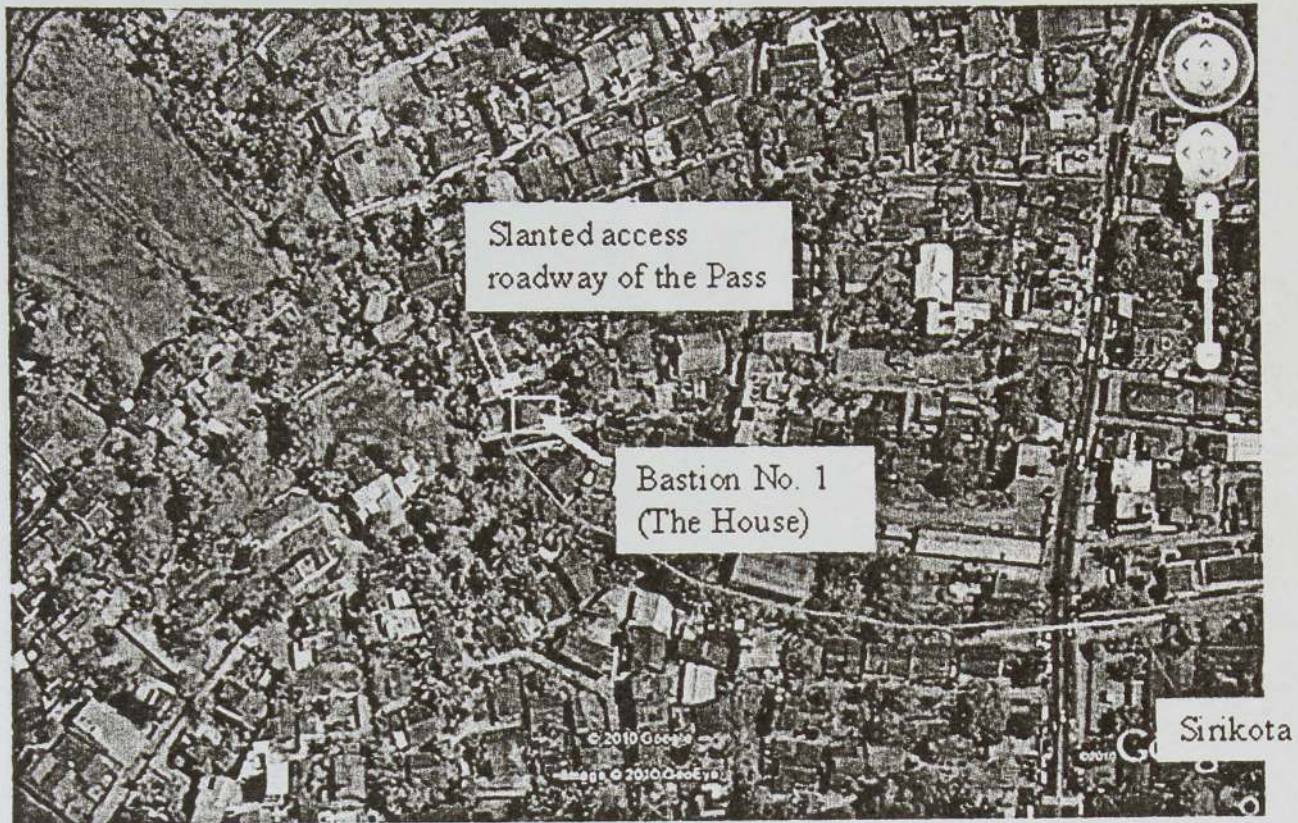


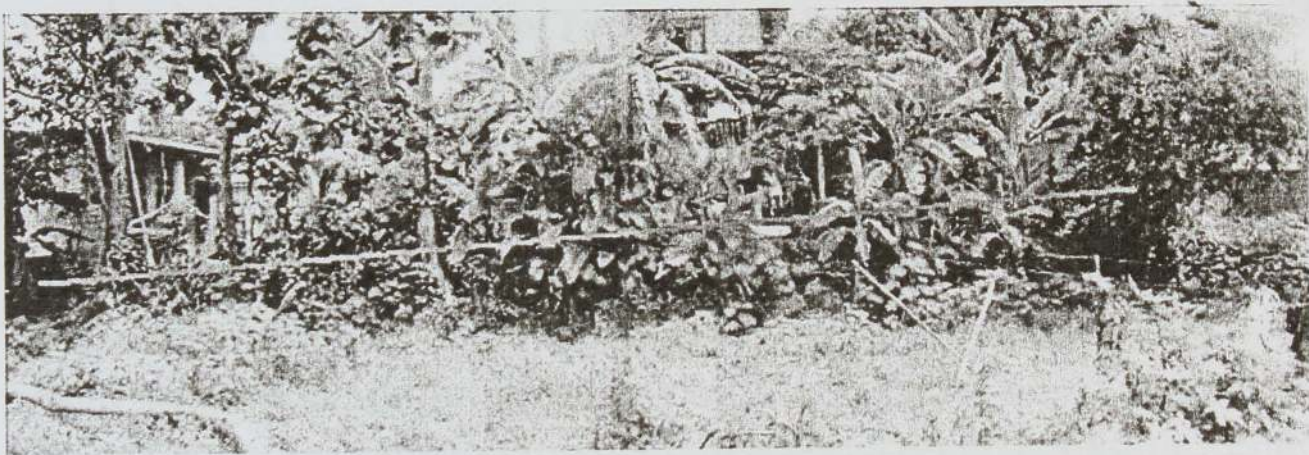
Figure 11: The remaining foundation of the Bastion No. 8 and the pass



### Pass No. 5 - pass of the Pacās (Vāddāhs) and Bastion No. 1



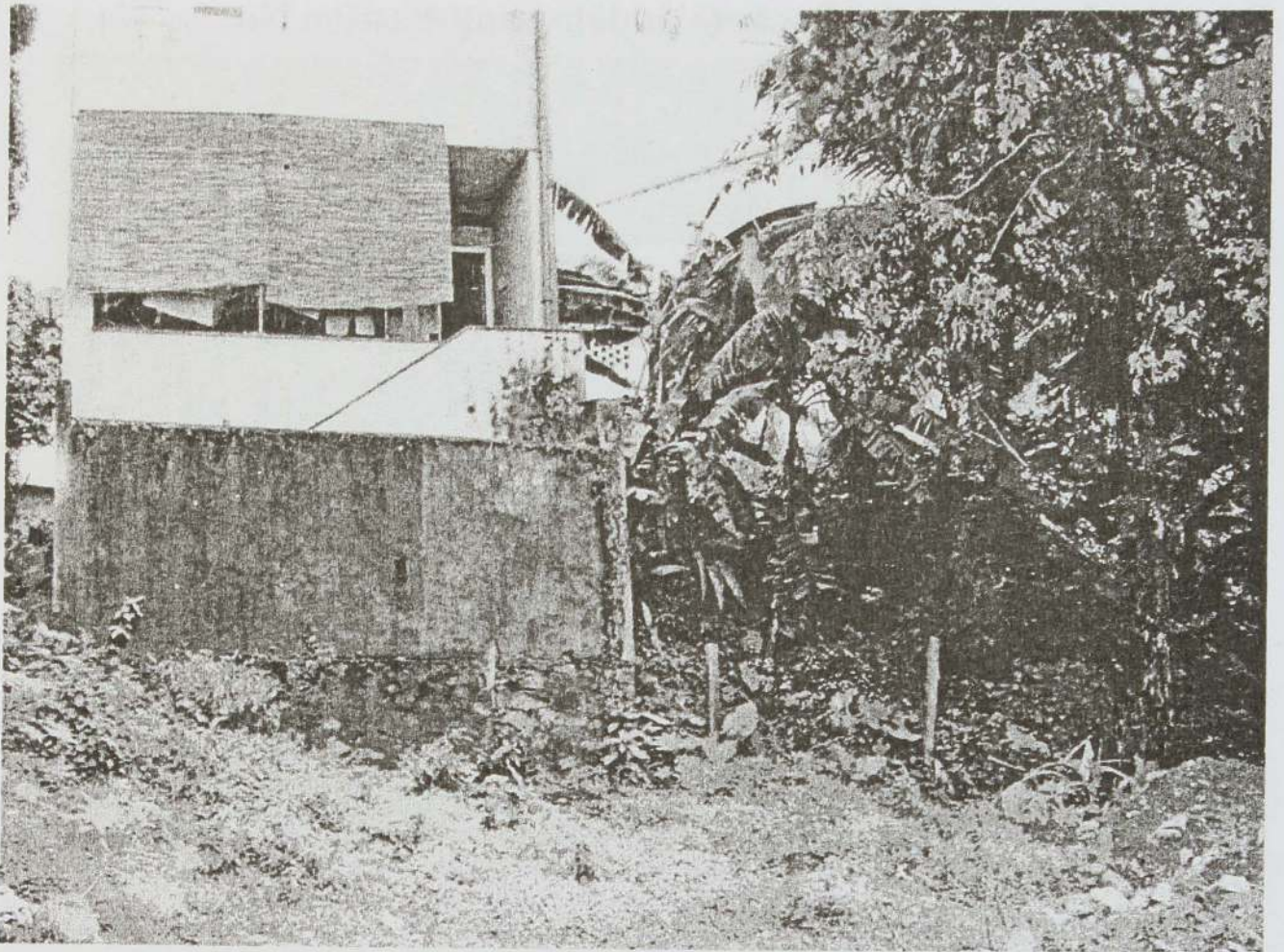
**Figure 12 : Pass of Pacās**



**Figure 13: Slanted Access Roadway of the Pass No. 5.**

Note: The location of the bastion is on the right and the photographer stands on the mud layer of the former lake





**Figure 14: The house stands at the exact location of the Bastion No. 1.**

Note: To the right the end of rampart can be seen

The exact location of this pass and the bastion can be identified by a surface survey although the granite stones have been removed from the site and a house has been constructed exactly on the site of the bastion. The location of the bastion should be at the end of the outer rampart. The difference in the height clearly indicates the end of the rampart. The slanted landscape to the west immediately after the bastion can be identified as the access road to the pass. Couto has mentioned on several occasions, how the Portuguese made use of Vāddahs to communicate between Kōṭṭe and Colombo. Vāddahs also helped the Portuguese on several occasions to cross the lake. Couto has also mentioned an occasion where Rājasiṅha had paid a bribe to Vāddahs to give incorrect intelligence reports to the Portuguese (p. 236). It is very likely that they took this route since it is not too far from Colombo. The pass of *Pacās* should be either the pass marked as No. 3 or No. 5, since those are the only passes that run to the west, other than the *ambalama* pass. The deity of the *dēvāla* on the bastion cannot be identified.





**Figure 15: Location of an Artillery Gun near the Bastion No. 1**

### **Pass No.6 - Piṭa Kōṭṭe Pass, the Bastions No. 2 and 3 and the Outer moat**

This pass can also be identified from the information given by Couto. According to Couto, four walls were constructed at the defile by the Portuguese to protect the entrance and these are also not found at present. It appears that all the materials have been removed for construction works. However, if excavations are carried out, it is very likely that the foundations of the rampart, the two bastions and the Portuguese walls can be found.

The outer moat built by Aḷakēśvara and the defile, he left as the main access to the fortress can be identified without difficulty. Perhaps by looking at the defile, one could assume that it was a section of the moat filled by the road builders, recently. But the measurement of the section helps further to identify it. According to Couto, the defile was about 40 paces [200 ft.]. It can be seen that



the moat is filled to a greater extent on the side of the defile because of natural erosion. The figure given by Queyroz which is 70 paces appears to be incorrect.

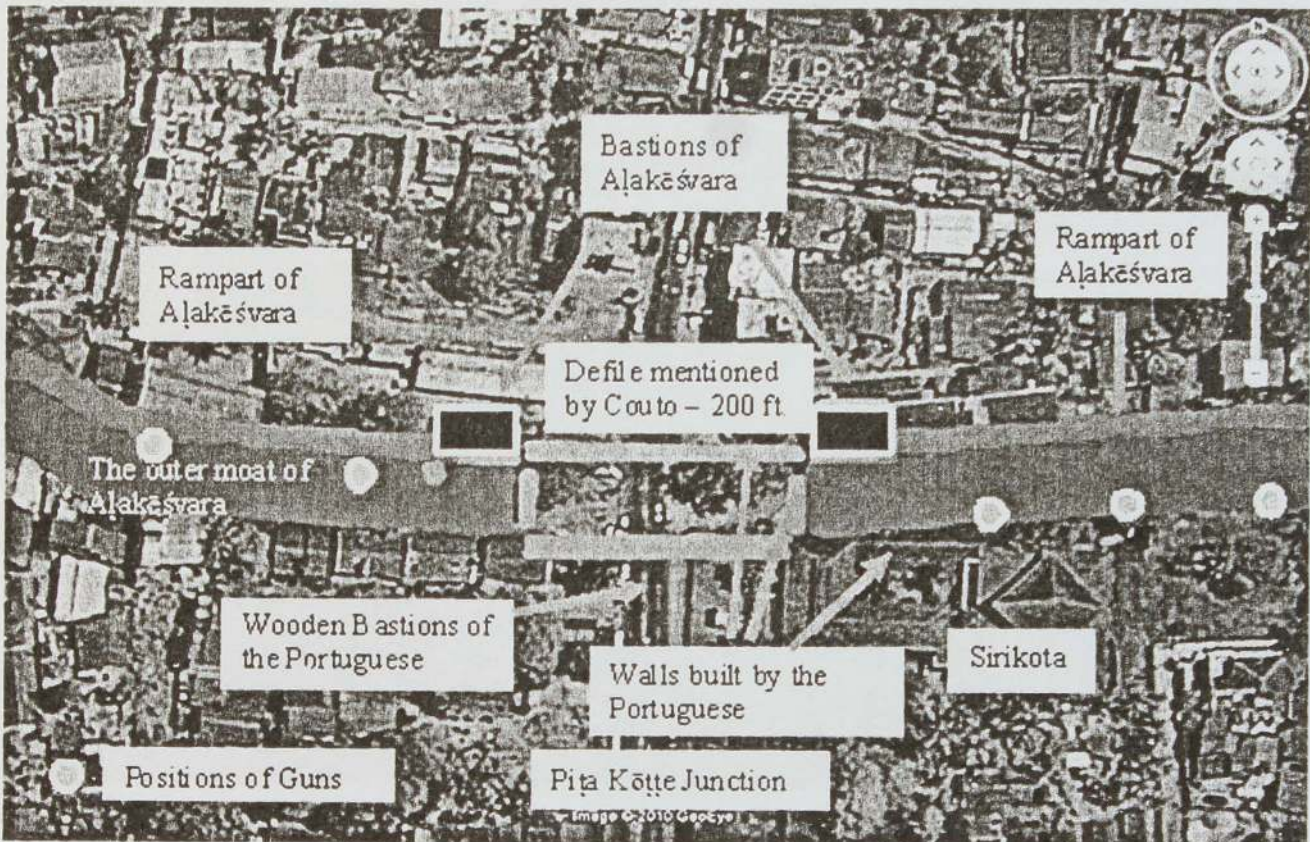


Figure 16: A sketch of the main entrance at Piṭa Kōṭṭe

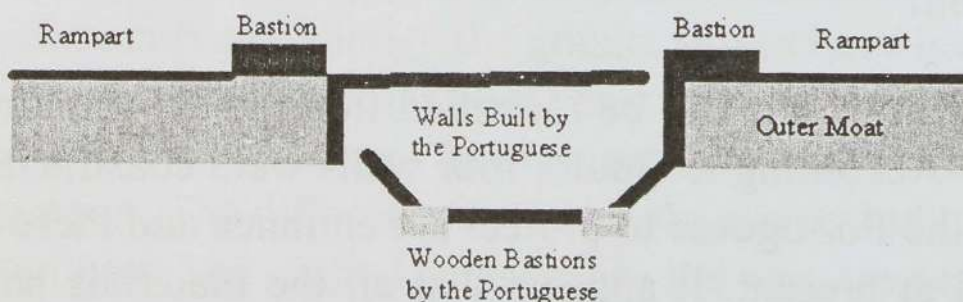


Figure 17: A Sketch of the Outer City Gate [Piṭa Kōṭṭe]

Note: Based on the inner city gate depicted on the Dutch map, the outer city gate at Piṭa Kōṭṭe pass built by the Portuguese would have been somewhat like given above

Along the outer moat, several positions of artillery locations are visible. Some of the positions are marked on our sketch. On the left section of the moat, the guns had been placed at the inner bank



and on the right section at the outer bank. Couto has mentioned [p .75] that the pass was fortified with a bastion and *transqueiras* [a rampart], in which they placed the artillery.

The deities of the two *dēvālas* cannot be known precisely but it is likely that one was dedicated to Skandha. De Alwis has reproduced an account taken from the *Daily News* of 23.05.1930 where the acting Archaeological Commissioner had reported on the removal of 31 stone pillars from the Temple of Kandaswamy. One of the pillars had carried an inscription stating that a donation was made by Sri Vijayabāhu in the 11<sup>th</sup> year in [the month of] Vaikās [Vesak]. This king can be identified as Vijayabāhu VII [1510-1521 A.D.]. In the Ceylon Administrative Report of 1930, it is merely stated that the pillars have been used for construction of the road but not identified the location. It was not even mentioned that it was from Kōṭṭe. Due to the presence of the inscription of Vijayabāhu, it is quite possible that it was removed from Kōṭṭe as mentioned in the newspaper.

