

DEPARTMENT OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS



# DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE CITY OF COLOMBO

MONOGRAPH No. 2

1954

Printed at the Government Press, Ceylon

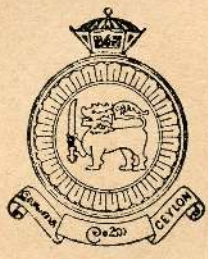
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## PREFACE

**T**HIS is the second monograph to be issued by the Department of Census and Statistics and it deals with the Municipality of Colombo. The Department is indebted to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, for the most valuable suggestion made by him to prepare such a monograph.

2. A Census generally provides a view of the specific events or position relating to a fixed date or period, and the figures themselves cannot indicate the trends or possibilities. The essential need is to be aware of the trends and forces which themselves affect the society in certain directions. This need is fulfilled by the provision of reviews, reports or monographs where the information is carefully analysed and interpreted in relation to the political, social and economic background having regard to the interplay of forces within and without. It is by such a special study that glimpses of rapidly changing events and processes can be caught and presented in the context of historical facts and demographic changes.

3. This survey attempts to present a fair idea of the statistical and demographic information of local interest namely the development of Municipal administration, growth of population, its distribution, age, sex and fertility, race and religion, literacy and education, residence, housing, aspects of family life and economic environment. One could easily follow the evolutionary progress made by the capital city of Ceylon from very humble beginnings to its present status of a modern city within a short space of time. Apart from the general usefulness and interest of this monograph to the average citizen there is very valuable information of special interest to the Local Government authorities to study the problems and possibilities of similar local bodies.

4. This volume has been the result of the first attempt at assembling the valuable data relating to a city in Ceylon and may perhaps be the beginning of a profitable series of demographic studies in the future that may well be undertaken during intercensal periods.

5. The author of this monograph is Mrs. I. Kannangara, Assistant Superintendent of Census, who is also responsible for the statistical figures and tables as well as the preparation of the text.

Department of Census and Statistics,  
16, Albert Cerescent,  
Colombo, August 12, 1954.

N. D. WIJESKERA,  
Acting Director of Census and Statistics.



#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

**F**IGURES given in this report have been taken from published material except in the case of the 1953 Census figures and those of the Urban Family Budget Survey. Statistics relating to them are as yet provisional.

The author is grateful to all those who helped her in the preparation of this report, and in particular to those who had no connection with the Department of Census and Statistics, but who nevertheless were of great and willing assistance in supplying maps, books and information that were required invariably at short notice.





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1875  
1876  
1877  
1878  
1879

## CHAPTER I

### THE RISE OF THE CITY

**C**OLOMBO the capital city of Ceylon owes its importance and development chiefly to its harbour one of the largest artificial harbours in the world. Its history goes beyond the 9th century, when its usefulness as a port of call was discovered by Arab traders. Ibn Batuta, the Arab traveller, described it as "the finest town in Serendib". There is some evidence that prior to the Portuguese conquest in the 16th century it had been customary for "several ships from Bengal, Persia, the Red Sea and other places" to call at Colombo for purpose of barter trade.

Early in the 16th century in the year 1505 the Portuguese first set foot on Ceylon more by chance than by any pre-conceived design. A fleet captained by Don Lourenco De Almeida, while trying to intercept the rich Muslim trade between the Far East and Persia, was driven by storm to the shores of Ceylon and made its way thereafter to Colombo, then known as Kolombo or Kolontota, which was the centre of the Island's rich trade in spices, coconuts, elephants and pearls. The Island's trade was at that time in the hands of the Muslims and the Portuguese forthwith set about their plans to oust them by force of might and even piracy.

The importance of Colombo rose from the fact that it was the chief anchorage for ships and the Island's trade centred around it. The Portuguese quick to see this negotiated with the Sinhalese kings and built a fortress there. Thereafter making fresh treaties with the Sinhalese kings they attempted to gain some part of the trade which up to that time had been a royal monopoly. The fort was gradually strengthened to keep away foreign invaders, the swamp on one side of the town was turned into a lake to prevent attacks from the south, and the limits of the town too were extended. With their defences centered in and around Colombo the Portuguese obtained a considerable part of the trade and gained ascendancy over the Island.

The Portuguese held out for over a hundred years till towards the middle of the 17th century when the Dutch started making inroads into the Island. The latter realized that if they were to gain trading rights they must oust the Portuguese from Colombo. Accordingly they started the siege of Colombo in October, 1655.

Circumstances favoured the Dutch, for the Fort of Colombo had suffered through the corrupt and lethargic military and civil administration of the last Portuguese General. The bastions which fortified the city had been neglected and the troops were not sufficient to man the posts. The Dutch took advantage of these circumstances and broke through the defences capturing the city in May 1656, driving the Portuguese finally out of the city and out of the Island.

The Dutch reduced the size of the fort which at that time comprised a part of that portion of the city extending from the harbour to the modern Canal Row and from York Street to Galle Buck. They fortified this with bastions and a thick rampart. This was separated from the Old Town which was the residential quarter and which in British times came to be called "Pettah" a word of Anglo-Indian origin. The Old Town extended in the Dutch period from the modern Front Street to Fourth Cross Street, and from Maliban Street to the sea. The Fort and the residential quarter were separated

by an open space which was turned into a canal and the road connecting the two lay over a causeway now represented by Main Street. Although the names Fort and Pettah still survive they have lost their original significance.

The policy of the Dutch was peaceful, their main idea being to secure commerce and especially its monopoly. With this idea in view they entered into various treaties with the Sinhalese kings and offered their services and protection to them from foreigners. With their hold over the Fort of Colombo they were able for a considerable time to hold any foreign aspirants to the Island's trade at bay and also keep the Sinhalese kings from ousting them in spite of several intermittent skirmishes aimed at driving them out.

Towards the end of the 18th century when war broke out afresh between the Sinhalese and the Dutch the former solicited the aid of the British who speedily sent armaments and troops in their anxiety to gain some part of the Island's trade. The Dutch were gradually ousted from their settlements all over the Island and with the fall of the city of Colombo in 1796 all their possessions finally passed into the hands of the British.

Up to that time commerce had been the chief interest and pre-occupation of foreign governments, but with the coming of the British they wanted the people to feel that their's was to be a government of the people and of the king in the interests of the people. Accordingly the monopoly on cinnamon was removed and the British set about inaugurating a large scale system of reforms including judicial, constitutional, educational and commercial.

Active measures were soon taken in hand to develop the country's resources and to improve the City. One of the most interesting of these was the Lottery which was proclaimed in October, 1821, "for the improvement of the Town and vicinity of Colombo". It is unique in that this was the earliest recorded State Lottery held in the Island. The only other State sponsored Lottery was the Colombo Plan Exhibition Sweep held in 1952. Its profits however were used solely in connection with the Colombo Plan Exhibition held in Ceylon in 1952, and were not utilised for any civic purpose. A Government advertisement gave notice of the 1821 "Scheme of Lottery, the profits of which, arising from a deduction of 10 per cent from the respective Prizes, will be applied to this purpose . . . . to be drawn on the third day of December next, at Colombo . . . . The Prizes will be payable after the above mentioned deduction, ten days after the day of the Lottery being drawn<sup>1</sup>". The first drawing was postponed to December 6, 1821, and there was another drawing on February 5, 1822. For the first drawing 800 tickets were sold at 50 Rix dollars each bringing in a total revenue of 40,000 Rix dollars. The tickets could be bought as wholes or by halves and quarters at proportionate rates. All the money was distributed in 259 prizes, the profits accruing to Government being only 4,000 Rix dollars representing the 10 per cent deduction. It meant therefore, that every one who bought a ticket had nearly as high as a one in three chance of winning a prize.

In 1827 a "Return of the Population of the Island of Ceylon" was published. This was done on the order of the Governor, Sir Edward Barnes, and was compiled from separate returns by the Collectors to the Commissioners of Revenue in pursuance of an order dated January 27, 1824. According to this Return the population of the Colombo Fort was 734 persons, and of "Pettah or within the Kayman's Gate" 4,979 persons. The number of tiled houses was 205 and 857 respectively.

The next event of note was in 1865 when an Ordinance was passed establishing the Municipalities of Colombo, Kandy and Galle. Thereafter the city of Colombo expanded very rapidly. Some measure of its progress can be gauged from the fact that the Municipal revenue rose from Rs. 320,000

<sup>1</sup> *Ceylon Government Gazette* No. 1,056 of Saturday, December 1, 1821.



in 1867 to Rs. 400,000 in 1887. Later with the development of the port the revenue rose to Rs. 1,120,000 in 1897 and ten years later in 1907 to Rs. 2,553,000. The Municipal Council had at that time 9 elected members and 4 nominated members. In 1864 the Government constructed a storage tank at Labugama and a reservoir at Maligakanda to supply the city with water, and the Municipality paid an annuity of Rs. 130,000 for 35 years for this service. But this soon proved inadequate to serve the rapidly growing population of the town and in 1899 the mains were duplicated and an additional reservoir was built. The problem of drainage too for the city became urgent and a water carriage system was recommended and constructed at a cost which at that time seemed almost prohibitive.

With the improvement of the planting industry, Colombo was connected by road and rail with all parts of the Island and with the planting districts in particular. Exports from Colombo steadily increased thereafter. The harbour however was still unprotected and transport from ship to shore was a problem. Four-fifths of the Island's commerce was centered in the city, and besides, the possibilities of the port had been tremendously heightened by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. All this resulted in agitation for the improvement of the harbour. The history of Colombo from that time on, has been mainly the history of the port. Its development has been due to the foresight of those who saw its enormous importance as a port of call and as a trade centre. In 1871 plans were laid for the construction of a breakwater to shelter the harbour from the South-West monsoon. The foundation stone was laid in 1875 by Edward VII when Prince of Wales, and work proceeded under the direction of Sir John Coode. The work took nearly ten years to complete and cost over Rs. 7,000,000 but an immediate return was assured by the great increase in trade of the port and the corresponding increase in harbour and customs dues. Some measure of the increase can be gauged from the fact that while in 1861 only 82 ships called at Colombo, in 1883 the total tonnage exceeded 3 million and harbour dues rose from Rs. 600,000 to Rs. 3,000,000.

These results made further extensions and improvements desirable and accordingly in 1894 it was decided to build two more breakwaters with the object of forming a closed harbour. The construction work was completed in 1906 but as this did not provide complete shelter for shipping it was decided to build a further breakwater. This was completed in 1912 and was soon followed by the addition of a graving dock, a patent slip, a barge repairing basin, and coaling jetties.

In 1896 the tonnage of ships entered and cleared was  $8\frac{1}{2}$  millions and total imports and exports were valued at Rs. 216,000,000 nearly double the value in 1877. The total area of the harbour was now a completely sheltered waterway of 640 acres. Judged by the total tonnage entering and clearing from it Colombo at that time ranked as the 10th largest port in the world and was destined to become the distributing centre of trade in the Eastern seas.

The following table shows the tonnage cleared from the port from 1938-1953.

TABLE 1.—THE TONNAGE CLEARED FROM THE PORT OF COLOMBO FROM 1938 TO 1953

<i>Port of Colombo</i>					<i>Tonnage Cleared</i>
1938	...	...	...	...	12,438,728
1946	...	...	...	...	5,119,146
1947	...	...	...	...	6,202,891
1948	...	...	...	...	8,804,959
1949	...	...	...	...	10,388,427
1950	...	...	...	...	11,382,796
1951	...	...	...	...	11,901,858
1952	...	...	...	...	12,513,089
1953	...	...	...	...	12,999,295

In times of war as in those of peace the Port of Colombo proved equally invaluable and important. During both world wars, and especially during the second, large convoys of Allied shipping frequently steamed in, and on one single occasion the port held over 406,000 tons of Allied shipping.

It is said that work on a port can never be completed and at the present time development plans mooted as far back as 1902 are proceeding apace. The plans include the provision of seventeen deep water and coaster berths, quays to provide alongside berthing making transport from ship to shore a simple and expeditious matter, a safe oil dock, spacious transit sheds, fine terminal facilities and other requirements of a modern port. Additions too are being made to the extensive ware-house accommodation already available. A new and imposing passenger jetty is nearing completion and the new quay providing alongside berthing was formally inaugurated by Her Majesty the Queen and named Elizabeth II Quay, soon after the Royal Ship, the "Gothic", berthed alongside it last April.

