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A. LIYANAGAMAGE

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CONTENTS **Page No.**

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CASTE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN ANCIENT SRI LANKA

The Growth of the Caste System in the Early Anuradhapura Period: A Study Based on the Buddhist Commentaries

The significance of the role of caste in the social formation of Sri Lanka in the past and present is often emphasized and this has indeed been the subject of several scholarly studies.[1] There have been attempts in some of these works to trace the antiquity of the caste system to a period as far back as the time of the early Indian immigrants, who arrived in the island sometime in the sixth or fifth century B.C.[2] This belief also gave rise to the notion that Sri Lankan society from its earliest stages was developing strictly on the lines of the *varṇa* ideology as expounded in the Brahmanic scriptures, the underlying assumption being that the Brahmanic concept of the four *varṇas* was introduced in *toto* in the island, and that it had continued to be the basis of social ranking ever since. However, as we have shown elsewhere,[3] the Sri Lankan society

1. M. B. Ariyapala, *Society in Medieval Ceylon,* Colombo, 1956; W. Geiger. *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times,* Wiesbaden, 1960" H. Ellawala, *A Social History of Early Ceylon,* Colombo, 1969; Ralph Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organization,* Colombo 1956; M. W. Roberts, *Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*; Bryce Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon,* New Brunswick, New Jersey,1953; Nur Yalman, *Under the Bo Tree: Studies in Caste, Kinship and Marriage in the Interior of Ceylon,* Berkeley, *1967.*
2. Ellawala, *op.cit.*,p.11.
3. P. V. B. Karunatilaka, 'Early Sri Lankan Society: Some Reflections on Caste, Social Groups and Ranking', *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities,* Peradeniya, 1983, Vol. X, Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 110-115.

in its formative stages was not developing strictly in line with the Brahmanic *varṇa* type, though the island came under strong Indian influence from . fairly early times.

Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that the Brahmanic concepts were totally unknown in the early period, for there is clear evidence for the presence in Sri Lanka of a few *kṣatriya* families and a fairly large *brāhmaṇa* community at least by about the third century B.C.[4] This shows that a system of ranking based on the ritual status of the *varṇa* type was known in the island from a fairly early period, but strikingly enough there is little evidence for the presence of the *vaisya* and the *sūdra* castes which consituted the majority of the Indian population. However, what was unique in the early Sri Lankan social formation was the existence of a parallel system of ranking, the nature of which was determined primarily by political and economic status. Certain groups such as the *parumakas* that represented this system of ranking appear to have assumed a social status even above that of the *brāhmaṇas*.[5]

However, after about the first century A.D., some of the important social groups that were dominant in the preceding period, are no longer mentioned in the epigraphic or literary sources. This is certainly true of the *parumakas* and the *gamikas* who appear to have constituted the upper and middle orders of the social hierarchy. And the term *aya* which was used as a title by some local rulers and male members of the Anuradhapura royal family, too, seems to have lost its significance as a title denoting social position after about the first century A.D. Taking into consideration the fact that at least three major groups that occupied a prominent position in the social order of the pre-Christian times dissappeared from the social scene, it becomes quite clear that a very significant change had taken place in the social organization sometime around the beginning of the Christian era.

4. *Ibid.*, pp.13-14
5. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

Though it is not possible to provide any definite explanation for the disappearance of these groups that played a vital role in the political, economic and social spheres, a useful clue to an understanding of what happened to these groups, may lie in the changes that had taken place within the political system and the administrative set-up. The establishment of a unified kingdom in the island sometime in the second century B.C., and the subsequent strengthening of royal authority paved the way for the growth of a new type of administrative organization, in which officials appointed by the monarch assumed greater power and prestige. This is very much evident in the emergence of several offices such as *amacca* and *ratika* into prominence from about the first century A.D.

The *amaccas* or king's courtiers were known as an important section in the royal circles from a very early time. Even if we discard the evidence found in the chronicles about the *amaccas* in the period prior to the advent of Buddhism, from the time of Devanampiyatissa onwards it is clear that they not only advised the king but also wielded some executive power as well.[6] With the expansion of royal authority and the resulting changes in the administrative set-up, they appear to have gained more power and greater prestige. As Tilak Hettiaracchy has shown,[7] by about the first century A.D., the *amaccas* were becoming almost a class by themselves, and their power and wealth increased further during the centuries that followed. It is noteworthy that at least from about the first century A.D., the *amaccas* were already serving as provincial governors in far-off districts. This is a clear indication of a shift of authority within the political system. As shown by us elsewhere, the *aya-parumaka* group wielded considerable power and authority in the political system that prevailed in pre-Christian times.[8] From about the first century A.D., *amaccas* are found frequently mentioned in a large number of religious grants, and like the *parumakas* in the

6. T. Hettiarachchy, *History of Kingship in Ceylon up to the Fourth Century A. D.*, Colombo, 1972, pp. 91ff.
7. *Ibid.*, pp.92 and 97 ff.
8. Karunatilaka, *op. cit.*, pp. 122 ff.

preceding period, the *amaccas* constitute one of the most important sections among the benefactors of the *saṅgha*.[9]

Their benefactions were no longer limited to the donation of caves and dwelling places for the *sangha* but included such economically important resources such as large extents of land, fields, irrigation canals and reservoirs as well as considerable sums of money.[10] If religious endowments are an indication of social position and economic strength of the benefactor, these grants clearly show that the *amaccas* of this time owned considerable wealth and important economic resources.