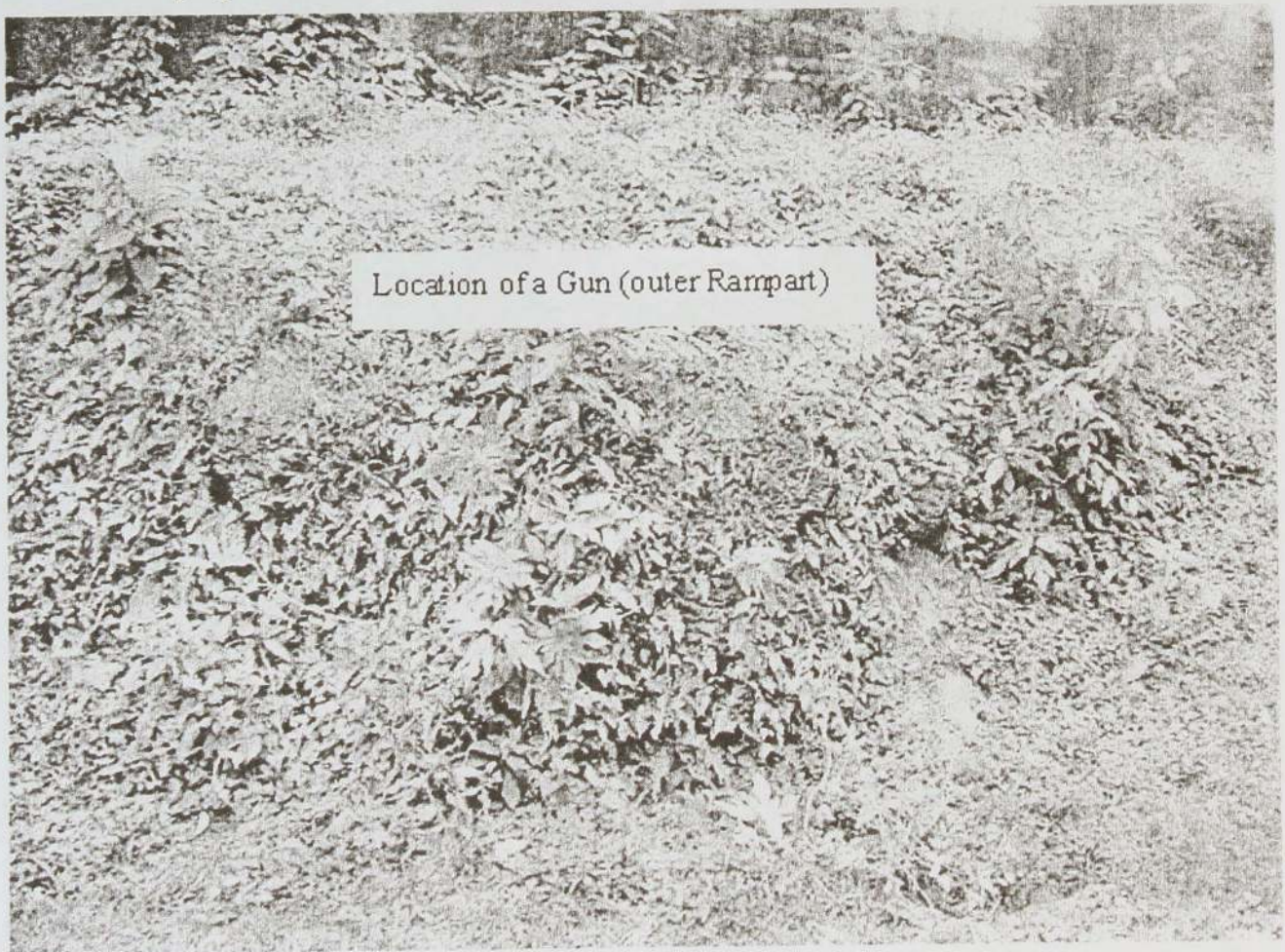
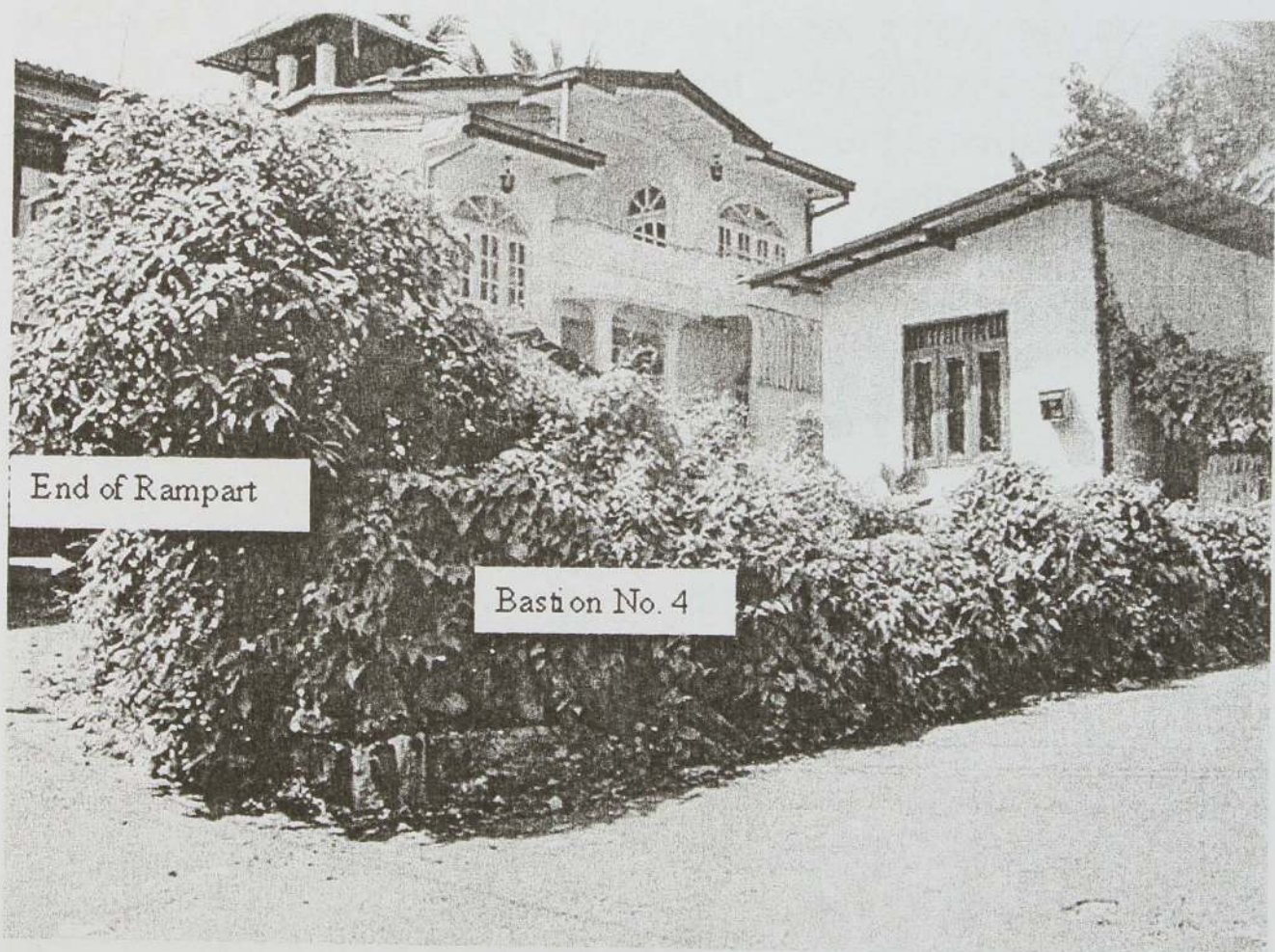


Figure 18: A location of a gun on the right section of the Outer Moat



### Pass No.7 - *Mainotos* [the washers] –and Bastion No. 4

The eastern side of the outer moat is also short. The rampart running parallel to the moat turns northward at the boundary of the present Jātika Sēvaka Saṅgamaya head office. Then it runs about 100 feet to the north and ends. The ancient roadway is most probably the present Ran Pokuṇa Road. The area should have been surrounded by water and marshy areas and the end of the outer rampart would have been a secure point. The location of the bastion should have been at the centre now covered with vegetation. A slight gradient can be seen up to the possible location of the bastion.



**Figure 19: Location of the Eastern end of the outer Rampart**

Perhaps the identification of the pass is confirmed from the presence of the folks of Rajaka caste [washers] towards Talapatpiṭiya. It is known that the area is mainly populated by them from ancient times.



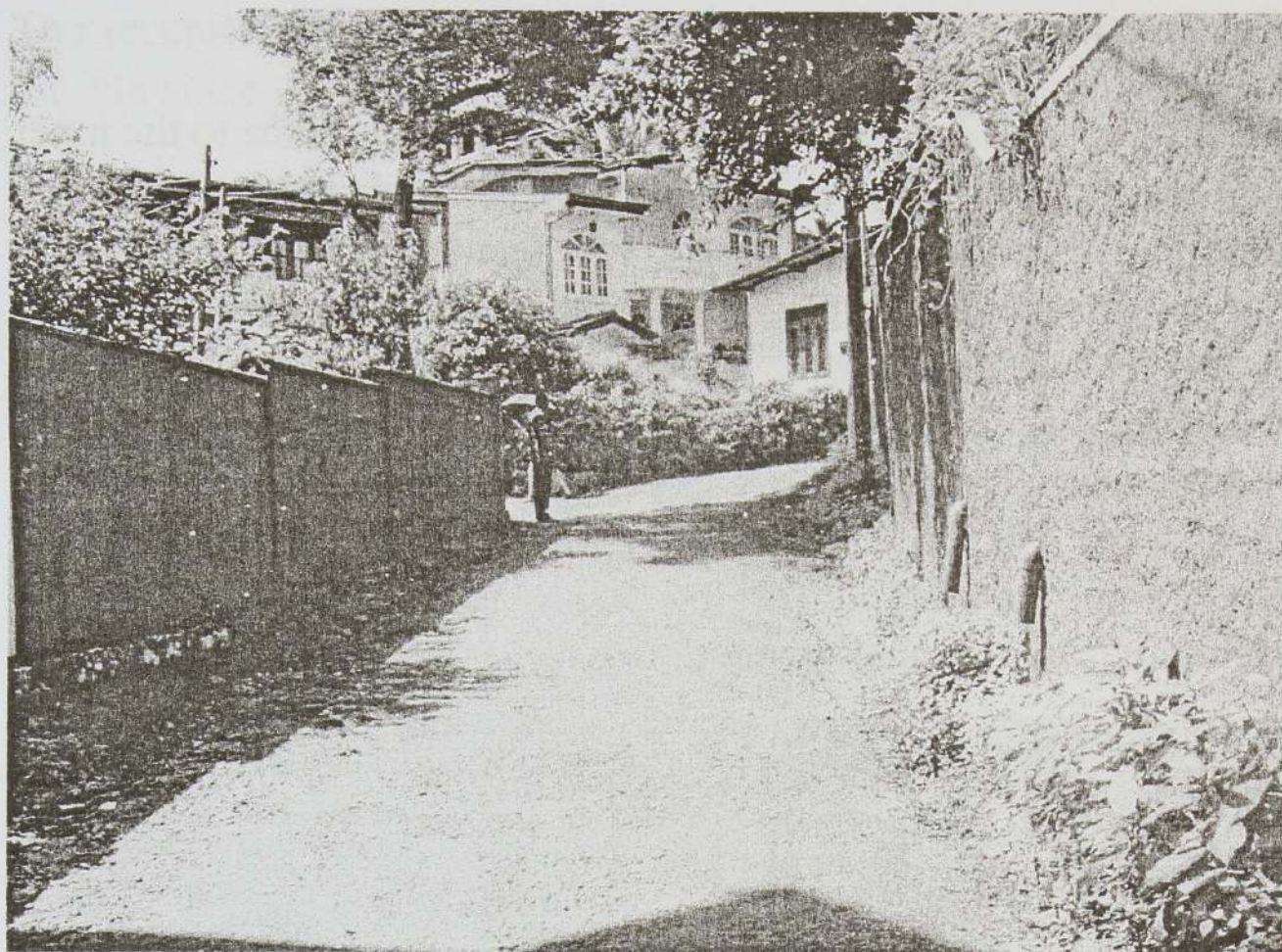


Figure 20: Ran Pokuṇa Road at pass No. 7

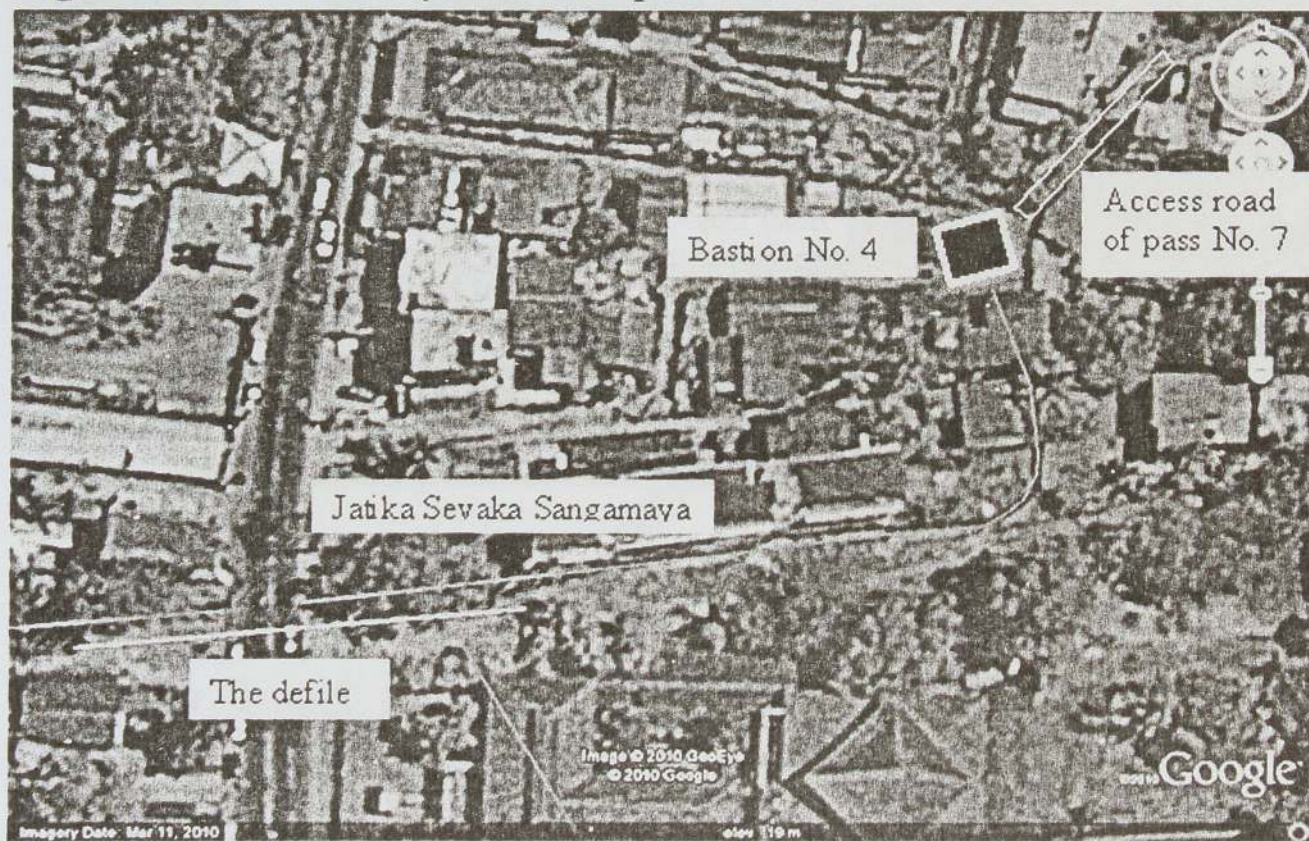
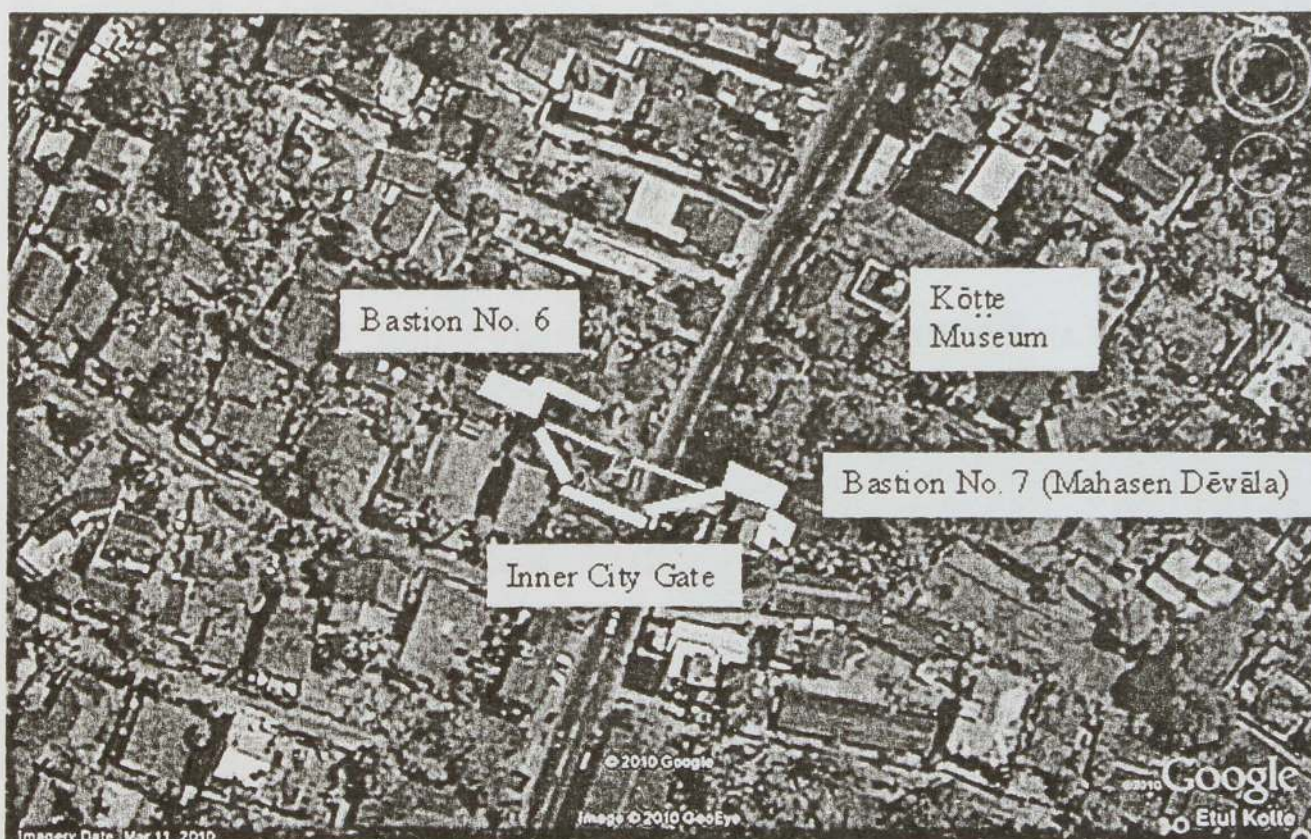