It can therefore be said that Colombo was a port before it became a city. Urbanisation came gradually owing to the "innate conservatism and habitual immobility of the people of Ceylon and their reluctance to alter their pattern of life". A traditional agricultural heritage does not take easily to urban development. A city rises only when the group or society within it controls more resources than are necessary for the sustenance of life. The break down of village rice agriculture and the rise of the plantations brought about those conditions and the export of commercial crops made Colombo the centre of commerce and trade, and in the course of time it became the dominant city of Ceylon.

The phenomenal growth of foreign trade during the last fifty years may be seen from the following table, which gives the value of imports and exports from 1920 to 1953.

TABLE 2.—IMPORTS AND EXPORTS, 1920 TO 1953

<i>Year</i>	<i>Imports</i>		<i>Exports</i>	
	<i>Rs. '000</i>	<i>Rs. '000</i>	<i>Rs. '000</i>	<i>Rs. '000</i>
1920 ... ..	360,927	...	276,295	...
1930 ... ..	324,357	...	310,171	...
1946 ... ..	695,568	...	720,537	...
1947 ... ..	962,578	...	837,901	...
1948 ... ..	994,008	...	940,042	...
1949 ... ..	1,028,843	...	1,008,462	...
1950 ... ..	1,166,806	...	1,498,281	...
1951 ... ..	1,558,670	...	1,826,596	...
1952 ... ..	1,702,441	...	1,411,831	...
1953 ... ..	1,607,838	...	1,489,972	...

The impact of foreign trade on the development of the port and the size of the city could scarcely be overemphasized.

In size, compactness, and certain architectural and industrial features, and also certain social characteristics, the city of Colombo stands apart. But "the city is creating a great hinterland which is gradually forming one community with the urban nucleus. Just as dwellers in the city and in the country are being brought nearer to one another in the process of interaction and dominance, so if in lesser degree, are the environments of city and country tending to become the common possession of men<sup>1</sup>".

The city of Colombo has already created this great hinterland. "Greater Colombo" now includes the Urban Council areas of Dehiwala-Mt. Lavinia, Moratuwa, Kotte, Kolonnawa, and Wattala. They are essentially semi-urban in character but tending to form one community with the urban nucleus of the city.

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<sup>1</sup> Mc. Iver—Society, page 139.

## CHAPTER II

### DEVELOPMENT OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

**T**HE Municipality of Colombo dates back to 1865, in which year an Ordinance to establish the Municipalities of Colombo, Galle and Kandy was introduced by Sir Hercules Robinson who was appointed Governor in 1865, and during whose administration the Island saw many improvements in new roads, railways, bridges, public buildings, reservoirs, tanks and channels. The Colombo Port too received a great impetus during his administration, as did the educational system of the country.

The Municipal Council was empowered by the Governor and the Executive Committee to levy new rates on vehicles, lights and water-ways, besides appropriating those already in existence like the assessment tax, receipts from tolls, stamp duties, &c. The assessment tax had been first introduced in 1820 "for establishing an assessment on houses in the Fort, Town and Four Gravets of Colombo, for the purpose of keeping the roads in the same in good repair, and providing lights therein". The Ordinance became Law in February, 1866, after it had received the assent of the Queen.

With the establishment of the municipality it was felt that local wants would largely be supplied, sanitary reforms introduced, and social conditions especially of the poorer classes improved. The Council consisted of nine elected members representing the nine Wards of the town and four nominated members with the Government Agent of the Western Province as the Chairman of the Council. The franchise was conceded only to male voters owning property the annual value of which was over Rs. 100. Any male person owning house and property worth over Rs. 5,000 or occupying a house the annual value of which was over Rs. 500 could stand for election as a Councillor.

The first meeting of the Colombo Municipal Council was held in January, 1866, with C. P. Layard the Government Agent of the Western Province in the chair. The elected members represented the Colpetty, Slave Island, Fort, San Sebastian, Pettah, St. Paul's, Cottanchena, New Bazaar and Maradana Wards.

Among the landmarks in the early history of the Municipal Council were the introduction of gas lighting in the Fort streets in 1868. Up to that time the streets had been lit with oil lamps.

In 1875 the Council first welcomed British Royalty to the Island in the person of the Prince of Wales, later Edward the VII, when he arrived to lay the foundation stone of the break-water.

The first Municipal Printing Press was established in 1878 and in five years time the work had increased so heavily that it was considerably expanded.

In 1884 the washing of pearl oysters was undertaken by Mr. Siedle at the mouth of the Kelani Ganga. Two years later he obtained a licence from the Council for this privilege.

The first telephone was installed in 1879 by Mr. Buchanan who obtained permission to have a telephone extension from his house, Muirburn Lodge, Cinnamon Gardens, to that of his partner Mr. F. W. Bois, who occupied Turret House. Shortly after, several other firms too applied for similar privileges, and the Telephone Ordinance came into operation in 1882.

British Royalty was again received by the Council when it welcomed Prince George of Wales, Prince Albert, and H. R. H. the Duke of Edinburgh in 1882.

In 1886 the German firm of Freudenberg obtained the first tramway concessions and about twenty-nine years later purchased land in Prince Street at the fantastic price of Rs. 555,000 an acre\*. However the trams are now giving way to more modern means of transport, and trolley buses have taken their place along the majority of Colombo's old tram routes.

The Council functioned on these lines for 22 years till the new Ordinance of 1887 was promulgated. By this ordinance the entire executive power and responsibility was vested in the Chairman. The qualifications of Councillors and voters were revised and defined anew, and limited liability companies were also given the right to vote.

The drainage system for the city envisaged by the eminent engineer Mansergh, was begun in 1901 with a Rs. 2,000,000 loan from the Central Government. The first Municipal enteric hospital was opened in 1909 and the Municipal free dispensary in 1910. As early as 1903 the Medical Officer of Health urged the council to have a milk standard set for the city, although not much was done to implement the suggestion till very much later.

In 1911 the city limits were extended to Wellawatta, and the number of wards increased from 9 to 10. An attempt was made soon after to make the Council a more or less autonomous body and in 1921 a special committee was appointed to report on the reform of the Council's constitution. After much time had lapsed the reformed constitution was introduced with the passing of the Colombo Municipal Council (Constitution) Ordinance of 1935 which came into operation two years later in 1937. The city was now divided into twenty wards which were to be represented by twenty elected members. According to the new constitution the Mayor was to be an elected Chairman and provision was made for the election of a Deputy and the nomination of four Councillors by the Government. Qualifications governing elected and nominated councillors too were considerably revised. The first meeting of the new Council was held in May, 1937, and Dr. R. Saravanamuttu, later Sir Ratnajoti Saravanamuttu became the first elected Mayor to hold office. The Ordinance of 1935 was amended in 1943 when the principle of nominated membership was abandoned and the number of wards increased from twenty to thirty. Very recently with effect from January 1, 1951, the city has been enlarged by the inclusion of Kirillapone within the town limits.

In the meantime the Local Government Service Commission Ordinance was promulgated and under its provision, a new Local Government Service was inaugurated throughout the Island. The Ordinance vested the matter of appointment and disciplinary measures relating to Local Government officials in the hands of the Commission.

As far as members are concerned the administration of the Council is entrusted to Standing Committees. The election of members to these Standing Committees takes place soon after the election of a Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

The Standing Committee on Finance and not less than two other Committees must be elected at the first general meeting of the Council for the year. The Finance Committee consists of five members with the Mayor in addition as an ex-officio member and ex-officio chairman. The other Standing Committees consists of six members each. Besides Finance, the other Standing Committees relate to Law and General Subjects, Sanitation and Markets, Municipal Works, Housing and Town Improvement, Traffic and Tramways. The Finance Committee deals with all financial matters of the

\* E. B. Denham—Ceylon at the Census of 1911, p. 134.

Council which include tenders, quotations, detailed estimates, salaries, pensions and gratuities, acquisitions, advances, all expenditure matters and the budget.

The Committee on Law and General Subjects covers by-laws, regulations, ordinances and general matters not normally coming within the purview of other Committees.

The Sanitation and Markets Committee is responsible for all matters relating to public health, veterinary services, and public services such as dispensaries, child welfare and maternity homes, cattle mart and markets, &c.

All construction works pertaining to service and general matters of the Municipal Engineer's and Water Works' Departments, Workshops, Fire-brigade, Playgrounds, &c. are a charge on the Municipal Works' Committee.

The Housing and Town Improvement Committee deals with all matters coming under the Housing and Town Improvements Ordinance ; the Traffic Committee with all traffic problems such as bus-halts, roads, speed limits, &c., and lastly the Tramways Committee with all matters pertaining to Tramways.

There are twelve departments in the Municipality each with its specified range of duties. The Secretary's Department which forms the Secretariat to the Mayor, Commissioner, and Council, deals with administration, maintaining general records of the Council, preparation of agenda, summoning meetings of the Council and Committees and keeping records of such meetings. In addition the Municipal Press, the Ayurvedic Dispensary and the Playgrounds are run by this department. It also deals with the issue of licences and permits for various services in the city such as barber saloons, milk vendors permits, street collections, &c.

The Municipal Treasurer's department receives and disburses the Councils revenues. The Department of the Municipal Assessor is responsible for the assessment of all properties within the Municipality and their acquisition if required for Municipal purposes.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health is head of the Public Health Department and his especial charge is the safe-guarding of the City's health, sanitation and all connected matters. Among various services rendered by this Department are the care of mothers and young children, provision of maternity homes and mid-wifery services, outdoor dispensaries, immunisation against infectious diseases, anti-plague measures, ambulance and anti-tuberculosis service, sanitary and anti-mosquito supervision, inspection of public markets and food, provision of laundries and maintenance of cemeteries, &c.

The Water Works Department is responsible for the maintenance of the city's water supply which comes along 107 miles of mains from the Labugama reservoir twenty-eight miles away from Colombo. The two service reservoirs in the city are at Maligakanda and Elie House. The average consumption of water per head in 1949 was forty-one gallons excluding supplies to shipping. As the supply of water from Labugama is proving inadequate to meet the requirements of the expanding population another scheme is under construction at Kalatuwawa. This reservoir, when completed, is expected to have a storage capacity even larger than that of Labugama and both together are expected to be amply sufficient to meet Colombo's needs.

The duties of the Department of the Municipal Engineer include the maintenance of buildings belonging to the Municipal Council, and services such as lighting, parks, conservancy, cleansing, roads and drainage. The drainage system is now being expanded to cover areas that had lacked a water carriage system. Underground conveniences have been constructed in the congested San Sebastian

Ward and more are contemplated in other parts of the city where ground space has become a serious problem. More and better roads too are being built, old ones widened and broad dual-carriage ways and roundabouts beautifully laid out with small flowering plants are making their appearance all over Colombo. The streets of the city are lit both with electricity and gas, there being 3,600 electric lamps lit by the Department of Government Electrical Undertakings and over 2,000 gas lamps lit by the Gas Company on contract. The Council's policy is gradually to replace the gas with electric lamps.

The parks, playgrounds and lawns of the City are carefully maintained and they have contributed to Colombo's reputation as a garden city. Chief among the beauty spots in the city are the Victoria Park and Gordon Gardens, while among the healthy open spaces are the Galle Face Green, Havelock Park, Campbell Park and Elie House Park.

The health and welfare of animals is the care of the Veterinary Department which keeps a constant and careful watch on animal diseases such as rinderpest, foot and mouth disease, anthrax and rabies. There is a rabies laboratory whose services are fully utilized.

The Fire Brigade and Ambulance Department is equipped with the most modern fire-fighting equipment.

The Library Department runs the Public Library which is perhaps not as modern or as well equipped as it might be.

Public assistance is the charge of a separate department which is concerned with the relief of distress within the City. Among its measures for relief are the provision of assistance to incurables, mental and physical defectives, orphans and children of poor parents. It also maintains the City Refuge which houses, feeds, clothes and cares for aged destitute persons. The department also looks after the maintenance and education of poor and orphaned children and gives assistance to needy persons who are temporarily in need of relief such as when the head of the family is hospitalized due to tuberculosis, accident, &c.