The term *raṭiya* or *raṭika* in the inscriptions and *raṭṭhiko* of the literary sources denoted an officer in charge of an administrative unit known as *rata*. This points to an administrative organisation founded on a territorial basis. Hettiaracchy believes that the *ratiyas*, at least in certain instances, discharged similar duties as *amaccas* in the provincial administration.[11] It is, however, difficult to conclude that the *raṭiyas* were in charge of large regional administrative units. The inscriptions show that they, too, were benefactors of the Buddhist *sangha*, and that their donations also included land, reservoirs and irrigation rights.[12] The social prestige and the economic strength of the *amaccas* and the *raṭiyas* is amply epitomized in a question posed by the author of the *Sammohavinodani* when he asks "Are there any other royal officials who are equal to the *amaccas* and *raṭṭhikas* in their (possession of) crops and vehicles etc., (wealth)?" [13]

An essential feature of the rise of the *amacca* and *raṭika* groups into prominence, assuming new responsibilities in regional administration is that they derived their power and authority basically from the ruling monarch, unlike the *ayas*, the *parumakas* and perhaps the *gamikas* who had their own power bases. Hence, the expansion of royal authority must certainly have affected the power base of the local leadership represented by the *aya-parumaka-gamika* groups, thereby making their role insignificant or irrelevant. However, a close look at the evidence on the functions and authority of the *amaccas* and the *raṭikas* would reveal that most of the functions that were in the hands of the *parumakas* and the *gamikas* in pre-Christian times, were now being performed by the *amaccas* and the *ratikas*. For instance, an important post like that of the *senāpati* (troop-leader), which in pre-Christian times was mostly manned by the *parumakas*, was held by an *amacca* in the first century.A.D. [14] Another *amacca* was a *kanapeṭika* (record-keeper), a post previously held by *parumakas*.[15] Therefore, it is tempting to suggest that it was mainly from amongst the ranks of the descendants of *aya-parumaka-gamika* groups that the kings of the later times, too, at least in the early centuries of the Christian era, had selected personnel for higer places in the officialdom. In fact, an early Brahmi record of the pre-Christian times shows that the *parumakas* had already held the post of *amacca*, and in another instance a *gamika* had held the post of *amacca*.[16] Thus it is only natural for the kings of the later periods too, to turn to the traditional leadership and elite groups in the search for persons for appointment to positions in the emerging state, where royal authority was increasingly becoming the most crucial factor. Therefore, under the new circumstances in which offices in the state were gathering greater importance and social prestige over the traditional social norms and ranking, the elites must have preferred new titles denoting power and authority to the older ones which by now, were fast losing their significance.

9. Hettiarachchy, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
10. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* (*EZ.*) V, pp. 412-18; *University of Ceylon Review* VIII, p. 120.
11. Hettiarachchy, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
12. *University of Ceylon Review*, VIII, 1950, 127; *EZ.*, III, pp. 25-52 nda' pp. 117-118.
13. *Sammohavinodani*, Hewavitarana Bequest Series, Vol. XXXV, p. 345, *'amaccolhaṭṭhiyō vā bhoga-yāna-vāhanādi hi ko mayā sadiso anno rājapuriso atthi.'*

14. Hettiarachchy, *op.cit.*, p.95.
15. S. Paranavitana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon, Vol. I, Early Brahmi Inscriptions* Colombo, 1970, p. 1, no. 3 and *EZ*; V. pp. 408 ff. ins. no. 8.
16. Paranavitana, *op.cit.*, p.61, no.797.

If certain groups that had held higher positions and played a key role in the socio-political organisation of the island disappeared, or more probaly their titles fell into abeyance, it signals a major realignment within the system of ranking. This is especially significant in that the *aya-parumaka-gamika* group virtually dominated the upper and middle orders of the social hierarchy, perhaps sharing among themselves most of the high offices in the royal court and the administration. Furthermore, these groups represented one of the two parallel systems of ranking that prevailed during the early period. Thus we see a major change taking place in the socio-political organisation of the island sometime around the beginning of the Christian era.

The inscriptions that provide most valuable information for the study of society in the early period pose a special problem when taken as a source for the later period. It is true that most of the inscriptions from about the first century A.D. onwards become relatively large in content, but the majority of them are in the form of royal edicts recording land grants, mainly in favour of the *saṅgha* and therefore, they contain little or no information relevant to social history. There are some other inscriptions, again recording religious benefactions, but the benefactors preferred to be identified by their official titles such as *amacca, raṭika, bhojika* etc., rather than indicating their social status. Hence, the inscriptions belonging to the period after the first century A.D., are of little value for the study of social history. The Pali chronicles (*Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahavaṃsa*) do contain scattered fragments of information but they are certainly of limited value for a comprehensive study.