Figure 21: The pass of the washers (No. 7) and the Bastion No. 4



## The Bastions and the Dēvālas on the Inner Rampart

Until recently, one of the Dēvālas at the entrance to the inner city has attracted devotees as being a Dēvāla dedicated to Mahasen. This identification should be correct since according to the verse No. 26 of the *Sāḷalihiṇi Saṇḍēśaya*, the Mahasen temple was on the south which means south of the Īśvara Dēvāla or the Kontagantōṭa, where the bird began the journey. According to Ranasinghe (p. 22), there were two stone pillars at this place until recently. Though there were four dēvālas on the south [inner rampart], only the No. 7 could be identified as the Mahasen Dēvāla, because of the continuous worshipping by people up to contemporary times.



**Figure 22: The Entrance to the Inner City**

The remains of the bastion marked as No. 6 could be identified within the premises of the Salvation Army. In about 1905 when the building was constructed, the bastion had been levelled by the then owner of the land according to the neighbours. Some remains of the front section still can be seen. Perhaps the structure other than the two bastions on both sides could be an additional fortification by the Portuguese as in the case of the outer city gate.

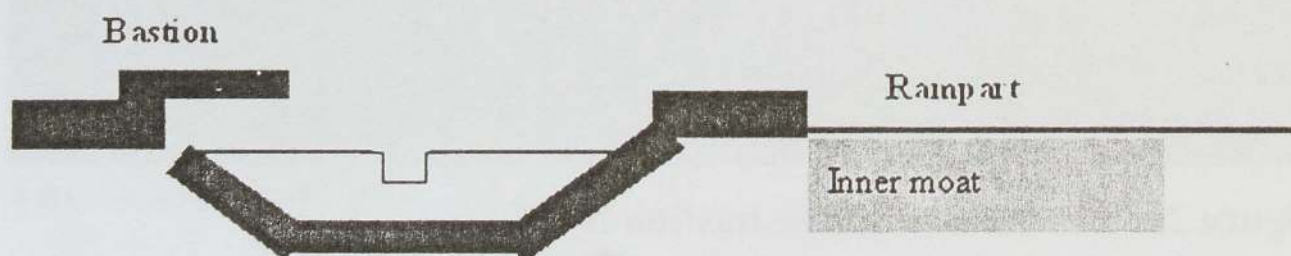


The recent road development work has caused severe damage to the site since the entrance had been widened using bulldozers.

**An extract from the Dutch Map (front section of the inner rampart)**

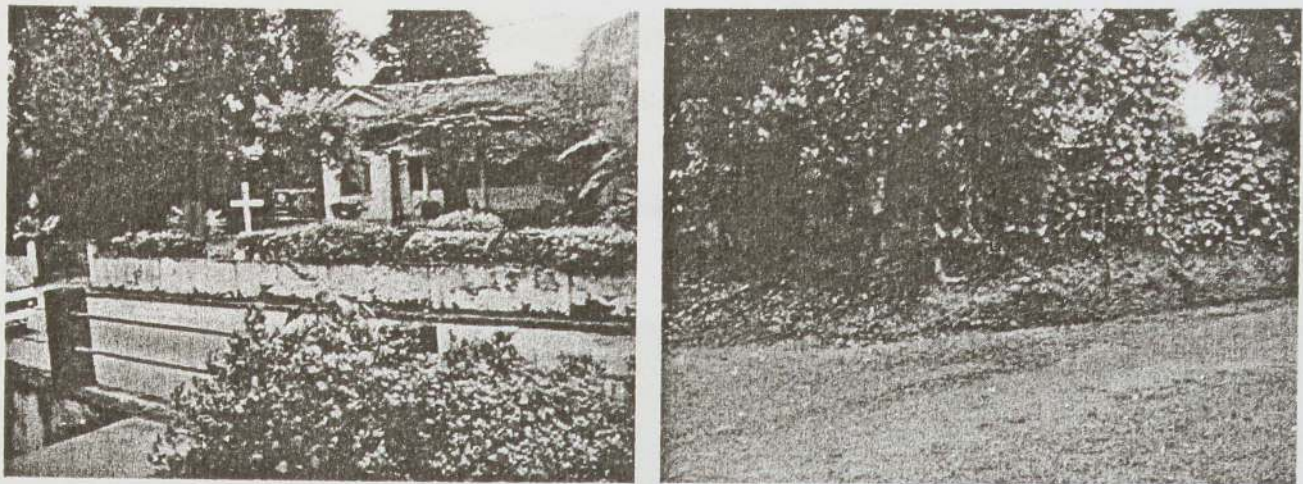


**Figure 23: The southern inner city wall as depicted on the Dutch map**



**Figure 24 : A Sketch of the Inner City Gate from the Dutch Map**





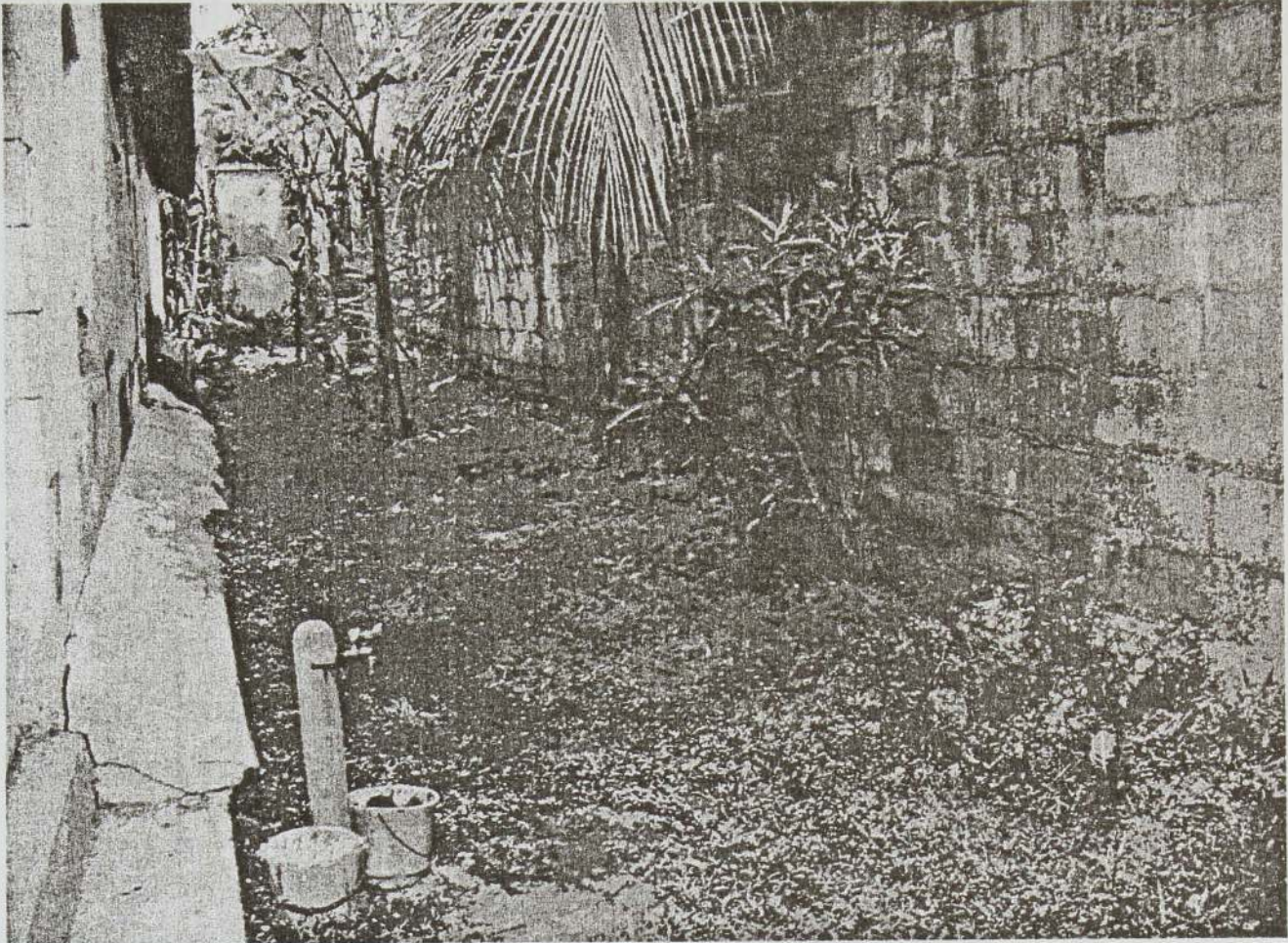
**Figure 25: Bastion No. 6 as seen from the Bastion No. 7 and a part of the front structure**



**Figure 26: The houses on the bastion No. 7**

Note: The remaining front section of the gate in the premises of the Salvation Army can be seen on the top right





**Figure 27: Levelled section of the rampart (Salvation Army premises)**

## **The Natural Defences**

There are 5 types of natural defences to protect a city as per ancient philosophy. Those were the mountains, the forests, the water, the mud and the sand. It could be seen that both the water and the mud defences had been used effectively in the fortification of Kōṭṭe. It was the mud in the marshy area infested with crocodiles that could be considered the most formidable defence of Kōṭṭe.

## **The Water Barrier**

According to de Alwis, the strategy was to fill the reservoir, flood the surrounding when an enemy attack was eminent. This means the water level was about the present day level during the peaceful times and was raised when an attack was expected. To work such a sophisticated system, it is essential to have a large reservoir upstream with sufficient quantity of water. The water flow should be such that the surrounding of Kōṭṭe could be filled in



a short period of time, perhaps in a few hours. For this, there should exist a substantial gradient and a wide canal. Such a facility cannot be found in the vicinity of Kōṭṭe. The gradient cannot be more than 10 ft. to 2 km, if such a reservoir was there. Some quantity of water can be stored only in the small tank called Talangama tank but that is not sufficient to flood the surrounding of Kōṭṭe to a considerable level. It seems the assumption of de Alwis is not correct due to several reasons including the following.

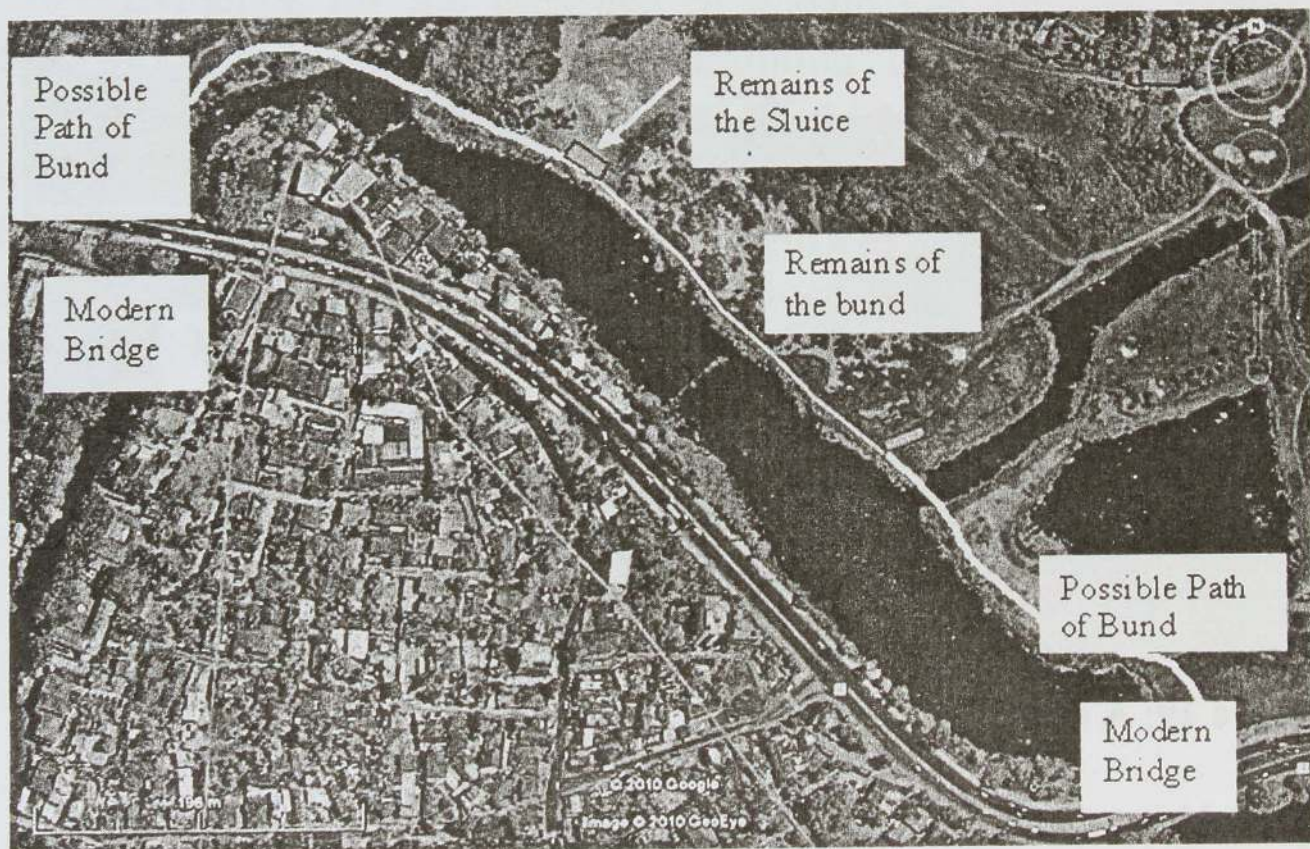
1. The Quantity of water that can be stored in the vicinity is small.
2. The surrounding area of Kōṭṭe cannot be flooded fast enough to the required level in a short period of time.
3. The land that was expected to be flooded cannot be used for any economic purpose and there is no reason to drain out water during peaceful times.
4. The Portuguese writers have mentioned that the surrounding of Kōṭṭe was a lake which means it was always filled with water. Couto has indicated that there was water up to the rampart.
5. If the water cannot be filled within the required period, the main forward defence would become ineffective.
6. If the enemy first gains access to the intake sluice, the system becomes ineffective.
7. If there were two *amuṇas* as mentioned by de Alwis, Rājasiṅha who sieged the city for 5 months would have gained access to them and reduced the water level.

As such, it is more logical to assume that the surrounding area was always kept filled up to the required level. This ensures the maximum protection at all times.