The Colombo Municipal Council thus provides a very extended range of services for the city dweller.

The Council's revenue\* is approximately Rs. 16 million plus another Rs. 5 million by way of Central Government refunds. About Rs. 10½ million comes from the consolidated rate, Rs. 2 million from licences, Rs. 1½ million from water and the rest from taxes, judicial fines, markets, rents, &c. Government refunds are mainly to cover the maintenance of the trunk roads in the city, a grant to meet the cost of living allowances to municipal employees and a block grant of a quarter of a million rupees.

The Council's expenditure is about Rs. 21 million, of which Rs. 7·1 million is spent by the Engineering Department. Public assistance amounts to only Rs. 2·8 million, while public health costs Rs. 2·7 million.

Apart from these, the Tramways cost the Council about Rs 2 million per year, though revenue from it is about Rs. 1·4 million. The Trolley bus service costs Rs. 1·9 million but brings in about Rs. 1·3 million by way of revenue.

One can catalogue a whole range of services which a modern city corporation makes available to the city dweller. Not all of them are provided by Ceylon's premier local authority. Some of the services provided are inadequate for a growing city like Colombo. The city can utilize more libraries, parks, playgrounds, houses and the like. Extension of such facilities will doubtless influence the development of the city.

\* Figures are for the year April 1954-March 1955, and are taken from the Budget of the Colombo Municipal Council.

CHAPTER III

GROWTH OF THE CITY POPULATION

IT is the evidence of history that the growth of the cities is associated with the growth of populousness, and all the great civilizations of the past have in fact been associated with the rise and fall of the city. As is to be expected the greatest populousness is to be found in Colombo. The area, population and density per square mile of the City at the Census of 1953 is given below.

AREA, POPULATION AND DENSITY OF COLOMBO CITY, 1953

			<i>Area in Square miles</i>		<i>Population</i>		<i>Density</i>
Colombo City	...	...	13 7/8	...	425,881	...	30,694

The growth of the city population was chiefly due to the rise of commercial and financial enterprise and other economic opportunities in the city. This growth depends on natural increase, the migrant stream, and the extension of the city limits. The latter however played only a minor role as within the space of seventy-two years the area has increased by only 4.4 square miles. It has been said that the effective limits to migration are set by society, not by geography. And right up to the end of the second decade of this century it was the migrant stream that determined the growth of the population. Natural increase did not come into its own till about the early thirties. This is not to underestimate the importance of geographical factors ; the city grew after the port, only its population rose by migration drawn by the city environment.

At any given time the relationship between land and population depends on the techniques which man has developed. The density of population as argued by Ratzel varies with the manner of making a livelihood. A city therefore tends to be densely populated. The following table shows the Area, Population and Density of Colombo from 1881 to 1953.

TABLE 3.—AREA, POPULATION AND DENSITY OF THE CITY POPULATION, 1881 TO 1953

<i>Census Year</i>			<i>Area in Square miles</i>		<i>Population</i>		<i>Density</i>
1881	...	...	9 9/20	...	110,502	...	11,693
1891	...	...	9 9/20	...	126,825	...	13,350
1901	...	...	10	...	154,691	...	15,469
1911	...	...	11 15/16	...	211,274	...	17,698
1921	...	...	12 15/16	...	244,163	...	18,872
1931	...	...	13	...	284,155	...	21,858
1946	...	...	13 11/40	...	362,074	...	27,852
1953	...	...	13 7/8	...	425,881	...	30,694

While the population has quadrupled between 1881 and 1953, the area has increased by less than 50 per cent. The area increased by a little over half a square mile in the last two decades of the previous century but population rose by as much as 44,189 or 40 per cent. At the turn of the century the density of population per square mile stood at 15,469 which by 1953, rose to 30,694,



almost doubling itself within the space of half a century. The density of the whole Island in 1953 was 323 persons per square mile. Colombo is therefore ninety-five times as densely crowded as the rest of the Island.

TABLE 4.—DENSITY OF THE POPULATION IN OTHER CITIES

City	Year	Density
London ... ..	1951 ...	28,979
Bombay ... ..	1951 ...	31,201
Colombo ... ..	1953 ...	30,694
New York ... ..	1950 ...	25,014
Montreal ... ..	1951 ...	20,268
Birmingham... ..	1951 ...	13,904
Liverpool ... ..	1951 ...	18,361

Nevertheless the growing population in the city is tending somewhat to overcrowd it. This is particularly borne out by the intercensal increases in the City which are generally higher than those for the Island. This may be compared with densities in cities in other parts of the world.

TABLE 5.—POPULATION, INTERCENSAL INCREASE, AND PERCENTAGE INCREASE FOR THE CITY OF COLOMBO AND THE ISLAND

Period	City of Colombo		Ceylon	
	Actual increase	Percentage increase	Actual increase	Percentage increase
1871 to 1881	14,654	15.3	359,358	15.0
1881 to 1891	16,323	14.8	248,051	9.0
1891 to 1901	27,866	22.0	558,165	18.6
1901 to 1911	56,583	36.6	540,396	15.2
1911 to 1921	32,839	15.6	392,255	9.6
1921 to 1931	39,992	16.4	808,266	18.0
1931 to 1946	77,919	27.4	1,350,468	25.4
1946 to 1953	63,807	17.6	1,441,298	21.6

The city population began to rise in effect only in 1881, prior to that the growth of the population was independent of any of the forces that generally draw people to the towns. Between 1881 and 1891 however the city population exceeded the Island's rate of growth by about 6 per cent. In the next decade the rate was 4 per cent above the Island rate, so that at the beginning of the century the rise of the city population had already manifested itself.

Between 1901 and 1911 the City rate of increase of population was more than double the Island rate. This was partly due to the widening of the City's boundaries to include two square miles more than before and partly the result of the increasing tempo of urbanization. Noteworthy is the fact that while the Island rate of increase was less than in the previous decade, the City rate was higher than for any period before or after it.

The extension of the city boundaries added 10,915 persons to the population, while deaths exceeded births by 17,102, so that the migration into the city would have amounted to 62,770 persons drawn no doubt by the rapid expansion of trade during the period.

In the next decade too deaths exceeded births. The excess was 12,859, but the inclusion of the new Wellawatta ward added 1,146 persons to the population. It would seem therefore that the influx of persons into the city during 1911 to 1921 was 44,602 persons.

The actual increase between 1921 and 1931 was 39,992 persons, but of this only 3,267 represented the natural increase or increase of births over deaths. The net influx into the city of 36,725 persons must have been accelerated greatly by urban development and trade.

It was only in the next intercensal period 1931 to 1946, that natural increase played a significant role in the growth of the urban population. Births were 183,775 and deaths 122,442 so that migration accounted for 16,586 persons out of the total intercensal increase of 77,919.

Between 1946 and 1953 the population rose by 63,807. Excess of births over deaths numbered 53,590 with the result that migration must have contributed only 10,217 persons to the population. The decline of the migrant element is a noteworthy feature of population growth in recent years. The city population is now 5.3 per cent of the Island's population. In 1871 it was just 4 per cent. The ratio remained identical in 1881, but rose to 4.2 in 1891 and 4.3 in 1901. It increased sharply in 1911 when it represented 5.2 per cent of the Island's population. This was about the time that the greatest addition to the City population took place. At the Censuses of 1921, 1931, and 1946, the ratio remained stationery at 5.4 per cent, perhaps indicative of the fact that urbanization had run its full course. This appears to be borne out by the ratio revealed at the 1953 census which showed that the city population had dropped to 5.3 per cent of that of the Island.

This may be compared with the ratios for some of the largest cities in other parts of the world.

Country	City	Year	Per cent in city
Egypt	Cairo	1939	8.2
Australia	Melbourne	1939	18.4
New Zealand	Wellington	1941	13.7
Japan	Tokyo	1935	8.5
India	Calcutta	1941	0.4
Great Britain	London	1931	20.5
Germany	Berlin	1939	6.3
France	Paris	1936	6.8
Sweden	Stockholm	1940	9.3
Greece	Athens	1937	7.0
Poland	Warsaw	1931	3.6
Argentina	Buenos Aires	1943	18.5
Chile	Santiago	1940	19.0
Cuba	Havana	1943	13.8
Venezuela	Caracas	1941	10.4
Panama	Panama	1940	17.7
Mexico	Mexico City	1940	7.4
Puerto Rico	San Juan	1940	9.0
Brazil	Rio de Janeiro	1940	3.8
Columbia	Bogota	1938	3.7
Guatemala	Guatemala	1940	5.0
United States	New York	1940	5.7
Canada	Montreal	1941	7.8

If this provides an index of urbanisation it would seem that Colombo today is comparable with the largest cities in Germany, France and the U. S. A.



CHAPTER IV

DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION

THE distribution of the population in the city reflects the social and economic conditions of its inhabitants. The city is divided into thirty-one wards for purposes of Municipal representation. They are not all equal in geographical area nor in size or quality of the population. While it is difficult to evaluate the latter, it may generally be said that the heavier the concentration, the poorer the quality. By quality be it noted, no more is implied than the possession of a certain level of literacy, certain levels of skills and adequate means of livelihood. The following table shows the distribution of the city population by wards.

TABLE 6.—AREA, DENSITY AND POPULATION BY WARDS OF THE CITY OF COLOMBO, 1953

Ward	Total area in acres		Population		Crude Density per acre	
	1953	1953	1953	1953	1953	1953
City of Colombo	8,711	...	425,881	...	48.9	...
Modera	465	...	14,798	...	31.8	...
Mutwal	270	...	15,574	...	57.7	...
Madampitiya	574	...	18,866	...	32.9	...
Kotahena East	153	...	11,380	...	74.4	...
Kotahena West	204	...	16,493	...	80.8	...
Kochchikade	65	...	12,105	...	186.2	...
St. Paul's	71	...	18,863	...	266.0	...
Grandpass	104	...	13,936	...	134.0	...
New Bazaar	115	...	10,497	...	91.3	...
Alutkade	88	...	15,534	...	176.5	...
San Sebastian	120	...	17,160	...	143.0	...
Pettah	145	...	10,592	...	73.0	...
Fort	242	...	4,537	...	18.7	...
Slave Island	250	...	11,020	...	44.1	...
Wekande	95	...	10,028	...	105.6	...
Hunupitiya	201	...	9,038	...	45.0	...
Maligawatta	305	...	10,274	...	33.7	...
Maradana	177	...	14,976	...	84.6	...
Suduwella	328	...	18,521	...	56.5	...
Maligakanda	85	...	15,958	...	187.7	...
Dematagoda	180	...	12,460	...	69.2	...
Kuppiawatta	178	...	11,572	...	65.0	...
Borella	390	...	17,394	...	44.6	...
Cinnamon Gardens	960	...	17,559	...	18.3	...
Timbirigasyaya	935	...	19,417	...	20.8	...
Kollupitiya	272	...	13,841	...	51.1	...
Bambalapitiya	400	...	12,187	...	30.5	...
Havelock Town	353	...	11,783	...	33.4	...
Wellawatta North	328	...	15,140	...	46.2	...
Wellawatta South	267	...	14,266	...	53.4	...
Kirillapone	391	...	10,112	...	25.9	...

The city itself is 8,711 acres in extent and the wards range from 960 acres in Cinnamon Gardens to 65 acres in Kochchikade. Population ranges from 19,417 in Timbirigasyaya to 4,537 in the Fort. Density per acre on the other hand is highest in St. Paul's and lowest in Cinnamon Gardens. Concentration is heaviest in the working class wards of St. Paul's, Alutkade, Kochchikade, Grandpass, San Sebastian and Maligakande. Less congested are Mutwal, Kotahena, Dematagoda and Kuppiyawatte wards, populated essentially by the middle classes. The comparatively low density in Modera and Maligawatte is partly explained by the large areas which comprise these wards. The Fort has a density of only 18.7 persons per acre, chiefly due to the fact that it is the centre of the City's commercial and financial enterprise and contains more business houses than residential ones. The comparatively affluent live in the Cinnamon Gardens, Timbirigasyaya, Havelock Town and Bambalapitiya wards as is evidenced by the low population concentrations in these areas. On the outer fringes of these, are Kollupitiya and Borella where the densities approximate closely to that of the average for the city.