In the light of these difficulties, in utilizing the widely used material m the inscriptions and the chronicles,one is left with another group of literary sources, the contents of which had not been utilized to the full in the study of many aspects of ancient Sri Lankan history. They are the Pali commentaries to the Buddhist canon, the majority of which were edited and translated into Pali by the reputed Buddhist scholar-monk Buddhaghosa in the fifth century A.D. The *atthakathas* as they are widely known, are exegetical works on the

various texts of the Buddhist canon, and their main objective was to explain many abstruse points of doctrine and interpret certain obscure terms found in the texts. The compilation of the commentaries is said to have begun at the time of Thera Mahinda in the third century B.C., but in the course of time they grew in content acquiring new material in the form of explanatory information, elaborations and different opinions expressed by various scholars and teachers.[17]

In this gradual growth of the commentaries, the authors who incorporated new material did so in many instances, by adding examples and references to events and conditions relating to Sri Lanka. These examples and elaborations invariably depicted conditions in the island at that time and hence contain valuable data for historical studies. In addition to definite references to incidents and conditions in Sri Lanka, there is another type of material in the commentaries which is of immense value for the study of Sri Lankan social history. As Adikaram has shown,[18] one can extract historical data by a comparison of the commentaries with the original canonical texts. In this, a commentation which seems to differ from a textual statement, or an elaboration on a point raised in a text can be considered as material that was acquired with the growth of commentarial literature. However, in using this material for writing Sri Lankan history, one has to exercise extreme caution in order to differentiate the information relating to Sri Lanka from that which applies to India.

A basic problem one has to face in using the material in the commentaries is their chronology. The date of the commentaries has been broadly fixed between the third century B.C. and the fifth century A.D.,[19] that is, from the time of the advent of Buddhism to the date of Buddhaghosa. The Sinhalese commentarial works, particularly certain sections on the Vinaya texts, must have been

17. E. W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon,* Colombo, 1953, pp. 33 ff.
18. *Ibid.,* p. 41.
19. *Ibid.* p. 87.

completed by about the middle of the first century A. D., yet, this does not necessarily mean that the commentaries ceased to grow. A number of references to events that are said to have taken place during the times of later kings such as Vasabha (65-109 A. D.) and Mahasena (278-302 A.D.) found in the commentaries, [20] clearly show that these works kept on growing over the centuries.

On the other hand, although the upper limit of the chronology has been fixed as the third century B. C., the material found in the commentaries relating to Sri Lankan social history, hardly tallies with the information available in the epigraphic sources applicable to that period. For instance, such important groups like the *ayas*, the *parumakas* and the *gamikas* referred to above, as holding high positions in society as well as in the administration, are not mentioned at all in the commentarial literature. As stated earlier, these groups disappeared from the socio-political scene sometime around the first century A. D., and one possible explanation for the absence of any reference to these groups in the commentaries is that, although the origins of the commentarial traditions may be dated in the third century B. C., their contents took the present form sometime after these groups had disappeared from the scene. Such a supposition gains some strength from the references in the commentaries to the regional administrative officials known as *raṭikas*. The *raṭiyas* appear for the first time in the inscriptions only after the first century A. D., but the commentarires 'eulogize' them along with the *amaccas* as two of the most poweful and wealthy sections in the entire royal officialdom. [21] Both the *amaccas* and the *raṭikas* grew in importance and strength in society in the following centuries and they became two of the most important groups to patronize the Buddhist *saṅgha*. [22] Therefore it is quite probable that the contents of these commentaries had taken their present form sometime after these groups had come into prominence.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 26 and *Samantapāsādikā*, (P.T.S. edition) III,pp.519 and (Hewavitarana Bequest) p. 337.
21. *Sammohavinodanī*, (Hewavitarana Bequest), p. 345.
22. See *supra.*, pp. 4-6.

Yet again, a difficulty arises in marking the lower limit of the chronology of this body of writing, because not all the commentaries were translated by Buddhaghosa. Some of the works which had been left out by Buddhaghosa were later translated into Pali by other scholars such as Buddhadatta, Dhammapāla, Upasena and Mahānāma. While dates of at least some of these later translators remain a matter of controversy, those that are suggested for them would place them in a period several centuries after Buddhaghosa. [23] Hence, as long as these issues remain unsettled it is extremely difficult and even hazardous to make use of the material in these works, as confidently as one would turn to Buddhaghosa's commentaries. Moreover, some later commentaries like the *Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā*, the *Petavatthu-aṭṭhakathā* and the *Cariyāpiṭaka-aṭṭhakathā* contain no reference at all to Sri Lanka, and all events and places described in them are related to India, and thus they are of little value for our study. Therefore, it is safer for us to use only the commentaries of Buddhaghosa for the present study. Accordingly, the lower limit of chronology may be fixed as the fifth century A.D.