It appears that before all the other constructions, Aḷakēśvara built a dam just north of Kōṭṭe peninsular to determine the water level. Without knowing the water level he could not have determined the places to have the bastions and the watch towers. As reported by Couto, this dam should have been close to the bridge. For effective protection, it should have been within a range of an



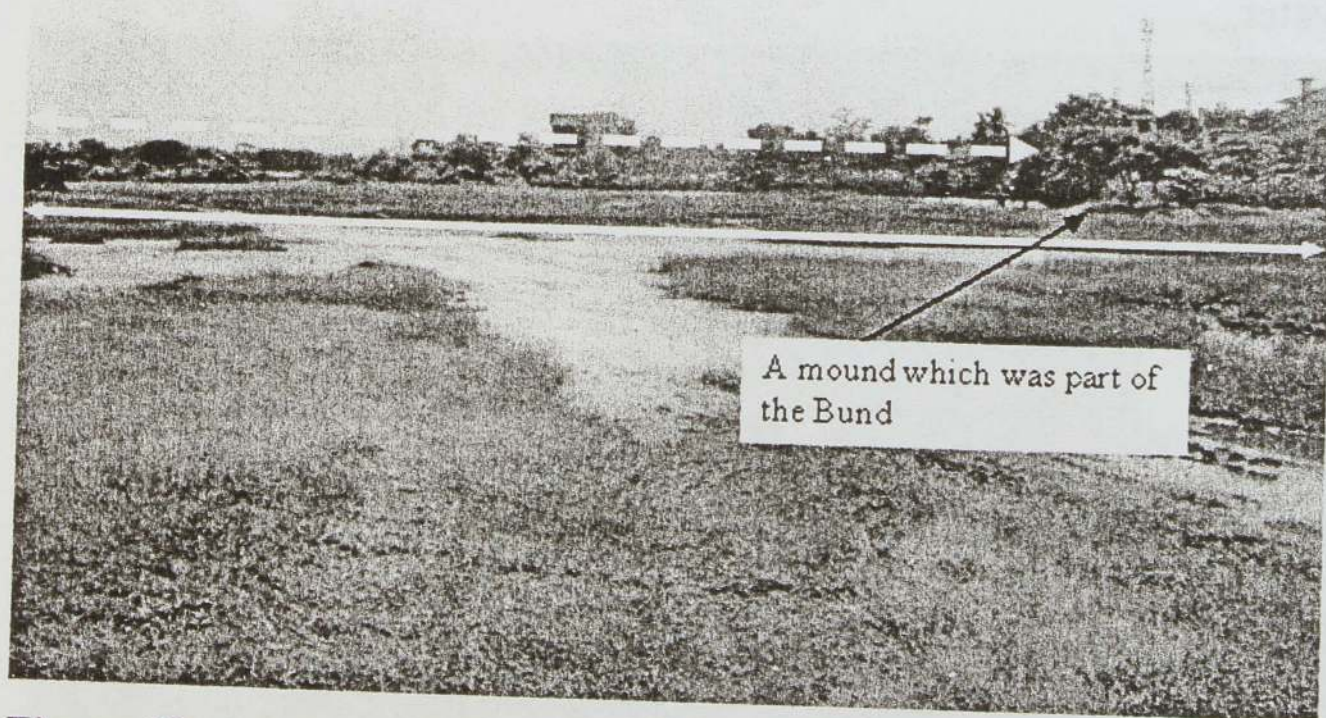
archer when originally designed. That is why, when the guards at the bastion of the ambalama pass heard the noise of breaking the dam by Rājasinha's soldiers, they were able to kill many of them and also catch a vessel used for transportation (p. 228). Couto has mentioned that Rājasinha attempted to breach the dam to empty the lake since after many attacks, he was unable to breach the fortification. As last resort, he engaged a large number of workmen to break the dam. Thereafter, the Portuguese stationed 50 soldiers at that point to defend it, which shows its importance. The location of this dam was important and strategic. As can be observed, the two streams flowing from both sides of Kōṭṭe known as Kolon Oya and the Diyavanna Oya connect each other near the northern tip of Kōṭṭe. If the dam was far away from the last bastion or the bank of the side of Kōṭṭe, then it could not have been defended effectively. As seen from the description of Couto, Aḷakēśvara had built the dam at the ideal place. This dam has been mentioned in both the *Aḷakēśvara Yuddhaya* and the *Rājāvaliya*. It is mentioned that an 'amuṇu gilma' was built to hold water. The Sinhala word has a distinctive meaning. It means a dam which overflows the excess water.



**Figure 28:** The Bund which controlled the water level of the lake surrounding Kōṭṭe



The remains of this dam could be found along the opposite bank of Diyavanna Oya as marked in the photograph. There are sections of the bund at a height of about 4-5 feet. However, the bund should have been much higher perhaps about 10 ft., to make the lake deep and to fill the moats. Some sections have clearly been washed away due to flooding and some section may have been levelled due to recent development work. At present a part of this land belongs to the Water's Edge hotel and the area had been used as a car park occasionally. The levelling of the area is clearly visible causing damage to the dam as well. The function of this dam was to retain water in the surrounding lake and allow the excess water to drain out continuously. The function of this dam was different from the other dams which divert water to a reservoir or paddy fields or retained water in the case of a reservoir. Without the dam, the water level would have been something closer to the present level.



**Figure 29: A section of the Bund**

Note: Since the above photograph was taken on the 09-11-2010 by 06-01-2011 the section marked in dotted line had been



removed to build a new reservoir to control floods. On the 08-03-2011 it was observed that the entire bund has been removed.

The remains of the foundation of a structure can be seen in the adjoining land separated with fencing posts. It is very likely that this was the section that drained out the excess water which could be called a sluice gate. The water would have spilled over the section which was at a lower height than the dam. From the granite stones found at that place, it appears that the dam was strengthened with large granite stones but the cabook blocks perhaps indicate the subsequent repairs. It is interesting to note that the sluice gate had been placed not across the water course but on solid ground. This guaranteed the strength of the gate.

The bund and the gate would have needed continuous attention as a result of a large quantity of water being carried by Diyavannā Oya during the rainy season. The excess water would have spilled over back to the Diyavannā Oya downstream.

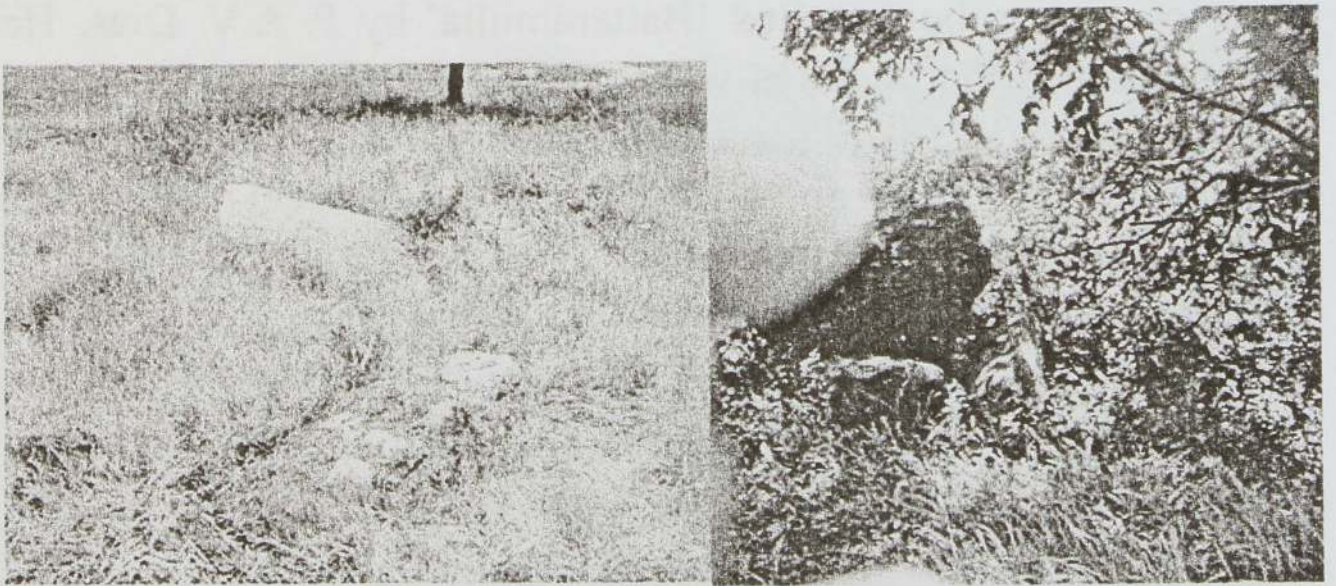
Evidence for the presence of a dam can be seen in the description in a book called 'Battaramulla' by P. A.V. Dias. He has mentioned that the area where the modern bridges are found was called '*Vēlla*' [dam] sometime back (p. 145). He further states that the area was filled about 10 ft. recently as it went under water during the rainy season, which shows there was no dam there. It appears that although the dam was on the other side, with the lapse of time, due to the disappearance of the dam, people have called the Kōṭṭe side as the dam.





**Figure 30: The remains of the Sluice Gate left after levelling the land.**

[Some large Granite stones and Cabook blocks are visible]

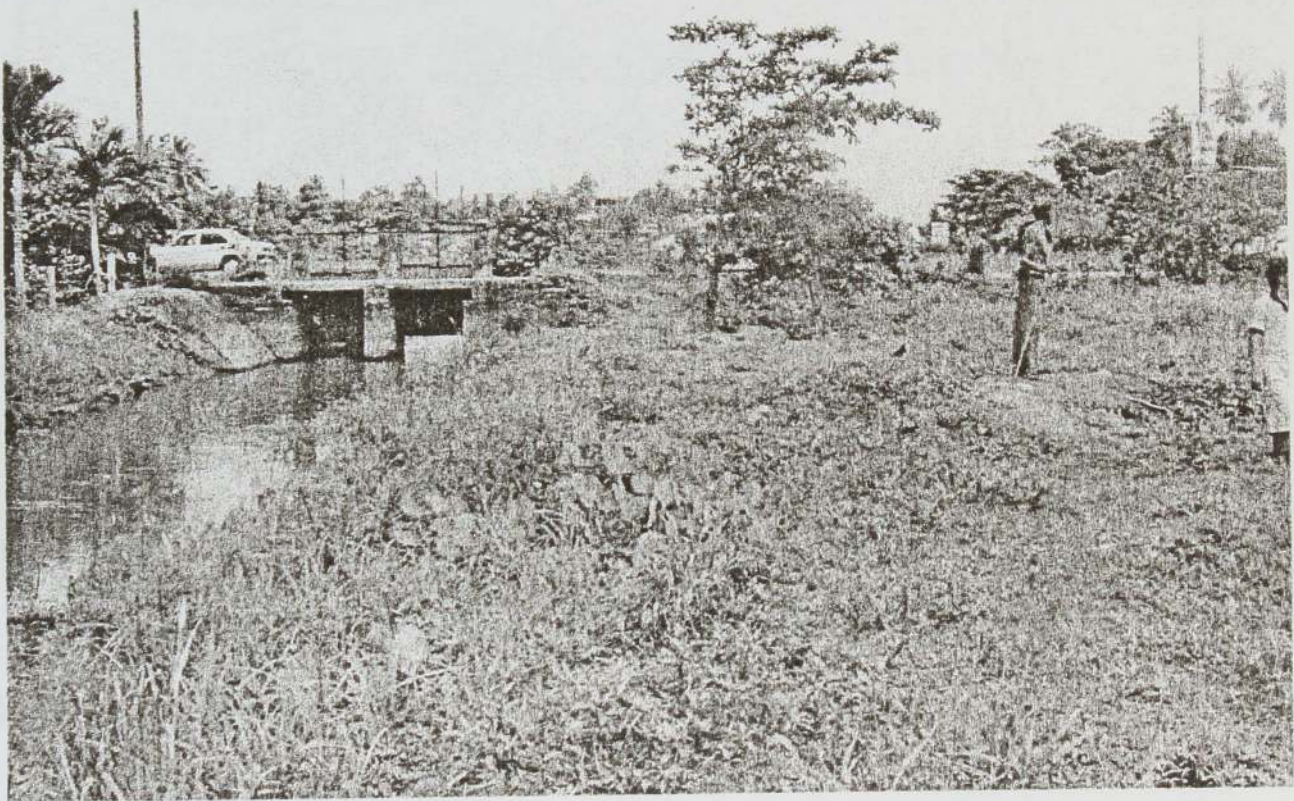


**Figure 31: Some large granite stones and cabook blocks found along the bund**

De Alwis has reported that there were two sluice gates called 'Purāṇa Amuṇa' and 'Kuḍā Amuṇa', about 1 ½ miles away from Kōṭṭe in the direction of Talangama. Like his previous argument,



this too is doubtful since there is no need to divert water to fill the reservoir. The water flowing in the Diyavannā Oya and the Kolon Oya is sufficient to fill the reservoir. On the other hand, no signs of water diverting from another basin can be found. There are several *amuṇas* in the area but those are built to divert water to the paddy fields. Since the elevation of reservoir surrounding Kōṭṭe was low, the water naturally collects in the reservoir. The two *amuṇas* mentioned by de Alwis cannot be found at present but an *amuṇa* is found in Thalangama, which is called Pottavala Amuṇa. It is a small *amuṇa* and no diversion of excess water through this *amuṇa* can be seen.



**Figure 32: Pottavela Amuṇa which is too small to fill the Kōṭṭe reservoir**

At present, the water of Diyavannā flows southward after passing the northern tip of Kōṭṭe. However, before digging the Wellawatta and Dehiwala canals the water flowed to the Kālani River. At that time, Diyavannā which flows on the eastern side of Kōṭṭe and Kolon Oya [also known as Kolonna Oya] which flows on the western side of Kōṭṭe connected together at the northern tip



of Kōṭṭe and then flowed to the Kālaṇi River. Now the water flows directly to the sea through the two canals mentioned above. That means the water of Kolon Oya which flowed to the north those days now flows to the south, passing Kōṭṭe and then direct to the sea through the canals. Early Dutch maps (p. 77) show that there were no canals originally, and therefore, the water of the Diyavannā flowed to the Kālaṇi River. Queyroz has mentioned that Kōṭṭe was navigable by boats through the Kālaṇi River.

### The Direction of Water Flow



Figure 33 : A Dutch map before digging of Dehiwala and Wellawatta Canals

### The Protection Provided by Mud

The protection by water was not the only feature of the defence of Kōṭṭe. There is another important defence system that is not much mentioned in the sources. Perhaps, it was not mentioned since it was considered obvious and normal in that area. That was the existence of mud right around Kōṭṭe. Actually if not for the mud, the water defence would have become an ordinary water barricade



found in any other ancient city. The difference in Kōṭṭe was that the mud was there right around the peninsula preventing entry. Possibly, it was the most important and formidable fortification of Kōṭṭe leaving only the passes as access points.

The existence of the protection due to mud can be understood when one carefully analyses the situation. Firstly, one has to explain why there was no rampart from the outer wall to the inner wall, i.e. from Bastion No.1 to No. 5 and No. 4 to No. 8. Without the rampart, an invader could have landed in the area with ease, since it could not have been protected without a large number of soldiers. Before the building of the inner city wall, the position would have been much worse. This indicates that there existed a most formidable barricade that kept all the invaders at bay.

How the mud barricade worked should be surmised in conjunction with the water barricade. If the water level goes much above the mud level, then an invader can reach the land by boats. As such, the mud should be submerged slightly in such a way that the vegetation is left above the water, making it a barricade. There would have been some vegetation on the mud and residual organic material would have increased the effect. The mud barricade is further fortified with the presence of the crocodiles (Queyroz p. 29). This type of marshy areas is the ideal habitat of the crocodiles. The vegetation provides them an ideal space to be hidden and no one would have dared to cross the mud barricade. Perhaps only Rājasinha crossed a shallow section near Piṭa Kōṭṭe, once during an invasion (Couto, p. 217)

Accordingly, the marshy area with vegetation would have, effectively prevented any boat landing on the banks on the side of Kōṭṭe. To have this effect the surroundings of Kōṭṭe would have been properly levelled unless the area was naturally at the correct height, which is unlikely. Even the sand removed when digging the canals may have gone for this purpose as in the case of Mithilā. Therefore the mud surrounding Kōṭṭe may be not only what was available naturally, but what would have been added as well. This



gives an idea of how the passes were built. The passes were possibly prepared by digging and removing the mud so that a boat could sail up to the bank. Therefore, no boat could access the Kōṭṭe peninsula other than through these passes. If there was any opportunity to land on the bank where there was no rampart, Rājasiṅha who was so desperate, who tried all the methods would have done that since the defence of the Portuguese was mainly on the passes. It is interesting to note that, to attack the Piṭa Kōṭṭe main entrance, the soldiers of Rājasiṅha had once carried ladders (Queyroz p. 417) but in regard to any attack on the inner city [rampart] they never tried that. In fact, since the perimeter of Kōṭṭe was huge, this would have been a more practical way to slip in to the fort, if there was a possibility. This confirms that crossing the lake other than through the passes was not an option. Though now not visible, and also not very prominent, at that time, the mud barrier, one could conjecture the most important defence of Kōṭṭe.