The growing population of the city does not appear to move away from the densely populated areas. The following table shows the comparative densities at the Censuses of 1946 and 1953 and the increase of persons per acre for each of the wards of the city for the period.

TABLE 7.—DENSITY OF POPULATION PER ACRE, 1946 AND 1953

Ward	Density per acre		Density per acre		Increase in Density per acre
	1946	1953	1946	1953	
City of Colombo	...	43.5	...	48.9	5.4
Modera	...	25.6	...	31.8	6.2
Mutwal	...	50.5	...	57.7	7.2
Madampitiya	...	24.3	...	32.9	8.6
Kotahena East	...	65.0	...	74.4	9.4
Kotahena West	...	72.2	...	80.8	8.6
Kochchikade	...	174.4	...	186.2	11.8
St. Paul's	...	245.9	...	266.0	21.9
Grandpass	...	123.1	...	134.0	10.9
New Bazaar	...	77.1	...	91.3	14.2
Alutkade	...	155.1	...	176.5	21.4
San Sebastian	...	128.7	...	143.0	14.3
Pettah	...	69.5	...	73.0	3.5
Fort	...	9.1	...	18.7	9.6
Slave Island	...	40.2	...	44.1	3.9
Wekanda	...	96.5	...	105.6	9.1
Hunupitiya	...	44.6	...	45.0	0.4
Maligawatta	...	25.5	...	33.7	8.2
Maradana	...	75.7	...	84.6	8.9
Suduwella	...	50.4	...	56.5	6.1
Maligakanda	...	168.4	...	187.7	19.3
Dematagoda	...	61.0	...	69.2	8.2
Kuppiawatta	...	60.6	...	65.0	4.4
Borella	...	34.7	...	44.6	9.9
Cinnamon Gardens	...	17.4	...	18.3	0.9
Timbirigasyaya	...	16.6	...	20.8	4.2
Kollupitiya	...	44.5	...	51.1	6.6
Bambalapitiya	...	26.1	...	30.5	4.4
Havelock Town	...	29.7	...	33.4	3.7
Wellawatta North	...	39.1	...	46.2	6.1
Wellawatta South	...	46.3	...	53.4	7.1
Kirillapone	...	—	...	25.9	—

St. Paul's, Alutkade and Maligakanda show an increase of as much as 19 to 22 persons per acre and these are already the most crowded parts of the City. Kochchikade, New Bazaar, Grandpass, and San Sebastian now have between 10 to 14 persons extra per acre than seven years ago. An increase of between 7 and 10 persons is found in Mutwal, Madampitiya, Kotahena, Fort, Wekande, Maligawatte, Maradana, Dematagoda, Borella and Wellawatte. Some of these are commercial areas where the densities are by no means high. The smallest increases in the residential areas were confined to Cinnamon Gardens, Havelock Town, Timbirigasyaya and Bambalapitiya. The newly added sub-urban ward of Kirillapone had a density of only 26 persons per acre. The pressure of population in the densely populated parts, therefore remains one of the acute problems of the city.

CHAPTER V  
AGE, SEX AND FERTILITY

A notable feature of the city population is the marked preponderance of males over females. At the Census of 1953 the masculinity ratio in the city showed 1,546 males to every 1,000 females, which was the highest for any urban or rural centre in the Island.

This unusual preponderance of males is partly explained by the fact that the influx of males into the city drawn by the urban environment is far greater than the influx of females. This is borne out by the age distribution which is shown in the following table.

TABLE 8.—POPULATION OF COLOMBO, 1953, BY AGE GROUPS AND SEX

Age Group	Males		Females		Ratio of Males per 1,000 females
	1953		1953		
All Ages	258,635	...	167,246	...	1,546
0 to 4	24,217	...	22,976	...	1,054
5 to 9	22,598	...	22,035	...	1,026
10 to 14	19,930	...	18,164	...	1,097
15 to 19	21,589	...	15,156	...	1,424
20 to 24	35,080	...	16,611	...	2,112
25 to 29	32,848	...	15,729	...	2,088
30 to 34	23,866	...	11,203	...	2,130
35 to 39	21,284	...	11,524	...	1,847
40 to 44	15,935	...	7,745	...	2,057
45 to 49	14,379	...	7,311	...	1,967
50 to 54	10,452	...	5,911	...	1,768
55 to 59	6,494	...	3,955	...	1,642
60 to 64	3,992	...	3,040	...	1,313
65 and over	5,936	...	5,841	...	1,016

While the excess of males over females in the lower age groups is not very high, it becomes particularly marked as the adult age groups are reached. The differences are not significant between 0 to 4, 5 to 9 and 10 to 14, but wide divergences begin with the working age groups of 15 to 19. The divergences increase thereafter and reach a peak at age groups 30 to 34 and continue right to the age groups 55 to 59 indicating that the marked preponderance is restricted to the age groups covering the working span 15 to 59.

The triple age grouping devised by Sundborg the Swedish demographer shows an increase in the "child group" as also in the "grand parent group". The following table shows the percentage distribution of the city population classified according to the Sundborg grouping for the years 1946 and 1953.

TABLE 9.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE TRIPLE AGE GROUPING, CEYLON, 1946 AND 1953

	1946	1953
0 to 14	25·7	30·5
15 to 49	65·1	58·7
50 and over	9·2	10·8

The aging of the population is doubtless being effectively countered by greater numbers in the "child group", but both appear to increase at the expense of the working population between 15 and 49.

This can be seen in somewhat greater detail in the following table which shows the percentage distribution of the city population by sex and age groups for the years 1946 and 1953.

TABLE 10.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION BY SEX AND AGE GROUPS FOR COLOMBO CITY, 1946 AND 1953

Age Groups	Males		Females	
	1946	1953	1946	1953
All Ages	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
0 to 4	7·5	9·4	13·1	13·7
5 to 9	6·2	8·7	10·5	13·2
10 to 14	7·2	7·7	10·6	10·9
15 to 19	10·5	8·3	10·7	9·1
20 to 24	15·8	13·6	11·5	9·9
25 to 29	13·5	12·7	9·7	9·4
30 to 34	10·1	9·2	7·2	6·7
35 to 39	9·2	8·2	7·1	6·9
40 to 44	6·0	6·2	4·8	4·6
45 to 49	5·4	5·6	4·5	4·4
50 to 54	3·1	4·0	3·2	3·5
55 to 59	2·1	2·5	2·1	2·4
60 to 64	1·4	1·5	1·9	1·8
65 and over	2·0	2·3	3·1	3·5

The relative increase in the age groups 0 to 4, 5 to 9, and 10 to 14, for both males and females is particularly noteworthy. In the groups 15 to 19, 20 to 24, 25 to 29, 30 to 34, 35 to 39 there is a significant decline. There are no significant differences between 40 to 44 and 45 to 49, but in the older age groups there is a progressive increase. This is in marked contrast to the age structure of the Island as a whole where a decline in the child group and an increase in the grand parent group has been observed since 1911.

The increase in the lower age groups would mean a rapidly expanding city population and one of the causes of this is probably the reduction in mortality rates coupled with high birth rates. Recent trends show that migration is now becoming a less important factor than it used to be in the city and the size of the population is largely dependent on natural increase and the fertility pattern.

Birth registration in Ceylon particularly in the urban sector is of a fairly high order, averaging as much as 96·8 per cent in degree of completeness\*. Official Statistics can therefore be used with confidence in assessing fertility trends.

\* Post Enumeration Survey, 1953, page 18, Monograph No. 1, published by the Department of Census and Statistics.

The table below shows the population, number of births to persons normally resident in the town, and birth rates per 1,000 persons for Colombo city during the last seven years.

TABLE 11.—POPULATION, BIRTHS TO RESIDENTS AND BIRTH RATES FOR COLOMBO CITY, 1947 TO 1953

Year	Mid-Year Population*	Births	Birth rate per 1,000 persons
1947 ...	361,400 ...	11,216 ...	31·0
1948 ...	373,900 ...	12,301 ...	32·9
1949 ...	381,700 ...	13,305 ...	34·9
1950 ...	387,900 ...	13,304 ...	34·3
1951 ...	401,400 ...	13,194 ...	32·9
1952 ...	407,900 ...	13,211 ...	32·4
1953 ...	425,800 ...	14,884 ...	35·0

The figures reveal no marked trend in the birth rate. The birth rate in 1947 was 31·0 per 1,000 persons and is high compared to rates in other urban areas of the world. For all† urban areas in New Zealand it was 21·6 (1953). Comparative rates for other cities are as follows :

London‡	...	14·7 (1950)
Delhi§	...	30·6 (1948)
Bombay	...	33·9 (1948)
Madras	...	31·1 (1948)

The rate for Colombo increased still further in 1948 and 1949, then registered a slight decline in 1950 and 1951 but shot up again to a new peak in 1953 when the rate recorded was 35 per 1,000 persons.

On the other hand the death rates in the city reveal a steep decline over the years. The following table shows the population, number of deaths among persons normally resident in the town and death rates per 1,000 persons for Colombo City during the last ten years.

TABLE 12.—POPULATION, DEATHS AMONG RESIDENTS, AND DEATH RATES FOR COLOMBO CITY, 1944 TO 1953

Year	Mid-year Population	Deaths	Death rate per 1,000 persons
1944 ...	347,900 ...	6,140 ...	17·6
1945 ...	352,000 ...	6,121 ...	17·4
1946 ...	356,700 ...	5,625 ...	15·7
1947 ...	361,400 ...	5,062 ...	14·0
1948 ...	373,900 ...	4,910 ...	13·1
1949 ...	381,700 ...	5,021 ...	13·2
1950 ...	387,900 ...	5,117 ...	13·2
1951 ...	401,400 ...	5,149 ...	12·8
1952 ...	407,900 ...	4,522 ...	11·1
1953 ...	425,800 ...	4,207 ...	9·9

\* Registrar-General's official estimates.

† Source for New Zealand Statistics in this Section is from the monthly Bulletin of Statistics, Census and Statistics Department, Wellington, New Zealand.

‡ Source of United Kingdom Statistics in this Section is from the Registrar-General's Statistical Review for England and Wales.

§ Source for Indian Statistics in this Section is from the Statistical Abstract, India.



Colombo City in 1953 had a death rate of only 9.9 per 1,000 persons, the lowest so far recorded. It is interesting to compare this with rates in other cities of the world, including areas where health standards are recognized as being very high.

TABLE 13.—DEATH RATE—SELECTED URBAN AREAS

Colombo	...	...	1953	...	9.9
New Zealand—All Urban areas	...	...	1953	...	9.7
London	...	...	1950	...	10.4
Bombay	...	...	1948	...	21.9
Madras	...	...	1948	...	14.6
Delhi	...	...	1948	...	11.5

The significant lowering of the death rate in the city is indicative of the high public health and sanitation facilities provided by the premier local authority in Ceylon.

Among the major causes of death in the City were diseases associated with the heart. Heart disease was responsible for the largest number of deaths and others in order of importance were pneumonia, gastritis and enteritis, and tuberculosis.

The following table compares the birth, death and infant mortality rates for the residents of the City, all urban areas, and Ceylon.

TABLE 14.—BIRTH, DEATH AND INFANT MORTALITY RATES FOR RESIDENTS OF COLOMBO CITY, ALL URBAN AREAS, AND CEYLON FROM 1947 TO 1953

Year	Birth rate per 1,000 persons			Death rate per 1,000 persons			Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births		
	Residents Colombo city	Residents All Urban areas	Ceylon	Residents Colombo city	Residents All Urban areas	Ceylon	Residents Colombo City	Residents All Urban areas	Ceylon
1947	31.0	32.0	39.4	14.0	13.3	14.3	129	122	101
1948	32.9	32.5	40.6	13.1	12.1	13.2	117	105	92
1949	34.9	32.0	39.9	13.2	11.8	12.6	115	103	87
1950	34.3	39.5	40.4	13.2	14.6	12.6	112	97	82
1951	32.9	38.8	40.5	12.8	14.3	12.9	100	93	82
1952	32.4	37.7	39.5	11.1	13.0	12.0	85	85	78
1953	35.0	38.0	39.4	9.9	11.6	10.9	72	77	71

The birth rate follows the general pattern of being lower in the City than elsewhere. It is uniformly lower during this period in the City than in Ceylon and only in the years 1948 and 1949 is there an increase in the Colombo City rate over that of all urban areas taken together.