As we have shown earlier, if certain groups that commanded higher positions and played a vital role in the socio-political fabric of the island during the pre-Christian centuries disappeared from the scene, or to be more precise, the titles denoting those social positions fell into disuse under the changing circumstances, these changes must certainly have had profound implications not only upon the system of ranking but also on the entire social order. This is particularly significant in that the *aya-parumaka-gamika* groups represented one of the two parallel systems of social ranking. It is also noteworthy that some of these groups appear to have held more prestigious positions in society as well as in economic and political spheres, than certain other groups such as *brāhmaṇas* who represented a system of ranking based on ritual status. [24] Hence, one of the most crucial problems that has to be examined in this study is the nature of the social system that emerged from the changes considered above.

23. Adikaram, *op. cit.* pp. 8 ff.
24. Karunatilaka, *op. cit.* p. 124

Although it is difficult to trace and identify every step in this change owing to the paucity of detailed information, a few commentarial passages throw welcome light, at least on certain aspects of the emerging social order. In this regard a passage in the *Manorathapuraṇī* (appearing in several other commentaries in the same manner) merits special attention. This passage which is a comment on the word *gahapatikānaṃ* in the original canonical text of the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, states that those who enter the Order (of monks) from the *khattiya* families (*khattiya-kula*) are incapable of being established in the Dispensation for they are proud of their birth (*jati*) and those of the *brāhmaṇa* families fail on account of their being proud of their knowledge of the scriptures. Those of the families of low-birth (*hīna-jacca-kulā*) fail owing to the complexes arising from their low birth status. The children of the *gahapatis* alone, it emphasizes, are preponderant in number and being free of those complexes are capable of grasping properly the teachings of the Buddha and attaining the status of Arhantship.[25]

The original canonical text on which this commentary has been made, does not contain any reference whatsoever to the advantages or disadvantages of belonging to any particular caste or social group. Accordingly, it does not warrant such an elucidation, and therefore it is clear that it is an independent interpretation coming from the commentator. It is also noteworthy that this interpretation cannot be considered even as a reproduction of the conventional Indian caste concepts according to which the gradation is *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* amd *śūdra*. (In fact the same commentary makes a clear reference to the traditional Indian scheme of caste gradation in a different context.)[26] Nor can it be taken as an elucidation compatible with the original teachings of the Buddha that reject the entire basis of the caste system. Hence, the only possible explanation is that the passage in question was of local origin and accordingly, the gradation given therein was the one known to the Sinhalese commentators

25. *Manorathapūraṇī*, (Hewavitarana Bepuest Series), Vol. II Colombo 1923, p. 564 and *Pañcappakraṇa-aṭṭakathā* - Vol. 1, (Hewavitarana Bequest Series), Colombo, 1936 p.64.

26. See *Manorathapūraṇī* Vol. 1 (Hewavitharana Beqeest)., p. 195.

at the time it was compiled. A. Liyanagamage has drawn attention to the significance of this passage including a few others in his paper on 'The Influence of Caste on the Buddhist Sangha in Ancient and Early Medieval Sri Lanka.'[27]

Here, the social gradation is given as *khattiya*, *brāhmaṇa*, *gahapati* and the *hīna - jacca - kula*. This scheme has some resemblance to the traditional Brahmanic social gradation as far as the first two groups are concerned, but not in the case of the other two. Even the hierarchical order of the first two is not at all compatible with the classical Hindu system wherein the *brāhmaṇas* come first. Yet, it is noteworthy that the entire Buddhist literary tradition of both India and Sri Lanka is unanimous on the point that the *ksatriyas* were superior to the *brāhmanas* in the social order.[28]

Although one can argue that the term *gahapati* in the commentarial passage stands in place of *vaisya* in the traditional Brahmanic caste scheme, it must be noted that a social group called *gahapati* was actually known in Sri Lanka from a very early time.[29] In the passage in question the term *gahapati* is used so as to contradistinguish this group from the *kṣatriyas* and the *brāhmaṇas* on the one hand, and those of 'low-birth' on the other. Thus the *gahapati* or householder is ranked above those of 'low-birth' but below the positions of the *kṣatriyas* and the *brāhmaṇas*.

The scheme of social gradation given here seems to suggest that there was a group other than the first three (viz., *khattiya*, *brāhmaṇa* and *gahapati*), And the fact that that group alone was known as *hīna-jacaa* or of low-birth, implies that the first three groups were considered to have been of high birth. This points to a broad-based division

27. *Kalyani, Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Kelaniya*, Vol. I, 1982, pp. 57-61.

28. See *Ambhaṭṭa-sutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* (ed. W. Nānāvāsa), Colombo Vol. III, p. 50 ff. and *Assalāyana-Sutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* (ed K. Nānavimala) Colombo, Vol. II, pp. 262 ff. Also see W. Rahula *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1956, pp. 233 ff. and W. Geiger. *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times, op. cit.* p. 24.