## **Other Monuments Relating to Fortification**

### **The Old ditch**

According to Couto, due to dire need to find something to eat, a party had gone one day out of the Piṭa Kōṭṭe pass and noticed that Rājasiṅha had stationed his army there in the neighbouring forest. Then the Portuguese had sent their forces through an old ditch (p. 229) and launched a surprise attack which was a major blow to Rājasiṅha. De Alwis has mentioned about a ditch where sections were still found [in 1976], which can be identified as this ditch. At present, a drain which may be the tail section of this ditch, can be seen near the Kōṭṭe Rajamahā Vihāra at Rajamahā Vihāra Road about 350 metres from the junction. The ditch is intact from the road to the marshy area, which is presently used as a paddy field. On the other side of the road, the ditch would have been inside the gardens of the residents and cannot be seen and perhaps filled to a greater extent. According to Couto it had only one single passage, very narrow and both sides were very marshy. One of the purposes of this ditch may have been to launch a surprise attack from behind



the enemy lines. Certainly this would have been covered with vegetation at that time and not easily visible, specially due to the slender breadth. That means the soldiers in the fortress could slip away from the fortress and access the rear of the enemy lines. This should have been a part of the tunnel system described below.

## The Tunnels

It is clear that there was a tunnel system at the outer periphery of Kōṭṭe. The possible entrance is popularly believed to be the structure at the Ānanda Sāstrālaya premises. However, it is more logical to assume that the entrance was from the moat or a bastion at Piṭa Kōṭṭe.

It is apparent that there were two separate tunnel systems and the formation at the Ānanda Sāstrālaya premises was the meeting point of the two. The tunnel that has only one entrance (now sealed with concrete) was wide and the height had been about 9 feet, when it was first discovered in the seventies of the last century. Some children of the school had walked through the tunnel several metres and as a result it had been sealed off for safety. This entrance is bigger than the other two entrances. That indicates it was the main tunnel that would have had the entrance from a safe place inside the fortress. Since only the outer rampart was there prior to Parākramabāhu VI making Kōṭṭe as his capital, the entrance point should have been some distance to the north from the outer rampart. Very likely this tunnel had been dug through the defile at Piṭa Kōṭṭe. The height of this was sufficient for a person to travel on horseback. The tunnel opening is only about 250 metres from the defile.





Figure 34: A section of the old ditch

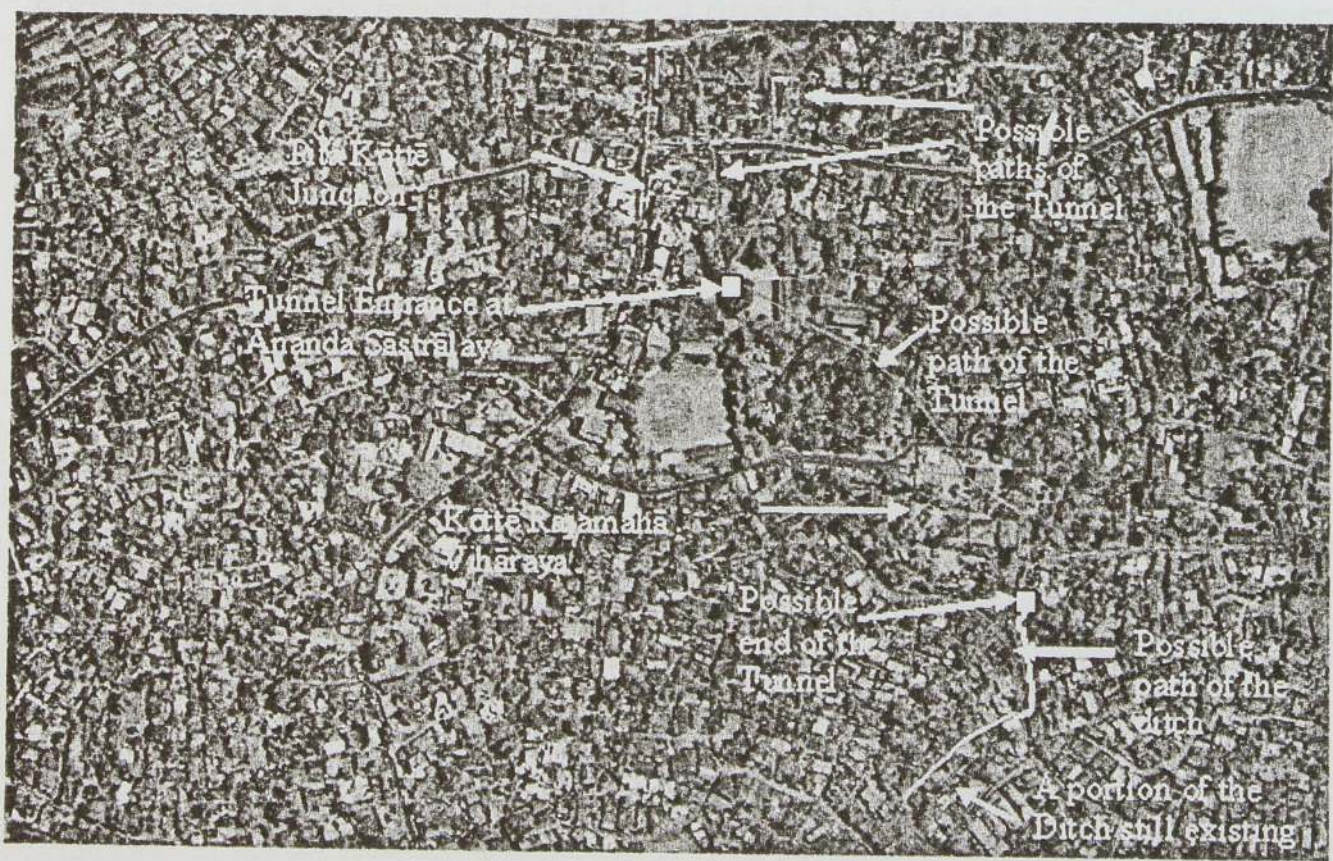


Figure 35: The Tunnel System



The other structure really has two entrances that connect inside the cave. The height of that also had been about 5 feet in the seventies [now less than 3 feet]. The width is only about 2 ½ feet so that only one person can enter at a time [this width is almost same as the width of the ditch]. There is little doubt that this tunnel would have started from a secure point close to the moat, as an alternative escape route. This has an exit/entrance point at the Ānanda Sāstrālaya premises and then runs perhaps below the Rajamaha Vihara premises up to the opening which was the starting point of the ditch which is mentioned above. This entrance also provided a facility to obtain fresh air since practically a tunnel cannot be built continuously without providing places to get fresh air. Perhaps, there would have been another ventilation passage closer to the Rajamahā Vihāra. The exit point perhaps was on the other side of the Rajamahā Vihāra, passing the present peripheral road of the Vihāra as shown in the sketch. From that point to the Rajamahā Vihāra Road, the tunnel may be still traceable.

From what Couto has mentioned, it appears that the tunnel system was not in operation at the time of Portuguese occupation of the fortress since it was at least 175 years after the construction of the tunnel. If not maintained properly, it would have been in a dilapidated condition or already no passage existed. Even if the tunnel system was in operation, the Portuguese could not have used it due to two reasons. Firstly, Rājasiṅha also would have known this secret passage making any attempt risky. Secondly, the exit was in the wrong direction since the Portuguese had to go to Colombo. Rājasiṅha also would not have tried this since it would have been too risky. If an archaeological excavation is carried out, it is very likely that the tunnel system can be traced.

The tunnel system suggests that the fortification of Kōṭṭe was of a very high standard.





**Figure 36: The two entrances of the small tunnel**

### **The Gun Positions**

On the west of the defile about 50 feet away, a circular raised portion can be seen in the outer moat. Another one can be seen about another 75 feet away. On the eastern side also at least 3 positions can be identified as the possible places where the artillery guns were kept. These guns had been kept at a low level perhaps to keep them hidden to launch a surprise attack in addition to the guns placed on the rampart and the bastions. Some of these are depicted on the Piṭa Kōṭṭe sketch. Perhaps some of these were the guns that Couto reported removed from the enemy ships. He has mentioned several times that in 1536 Bhuvanekabāhu (1521-51) attacked 7 Malavar ships which were in the Colombo Harbour and captured 4 ships<sup>9</sup> (p.74). He has then reported the artillery guns captured were placed at Piṭa Kōṭṭe. The Portuguese factor<sup>10</sup> Nuno Freira had helped Bhuvanekabāhu on this effort since it was on their behalf as well that Bhuvanekabāhu attacked the Moors.



## Level Platforms

Near the entrance to the inner city on the left side, there is a flat land. At present, this area is the premises of the Salvation Army. As one enters the Salvation Army premises, short cabook foundations could be seen from the left and the right<sup>11</sup>. The right section is part of the bastion while the left section is part of the entrance as depicted in the Dutch map. The area next to that is a flat narrow land, stretching up to about 75 meters and which comes to an abrupt end. The area beyond that is the ancient lake. The flat narrow land under reference can be identified as one of the areas mentioned in the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* as 'ēka bhūmika', which means one floor. Without the present buildings, this place is like a stage where the road can be clearly seen. On the other hand, it is close to the pass No. 3. Perhaps some guns were mounted at this place, and were used when Rājasiṅha mounted a simultaneous attack on all the passes (Couto, pp.236-37) to defend the pass No. 3, which was in the vicinity.

## Comparison of Kōṭṭe with Mithilā

It seems that the fortification of Mithilā was mainly man made assuming that it was a legendary city. According to the story, Mahauṣada improved the fortification when he envisaged threats from the enemies. It is not clear whether there was a natural line of defence prior to that and to what extent those were optimised by him. In Kōṭṭe, however, the major portion was protected with an in-built natural defence system. What Aḷakēśvara did was the modifications to the mud layer in the areas to the required level so that it made a formidable defence. Like Mithilā, he would have used the large quantity of sand removed when digging the moat to strengthen the mud layer. Beyond the mud layer, there was water in the form of a lake due to the rise of the water level because of the bund. As such, other than on the south there was no need for a moat against 3 moats at Mithilā. Aḷakēśvara built a moat only on the southern side but instead of 3 separate moats, only one deep moat. The area with mud was infested with crocodiles as in the case of Mithilā.



Perhaps the height of the rampart was very much more than Mithilā if measured from the water level. The height from the ground level could be assessed from a mention in the Portuguese records. The forces of Rājasiṅha have attempted several times to climb on to the rampart from the castles being mounted on the elephant backs (p. 417). As such, height appears to be about 15-20 feet from the ground level. If measured from the water level, it appears to be over 35 feet. Like Mithilā, Aḷakēśvara erected perhaps hundreds of watch towers. A photograph of the foundation of one such tower situated at the Pārakumbā Pirivena is given by de Alwis (op p.12), which is now not found. It is not clear whether towers were covered with arabesque, but very likely. Instead of grotesques at the gates the four dēvālas had been built with the statues of deities.

Another similarity was the hording of foodstuffs. Mahauṣada had instructed all the householders to stock foodstuff. Perhaps Aḷakēśvara followed this since according to *Rājāvaliya*, he stocked sufficient food for several years.

Another similarity was the 7 gates. Certainly, at the inception, there would not have been 7 passes to Kōṭṭe as discussed earlier but the 7 passes may indicate the 7 gates of the city of Mithilā, which was including the additions by Parākramabāhu VI.

### **The Withdrawal from Kōṭṭe**

The story of Kōṭṭe is not complete without the description of the withdrawal from Kōṭṭe to Colombo, since it explains as to why Kōṭṭe has too little ruins and even the scholars have sometimes mentioned that Kōṭṭe was destroyed by Rājasiṅha. There is no other easy way to explain the events, than quoting the vivid account of Queyroz (pp. 420-21), just like a passage from a Shakespeare Drama;

*... the viceroy sent as captain of Colombo the valiant Diogo de Melo Coutinho bred and always successful in the war;*



*with express order to remove the people and dismantle the city of Cota and to transfer the king and the people and artillery and whatever else could be useful to the fortalice of Colombo, which was carried out in July 1565, to the bitter regret of its Emperor and its inhabitants, because thus was abandoned their ancient Metropolis and their beloved fatherland, a place so strong and invincible by arms that, were it conveniently fortified, it would be impregnable, being surrounded by a lake, and near the river Calani navigable by rowing boats and having a supply of victuals. Pitiful were the cries the women with their dishevelled, in the streets and the roads, the sighs of the children, the grief of the men, laden with chattels like pilgrims, the Portuguese also joining the grief; and that nothing might be lacking, as it related in the wars of Granada after the destruction of Galera, as soon as they pass the lake, even the Baying of the dogs moved them to compassion. The city remained abandoned and disfigured, the buildings and walls razed, given over to the wild elephants and other beasts of the forest. ...*

Thus was the final farewell to the great, wealthy and prosperous city of Kōṭṭe.

## Conclusion

The exact nature of the city of Kōṭṭe and the fortification can be understood only after a proper excavation of the relevant sites. It is clear however, that the fortification of Kōṭṭe had all the components of a sophisticated defence system consisting of the following:

1. A mud barricade around the peninsula as forward defence except at Piṭa Kōṭṭe and the passes
2. A moat at Piṭa Kōṭṭe adjoining the Outer Rampart
3. An inner rampart right around the inner city and an inner moat as secondary defence [which was never used since no enemy gained access to the fortress]



4. Bastions to control the passes
5. A dam to raise the water level of the surrounding lake to a desired level and a spill over to remove the excess water
6. A tunnel system and a ditch, which could be used to go out of the fortress secretly [Perhaps it was not usable during the Portuguese occupation] and also could be used for surprise attacks.
7. A drawbridge at the northern pass
8. Four walls and two bastions [wooden] built by the Portuguese at Piṭa Kōṭṭe

Out of the above defences, the most formidable defence was the conjectured Mud. Rājasiṅha I, one of the greatest warriors of Sri Lanka, was unable to enter the fortress even after continuously fighting for nearly 7 years, which shows the strength of the fortification.

The main reason for the failure of the Portuguese was not storing a sufficient stock of food. Even after a siege of 4 months, they did not realise this fact, and in 1564 Rājasiṅha continued his siege for 5 month which continued perhaps till early 1565, when the Portuguese found it unbearable. Couto has always reported that against negligible casualty on their side, hundreds of soldiers of Rājasiṅha died. One reason could be the skill acquired by the Portuguese due to extensive training. However, the main reason as to why Rājasiṅha could not penetrate the defence was the formidable fortification of Kōṭṭe, effective and sophisticated. Niśsaṅka Aḷakēśvara on hindsight could be regarded as one of the greatest war strategists in ancient Sri Lanka.



## The Map of Ancient Kōṭṭe

A Sketch of the Ancient City of Kōṭṭe given below depicts many historical monuments of Kōṭṭe that are reported in several sources and recently discovered. This has not been drawn to a scale but the base was a Google Earth picture of Kōṭṭe. Some features of the Dutch map given below, have also been incorporated into this map. In addition several hitherto known sites and some unknown sites but known by the residents were also included.

It is always mentioned that Kōṭṭe was in a lake but the map does not depict this feature separately. The areas marked as marshy land should have been slightly covered with water and therefore looked like a lake. As such to visualise the lake one should take the water courses and the marshy lands together.

It is known that the area had been substantially developed recently, which resulted in distortions to the ancient landscape. Even then if the elevations at various places are measured it is still possible to determine the boundaries of the ancient lake.