The death rate shows a declining trend in the City and in Ceylon. In the case of all urban areas the years 1950 and 1951 have registered a comparatively high mortality, but the rate appears to decline thereafter.

The infant mortality rates on the other hand are not very heartening, for although a very definite improvement has been registered over the past 7 years, the rate nevertheless is very much higher than in other selected urban areas as can be seen from the table below. The chief cause of infant deaths was immaturity.

TABLE 15.—INFANT MORTALITY RATES PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS FOR SELECTED URBAN AREAS

Colombo	...	...	1953	...	72
New Zealand—All urban areas	...	...	1953	...	22.5
London	...	...	1953	...	23

As the growth of the City population no longer depends on the net migration into the City, some idea of its future trend can be obtained from a study of fertility statistics. The simplest measure of fertility is the general fertility ratio also known as the child-woman ratio. It is the ratio of children aged 0-4 to women in the reproductive age group between 15 to 44 years. The general fertility ratio for the last three census years is given in the table below, and shows the increasing trend over the years.

TABLE 16.—GENERAL FERTILITY RATIO PER 1,000 WOMEN 15 TO 44, AND PER 1,000 MARRIED WOMEN 15 TO 44 FOR THE CENSUS YEARS, 1931 TO 1953—COLOMBO CITY

Year				Children 0 to 4				Children 0 to 4
				per 1,000 women				per 1,000 married
				15 to 44				women 15 to 44
1931	...	...	...	434	...	...	...	638
1946	...	...	...	510	...	...	...	745
1953	...	...	...	605	...	...	...	911

A more refined measure has been added by giving the ratio per 1,000 married women and this too shows the same increasing tendency. The figures may be compared with the same ratio for some cities in India\* and the United States.

Bombay	...	...	1941	...	468	(children 0 to 4 per 1,000 married women 15 to 39)
Calcutta	...	...	1941	...	531	(children 0 to 4 per 1,000 married women 15 to 39)
U. S. A. (three largest cities)	...	...	1941	...	271	

It is noteworthy that even allowing for the different age grouping used, the fertility rates for the City of Colombo are comparatively high. For the Island as a whole the general fertility has been on the decline since 1881, though an increase has been registered in 1953. In 1881 it was 858, 834 in 1891, 816 in 1901, 686 in 1911, 647 in 1921, 594 in 1946 and 668 in 1953. On the other hand in the City itself, the trend has been towards higher fertility.

Differential fertility by race provides some interesting comparisons. The following table shows the general fertility ratio for the City by race for the different Census years 1931, 1946 and 1953.

TABLE 17.—GENERAL FERTILITY RATIO PER 1,000 WOMEN 15 TO 44 SHOWING RACE DIFFERENTIALS FOR THE CENSUS YEARS, 1931, 1946, 1953—COLOMBO CITY

Year	All races	Low									
		Country Sinhalese	Kandyan Sinhalese	Ceylon Tamils	Indian Tamils	Ceylon Moors	Indian Moors	Burghers	Europeans	Malays	Others
1931	... 434	... 393	... 246	... 525	... 421	... 536	... 470	... 448	... 277	... 610	... 749
1946	... 510	... 467	... 259	... 602	... 501	... 644	... 583	... 519	... 181	... 643	... 807
1953	... 605	... 533	... 240	... 740	... 663	... 795	... 658	... 471	... 371	... 777	... 832

If the miscellaneous group designated "others" is excluded it will be seen that in 1953 as in 1946 the Ceylon Moors had the highest fertility rate. Both the Ceylon Tamils and the Indian Tamils have considerably increased their fertility ratios since 1946, while those for Burghers and the Kandyan Sinhalese have declined. These ratios partly reflect the racial distribution and partly the marital habits of the various races in the City.

\* *Vide* Kingsley Davis. The population of India and Pakistan, page 70. Though Davis uses the age group 15-39, he asserts that "tests have been run . . . and the results are much the same regardless of whether age 39 or 49 is taken as the upper limit".

CHAPTER VI

RACE

IT has been said that Colombo has "in a sense been forced upon the Sinhalese in spite of themselves" and that it "was never a city of their own choice or making". Yet the Sinhalese both Low-Country and Kandyan together comprise 47·3 per cent of the population of the city. Ceylon Tamils form 12·6 per cent and Ceylon Moors 13·5. Indian Tamils are 11·8 per cent and Indian Moors 4·2. Burghers and Eurasians constitute 4 per cent, Malays 2·7 and the European element is no more than 0·7 per cent.

The racial distribution in the city has considerably altered in the last generation. The following table shows the percentage distribution of the various races in Colombo Town from 1921 to 1953.

TABLE 18.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE VARIOUS RACES IN COLOMBO CITY, 1921 TO 1953

Race	1921	1931	1946	1953
All Races	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Low Country Sinhalese	45·2	43·0	44·3	44·6
Kandyan Sinhalese	1·7	2·0	2·4	2·7
Ceylon Tamils	6·0	6·7	9·8	12·6
Indian Tamils	16·2	16·4	12·5	11·8
Ceylon Moors	10·4	10·3	12·4	13·5
Indian Moors	5·8	5·2	4·4	4·2
Burghers and Eurasians	6·1	5·6	4·8	4·0
Europeans	1·2	1·2	0·7	0·7
Malays	2·4	2·5	3·0	2·7
Others	5·0	7·1	5·7	3·1

The Low Country Sinhalese have not shown any tendency to increase, while the Kandyan Sinhalese appear to be growing in numbers. The proportionate strength of the Ceylon Tamils has nearly doubled itself over the last twenty years. The proportion of Ceylon Moors too has increased considerably. On the other hand the proportion of Indian Tamils and Indian Moors has fallen off, the decline being particularly noteworthy in the case of Indian Tamils. Burghers, Eurasians and Europeans have also declined in proportionate strength.

The increased proportion of Ceylon Tamils and Ceylon Moors would seem to indicate a larger influx of these races into the city and in the case of Ceylon Moors greater fertility as well\*. It is also possible that considerable numbers of Indian Tamils and Indian Moors are calling themselves Ceylon Tamils and Ceylon Moors. The smaller proportion of Europeans is not altogether unexpected, while the relative decline of the Burghers and Eurasians would seem to indicate that greater numbers of them are being absorbed by the older races in Ceylon.

\* *Vide* page 32.

The distribution of the population by race for the various Census Years is given in the following table.

TABLE 19.—DISTRIBUTION OF THE VARIOUS RACES—COLOMBO CITY, 1881 TO 1953

Race	Year							
	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1946	1953
All Races	110,502	126,825	154,691	211,274	244,163	284,155	362,074	425,881
Low Country Sinhalese	46,869	59,962	67,207	91,590	110,470	122,278	160,307	189,960
Kandyan Sinhalese	—	—	1,383	2,495	4,130	5,649	8,682	11,676
Ceylon Tamils	25,604	24,372	34,640	15,252	14,593	19,202	33,622	53,684
Indian Tamils	—	—	—	36,717	39,560	46,502	45,267	50,147
Ceylon Moors	23,583	24,428	28,898	24,481	25,417	29,301	44,800	57,527
Indian Moors	—	—	—	13,688	14,275	14,939	16,078	18,051
Burghers and Eurasians	8,770	10,674	11,851	13,485	14,863	15,887	17,412	17,145
Europeans	1,186	1,228	2,039	2,752	2,836	3,340	2,457	2,964
Malays	2,944	3,437	4,493	5,364	5,852	7,022	10,802	11,488
Others	1,546	2,724	4,180	5,450	12,167	20,035	20,647	13,247

No distinction was made between Low Country Sinhalese and Kandyan Sinhalese prior to 1901, and for the same reason statistics of Indian Tamils and Indian Moors are shown only from the Census Year 1911.

The distribution of races in the city deviates slightly from the Island pattern. The following table shows the comparative distribution for the Island and for the City.

TABLE 20.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION FOR COLOMBO CITY AND CEYLON, 1953

Race	Colombo Town	Ceylon
All Races	100·0	100·0
Low-country Sinhalese	44·6	44·0
Kandyan Sinhalese	2·7	3·1
Ceylon Tamils	12·6	13·0
Indian Tamils	11·8	16·6
Ceylon Moors	13·5	13·9
Indian Moors	4·2	0·5
Burghers and Eurasians	4·0	3·9
Europeans	0·7	0·6
Malays	2·7	2·9
Others	3·1	1·5

The deviations are most marked in the case of Indian Tamils, Indian Moors, and "Others". "Others" include Malayalees, Chetties, Afghans, Arabs and Chinese, &c., and their concentration is heavier in Colombo Town than elsewhere, Indian Tamils are found in greater proportions in the Island than in the City, while Indian Moors show greater proportionate strength in the City than in the Island. However Indian Tamils and Indian Moors taken together constitute about the same ratio in the city as in the Island.

## CHAPTER VII

### RELIGION

**T**HE City is unique in that the four great value systems of the world—Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam or the Muslim religion count among its citizens a significant number of adherents. In the Island the Buddhists, mainly Sinhalese comprise a little less than two-thirds of the population ; Hindus, mainly Tamil, a fifth ; while Christians and Muslims nine and eight per cent respectively. In the City Buddhists are under represented as compared to the Island, forming only 40 per cent of its population ; Christians 22 per cent, Hindus 17 per cent, and Muslims 21 per cent, which latter group is more numerous in the City than elsewhere.

Ceylon's connections with the Buddha go back to the time of the Buddha himself, but the actual introduction of Buddhism to the Island took place about 240 years before the beginning of the Christian era, when Arahat Mahinda, the son of Emperor Asoka of India, came to the Island.

Buddhism has influenced the lives and thoughts of men and women for twenty-five centuries and surpasses " in the number of its followers and the area of its prevalence any other form of creed ".

Christianity is numerically the second most important religion in the City, although it comes third in order of magnitude in the Island. According to tradition Christianity is said to have been first preached in Ceylon in the 6th Century A.D. during the time of Emperor Justinian. However the first historical evidence of the existence of this religion dates back to the coming of the Portuguese in the 16th Century. The Portuguese brought with them a number of missionaries, chief among them being St. Francis Xavier, and the predominance of Catholicism among the Christians in Ceylon to-day is due to the great zeal and tireless efforts of these missionaries.

Nearly all the Ceylon Moors and Malays are adherents of Islam or the Muslim religion. There are two sects in this religion, the Sunni and the Shia, the latter of which is represented to a very small extent since it is the faith of some of the Indian Moors only. The Muslim religion has the third largest number of adherents in the City though in the Island it holds fourth place.

Hinduism comes fourth in order of magnitude in the City though it ranks next to Buddhism amongst the Island's religions. The two religions are closely inter-related and have many doctrines and observances in common. This is probably due to the fact that Hinduism is a very comprehensive and elastic religion and it covers a variety of religious beliefs and philosophy. It is a religion notable for its absence of dogma, and its fundamental concept is expressed in the Hindu Scriptures in the words " However men approach me, even so do I accept them, for the path men take from every side is mine". \*

\* Baghavat Gita iv. 10

The following table gives the numerical and percentage distribution of the various religions in the City in 1946 and 1953. The group designated as "other religion" includes Zoroastrians, Free Thinkers, Agnostics and Others.

TABLE 21.—NUMERICAL AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE VARIOUS RELIGIONS IN COLOMBO CITY, 1946 AND 1953

	<i>Persons</i>		<i>Percentage</i>	
	1946	1953	1946	1953
All religions ...	362,074	425,881	100·0	100·0
Buddhists ...	139,536	166,684	38·5	39·2
Hindus ...	65,469	73,860	18·1	17·3
Muslims ...	74,326	89,997	20·5	21·1
Christians ...	82,223	94,415	22·7	22·2
Others ...	520	925	0·2	0·2

The pattern of religious distribution in the City follows somewhat the pattern of racial distribution. The Sinhalese are mainly Buddhists, but in the City itself, a not insignificant number are adherents of Christianity. Similarly Christianity claims a number of Ceylon Tamils though like the Indian Tamils they are mainly Hindus by religion. It is noteworthy that the Christian element is more dominant in the city than elsewhere, though Buddhists are twice their number. The Moors—Ceylon and Indian—and Malays are almost exclusively adherents of Islam. The comparatively large numbers of Muslims in the City corresponds to the preponderance of Moors and Malays, whose presence here is due to their wide trading and business interests which are necessarily centered in the capital city of Ceylon.

CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATION AND LITERACY

THE scheme of free education was introduced in October, 1945, on the recommendations of the Special Committee on Education. Most of the denominational schools too elected to join the scheme according to which education was to be made free from the Kindergarten to the University. The resulting educational progress made by the country is indicated by the literacy pattern as revealed by the 1953 Census.

The following table shows the number and percentage of the population in the City, five years of age and over, subdivided into literate and illiterate.

TABLE 22.—LITERACY OF THE POPULATION FIVE YEARS OF AGE AND OVER FOR COLOMBO CITY

<i>Literacy and Sex</i>				1946		1953	
				<i>Number</i>	<i>Per Cent.</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per Cent.</i>
Population 5 years of age and over	T	327,594	100.0	378,688	100.0		
	M	212,368	100.0	234,418	100.0		
	F	115,226	100.0	144,270	100.0		
Read and Write	T	240,527	73.4	300,199	79.3		
	M	170,430	80.2	200,082	85.4		
	F	70,097	60.8	100,117	69.4		
Illiterate	T	87,067	26.6	78,489	20.7		
	M	41,938	19.8	34,336	14.6		
	F	45,129	39.2	44,153	30.6		

Literacy has increased between 1946 and 1953 from 73.4 to 79.3 per cent. Literacy among males from 80.2 to 85.4 per cent and among females from 60.8 to 69.4. These figures indicate marked improvement, though it must be remembered that the largest number of schools are to be found in Colombo. Colombo's high standard of literacy is therefore not altogether surprising.

However, this standard of literacy must be viewed against the test adopted by the Census authorities, which was not particularly high consisting as it did of mere ability to read a simple letter in the language concerned and write a short reply to it. It is, however, interesting to find out how many people were able to reach a standard of education which might be regarded as affecting the quality of the population. A rough indication is furnished by the number of children who attend the various schools. In 1953 the number amounted to 62,948\* girls and boys or 76.1 per cent of the City population between 5 to 14 years.

The spread of literacy and the growth of educational facilities tend to have the most far reaching effects on the quality of the population. The City dweller is fortunate in that free education from the Kindergarten to the University is readily available to him, with the result that there is greater equality of opportunity in the city than elsewhere.

\* 61,612 children aged 5 to 14 attended schools, and 1,336 attended private tutories.

CHAPTER IX

BIRTHPLACE AND LENGTH OF RESIDENCE

NOT all the people residing in the City were born in Ceylon. At the Census of 1946 it was found that 20 per cent of the City population was born outside Ceylon. Even though the foreign born population came down to 17 per cent in 1953, the actual number of such persons was 73,218 in that year.

The following tables shows the number and percentage of the Ceylon born and foreign born population in the City for 1946 and 1953.

TABLE 23.—CEYLON BORN AND FOREIGN BORN POPULATION IN THE CITY

Year	Total Population	Born in Ceylon		Born outside Ceylon	
		Number	Per Cent.	Number	Per Cent.
1946	... 362,074 ...	289,662	80·0	72,412	20·0
1953	... 425,881 ...	352,663	82·8	73,218	17·2

The table shows that while the foreign born population in the City is relatively declining, the decline is not sharp enough to change the character and composition of the city population. Noteworthy is the fact that the foreign born element has increased by a little less than a thousand over the last seven years. Most of these immigrants are adults and they are mainly engaged in the city's commerce and trade. Their relative strength in the city as shown at the 1946 Census was greater than in any district (excluding Colombo District) in the Island and in fact only Kandy District had a foreign born population greater than Colombo Town. Yet in Kandy they comprised only a tenth of the population while in Colombo city they formed a fifth of the population.

The relative proportion of the foreign born population to the Island population had been on the decline since 1901 when the migrant flow into Ceylon was at its peak. In 1891 the foreign born represented 8·9 per cent of the population of Ceylon. Ten years later it increased to 12·4. In 1911 it fell to 11·6 and in 1921 to 10·4. In 1946 only 5·6 per cent of the Island's population was foreign born, but in that year the strength in the city was as high as 20 per cent. In the City itself therefore the foreign born constitute an important element of the population.

About a third of the foreign born population in the city have been resident in Ceylon between five and ten years. About a seventh have been here for less than five years, and twice that number between eleven and twenty years. Roughly 25 per cent have been in Ceylon for more than twenty years. The following table shows the foreign born population in the City by length of residence in Ceylon for the Census years 1946 and 1953.



TABLE 24.—FOREIGN BORN POPULATION IN THE CITY BY LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN CEYLON,  
1946 AND 1953

<i>Length of Residence</i>	<i>Population per 1,000</i>	
	1946	1953
Under 5 years	307	143
5 to 10 "	214	347
10 to 20 "	276	262
11 to 30 "	132	157
21 to 40 "	54	65
41 to 50 "	14	19
51 to 60 "	3	5
60 years and over	0	1

The countries of nativity of the foreign born city population are mainly India, the British Isles, Malaya, and Continental Europe. Among the less numerous but no less significant are the migrants from Australia and China.

The Ceylon born population in 1946 in the city numbered 289,662 or 80 per cent of the population. Not all of them however were born in the city, only 170,280 or 47 per cent constituted the city born population. The Census also revealed that the percentage of persons who were born in the town of Colombo and were found resident in it was 69·8 indicating that about 30 persons in every 100 born in Colombo tended to move away from the city. As many as 119,382 persons or 33 per cent of persons in the city were born outside the city. On the other hand 76,647 persons born in the city were not resident in it at the time of the Census. This provides a measure of internal migration to and from the city. The net inflow is of course considerably greater than the net outflow.

CHAPTER X

HOUSING

ESTIMATES made by the Central Bank of Ceylon\* show that on the basis of a separate house for every family in the Island, there should be a house for every 4·84 persons. Yet in the city† only 37 per cent of the population comprised 4 to 6 person households. Twenty per cent were 2 to 3 person households while 23 per cent were 7 to 9 person households. Households with over 10 persons, comprised 14 per cent of the city population.

Only 12 per cent of the houses were owned by the occupants. Five per cent of the city population lived in rent free quarters, while 83 per cent lived in rented premises.

In contrast are the figures for the urban sector and the rural sector of Ceylon.

TABLE 25.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DWELLINGS CLASSIFIED BY TENURE FOR THE CITY AND URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, 1946

Tenure	City	All Urban Areas	Rural Areas (excluding Estates)
Owned	11·9	30·4	73·8
Free of rent	4·9	8·9	16·8
Rented (unfurnished)	83·0	60·6	9·4
Rented (furnished)	0·2	0·1	—

City houses were therefore predominantly rented houses. Furnished houses which were rented comprised only 0·2 per cent of the city houses and they relate mainly to flats occupied by the foreign born population in the city. Noteworthy is the fact that while in the village practically 90 per cent were owned or occupied free of rent by the occupants, only 16 per cent in the city came within this category. Housing is therefore essentially a city problem.

About a third of the city houses were rented at less than Rs. 10 a month, while a little less than that number were rented at between Rs. 10 and Rs. 20. Only two-fifths of the city population thus lived in houses exceeding a rental of Rs. 20 a month.

The following table shows the percentage distribution of unfurnished houses according to rentals.

TABLE 26.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF UNFURNISHED DWELLINGS CLASSIFIED BY RENTALS PAID, FOR THE CITY AND URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, 1946

Monthly Rent	City	All Urban Areas	Rural Areas (excluding Estates)
Under Rs. 10	39	48	69
Rs. 10 to Rs. 20	34	28	19
Rs. 20 to Rs. 30	10	10	7
Rs. 30 to Rs. 40	5	5	2
Rs. 40 to Rs. 50	4	3	1
Rs. 50 to Rs. 60	2	2	1
Rs. 60 to Rs. 70	1	1	‡
Rs. 70 to Rs. 80	1	1	‡
Rs. 80 and over	4	2	‡

\* Report of the Housing Sub-Committee, page 9.

† According to the Census of Ceylon, 1946.

‡ Less than 1 per cent.

One room houses formed a third of the houses in Colombo. Another third had two rooms each. Over-crowding is therefore an acute problem, as 80 per cent of the houses in the city had between only one and three rooms each. The Central Bank of Ceylon estimates that the back log of houses in mid 1952 at 4.84 persons per house was 39,796 of which 27,856 were working class houses. This is a measure of the extent of over-crowding in the city. However this is not a problem peculiar to Colombo, for over crowding in urban areas is a problem the world over, caused by the trend to migrate to the cities. Housing expert, Charles Abrams,\* declares that over crowding in Bombay, is so great that tenements on an average house more than seven persons per room, while in Panama city as many as 20 persons occupy a single room of about 15 by 15 feet sleeping in relays.

The following tables shows the distribution of dwellings classified by the number of rooms for urban and Rural Areas, Ceylon, 1946.

TABLE 27.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DWELLINGS CLASSIFIED BY THE NUMBER OF ROOMS FOR THE CITY AND URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, 1946

Number of Rooms			City	Urban Areas	Rural Areas (excluding Estates)
1	...	...	33.1	35.1	38.6
2	...	...	35.4	32.0	35.7
3	...	...	13.8	15.2	16.1
4	...	...	7.0	7.5	5.5
5	...	...	4.0	4.1	2.0
6 to 7	...	...	3.8	3.8	1.2
8 to 9	...	...	1.7	1.3	0.3
10 to 11	...	...	0.7	0.5	0.3
12 to 13	...	...	0.2	0.2	0.1
14 to 15	...	...	0.1	0.1	—
16 and over	...	...	0.2	0.2	0.2

Rooms do not include bath rooms, closets, pantries, basements, stables, stalls, store rooms, garages, &c. but only rooms which are "finished off for living purposes at all times".

City houses are mainly of brick and tile, 91 per cent of them had tiled roofs and 79 per cent brick walls at the 1946 Census. This is not true of urban housing as a whole, as only 60 per cent of the houses in urban Ceylon had tiled roofs and only 48 per cent had brick walls. The following tables show the percentage distribution of dwellings according to material of roof and material of outer walls.

TABLE 28.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DWELLINGS CLASSIFIED BY PRINCIPAL MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION OF WALLS FOR THE CITY AND URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, 1946

Material of Wall			City	Urban Areas	Rural Areas (excluding Estates)
Cadjan	...	...	0.5	5.6	5.5
Mud	...	...	11.5	29.1	71.0
Wood	...	...	0.9	1.6	1.0
Zinc	...	...	1.3	0.9	0.1
Stone	...	...	3.4	10.8	12.7
Brick	...	...	79.3	48.7	8.2
Concrete	...	...	1.2	1.4	1.1
Other	...	...	1.9	1.9	0.4

\* Charles Abrams in "Urban Land Problems and Policies", published by the Housing and Town and Country planning section of the United Nations, 1954.

TABLE 29.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DWELLINGS ACCORDING TO THE MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION OF ROOF FOR THE CITY AND URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, 1946

<i>Material of Roof</i>			<i>City</i>	<i>Urban Areas</i>	<i>Rural Areas (excluding Estates)</i>
Thatch	...	...	3.1	26.1	68.6
Tile	...	...	91.4	67.3	22.9
Zinc	...	...	4.1	5.1	7.8
Asbestos	...	...	0.3	0.4	0.3
Shingle	...	...	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other	...	...	1.0	1.0	0.9

Mud houses are not unknown in the city—they contributed nearly 12 per cent of the houses in the city in 1946. In Urban Ceylon they comprised a third of the houses while in Rural Areas they were the predominant type. Thatch roofs however were unusual in the city unlike in rural Ceylon where 68 per cent of the houses had thatched roofs.

## CHAPTER XI

### ASPECTS OF FAMILY LIVING

THIS chapter is based on a survey of family living carried out by the Department of Census and Statistics in 1949 to 1950. The first survey of the city was attempted in 1939. The work was carried out by the then Statistical Assistant of the Department of Labour, Industry and Commerce, Mr. K. Williams. His inquiry was confined to the working class of the City of Colombo, from whom he selected on the random principle 351 families. Their family expenditure budgets were carefully recorded and averaged to produce the typical family budget of the working class of the city of Colombo. On the basis of this budget an index number, known as the index number of the working class of the city of Colombo was compiled and was regularly computed till 1953 when a new series of index numbers was introduced as a result of a new family budget survey.