29. Karunatilaka, *op. cit.*, pp. 133 ff.

of the populace into two, namely those of high birth and those of low-birth. In fact, such a broad-based two-fold division is referred to in several other commentaries as well. For instance-the *Paramattha jotikā*,[30] the commentary on the *Suttanipata*, makes a clear reference to the people of *ucca-kula* (high caste) and *hina-kula* (low caste). Here, what is significant is the emphasis laid on one's *jati* or birth in determining one's social position and hence the element of birth appears as the most important criterion.[31]

Of the first three social groups referred to in the *Manoratha-pūraṇī* passage, the *kṣatriyas* and the *brāhmaṇas* are mentioned in the chronicles as well. The early Brahmi inscriptions, too, refer to *brāhmaṇas* in the island who were benefactors of Buddhism[32] As previously shown elsewhere, though there appear to have been a few *kṣatriya* families in early Sri Lanka, they never developed into a separate caste as in India. Even the main line of the Anuradhapura rulers, as Paranavitana has argued, had no *ksatriya* origin though their successors in the later period boldly claimed *kṣatriya* status.[33]

30. *Paramatthajotiaka* (*Suttanipata* Commentary, Hewavitarana Bequest Series), Colombo, 1922, p.195.

31. Here what is significant is the emphasis laid on one's *jāti* or births as the determinant of one's social position, and hence the element of birth appears as the most important criterion. In the commentaries as well as in the chronicles *jati* is the most frequently used term to denote caste but occasionally the term *kula* which literally means 'family' is also used to mean caste. For instance, the *Sumaṅgalāvilāsinī* uses the phrase *khattiya-kula* when it really means the *ksatriya* caste. *Sumaṅgalvilāsinī*, (Hewavitarana Bequest Series), Colombo, p.428. Similarly the *Manorathapurani*, too, mentions *kṣatriya*, and *vaiśya* as *kulas* in an attempt to explain the phrase *kula-sampatti*: *idhava manussa-loke khattiya brāhmaṇa vessa kule jāyanti; asamehiva hi tivida kula sampatti nāma, Manorathapūraṇī*, Hewavitarana Bequest Series, Vol. I, p. 392. The term *vanna* is found occasionally mentioned in the commentaries, but it is always used to mean the classical Indian concepts of the four *varṇas*. However, there are instances where the term *jāti* is also used to mean the four *varnas*, see for instance, *Samantapāsādikā*, (Hewavitarana Bequest Series), Vol. I, Colombo, 1929 p.168, *jāti vasena yam jacco vā taṃ jaccā vā hotu; khattiyo vā brāhmaṇo vā vesso vā suddo vā ti attho.*

32. Paranavitana *op. cit.p.* IXVII.

33. *University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon,* (=*UCHC.*), Vol. I, pt. I, pp, 229-30 *EZ*. Vol. II, pp. 61-62, no. 11.

The chronicles, particularly the *Mahāvaṃsa*, take great pains to portray the Sinhalese royalty as descending from reputed Indian *kṣatriya* families.[34] It is difficult to take this merely as a deliberate attempt on the part of the chroniclers to glorify the island's Sinhalese royalty by linking them with Indian *kṣatriya* families. It may well have been that the Sinhalese royalty, by the time the chronicles were written some time in the fifth century A. D., had assumed *kṣatriya* status, or at least that it had become the common belief in society that the Sinhalese royalty were of *ksatriya* stock. Such a supposition gains strength from a passage in the *Vibhaṅgaṭṭhakathā Sammohavino-danī*, which says that kings are the consecrated *kṣatriyas*.[35]

It is quite evident that the *brāhmaṇas* remained a strong and influential community in Sri Lanka throughout the early period. Some of them were closely associated with the royal courts serving as preceptors and counsellers.[36] Though they appear to have been a minority in the population, the *brāhmanas* commanded a high position in society by dint of their high birth and the important positions they held in court circles. Despite the fact that some *brahmanas* became converts to Buddhism when the new religion was introduced, a sizeable *brāhmaṇa* community seems to have continued to profess the Brahmaṇic religion, and at times even attempted to demonstrate their opposition to Buddhism.[37] There are also a few instances where *brāhmaṇas* succeeded in capturing the throne.[38] Although the *brāhmaṇas* remained a strong and powerful group in the early period, there is much less evidence of their presence in the sources of the period under review. Among the few instances where *brāhmaṇas* figure, mention may be made of the *Mahāvaṃsa* reference to some *brāhmaṇa* villages of the time of Mahasena (278-303 A.D.,[39] The Brahmanic shrines at these villages were destroyed by the king

34. *UCHC.*, Vol. I, pt. pp.368-369.
35. *Sammohavinodani*, ed. A.P. Buddhadatta, (Pali Text Society, London,) 1923, p. 518.
36. Paranavitana, *op. cit.*, p. lxvii-lxix and C. W. Nicholas, 'Brahmanas in the Early Sinhalese Kingdom', *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, 1950, pp. 259 ff.
37. Karunatilaka, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.
38. See H. Ellawala, *op. cit.*p. 15.
39. *Mahavamsa*, XX, VII; 41.

and had Buddhist *viharas* built on those sites. From the *Mahavaṃsa-tika*, it is clear that those shrines had Śaiva associations.[40] The thirteenth century Sinhalese chronicle *Pūjāvaliya* also refers to a *brāhmaṇa* village at the time of Jetthatissa (266-76) A.D.), the elder brother and predecessor of Mahāsena. The paucity of reference to *brāhmaṇas* may be interpreted as an indication of the diminishing influence of the *brahmana* community in the period under consideration.