Key: B = Bastion [There are 10 bastions marked]



### A Sketch of the Ancient City of Kōṭṭe

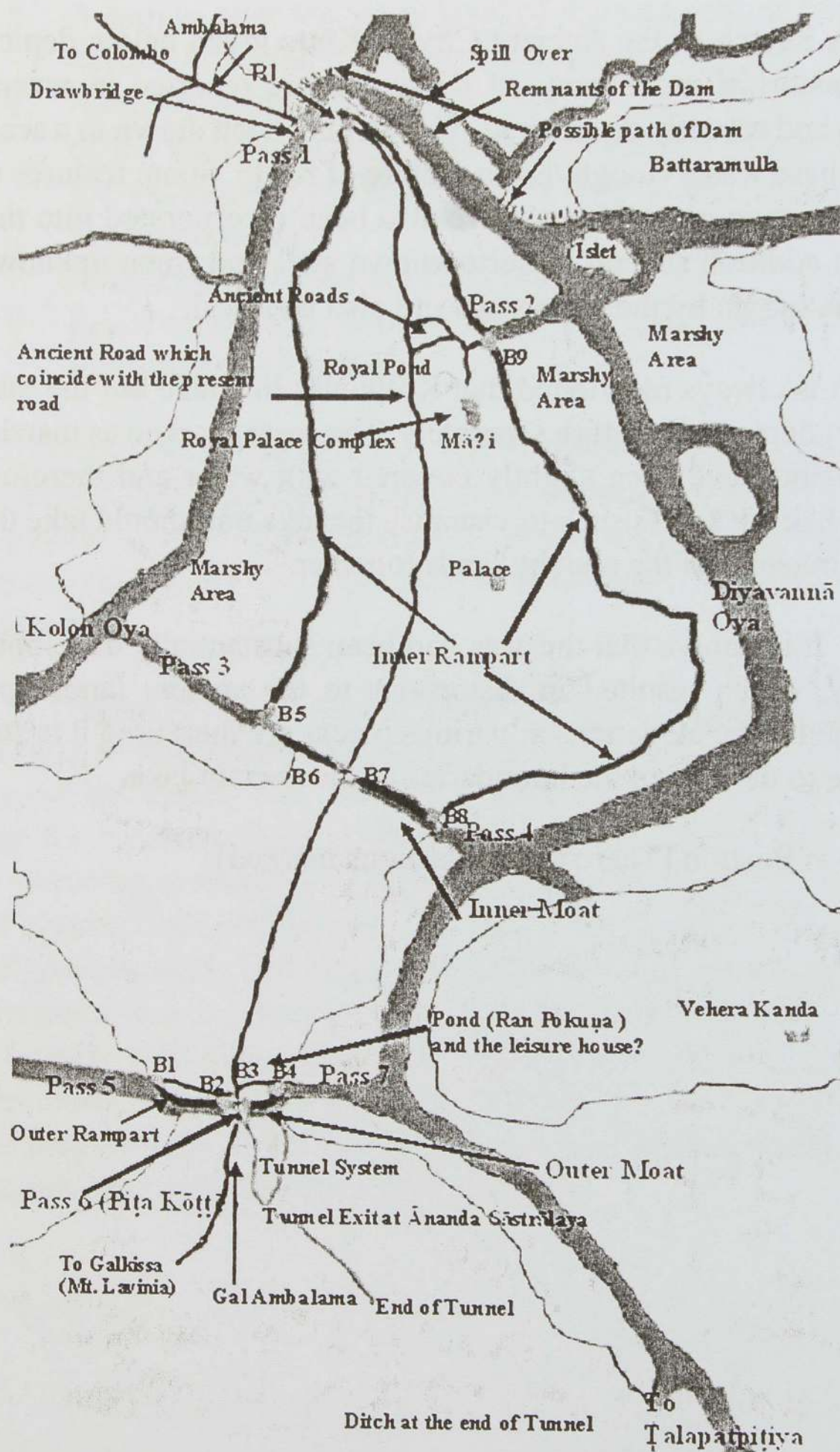


Figure 37: A sketch of the ancient City of Kōṭṭe



## The Oldest Map of Kōtṭe

There is a map which had been copied by Pieter Elias between 1786 and 1788, and found among VOC Maps. This may have originally been drawn in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. What is given here is a digital tracing of the map.

Note: The legends are from the '*Maps and Planes of Dutch Ceylon*'. The additional clarifications by the present researcher are given in italics and in brackets.

### The Following items which are of historical importance are marked in the Map

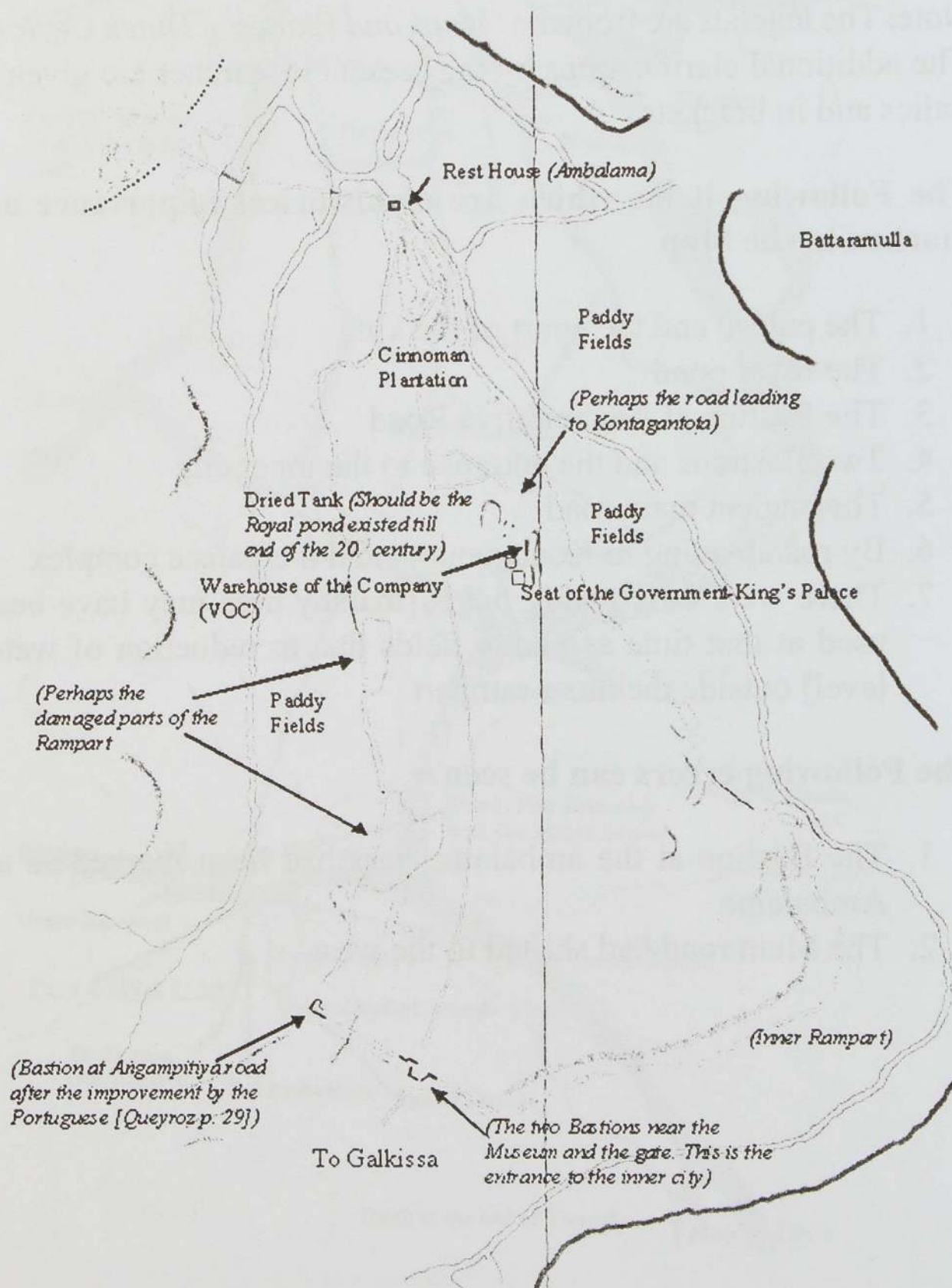
1. The palace and the court of the king
2. The royal pond
3. The Bastion at Aṅgampitiya Road
4. Two Bastions and the entrance to the inner city
5. The ancient main road
6. By road leading to Kontagantota and the palace complex
7. There were only paddy fields [marshy area may have been used at that time as paddy fields due to reduction of water level] outside the inner rampart

### The Following errors can be seen

1. The Bastion at the ambalama pass had been marked as an Ambalama
2. The Main road had shifted to the west

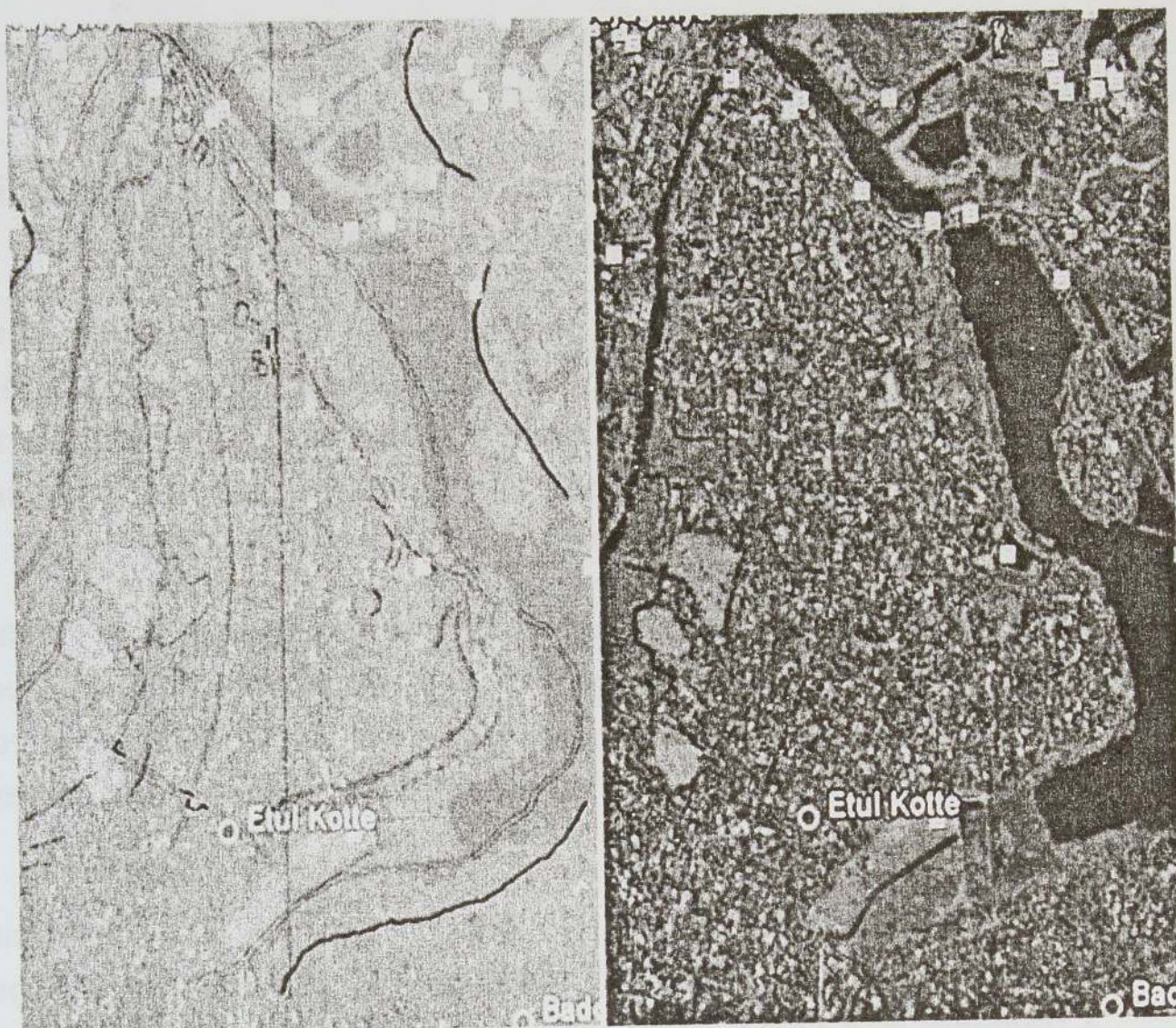


The situation plan of the village Kōṭṭa situated one and a half hours of walk/march from Colombo. The exact situation of Kōṭṭa together with surrounding village with fruits and wild trees grown in rough and uneven manner. Copied by P. Elias





## The Old Dutch Map superimposed on to the Google Map





## End Notes

- i Until recently, the area was called ‘pa-mahal-pāya watta’ (de Alwis, p. 17)
- ii The inner city was a requirement of a capital where the palace is situated. The fortification of Aḷakēśvara was the main defence.
- ii According to Nimal de Silva, the rampart of the Portuguese fort built in Colombo with cabook was found when the foundation of the present Bank of Ceylon Head Office building was excavated in Fort. Material from the disfigured city may have been used for this and many other ancient buildings
- iv ..... he remained for 3 years in Reygamme, departed then to Cotta, built a remarkable city, entirely of blue stone, and a beautiful palace for himself of the same stone, but with a sort of newly discovered gilding, and with same new temples and for demons, for deities which he worshipped.
- v Nimal de Silva confirms that late Douglas Ranasinha showed him some pieces of Lapis Lazuli found at the palace complex, perhaps a fragment of a pillar. These pieces now may be lying somewhere without the value being known.
- vi Lapis lazuli is a kind of semi-precious stone which has been mined in the Badakhshan province of Afghanistan for over 6,000 years, and trade in the stone is ancient enough for lapis jewelry to have been found at Pre-dynastic Egyptian sites ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lapis\\_lazuli](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lapis_lazuli))
- vii Tisara Saṇḍēśaya which had been written during early Gampola Period says the palace of Parākramabāhu V who was then the regional king at Dādigama also lived in a palace of which the walls were made out of blue gems (v. 11). It seems that even before the Kōṭṭe Period that was the practice.
- viii It is likely that it was completed before 1369 A.D., since according to both Saddharmaratnākaraya and Nikāya Saṅgrahaya in that year,



he held a Buddhist Council, which seems after the completion of Kōṭṭe.

- ix At that time there were only 8 Portuguese soldiers in Sri Lanka and they were under the protection of the king.
- x From 1523 to about 1551 no Portuguese fort existed in Sri Lanka. There were no soldiers stationed and also no warships till about 1538. However the Malavars brought some battleships on the request of Māyādunne in 1536, which resulted in the Portuguese intervention in Sri Lanka.
- xi Unfortunately, it was not possible to take a photograph on 05-10-2010 during the first visit and when the place was revisited on 06-01-2011 the entire section had been removed. Now no traces of the bastion and the section of the inner gate cannot be seen.

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## ĀNAMADUVA MAHA-USVĀVA PILLAR INSCRIPTION

by

Sirimal Ranawella

This inscription has been discovered recently in the premises of a monastery named Khettārāma, situated in a village named Maha-usvāva near Ānamaḍuva in the Puttalama District. It is engraved on a rectangular stone pillar, of which sides A and C measure 5 ft.3 in., in height and 11 inches wide; the sides B and D are 5 ft.3 inches in height, and 10 inches wide. All four sides of the pillar had been utilized for the engraving of the inscription; there are twenty lines of writing each on sides A and B, 22 lines on side C and 8 lines on side D, followed by the figures of a monk's fan, a crow and a dog; lines 14 to 20 on side B are much worn. The script as well as the language of the record is Sinhala of the latter part of the ninth century A.D.

This record which contains a decree issued by a *Mahapā* named Debisevā dā Kasbal, who can be easily identified as *Yuvarāja* Kassapa who ascended the throne after the demise of King Kassapa IV (898-923), dated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> regnal year of a king styled Sirisangbo *mapurmukā*, who can be identified without any difficulty as King Kassapa IV.

The inscription refers to some immunity granted jointly by the king and the *Mahapā* in respect of a village named Radutugama owned by an unnamed *pirivena* situated in a district named Kaḷunnaru-bima.<sup>1</sup> According to the *Pūjāvaliya*,<sup>2</sup> the Dhātusēna (455-473) had built a reservoir named Kaḷunnaru, and a Commander of the Bodyguard named Āsattānā who figures in the Ambagamuva Slab inscription of King Vijayabāhu I (1059-1114) is said to have been a resident of Kaḷunnaru-bima<sup>3</sup>. Yet the information provided by these two documents do not help us to trace or to identify the



location of region. However, the present epigraph indirectly informs us that the region around Ānamaḍuva had been known as Kalunnaru-bima during the Anurādhapura period.

Our record refers to a very senior monk (a *gorokun*) named Buddhasiṇha who was a resident of the above mentioned unnamed *pirivena* during the period when *Mahapā* Debisevā dā Kasbal was holding the office of *Mahapā*.

As to the meaning of the term *gorokun*; this term occurs in the Anurādhapura Slab Inscription of king Kassapa V (914-923), which had been edited by D.M.de Z. Wickremasinghe. He has rendered it into English as ‘decrepit person’, meaning ‘broken down with age’ meaning very elderly or senior person. However, the general meaning of the term *gorokun* as given in the Srī Sumangala Sinhala Dictionary is honourable, venerable or prominent.