The urban survey of 1939 was confined to the City of Colombo. In 1949 to 1950, the Department of Census and Statistics carried out a new survey of the working class. This included not only Colombo but also all the other urban areas of the Island, comprising seven Municipal councils and thirty-five urban councils. The principle of random sampling was adopted in the selection of the households whose budgets were investigated. The census lists were used in demarcating areas of each town where there was a concentration of people with predominantly working class occupations, occupation not income being the chief criterion.

This survey was undertaken for the express purpose of introducing a new index number based on the consumption habits of the working class people. The results of this survey which have not yet been published are nevertheless extremely interesting since the survey deals with the whole urban population of Ceylon, a sector on which very little information is as yet available.

In all 1,505 families, were covered by the survey, and of this number 455 belonged to Colombo Town. The families sampled were those of manual labourers, but such families comprised about 90 per cent of the city's population\*. This chapter is based on an analysis of the statistics of these 455 families in Colombo Town and may therefore be regarded as representative of 90 per cent of the city's population.

The average family in the City of Colombo consisted of 5·79 persons and it approximates closely the average family for Urban Ceylon. The family unit had an average income of Rs. 149·94 which represented the earnings of 1·6 earners, each of whose incomes averaged Rs. 94·30. The urban † family unit on the other hand had an income of Rs. 138·16 and an income per earner of Rs. 87·44.

\* Vide a New Consumers' Price Index. Sessional Paper VI—1953, page 4.

† Urban unit refers to all the urban areas of the Island taken together, while city unit relates solely to Colombo.

The figures are significant in that they emphasize the low level of incomes even in the premier city of Ceylon and that after all they are not much higher than those prevailing in the other urban centres of Ceylon. The following table summarises the family characteristics for Colombo city and urban Ceylon.

TABLE 30.—FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

<i>Description</i>	<i>Colombo City</i>		<i>Urban Ceylon</i>	
	<i>Rs.</i>	<i>c.</i>	<i>Rs.</i>	<i>c.</i>
Average size of family	5	79	5	80
Average number of earners	1	59	1	58
Average number of dependents per family earner	2	64	2	67
Average income per family	149	94	138	16
Average monthly income per earner	94	30	87	44

The family income did not consist solely of salaries and wages. In fact as much as 29 per cent came from other sources which included income from property, rent of house owned and occupied, or assessed rent of house occupied free of rent, &c. For the Urban Ceylon family unit, income from other sources was 24 per cent which would seem to indicate that the Colombo city family was slightly less dependent on salaries and wages than other urban family units.

Sixty-nine per cent of the family income constituted the earnings of the head of the family. Twenty-one per cent represented other family earnings, while all other incomes totalled only 10 per cent. The following table shows the sources of income per family for Colombo City and Urban Ceylon.

TABLE 31.—SOURCES OF FAMILY INCOME

<i>Description</i>	<i>Colombo City</i>		<i>Urban Ceylon</i>	
	<i>Rs.</i>	<i>c.</i>	<i>Rs.</i>	<i>c.</i>
Total monthly income per family	149	94	138	16
Income from salaries and wages, &c.	107	18	104	89
Salaries and wages, &c. as percentage of total income	71	5	75	9
Other family income	42	76	33	27
Other family income as percentage of total income	28	5	24	1

Family income in the city was somewhat higher than in other urban areas. Salaries and wages in the city were only 71 per cent of the total family income, while in Urban Ceylon it was as much as 76 per cent of the family income.

Somewhat less than a quarter of the families earned less than Rs. 100 a month, a little over a third less than Rs. 120 while a little over one half earned less than Rs. 140. In the case of the urban

families as much as three-fifths earned less than Rs. 140 a month while nearly a third earned less than Rs. 100. The following table shows the distribution of families according to income groups.

TABLE 32.—DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY INCOME GROUPS

Income	Colombo City		Urban Ceylon	
	Number	Per Cent.	Number	Per Cent.
All incomes ...	455	100·0	1,505	100·0
Under Rs. 60 ...	7	1·5	37	2·4
Rs. 60 to 80 ...	39	8·6	160	10·6
Rs. 80 to 100 ...	60	13·2	240	15·9
Rs. 100 to 120 ...	66	14·5	231	15·5
Rs. 120 to 140 ...	66	14·5	227	15·1
Rs. 140 to 160 ...	55	12·1	175	11·6
Rs. 160 to 180 ...	35	7·7	116	7·7
Rs. 180 to 200 ...	35	7·7	100	6·6
Rs. 200 to 220 ...	32	7·0	80	5·3
Rs. 220 to 260 ...	28	6·2	63	4·2
Rs. 260 to 300 ...	15	3·3	40	2·7
Rs. 300 and over...	17	3·7	36	2·4

It is noteworthy that while the average income per family was Rs. 149·94 the median income was Rs. 136·82. The median family income is the income of the family which is in the middle of an array of all the families arranged in ascending order of magnitude (incomes). There were thus as many families with incomes higher than the median family income as there were with incomes lower than the median family income. The urban median family income was Rs. 127·44.

Average family expenditure\* in the city totalled Rs. 184·16 a month, though the average for all the urban areas was only Rs. 168·15. The median family expenditure was Rs. 178·50 and Rs. 159·43 a month respectively.

Slightly over a tenth of the families spent less than Rs. 120 a month. A little over a third less than Rs. 160 a month, while over half spent under Rs. 180 a month. Over three-quarters of the families had monthly expenditures which did not exceed Rs. 220.

The following table shows the distribution of families by expenditure.

TABLE 33.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILIES BY EXPENDITURE GROUPS

Expenditure	Colombo Town	Urban Ceylon
Under Rs. 100 ...	5·3	11·7
Rs. 100 to 140 ...	17·8	23·7
Rs. 140 to 180 ...	27·9	28·6
Rs. 180 to 220 ...	21·5	17·7
Rs. 220 to 260 ...	10·8	8·4
Rs. 260 to 300 ...	6·8	4·9
Rs. 300 and over ...	9·9	5·0
Total	100·0	100·0

Expenditure per family unit was Rs. 184·16 or nearly 123 per cent of the average family income in the city. Expenditure exceeded income by as much as Rs. 34·22 while the comparable deficit for all urban areas taken together was only Rs. 29·99. Yet average expenditure as a ratio to average family income did not vary significantly, the figure being 122 per cent. Ninety-one per cent or 412 out of the 455 families had deficit budgets and only 9 per cent or 43 had excess budgets. When

\* Vide Appendix I.

savings were excluded from the family budget the number of families having deficit budgets fell to 395 or 87 per cent. The following table shows the distribution of families having deficit and excess budgets and the extents of such deficits or excesses.

TABLE 34.—EXTENT OF DEFICIT AND EXCESS INCOMES—COLOMBO CITY FAMILIES

Extent of deficit or excess in Rupees	Including Savings		Excluding Savings	
	Number of families with deficit	Number of families with excess	Number of families with deficit	Number of families with excess
All extents	412	43	395	60
0 to 10	35	18	44	22
10 to 20	38	11	43	12
20 to 30	50	6	44	8
30 to 40	43	3	41	7
40 to 50	44	1	44	3
50 to 60	28	—	23	3
60 to 70	30	2	36	2
70 to 80	28	—	25	—
80 to 90	24	1	28	2
90 to 100	26	1	17	1
100 to 110	13	—	9	—
110 to 120	14	—	12	—
120 to 130	9	—	4	—
130 to 140	6	—	4	—
140 to 150	3	—	7	—
150 to 200	16	—	12	—
200 and over	5	—	2	—

So that even without any savings being accumulated only 60, or thirteen out of every hundred families were able to balance their budgets. But the excess of income over expenditure even among them was relatively small—for a third of them it was not more than Rs. 10 a month, while for two-thirds of them it was under Rs. 30.

About a tenth of the families had deficits under Rs. 10. An equal number of families had deficits between Rs. 10 and Rs. 20 ; Rs. 20 and Rs. 30 ; Rs. 30 and Rs. 40 ; and Rs. 40 and Rs. 50. About half of the families therefore had deficits exceeding Rs. 100 a month, which is indicative of the conditions of life and labour in the city.

A measure of the indebtedness of the city population is also provided by the statistics of pawn broking and money lending collected at the Census of Financial Institutions 1952\*. The following table shows the principal statistics of pawn broking and money lending for Colombo Town and for the Island.

TABLE 35.—PAWN BROKING AND MONEY LENDING COMPARED FOR THE CITY OF COLOMBO AND CEYLON, 1951

	Colombo Town	Ceylon
<i>Pawn Broking and Money Lending—</i>		
Number of establishments	188	966
<i>Pawn Broking—</i>	<i>Rs.</i>	<i>Rs.</i>
Advances made	12,635,241	47,173,074
Advances outstanding	5,984,671	21,214,750
Interest earned	838,171	4,875,063
<i>Money Lending—</i>		
Advances made	22,237,756	43,126,635
Advances outstanding	12,087,326	25,457,930
Interest earned	1,242,111	4,708,232

\* Census of Financial Institutions, 1952, published by the Department of Census and Statistics.



It is significant that both for pawn broking as well as for money lending, about half the advances made were still outstanding at the end of the year. Pawn Broking advances in the City represented 27 per cent or over a quarter of the total advances for the Island, while money lending advances comprised 52 per cent or a little over half. The latter probably includes part of the credit utilized by the city's commerce and trade. Even accounting for this fact it would appear that indebtedness is more rampant in the city than elsewhere in the Island.

The monthly expenditure of the average city family was Rs. 184·16, sixty-two per cent of which was spent on food, eight per cent on clothing, four on fuel and light, six on rent and twenty on miscellaneous items. The following table shows the actual amount and the percentage spent on the various items in the city of Colombo and in Urban Ceylon.

TABLE 36.—MONTHLY EXPENDITURE PER FAMILY ON FOOD, CLOTHING, FUEL AND LIGHT, RENT AND MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Area	Total Expenditure	Expenditure on				
		Food	Clothing	Fuel and Light	Rent	Miscellaneous
		Rs. c.	Rs. c.	Rs. c.	Rs. c.	Rs. c.
Urban Ceylon	... 168 15 ...	108 44 ...	14 04 ...	7 11 ...	8 28 ...	30 28
Colombo Town	... 184 16 ...	113 41 ...	15 15 ...	8 06 ...	11 21 ...	36 33

TABLE 37.—PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE PER FAMILY ON FOOD, CLOTHING, FUEL AND LIGHT, RENT AND MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Area	Total Expenditure Rs. c.	Food	Clothing	Fuel and Light	Rent	Miscellaneous
		Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
		...	...	...	...	...
Urban Ceylon	... 168 15 ...	64·49 ...	8·35 ...	4·23 ...	4·92 ...	18·01
	100 %					
Colombo Town	... 184 16 ...	61·58 ...	8·23 ...	4·37 ...	6·09 ...	19·73
	100 %					

It is sometimes argued that the proportion spent on food or the " food ratio " can be taken as an index of poverty. The greater the proportion spent on food the lower the level of living. If this were so people in Colombo Town enjoy greater prosperity than people in the other urban centres of the Island. The proportions spent on clothing, fuel and light show no variation between the city of Colombo and Urban Ceylon but a greater proportion is spent on house rent in Colombo than elsewhere.

CHAPTER XII

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

THE social structure of a nation depends for the most part on the manner in which people earn their living. In an agricultural country like Ceylon, it is inevitable that the predominant occupational group should be agriculture. The production of commercial as well as food crops dominates the economy of the Island.

In the city itself agricultural and related occupations play a minor role. The following table shows the occupational distribution in the city of Colombo at the Census of 1953.