The fact that at least some *brāhmaṇa* shrines were destroyed by kings and the point that Buddhist *vihāras* were built on those sites, clearly show that there were concerted efforts on the part of at least certain rulers of this period for reasons that are not clear, to discourage the Brahmanic religion while promoting the interests of Buddhism. Such a policy must certainly have contributed to the decline of Brahmanic religious practices thereby reducing the influence of the *brāhmaṇas* on society. It is not until the end of the eight century A.D., that the *brāhmaṇas* begin to reappear on the socio-political scene in any significant way.

A point in the *Manorathapūraṇī* passage quoted above sheds some valuable light on the position of the *gahapatis* in contemporary society. It mentions that those who came from the *gahapati* community formed the majority in the *saṅgha*.[41] In the earlier period, the *gahapati* community consisted of persons whose occupations ranged from agriculture and trade to several types of crafts and dancing, and thus it was much more broad-based than the *vaisya* group in contemporary India.[42] Although it is doubtful whether the *gahapati* community of the later period, too, consisted of the same occupational groups, it is quite possible that the *gahapatis* continued to be the majority in the population.

40. *Vaṃsattappakāsinī* (*Mahāvaṃsa-tīkā*), ed. G. P. Malalasekara, London. (P.T.S.), 1935, Vol. II,p.685.
41. *Manorathapūraṇī, op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 564.
42. Karunatilaka, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-134.

The passage under consideration gives a clear indication of the groups that were included in the category of 'high-born' , but it does not provide any clue as to which groups were rated as 'low-born' (*hīna-jacca*). However, the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, another commentary edited by Buddhaghosa, while commenting on the word *sippa* which means 'crafts' mentions that there were two types of crafts namely, the inferior or low crafts and the superior or high crafts. The inferior crafts listed there include pottery, basket making, weaving and the craft of barbers. Accounting and the occupation of scribes and seal-bearers are among the crafts that are described as superior.[43] The same commentary, on another occassion, refers to weaving,sugar-milling and pottery-making as inferior crafts.[44]

Similarly the *Sammohavinodanī*, commenting on the word *sippāyatana* states that there were two kinds of functions (*kamma*) and here, too, the division calls one superior and the other inferior. The superior functions were those of the cowherds, agriculture and trading. The inferior functions were carpentry and the duties of the *puppha-chaddhakas*.[45] It also enumerates several crafts (*sippa*) in a further elaboration. There again, the usual two-fold division is mentioned; and the inferior crafts given there are those of the basket makers or workers on reed (*nalakārā*), weavers (*pesakārā*), potters (*kumbhakārā*), leather-workers (*cammakārā*) and the barbers (*ñahāpita*). The superior crafts are accounting and the occupations of scribes and seal-bearers.[46]

Though these references indicate that certain crafts and occupations were considered low, it is not immediately clear whether this division was based on any social differentiation or whether it had any caste implications. However, a story known as the story of the weaver's daughter (pesakāradhīto) found in both the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* and the *Sammohavinodanī*, seems to suggest that at least

43. *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, P.T.S. Edition, p. 930
44. *Ibid.* (Hewavitarana Series) P.274
45. *Sammohavinodanī, op, cit.*, p. 288
46. *Ibid.*

certain groups of people whose occupations are listed in the category of low crafts were actually considered low in the social reckoning too. In the incidents given there which are said to have taken place sometime in ancient Sri Lanka, an elderly *thera* and his novice pupil, while travelling in the air by virtue of the spiritual powers of the teacher, the young monk was enticed by the sweet voice of a young lass who was singing while picking lotus flowers in a nearby lake. The young monk, consequent upon lustful thoughts that flashed through his mind, lost his spiritual power and crashed on the ground near the lake. His teacher, however, unaware of the predicament of his pupil continued his journey. The young monk, having thus lost track of his teacher was thinking only of the girl. He then approached her and began to plead with her to marry him. The girl at first did not like the idea, but because of his endless pleading ultimately agreed to marry him but on one condition. She wanted the monk to obtain her parents' consent for their marriage. Having reached agreement on the matter, the girl accompanied the monk to her parental home. Initially, the girl's parents strongly opposed the idea but the monk was unmoved. The parents, having tried unsuccessfully to persuade the monk to remain in robes, ultimately confronted him with one final question. They say "Sir, do you think that we are of high birth? We are mere weavers: (therefore) please give up your idea of marrying our daughter." Still the monk was not prepared to change his mind, and eventually the parents yielded. The monk married the girl and took to weaving for a living.[47]

What is interesting in this story is that the parents, having tried in many ways to dissuade the monk from giving up robes, pose the question of birth or caste as their last resort. Two points that come out of this story are relevant to our discussion. In the first place, it shows that weavers were actually taken to have been of low birth, and that caste in this instance had a distinctly occupational bearing. The second point is that one's birth status or caste figured prominently in marriage, for the girl's parents it was the strongest point in their arguments. As shown earlier, weaving was one of the occupations that were considered as low crafts, and according to the story cited above, weavers were definitely considered as people of low birth. Hence it is reasonable to assume that people who were engaged in occupations which are mentioned along with weaving as low crafts, must also have been considered as being of low birth.