#### TEXT

A	B	C	D
1 ස්වස්ති ශ්‍රී	1 වන් නොව	1 ර කරන් මිසැ	1 .. .. උතුකි
2 සිරිසංඛො	2 ද්නා කොට ඉ	2 ගමට නොවද්	2 ඊ නොගන්නා
3 මපුර්මුකා දෙ	3 සා වැරියන්	3 නා කොට ඉසා	3 ඉසා මගිව
4 වන්නෙ වැපෑ පු	4 ගැල් මිවුන්	4 එක්තැන් සමි	4 පියදිව නො
5 ර දියවක් දවස්	5 නොගන්නා කො	5 යෙන් වදාළෙයි	5 වද්නා කොට
6 දෙබ්බෙවැ දා	6 ට ඉසා මෙ ර(ට)	6 න් ආ මෙකාප්ප	6 ඉසාකොල්පාට
7 කස්බල් මහ	7 ලද්දුනුමඩ	7 ඊ වැදැරැම් (මෙව)	7 ටි නොවද්
8 පාණන් වහන්	8 ලන් වෙහෙර	8 ලන් උරා වර මෙ	8 නා ඉසා
9 සෙ දවසැ බු	9 හිමැ ආවු ග	9 කාප්පර් නිරිලැ	සංකේත- වටාපත
10 ද්ධසිංහ ගො	10 මැද් වැදැ නො	10 සෙනු ඉසා බිද	කවුඩා
11 රොකුන් මහාපි	11 ගන්නා කොට ඉ	11 හල් සමනු ඉසා	බල්ලා
12 ඩිවා දී වළන්දනු	12 සා ගමින් පිට	12 මහාලෙ කොලො	
13 කොට මෙ පිරිවෙ	13 ත්සමුන්	13 මු ලොකෙ අරක්	
14 නැ බද් කළන්න	14 .. ..හිවල මිනි	14 සමණන් වර	
15 රැබ්ම ආවු ර	15 සුන් ස... ..පි	15 කුඩසලා (වෙළව)	
16 දුතු ගැම ආවු	16... ..ටි... ..ම	16 ඇතුල්වැ මෙ තු	
17 තැනට මෙලාට	17 වුන්... ..ම	17 වාක් දෙනා හින්ද්	
18 සි නොවද්නා	18... .. තු	18 වු අත්තාණි	
19කොට ඉසා රට	19 රමැ... ..	19 කණු ආන්නැ	
20 ලදු පස්ලදු	20 යන් මි..	20 උල්ලහනා ක	
		21 ල කෙනෙක් කවු	
		22 (ඩු) බලු වෙත්වා	



## TRANSCRIPT

A	B	C	D
1 Svasti Śrī	1 van nova-	1 ra karat misā	1 ... utuki-
2 Sirisaṇbo	2 dnā koṭ i-	2 gamaṭ novad-	2 ri nogannā
3 mapurmukā de-	3 sā vāriyaṇ	3 nā koṭ isā	3 isā magiva
4 vanne Vāpā pu-	4 gāl mīvun	4 ektān sami	4 piyadiva no
5 ra diyavak davas	5 nogannā ko-	5 yen vadāḷeyi-	5 vadnā koṭ
6 debisevā dā	6 ṭ isā me ra(ṭ)	6 n ā mekāppa-	6 isā kolpā-
7 Kasbal maha	7 lad dunumaṇḍa-	7 r vādārum (Me)	7 ṭṭi novad
8 pāṇan vahan-	8 lan veherā	8 valan Ūrā varā me-	8 nā isā
9 se davasā Bu-	9 himā āvū ga-	9 kāppar Nirilā	Figures: monk's fan
10 dhasiṇha go-	10 mād vādā no	10 Senu isā Bida-	crow
11 rokun mahā pi-	11 gannā koṭ i-	11 hal Samanu isā	dog
12 ṇḍvā dī vaḷandanu	12 sā gamin piṭa-	12 mahāle Kolo-	
13 koṭ me pīrive-	13 t samun	13 mu Loke arak	
14 nā bad Kaḷunna	14 ... hivaḷa mini-	14 samaṇan varā	
15 ru bima āvū	15 sun sa ... pi-	15 kuḍasalā (Veḷava)	
16 Radutugāma	16 ṭi ... ma ..	16 ātuḷvā me tu-	
17 tānaṭ melāṭ	17 vun ... ma	17 vāk denā hind	
18 si novadnā	18 ... tu	18 vū attāṇi	
19 koṭ isā raṭ	19 ramā ...	19 kaṇu me ānnā	
20 ladu pasladu	20 yan mi ..	20 ullanganā ka-	
		21 ḷa kenek kavu	
		22 [ḍu] balu vetvā	

## TRANSLATION

Hail! Prosperity! On the second day of the waxing moon of the month of *Vap* (September-October) in the second (regnal) year of His Majesty Sirisaṇbo: it is ordered in respect of Radutugama, which is attached to this *pirivena* situated in the District of Kaḷunnaru-bima, had been assigned (to this *pirivena*) for the purpose of providing large portions (of food) in order to feed Reverend Buddhasiṇha.

I, *Mekāppar* Sēna of Nirila, and I, Samanu of Bidahala, who both came by commission of Mevalan Ūrā, the Commander of Bodyguard, I, *Kuḍasalā* Velava, who came by commission of *Mahalā* Kolomu Lōke; in accordance with order of the Supreme Council to the effect that *Melāmsi* officers shall not enter this place, also the Governors of Districts and Governors of Provinces shall



not enter. Domesticated elephants, carts, and buffaloes shall not be appropriated. The archers who are attached to this District shall not enter the villages situated on the boundary of the monastery and arrest the (offenders). ..... shall not enter this village. May those who transgress these commands become crows and dogs.

### End notes

<sup>1</sup> IC. Vol.VI, No. 2, ll. 51-52

<sup>2</sup> Pūjāvaliya, edited by Paṇḍita Kiriālle Gnānavimala (1951), p.779

<sup>3</sup> IC. Vol.VI, No. 2, ll. 51-52



## **The Award of Sir S. C. Obesekere Memorial Medal to Prof. Sirimal Ranawella**

The Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka awards a medal once in three years to a distinguished scholar in Sri Lanka. This year, that honour falls on Prof. Sirimal Ranawella in recognition of his valuable services to advancing the knowledge of history and archaeology of Sri Lanka.

Prof. Ranawella has published 10 books, and a further 5 manuscripts are awaiting publication. He has published over 244 articles in learned journals and encyclopaedias. He has also delivered numerous scholarly lectures at many recognised institutions, including at the Royal Asiatic Society. Although he is now 90 years old, he still continues to engage in academic work, even the current journal of the Royal Asiatic Society has an article by him.

After his retirement from regular employment in 1989 and after a period of self tutoring, he devoted considerable time on Sri Lankan inscriptions. This soon became his passion. His knowledge of Pāli, Sanskrit and Sinhala Prākṛit combined with his deep knowledge of Sri Lankan history made him the more perfect epigraphist. In this fresh career, he has revised, re-edited or freshly edited 581 inscriptions of the late Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Dambadeniya, Kurunegala, Gampola and Kandy Periods in the *Inscriptions of Ceylon* Volumes alone.

This achievement should be compared with the 281 inscriptions edited by Paranavitana in the *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, in addition to the 1234 cave inscriptions, 685 Sigiri Graffiti and several inscriptions published in various journals.

Despite retirement in 1989 from the University of Ruhuna as its acting Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ranawella still continues to



work for universities at the highest level. At present, he is a member of panels of professors involved in selection and promotion committees of several universities.

In recognition of his deep knowledge of History and Archaeology, He has been regularly appointed to the Archaeological Advisory Committee for a number of years.

In recognition of his contributions, the University of Kelaniya awarded him in the year 2000 the degree of D.Lit.

To place his considerable achievements in context, we must consider Prof. Ranawella's childhood and formative years.

Gallage Sirimal Ranawella was born in Koggala, southern Sri Lanka, on 16 October 1921 to a family of extremely modest means. His early childhood was a constant struggle for the bare necessities of life, often skirting the margins of poverty, which resulted in his parents allowing him at the age of one to be adopted by his aunt Roslyn Amerasinghe. To this day, he remembers her as *Ammā*.

His early education was at Unawatuna Sinhala Buddhist Mixed School in Galle from 1927 to 1939. He was not an exceptional student, but was above average in his commitment to educate himself.

The basic facilities we now take for granted were luxuries to him. Studying whenever and wherever he could, if necessary by the light of kerosene bottle lamps, juggling part time jobs to contribute to his family's modest income, Sirimal Ranawella passed out of Unawatuna Sinhala Buddhist Mixed School in 1939 with above average results in his examinations.

For almost five years, he did various jobs, including work as a clerk and as an overseer, before joining the Ceylon Police as a policeman in which humble vocation, he worked for almost 10 years. His thirst for knowledge persisted and he enrolled as a student



with the Zahira College evening school. Later, while continuing to work the afternoon shift as a policeman, he joined the day school Pembroke College to follow an Advanced Level course of study.

Of the 3000 students sitting the University Entrance examination, only 53 students achieved passes in all 4 subjects and he was one of them.

He entered the University of Peradeniya in 1953 at the very adult age of 30, possibly the oldest student in his batch. At the University, he studied Sinhala, Sankrit and Pāli and specialised in Ceylon History. Yet his goal of studying epigraphy under Paranavitana did not materialise. After his University education, Sirimal Ranawella, being denied a promotion, he joined Dharmaraja College Kandy. Later he joined the Sinhala Encyclopaedia before he was recruited to the Department of History of the University of Kelaniya.

In 1966, he earned his Ph.D. from the University of London for his thesis, *“A Political History of Ruhuna”* bringing in fresh interpretations.

After teaching at the Kelaniya University for 20 years, he joined the University of Ruhuna in 1977, to first take up the position of Associate Chair, and then in 1979, the Chair of the Department of History. In 1988, he accepted the challenging post of Vice Chancellor at Ruhuna during a period of great turbulence in the country as well as in the universities. His background in the police, his simple and unassuming manner, helped him weather the storm of the JVP insurrection at the time. He saved the lives of many university students who were arrested on various charges. Even without his request, his term was extended after the retirement age.

With typically modest humour, he has been known to joke that he had “Gone from PC to VC a telling phrase for a persevering man with an unquenchable drive for knowledge of our country’s past. The Royal Asiatic Society Sri Lanka is proud to honour him.



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## Book Review:

*A 16<sup>th</sup> century clash of civilizations: The Portuguese presence in Sri Lanka* by Susantha Goonatilake, Vijitha Yapa 2011

This scholarly work of an interpretive nature has made it clear that the history of Portuguese connections in Sri Lanka bears great potential for debate and innovation. It also illustrates that images of both Sri Lanka and Portugal in the sixteenth century have entered a challenging phase of reinterpretation. Besides, it has opened up an arena for rekindling of thoughts not only on Portuguese enterprise but also on a discourse of "Post Colonialism"

Cultures in many Asian, African, Central and South American countries had been falling apart for centuries under the joint onslaught of European colonial enterprise, missionary activity, commerce and the mass media. The revivification of national cultures – the frantic search for historical roots or the rediscovery of national heritages from about the mid twentieth century was a countervailing force against these influences. In Sri Lanka, the political system spearheaded by the SLFP advocated this revivification of national culture, but there had been ups and downs in that direction during different regimes. Nevertheless revolutionary cultural changes have taken place in the spheres of drama, literature and religion during the last fifty or sixty years.

But in the study of the colonial past, there had not been much significant change in line with the revivification of national culture in spite of enormous output of MA, Ph.D. dissertations, books and monographs and articles. This is not due to any anti-national feeling of Sri Lankan historians but due to Euro-centric research training they received from European Universities - mainly British - such as London, Oxford, Cambridge and due to the nature and interests of their sponsors. Therefore, these studies have largely focused on political and social changes, trade and economic issues such as



land tenure but have excluded cultural and macro-civilizational factors. Many of them had not given a sympathetic treatment to the cultural traits and intellectual output of those conquered by Europe. Even the reputed scholars of the Portuguese enterprise in Sri Lanka; Prof. C.R. de Silva and late Prof. Tikiri Abeysinghe, trained in the British empiricist tradition as well as within the mindset and sponsorship of the Gulbenkian Foundation have downplayed the civilizational factors. The objective of the Gulbenkian Foundation in fact is to promote Portuguese culture abroad, and to operate a programme to preserve evidence of the Portuguese presence in the world.

It is in this broad canvas that Dr. Susantha Goonatilake's "A 16<sup>th</sup> Century clash of civilizations: The Portuguese presence in Sri Lanka" should be placed. It goes well beyond the recently published pioneering works of Gaston Perera: "Kandy Fights the Portuguese" and "The Portuguese Missionary in 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> century Ceylon." This most valuable treatise by Goonatilake examines through sociological as well as historical eyes cultural, religious, intellectual and technological developments in Portugal in general and Sri Lanka in particular to highlight main aspects of the clash between two civilizations. Aspects thus examined include depiction of civilizational encounter in building technology, literature, artifacts, thought and war. Just to give one example of building technology among many, the author cites the Portuguese Father Manual de Morais who stated in 1552 that in contrast to small size, simplicity and rough construction of churches in Portugal, the Sinhalese pagodas were richer than the richest church in Lisbon and were all covered in gold. Susantha's book attempts to sketch on the larger civilizational canvas what the British empiricist tradition had missed out. It portrays deep and significant cultural confrontations between the Portuguese and Sri Lankan Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. As one of the most eminent scholars on the Portuguese colonies, C.R. Boxer had pointed out "Portugal's sea-borne empire was nothing but a military and maritime enterprise cast in an ecclesiastical mould".



In the trading or virtual plundering aspects of this enterprise, apart from spices such as cinnamon, eastern luxury commodities which were in great demand in European royal houses played an important role. In chapters six and seven titled “Imported Jewels to European royalty” and “All that Glitters in European Courts” respectively Dr. Susantha Goonatilake illustrates the artistic tastes as well as modes of manufacture of jewellery, caskets, combs, fans, bells, forks and spoons in Sri Lanka and in Portugal. In these two chapters he takes us on a long journey to provide details of collections of such Sri Lankan luxury goods taken away to Europe over nearly one and a half centuries of the Portuguese enterprise. These exported luxury items display not only the more exquisite aspects of Sinhalese manufacture but also its non-sectarian attitude to art; a strong contrast to Portuguese fanaticism. Examples of jewellery and luxury goods described and illustrated in this volume indicate the unknown Sri Lankan craftsman’s ability to work with lathes and other instruments to precise measurements. The other civilizational factors that are discussed in this book include matters of education and thought, attitude to knowledge, belief and religion including aspects of Catholicism and Buddhism, the two major actors of clash of civilizations.

The period of European Colonial rule saw Buddhism in Sri Lanka facing trials and tribulations. The way Buddhists faced up to these problems was a signal tribute to the pervasive influence of Buddhism on the life and thought of Sri Lankans as well as to the unique characteristics of Buddhism. There were remarkable and instructive differences between the cultures-western and Sri Lankan in the early phase of their encounter.

Whilst the anti-Buddhist policies of the British Colonial rulers were on a relatively low key and gradually petered out after the mid-nineteenth century, those of their predecessors, the Portuguese and Dutch, were far more intolerant and severe. Of these two, the Portuguese were the more fanatic and ruthless. There was hardly a temple or other place of worship in the island which



they encountered that was left undemolished. Sacred and other literature stored in them were destroyed. Monks were either killed or expelled from Portuguese territory. Determined efforts were made to ensure that these temples were not rebuilt and the monks did not return to their ministrations.

The kind of society that had been shaped by Buddhism upto the time of colonial aggression can be seen from the records of the Europeans themselves. The Portuguese had found in Sri Lanka an extraordinary and unfamiliar liberality of spirit in matters of religion. Not only did Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims enjoy complete freedom of worship in kotte, but even the Portuguese themselves encountered complete liberty to exercise their religion and to propagate it. They were even given assistance to set up churches and maintain their priests. Only when the Portuguese activities of destruction of Buddhist places of worship, killing or expelling monks continued, without any stopping; the attitude of some of the Sinhalese leaders had begun to change. That change did not however, denote a basic change in the people's attitude. The Portuguese themselves noted that the Sinhalese continued to maintain that there was, not one path, but many different paths for those seeking salvation.

Portuguese religious fanaticism is well illustrated in chapter one under the heading "Getting Ready for a civilizational war". Starting with the Pope sanctioned armed push of the Iberian powers to countries around the world, the author discusses the ensuing clash of civilizations which had resulted in use of considerable cruelty by the Portuguese amidst deep cultural confrontations. The era is significant for Europe because it was the beginning of European domination of the world. For the rest of the world it was the beginning of a brutal period of suppression. The nature of the European inquisition, the introduction of the inquisition to Goa, Papal Bulls and injunctions, forced conversions, desecration and destruction of Buddhist and Hindu religious centres are in fact very well illustrated in this preliminary chapter.



In contrast, Dr. Susantha Goonatilake states that Buddhism did not see other religions as dangerous competitors but only as fellow travellers in a common search for truth. Buddhist tolerance was amply displayed when the Portuguese Catholics chased away the Muslims from territories they captured. The Kandyan King gave the Muslims new lands and settled them in the interior away from the reach of the Portuguese. In fact some of these lands were held by institutions such as the Ridi Vihara and the Asgiriya Temple. Later, when the Dutch Protestants banned Catholicism and its practices, the Sinhalese king in turn gave these Catholics protection and allowed their priests to operate from areas controlled by him as at Vahakotte. Even the Vahakotte Church, was built, as Susantha Goonatilake points out, on an ancient Buddhist site.

In passing, it has to be noted that with the sanctions of the pope and inspired by the twin motives of love of god and lust for gold, Vasco da Gama's ship succeeded in reaching Calicut in 1497 due to the help of an Arab sea farer domiciled in Malindi in East Africa. The name of this navigator of Da Gama's ship was Ahmed Ibn Majeed. His manuscript entitled *Book of uses* giving sailing directions in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean has been discovered in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In the final part of this work, navigator Majeed bitterly regretted the fact that he had shown the "Portuguese predators" the sea route to India because with astonishing speed and complete ruthlessness they had forcibly broken down the trade that had peacefully developed from ancient times in these regions.

As Dr. Lorna Dewaraja had pointed out, from the earliest phase, the Muslim links with India and Sri Lanka were completely severed. Even Indo-Sri Lanka trade had to be conducted surreptitiously from creek to creek. Having thus with ruthless aggression destroyed the unarmed peaceful trade, the Portuguese enforced an armed monopolistic system of their own, initiating an extremely turbulent era in Sri Lanka's history.