TABLE 38.—OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION—COLOMBO CITY, 1953

<i>Occupations</i>		<i>All Persons</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
All occupations	...	187,460	163,680	23,780
1. Miscellaneous	...	3,879	2,983	896
2. Professional, technical and related	...	10,755	7,664	3,091
3. Managerial, administrative, clerical, &c.	...	32,892	30,825	2,067
4. Sales and related	...	29,250	27,762	1,488
5. Farming, forestry, hunting and fishing	...	3,732	3,335	397
6. Mining and quarrying	...	44	22	22
7. Operating transport	...	11,410	11,015	395
8. Crafts and production processes	...	32,720	30,183	2,537
9. Service	...	61,282	48,936	12,346
10. Unspecified	...	1,496	955	541

The distribution doubtless reflects the economic environment in the city. The service occupations constitute nearly a third of the employed population in the city. These occupations include fire fighting, police, detention and preventive services, military other ranks, institutional and personal services, waiters and bar keepers, beauty specialists and barbers, employees of sports clubs and theatres, and unspecified labourers.

This group does not include professional services like law, medicine, and accountancy, but includes domestic servants who are a feature of middle class family life in Colombo. Half the women employed in Colombo are in the service occupations.

As is to be expected the managerial and administrative occupations come next in importance. They include managers and administrative officers in manufacturing industry, trade, insurance and finance, in transport, storage, warehousing, and community business and personal services. The group also includes clerical and related occupations such as book keepers, stenographers, conductors, clerks and peons.

The Island's administration is centred in the city. The Public Service both central and local absorbs a large number of men and women partly the result of the peculiar circumstances of the growth of the Island's economy. Development in Ceylon has throughout been sponsored by the state. The

whole field of medicine and education is almost exclusively manned by State Officials. In irrigation, public works, agriculture and industry the State continues to shoulder heavy burdens. Moreover the Public Service provides employment for the bulk of the educated youth in the city.

Physical production and the crafts provide employment for 32,720 persons. This group includes textile making occupations, tailors, basket and mat weavers, carpenters, metal workers, fitters, assemblers, mechanics, metal working and electrical occupations, stone workers, painters, building and construction workers, workers in the manufacturing industry, millers, &c.

The bulk of manufacturing industry in the Island is centred in the City—drawn no doubt by the existence of other facilities which are more readily available in the city than elsewhere. It is noteworthy that out of a gross output of Rs. 611 millions for industrial production in the Island, the output of manufacturing industry in the city itself totalled Rs. 327 million\*.

Sales and related occupations provided employment for 29,250 persons. They relate mainly to those employed in retail and wholesale establishments, street vendors, book sellers, insurance salesmen and canvassers, brokers, contractors for labour and money lenders and exchange agents.

The city is the centre of the Islands distributive trading and a network of retail and wholesale stores serves to provide the needs of the community.

Transport operation provides employment for 11,140 persons and relates mainly to the transport facilities provided in the city itself. For apart from internal transport within Colombo a network of road and railway transport from the remotest parts of the Island converge towards the city.

Professional and Technical occupations comprise nearly 6 per cent of the city employed and number 10,755 persons. They include architects, engineers, biological and agricultural scientists, doctors, nurses and midwives, ayurvedic physicians, accountants and those engaged in social sciences, teachers, priests and clergymen, lawyers and jurists, painters, authors, journalists, actors, musicians, politicians and public workers, &c. The medical profession is largely represented in this group as a result of the extensive range of hospital facilities provided in the city. The Island's Appellate and Supreme Courts are also centred in the city and account for the large number of persons in the Legal Profession. Commercial and financial enterprises in the city and to a lesser extent the engineering trade account for the large number of professional and technical men who are more numerous in Colombo than elsewhere.

Farming accounts for less than 2 per cent of these employed in Colombo. About the same number are in the miscellaneous group which includes land and property owners, unproductive workers, persons dependent on charity and pensioners.

Only 187,460 persons found gainful employment in the city and this means that out of a total population of 425,881 only 47 per cent were gainfully employed. This may be compared with the 1946 occupational structure for the Island as a whole, when it was found that 38·9 per cent of the population was gainfully employed. By gainfully employed is meant that a person must have an occupation which brings him an income or he must have some other means of subsistence.

The occupational distribution throws some light on the social structure of the city, but a further sub-division of the employed by industrial status enables an analysis to be made of the social status of those employed. Of the city employed, 78·3 per cent are paid employees, 14·7 per cent are workers on own account, 5·2 are employers, while a little under 2 per cent are unpaid family workers.

\* *Vide* Appendix II for principal Statistics of Manufacturing Industry in the City.

Very scant information exists on the incomes earned in Colombo Town. A special 10 per cent random sample of the 1953 Census figures however reveals the following pattern of income distribution.

TABLE 39.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME EARNERS—COLOMBO CITY, 1953

<i>Income</i>	<i>Per cent.</i>
All incomes	100·0
Under Rs. 20 per month	4·8
Rs. 20 to 40 per month	12·2
Rs. 40 to 80 „	26·5
Rs. 80 to 120 „	18·8
Rs. 120 to 160 „	12·0
Rs. 160 to 200 „	4·1
Rs. 200 to 300 „	7·8
Rs. 300 to 400 „	4·0
Rs. 400 to 600 „	3·9
Rs. 600 to 800 „	1·5
Rs. 800 to 1,000 „	0·8
Rs. 1,000 and over „	3·6

It shows that a quarter of the city employed earn between Rs. 40 and Rs. 80 a month, while nearly two-thirds earn less than Rs. 120 a month. About a quarter earn between Rs. 120 and Rs. 300 a month and perhaps constitutes the core of the middle class in the city. As there is no dividing line between the various strata the latter can perhaps also be regarded as the comparatively more affluent city working class. About 4 per cent earn over Rs. 1,000 a month and they belong to those in the professions, business and trade and also the higher rungs of the public service. Even allowing for understatement of income, it is still noteworthy that the bulk of the working population in Colombo earn no more than is barely sufficient to make ends meet.

Despite the economic advantages which the city provides in the share of banking, insurance, commercial, legal, and a whole range of other facilities, there is scarcely any indication of growing employment opportunities in the city. Any further immigration into the city will therefore add to the reservoir of unemployed in Colombo Town. Despite the noticeable diminution in the scale of migration, the drift to the town nevertheless continues, as chronic under employment in rural areas and growing pressure of population on the land give the villager no alternative. For some time to come this will remain the problem of the City.

## APPENDIX I

\* Average Physical Quantities bought per Month as shown in the Working Class Survey of  
1949-50, multiplied by Average Prices in 1952

*Actual values shown on left, percentages of total value shown on right*

					<i>Value</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
					<i>Rs. c.</i>	<i>of total</i>
Food	...	...	...	...	125 17	61·89
Fuel and light	...	...	...	...	8 67	4·29
House rent	...	...	...	...	11 52	5·70
Clothing	...	...	...	...	19 05	9·42
Miscellaneous	...	...	...	...	37 83	18·71
				Total	202 24	100·0
<i>Food—</i>						
A. Cereals†	...	...	...	...	27 16	13·43
B. Meals purchased	...	...	...	...	8 24	4·07
C. Beverages	...	...	...	...	20 43	10·10
D. Condiments	...	...	...	...	14 49	7·16
E. Pulses	...	...	...	...	2 29	1·13
F. Vegetables and fruits	...	...	...	...	14 28	7·06
G. Fats and oils	...	...	...	...	2 98	1·47
H. Groceries	...	...	...	...	0 58	0·29
I. Meat	...	...	...	...	7 72	3·82
J. Fish (fresh and dried)	...	...	...	...	20 62	10·20
K. Miscellaneous	...	...	...	...	6 38	3·15
				Total food	125 17	61·89
<i>Fuel and light—</i>						
Total fuel and light	...	...	...	...	8 67	4·29
<i>House rent—</i>						
Total house rent	...	...	...	...	11 52	5·70
<i>Clothing—</i>						
Total clothing	...	...	...	...	19 05	9·42
<i>Miscellaneous—</i>						
A. Betel and arecanuts	...	...	...	...	3 75	1·85
B. Tobacco	...	...	...	...	6 41	3·17
C. Hair dressing and toilet requisites	...	...	...	...	5 05	2·50
D. Medicine	...	...	...	...	2 41	1·19
E. Liquor	...	...	...	...	6 69	3·31
F. Household goods	...	...	...	...	1 33	·66
G. News papers	...	...	...	...	1 21	·60
H. Education	...	...	...	...	2 19	1·08
I. Postage	...	...	...	...	0 16	·08
J. Laundry	...	...	...	...	3 39	1·68
K. Sports and clubs	...	...	...	...	0 15	·07
L. Entertainment	...	...	...	...	1 28	·63
M. Transport	...	...	...	...	3 81	1·88
				Total miscellaneous	37 83	18·71

\* *Vide* Sessional Paper VI—1953, page 9.

† The total value of the quantities of cereals for 1952 is Rs. 20·53, but the total value of the cereal group is Rs. 27·16. The difference of Rs. 6·63 is the cost of preparing the flour into the various forms in which it is consumed.

## APPENDIX II

## Principal Statistics by Industry—Colombo City

Industry	Number of Establishments	Gross output	Cost of materials, fuel and electricity used	Net output	Remuneration of		Average number of Operatives	Other staff employed	Net output per person employed	Productive capital	Power equipment (H. P.)	
					Operatives	Other staff					Prime Movers	Electric Motors
All Industries	178	327,338,183	198,642,076	128,696,107	20,110,446	14,263,775	21,176	3,326	5,252	190,954,035	17,385	13,311½
1. Plumbago	*	1,432,000	1,145,000	287,000	41,400	12,000	79	6	3,376	426,000	—	6
2. Milk products	*	687,850	461,162	226,688	28,080	20,958	19	5	9,445	388,652	—	85½
3. Grain milling	7	743,967	547,759	196,208	43,746	17,614	59	22	2,548	117,160	12	185½
4. Confectionery, canning and processing of fruit and other products	12	6,071,948	4,328,104	1,743,844	527,096	242,467	563	94	2,683	1,139,307	167½	97½
5. Aerated and mineral waters	11	5,046,456	2,282,656	2,763,800	497,819	177,518	342	50	7,179	3,480,133	917½	250½
6. Tobacco	*	64,311,793	55,659,710	8,652,083	1,472,792	856,526	1,731	178	4,532	44,346,111	—	248
7. Textiles and thread	*	10,466,780	4,688,786	5,777,994	1,312,563	242,488	1,212	58	4,553	11,432,382	815	879
8. Coir fibre and coir goods	*	15,023,864	474,695	14,549,169	448,257	115,037	920	12	15,611	1,854,248	97	148
9. Footwear (exclusive of rubber foot wear)	*	548,143	263,418	284,725	179,422	34,835	127	8	2,109	—	—	27
10. Plywood and timber sawing	13	2,569,882	1,471,197	1,098,685	380,700	122,013	384	83	2,404	1,477,614	111½	252½
11. Printing, bookbinding and kindred industries	59	35,697,905	16,736,650	18,961,255	5,731,393	4,280,440	3,949	1,056	3,793	25,646,017	41½	1,141½
12. Leather and leather goods (exclusive of footwear)	*	841,431	468,516	372,915	235,987	40,470	174	14	1,984	1,503,288	15	85
13. Rubber goods	5	3,634,627	1,167,297	2,467,330	352,691	494,864	347	78	5,805	2,448,516	40	363
14. Fertilizers	*	548,939	477,078	71,861	2,981	3,720	4	4	8,983	26,527	—	15
15. Coconut and oil milling	6	94,963,709	63,955,670	31,008,039	972,716	1,059,126	892	176	29,034	12,201,291	1,411	1,497
16. Soap, glycerine and perfumes	8	21,206,803	16,072,388	5,134,415	537,828	486,568	358	79	11,749	18,078,339	43	1,688
17. Bricks and tiles	4	524,822	255,890	268,932	95,735	12,185	139	14	1,758	891,706	18	30
18. Engineering	33	54,660,538	24,171,264	30,489,274	6,647,440	5,828,566	9,363	1,351	2,846	53,288,733	2,771	5,443½
19. Jewellery and plastics	4	2,598,462	1,284,387	1,314,075	149,814	94,901	134	23	8,370	1,588,805	—	519
20. Electricity	*	577,450	493,582	83,868	182,311	26,238	105	4	769	4,498,769	10,900	—
21. Coal Gas, Oxygen and Carbon dioxide	3	5,180,814	2,236,867	2,943,947	269,675	95,241	275	11	10,293	6,120,437	25	350

\* Not published so as not to reveal particulars of individual establishments.