Such a supposition is further strengthened by a commentarial passage in the *Suttanipāta* Commentary *Paramattha-jotikā* which describes *caṇḍālā, vena, nesādā, rathakāra* and *pukkusā* as lowly people (*omaka-purisā*) of low birth (*hīna-kulikā*).[48] One can, however, argue that this particular passage does not necessarily refer to such groups in Sri Lanka but to those in India, for they are found mentioned in the original canonical texts as well. Even if this argument is accepted, it is still possible to show that at least some of these groups were actually present in Sri Lanka, too. The presence of the *candalas* in Sri Lanka is well attested and they served mainly as scavengers. They were generally considered as the lowliest in the social scale.[49] The word *nesada* has been rendered as 'hunter',[50] but the way in which this term occurs in many literary sources, lends support to suggest that it meant a mere hunter. It must be noted that the common term used in other Pali sources to denote a hunter is not *nesāda* but *ludda* or *ludda-manusso*.[51] The *Manorathapuraṇī* and the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* contain several references to members of the *nesada* community who entered the Order,[52] and the *Rasavāhinī* speaks of *nesāda* settlements known as Nesādagāma.[53] Most probably they were a separate community of people whose

47. ***Sammohavinodanī, op. cit.*** pp. 205-206

48. *Paramatthajotikā,* (Hewavitarana Bequest Series), Colombo, 1922 p. 214.
49. Karunatilaka, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-139.
50. Ellawala, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
51. See *Pali - English Dictionary* ed. T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, (Pali Text Society Dictionary), London. 1925, s.v.
52. *Manorathapūraṇī,* P. T. S. Edition, Vol. I, London, 1930, p. 21. and *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī, op. cit.* p. 887.
53. *Rasavahini,* ed. Saranatissa, Vol. II, Colombo, 1899, p. 1 and p. 132.
54. *The Indian Historical Review,* Vol IV, 1985, p. 49.
55. A. Bose, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India,* Calcutta, 1945, p. 457.

main livelihood was hunting. Moreover, the term *nesada* in the Sri Lankan Pali sources immediately reminds us of the Sanskrit term *nisāda* which denoted certain tribal groups in early India, who were later assimilated into the Aryan social fabric as untouchables.[54] Thus it is quite possible that in Sri Lanka, too, certain tribal groups who had taken to hunting as their main occupation were known as *nesādas*.

The term *pukkusa* has been rendered as removers of faded flowers,[55] but it is unlikely that such persons formed a separate caste. However, the Pali commentaries give the word *puppha-chaḍḍaka* as a synonym, and on the strength of some interpretations given in the *Samantapāsādikā*, Ellawala thinks that the term denoted a certain group of washermen whose function was to remove and clean blood-stained clothes.[56] Although the term *rathakāra* literally means 'chariot-maker' both the *Petavatthu* Commentary[57] and the *Manorathapūraṇī*[58] give it as an equivalent of *cammakāra* which means 'leather-worker'. It must be noted here that both the *puppha-chaḍḍakas* and the *cammakāras* as described in the *Sammohavinodanī*, were engaged in inferior functions.[59]

The manner in which these people are portrayed in the *Paramatthajotikā*, gives the impression that they were regarded as belonging to the lowest stratum of the social hierarchy. In fact, references in the commentaries and other sources clearly show that the *caṇḍālas* were at the lowest level, and therefore the other groups that are classified along with them, too, may not have held a position any higher than that of the *caṇḍālas*. Though it is difficult to ascertain

56. Ellawala, *op. cit.* p.70. It may be noted here that the thirteenth century Sinhalese Glossary *Jātaka-Aṭuvā-Gāṭapadaya* which is probably based on sources of much early origin interprets the term *puppha-chaḍḍaka* as barbarians who remove excrements, *puppha-chaḍḍaka pukkusa - asūci damana baburo, Jātaka-Aṭuva-Gāṭapadaya,* Vol. I. (ed. D. B. Jayatilaka), Colombo, p. 192.
57. *Petavatthu-Aṭṭhakathā,* P. T.S. Edition, III, 1894, p. 13 and *Paramatthadīpanī* (*Pañcappakaraṇa Aṭṭhakathā*) Hewavitarana Bequest, Colombo 1938 pt. I, p. 59.
58. *Manorathapūraṇī,* Hewavitarana Bequest, pt. II, p. 523.
59. See *supra* notes 44 and 45.

the basis of this classification, it is noteworthy that except in the case of the *venas* or reed-workers, the functions of all other groups involved some form of impurity. However, what is significant here is that many artisan groups as well as service groups were relegated to low castes, but agriculture and trade as well as the functions of scribes, accountants, and seal-bearers which most probably meant positions in administration, were reckoned as being of a superior order. During the previous period. as shown above, the *gahapati* community was composed of agriculturists and traders as well as of different artisan groups. Yet, from the above discussion it is evident that the case was no longer the same during the period under review. The social position of many artisan groups whose functions represent a wide area of the economy, seems to have undergone profound changes during this period. On the one hand these artisan groups were no longer considered as integral components of the *gahapati* community, and on the other, these groups now appear to have a definite ritual status below that of the *gahapati* community. That ritual status was primarily determined by their social position at birth.