The book is well illustrated with 85 photographs most of which are unique to the volume and not published elsewhere. These vary from Buddhist temples in India, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan jewellery including gem studded golden earrings, ivory caskets, fans, combs, folks and spoons made out of rock crystal, gold, rubies and sapphires to portable Sinhalese guns. This challenging book which counters Euro-centrism by looking at the world from a South Asian perspective is a result of an excellent innovative effort by Dr. Susantha Goonatilake. It is in fact a ground breaking discourse on the Portuguese enterprise in Sri Lanka.

**Prof. W.I. Siriweera**



## Tribute

### Gaston Perera: Chronicler within a Social Web

I cannot exactly remember the day when I and other members of the Portuguese Encounter Group of the Royal Asiatic Society RASSL came into contact with Gaston Perera. When I met him, he said he had written novels about the Portuguese and had researched into the area. I welcomed him to the group as a part of the nearly hundred who participated in our research. Unfortunately, I had not read his fiction (for nearly 20 years fiction reading had been excised out for me). Later in a newspaper interview, he was to state that I had introduced him to academic work. It is in that light, as a metaphor of Sri Lanka research and intellectual life, that I write this. I should mention that I am professionally and primarily a social epistemologist and this type of exercise is my bread and butter.

When we started the research, we were faced with some stark facts that much of the writing on the Portuguese were done under the intellectual control/guidance of those close to the Catholic Church or to Portuguese apologists. The previous research was carried under Catholic priests like S.G. Perera or from the Gulbenkein Foundation funds which foundation was created specifically to safeguard the presumed glory of Portugal. A few years ago, there were two major exhibitions organized by the Gulbenkein Foundation on the Portuguese “discoveries” - one was in Vienna and another in Washington. Nowhere was in these exhibitions mentioned the horrific destruction and barbarity done by the Portuguese around the world. This type of whitewash was also seen in “Sandeshaya”, the film on the Portuguese by Lester James Peris which film’s art director Weerakkody told the Royal Asiatic Society that he was specifically instructed not to depict Portuguese atrocities. Our Portuguese research was to go behind these ideological veils.

The previous authors under the tutelage of the Catholic Church or the Gulbenkein Foundation included Tikiri Abeysinghe



and C.R.de Silva (the latter also had written a book on “Buddhist Fundamentalism” of Sri Lanka in keeping with the Theocon ideological tenor in certain quarters of the USA, Silva’s adopted home. He was writing on a fictitious “Buddhist Fundamentalism” while ignoring the very strong Christian fundamentalism of the USA which as a softer parallel to the conversions by sword of the Portuguese was targeting the developing world for unethical conversions). The earlier generation of writers such as Paul Pieris (himself a Christian) and Wimalananda Tennekoon were a contrast to these later semi-apologist researchers. As these earlier researchers were mostly exposed to the empirical tradition and also as the period of the Portuguese (and Spanish) adventures was a key starting point in global theorising from Karl Marx to world system theory of Emmanuel Wallerstein and others, we brought in an overt social epistemology. This was to look at the world from Sri Lankan epistemological eyes. Some of the initial discussions we had was to suggest as essential prior reading not only E.H. Carr’s 60 year old “What Is History?” (which also had been translated into Sinhala) but standard works in social epistemology and world system theory. Carr’s dictum “Study the historian before you begin to study the facts” as well as similar pronouncements as that by Gunnar Myrdal on bias were to govern our preferred approach. We also wanted the full techniques of the social construction of knowledge to be brought in (to which literature I also had personally contributed see Clough 2001).

When we called for participation of University history teachers, we got only a weak response indicative of the current lack of curiosity and the repetition, as teaching material in the universities, of notes of an earlier generation. Gaston on the other hand had already visited some of the sites of major battles such as Randenigala, Gannoruwa and the Balana fort. These were among the sites that we visited - from Jaffna in the North to Devundara in the South, from Kotte in the West to Trincomallee in the East. In the process we collected around thousand photographs of the sites destroyed, mostly hitherto not pictorially documented. At Kotte



and the immediate surroundings, we found that teachers from the nearby Jayawardanepura University who taught the poetry of the Kotte period had not visited these sites whose descriptions were found in poetic form in the Sandesa literature. At Balana and Randenigala, Gaston led us in graphic detail to how the Portuguese forces and the Sinhalese ones marched and how they fought.

I had visited on my own Lisbon and Goa (both twice) as well as some of the major capitals of relevance to our work (London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, New York etc) and bought almost all the books available as well as photocopied all the older books. These I shared with Gaston and formed the core of the RASSL Portuguese collection to which we all referred. We organised several internal RASSL seminars (over 25) and other seminars in Kelaniya, South-Eastern and Ruhuna Universities. Gaston actively participated in all these. We had a national seminar for monks of those temples destroyed by the Portuguese, and we followed up with a three day international conference. The international conference was to be a crowning public moment but it was nearly not to be. Its funding had been promised by the local banks, but unfortunately, the then RASSL leadership thought it better to attend an all-expense paid pro-Portuguese conference on the same topic at the same time in Europe, funded by the Gulbenkein Foundation. The latter as its founding charter mentions, was to propagate “for eternity” the good of the Portuguese. The result was that we had no funds for the conference which fortunately at the last minute was filled by a benefactor. Gaston recalled a Portuguese era metaphor namely that those who went to the pro-Portuguese conference were only emulating Don Juan Dharmapala.

In contrast to our heavily researched conference, the Gulbenkein one had no significant mention of the barbaric destruction caused in Sri Lanka through the unholy alliance between the Portuguese and the Catholic Church, the sword and Bible referred to by other European authors like Boxer. In fact some of the papers in the Gulbenkein conference as well as in another one



organised in Sri Lanka by an overlapping group went out of the way to avoid mentioning the barbarities saying that these new Eurocentric researchers in contrast to an earlier generation were doing “modern research”. One such “academic” from Germany had taken opprobrium when a RASSL participant in their local conference mentioned that the Pope had apologised over 100 times for atrocities inspired by the church. The RASSL participant wanted Portugal and the Pope to apologise to Sri Lanka. If researchers in other countries on Iberian atrocities were not afraid to call a spade a spade, 500 years of Western domination had brought forth a local stratum comfortable with the tall Western tales against the country, the psychological effects of colonialism which Frantz Fanon had so ably explored.

The Fannonite colonial tail was still visible when shortly after independence, Gaston went to university. He chose to study Western Classics a choice which cast him at Peradeniya University in the category of “Kultur” that evocative *Shimpfwort* for the social groups alienated from Sri Lanka. Gaston, although writing against the Portuguese, had shades of the Kultur in some of his dealings. This gave rise to some personal quirks which showed up in Gaston’s academic work including his RASSL work. In the spirit of Carr’s dictum “Study the historian” it is instructive to briefly mention them as symptomatic of the times he lived. His two books were often peppered with unscholarly colloquialisms of Colombo English which I tried in vain to get him to excise. His reaction at times was testy and dismissive to some not sufficiently westernised (in the limited sense “westernisation” is understood in Colombo). This need for westernised approval led him to submit his book for review to one of those Colombo academics closely associated with those who wanted Western interference in Sri Lanka. She came back with a nasty review and he did not publish it. Similarly he submitted his book to the very German who had decried the call for compensation and again, he was deeply rebuffed.

Gaston was a product of his times caught in a social web created by a colonial past which as he tried to document it was in



turn influencing him. We are rapidly turning towards an Asian future and Gaston would be remembered as a chronicler of our nasty past but who was yet to fully cognize the new intellectual Asian future.

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**Dr. Susantha Goonatilake**



## Tribute

### Prof. R.A.L.H. (Leslie) Gunawardana

Prof. Ranaweera Appuhamillage Leslie Herbert Gunawardana (1938-2010) was one of the most outstanding academics of his generation. During the entirety of his professional career he was a member of the Department of History at the University of Peradeniya (originally University of Ceylon). He is best known for his highly significant contribution to the study of Sri Lanka's ancient and medieval history.

Leslie Gunawardana entered the University of Ceylon in 1956 from the Tholangamuva (now Dudley Senanayaka) Central College. One could say that his career is a striking example of the social revolution envisaged in the educational reforms introduced by Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara in the mid 1940's. At the University Entrance Examination (which was conducted by the university at that time) Leslie Gunawardana won the Open Scholarship awarded to the most outstanding performance at that competitive examination, and, as his subsequent career amply illustrates, he was able to continue that momentum of excellence right through his university life. Opting to follow a Special Arts Degree in History he graduated in 1960 obtaining First Class Honors and winning the Mabel Jayasuriya Prize for History, the F.H.M. Corbett Prize for History and the Research Scholarship for the most outstanding performance at the Final Examinations that year. After graduation he was recruited as an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of History and two years later, he proceeded to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London for post-graduate studies. In 1965 he was awarded the Ph.D. by the University of London for the dissertation titled *The History of the Buddhist Sangha in Ceylon from the Reign of Sena I to the Invasion of Magha*. A revised version of this work has been published as *Robe and Plough: Monastic and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Monographs of the Association for Asian Studies, University of Arizona Press, 1979).



Leslie Gunawardana's academic career reached its pinnacle in 1992 having been appointed Senior Professor in History after going through the various promotions including a Personal Chair on Merit in 1982. He was Head of the Department in 1986-87 and in 1990-91 and was elected Dean of the Faculty of Arts in 1991 and functioned in that capacity till October 1992. In 1997 he was appointed the Vice Chancellor of the University of Peradeniya and held that post till 2000. He left university service temporarily in 2001 to be appointed a Member of Parliament and the Minister of Science and Technology. He returned to university service in 2002 and retired in 2003.

As an academic Prof. Leslie Gunawardana's research interests have been wide and varied. A special feature of his research studies has been the application of the advances in modern social science theory to the study of Sri Lanka's ancient and medieval history. The contribution he has made in this sphere, have therefore been unique and unparalleled.

The published research of Leslie Gunawardana cover a wide gamut of topics such as state formation in early Sri Lanka, science and technology - particularly irrigation technology - and hydraulic civilization in ancient Sri Lanka and South Asia, medical practices and Ayurveda in pre-colonial Sri Lanka, the development of Buddhist monastic life and the history of the Bhikkhuni Sasana in Sri Lanka, Indian Ocean trade in early times and Sri Lanka's involvement, the formation of urban life in pre-colonial Sri Lanka, the development of ethnic identity among the Sinhalese and historiography as an academic discipline. His writings have often been characterized by their thoroughness, analytical skill and originality of insight. It is no exaggeration to say that no other historian of his times has covered such a wide array of topics contributing so significantly to our understanding of ancient and medieval Sri Lanka.

It is intended now to present a sample of his research publications indicating their significance as noteworthy



contributions to knowledge. Pointing out the fallacy of the popularly held view that rulers in early Sri Lanka held sway over the whole island Leslie Gunawardana traced the formation of the early Sri Lankan state in several papers such as “Prelude to State :An Early Phase in the Evolution of Political Institutions in Sri Lanka” (*Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* vol. VIII, 1983) and “Total Power or Shared Power? A Study of the Hydraulic State and Its Transformations in Sri Lanka From the 3rd Cen. to the 9th Cen. AD” (*Indian Historical Review*, vol VII, 1981) In these studies and in some others Gunawardana traced the expansion of the hegemony of Anuradhapura kingdom over outlying areas that occurred concurrently with the expansion of the hydraulic civilization. The significance of such a development to the understanding of South Asian history was illustrated in “Inter-societal Transfer of Hydraulic Technology in Pre-colonial South Asia” (*South East Asian Studies, Kyoto* vol. XXII, no.2, 1984)

Gunawardana’s detailed studies on the technology of hydraulic engineering in ancient Sri Lanka are exemplified in such publications as “Hydraulic Engineering in Ancient Sri Lanka: The Cistern Sluices” ( *The Senarath Paranavitana Commemoration Volume, Leiden, Brill, 1978*) and in the paper titled “Irrigation and Hydraulic Society in Early Medieval Ceylon “ *Past and Present, No. 53, Oxford and London, 1971*) where he extended his investigation to examine the social and political implications of the development of irrigation technology and the expansion of hydraulic civilization. Gunawardana’s study of medical practices in early Sri Lanka are exemplified in papers such as “Immersion as Therapy: Archaeological and Literary Evidence on An Aspect of Medical Practice in Pre-colonial Sri Lanka” (*Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* , vol IV, 1978) and “Obstetrics and Theories of Reproduction in Ancient and Early Medieval Sri Lanka” (*Kalyani, vols. III and IV, 1984-5*) His abiding interest in the development of the monastic life in Sri Lankan Buddhism is exemplified in such papers as “ Some Economic Aspects of Monastic Life in Later Anuradhapura Period” (*Sri Lanka Journal of Historical and Social*



*Studies, NS II, 1972*) and “Buddhist Nikayas in Medieval Ceylon” (*Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies, vol IX, 1966*) Also, his study of the order of Buddhist nuns in ancient Sri Lanka titled “Subtile Silks and Ferreous Firmness: Buddhist Nuns in Ancient and Early Medieval Sri Lanka and Their Role in the Propagation of Buddhism” ( *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* vol. XIV, 1988) is one of the very few scholarly studies on the subject. Special mention should also be made of Gunawardana’s original studies on the patterns of urbanization in early Sri Lankan history in papers such as “The Pre-colonial City in South Asia” ( *The Formation of Urban Civilization in South East Asia*, ed. Y.Tsubouchi, Kyoto, 1989 ). And in the following paper he extended his investigation to cover the overall life of the most long-standing capital of Pre-colonial Sri Lanka, “Anuradhapura : Ritual, Power and Resistance in Pre-colonial South Asian City” ( *Domination and Resistance* ed. Daniel Mille et.al., London, 1989).

Gunawardana was one of the few scholars who focused attention on the historical formation of group identity among the Sinhala people. His paper (originally published in *The Journal of the Humanities, vol. V, 1979*, in Peradeniya whose revised versions were later published elsewhere) titled “The People of the Lion: The Sinhala Identity and Ideology in History and Historiography.” led to substantial controversy wherein he had to concede some of the criticisms. An earlier paper touching upon a related subject was “The Kinsmen of the Buddha: Myth as Political Charter in Ancient and Early Medieval Kingdoms of Sri Lanka” ( *Religion and the Legitimation of Political Power* , (ed) Bardwell L. Smith , Chambersberg, 1978). Subsequent to the “People of the Lion” paper he also brought out on the same theme “Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past : The Changing Ethnic Identity of the Last Four Kings of the Kandyan Kingdom” ( in *Pivot Politics: Changing Cultural Identities in Early State Formation Processes*, ed. Martin van Backel et.al., Amsterdam, 1994) and a booklet titled *Hisoriography in a Time of Ethnic Conflict: Construction of the*



*Past in Contemporary Sri Lanka* ( Colombo, Social Scientists Association, 1995)

Gunawaradana's research on early Indian Ocean trade is exemplified in "Changing Patterns of Navigation Indian Ocean and Their Impact on Pre-colonial Sri Lanka" (*Kalyani*, vol. V and VI, 1986-7) and in "Sri Lankan Ships in China: A Note on a Passage in a Literary Work from the Period of the T'ang Empire" which he wrote in collaboration with Yumio Sakurai (*Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, vol. VII, 1981) Gunawardana will again be remembered as a scholar who while being a practitioner also sought to describe and analyse historiography as a discipline . Perhaps this was very much in need for historians working in the Sinhala medium. The symposium *Itihasaye Atitaya* ( the Past of History) is perhaps the only such work which can be used as a guide by Sinhala medium scholars in the discipline. Another noteworthy contribution of Gunawaradana is his attempt to work out a new and more acceptable periodization of Sri Lanka's history. The booklet titled *Periodization in Sri Lankan History: Some Reflections with Special Emphasis on the Development of the State* ( Colombo, Social Scientists Association, 2008) which won him a State Literary Award is the work representing his final synthesis of the observations he has made on a problem which he has mentioned in some earlier studies as well. Another noteworthy feature of Gunawaradana's scholarship was the fact that he was a bilingual scholar, writing in both English and Sinhala. Although the greater bulk of his work has been in English he has made several original contributions in the Sinhala medium which stand out as excellent examples of history writing. Here mention can be made of *Sivura Saha Nagula* ( the Sinhala translation of *Robe and Plough*) and *Anuradhapura Yugaya* ( a volume on the history of the Anuradhapura period which he edited with Amaradasa Liyanagamage) Another noteworthy contribution to the study of Sri Lankan history was the volume titled *Reflections on a Heritage* which he edited with some other academics and which was also made available in Sinhala..



As an internationally known scholar Leslie Gunawaradana was at various times affiliated with institutions such as Corpus Christi College, Oxford University as Visiting Fellow, Kyoto University as Visiting Scholar, Directeur Associe de Recherche at Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, Paris, as Rockefeller Fellow at the Institute of Culture and Consciousness in South Asia, Chicago, as Visiting Numata Professor at the University of Chicago, as Visiting Professor at the University of Virginia and as Visiting Professor successively at Bowdoin College, Maine and at Carleton College Minnesota. Reviews of his writings have been published in a wide range of academic journals such as *Journal of Asian Studies*, *American Ethnologist*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, *Archiv Orientalani* and *Contributions to Indian Sociology* which is ample testimony to his reputation as a scholar.

**Prof. K.N.O.Dharmadasa**



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96, Ananda Coomaraswamy Mawatha, Colombo 07

Sri Lanka

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