In many instances the chronicles and the commentaries refer to a section of people in society by the term *kulīnā* or *uccakulīnā*. It is derived from the word *kula* which literally means family.[60] Accordingly, the term *kulīnā* has been interpreted as 'a noble person' or 'a person of high family.[61] In fact, some commentaries speak of high families and also of those who entered the Order from high families (*ucca-kula-pabbajita*).[62] The *Mahāvaṃsa* uses the term *kulīnā* for the first time in its reference to the ladies who visited Thera Mahinda at the Nandana Park.[63] There it is apparently used with reference to the members of the wider royalty and the immediate royal family of King Devanampiyatissa. The *Vinayapiṭaka* Commentary *Samantapāsādikā*[64] speaks of families of high birth (*jāti-sampanna-*

60. *Pali-English Dictionary, op. cit.,* s.v.
61. Geiger. *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times.* p. 29.
62. *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī,* Hewavitarana Bequest, p. 422 and *Manorathapūraṇi,* Hewavitharana Bequest, Vol. I, p.248.
63. *Mahāvaṃsa.* XV, 3.
64. *Samantapasādikā,* Hewavitarana Bequest, I,p.58.

kulani) in describing some of the families that were sent by emperor Asoka to Sri Lanka along with the sacred Bodhi sapling. This evidence clearly points to the presence in Sri Lanka of a particular section of society known as *kulīnas* or nobles from a very early time. Indeed, as we have shown elsewhere, there were several groups of people such as the *ayas*, *parumakas* and *gamikas* alongside the royalty who enjoyed a higher social status, and it was the members of these groups that constituted the higher echelons of the administrative hierarchy. Thus it is quite possible that the nobility in the early period consisted of the *aya-parumaka* and the *gamika* groups.

The disappearance of these groups from the socio-political scene almost coincided with the emergence of a clan known as the Lambakaṇṇas, a leading section in society as well as in administration. Although there is no definite information about the origin of the Lambakaṇṇas, some literary works attempt to trace their origins to the noble families that accompanied the Bodhi sapling to the island. But scholars like Geiger[65] believed that they may have been one of the totemistic groups that probably came to the island with the early immigrants. Whatever was their origin, the Lambakannas had become a very prominent section in society by the time they first figure in the *Mahāvaṃsa*. The first mention of the Lambakaṇṇas comes in a reference to the time of king Ilanaga[66] (33-43 A.D.). According to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, the Lambakaṇṇas deserted the king when he went to Tissavapi for the ceremonial bath. The king, angered by this open insult, ordered the Lambakannas to work in road construction under the supervision of *candalas*. By putting the Lambakaṇṇas to work under *caṇḍālas*, the king obviously intended to humiliate them, but this resulted in open rebellion against the king. Consequently, the king was forced to flee the country, and even after his return to the island three years later, he had to face stiff resistance put up by the Lambakaṇṇas.

It is significant that the rebel Lambakannas are described in the *Mahāvaṃsa-ṭīkā*[67] as *amaccas*, and therefore they are likely to have

65. Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times*. p. 27.
66. *Mahāvaṃsa*, XXXV, 16.
67. *Vaṃsatthappakasinī*, p. 644.

wielded considerable power and authority. The fact that they enjoyed wide popular support in their revolt against the king is also an indication of their strength, and that Iḷanāga intended to humiliate them by making them to work under *caṇḍālas* also implies their high social position. The struggle of the Lambakaṇṇas reached its culmination when Vasabha founded a new dynasty that ruled the country for several centuries.[68]

The *Cūlavaṃsa* contains some specific and detailed information on the *kulīnas* in the fifth century A. D. It states that when Mittasena, the rice-thief who was raised to the throne by an *amacca* fell in battle with the invading Tamils, all the noble people (*janā-kulīnāsabbepi*) of Anurādhapura left for Rohaṇa.[69] The chronicle also mentions that when Dhātusena became king after defeating the Tamils, he punished those *kulīnas* who sided with the Tamils and fittingly rewarded the *kulīnas* who stood by him.[70] The *Cūlavaṃsa*, in its account of the career of Dhātusena, describes him as the grandson of a *kuṭumbika* who was living with his kinsmen. They were descendants of the Moriyas who fled to Rohaṇa through fear of *dovārika* Sabha, who ascended the throne after slaying Yasalālakatissa (52-59 A.D). [71] Apparently those Moriyas, thus belonged to the *kuṭumbika* community and must have been very close to the assasinated ruler. Their close association with the king must have made their position vulnerable in the changing circumstances.

The *kuṭumbikas* were well known in the earlier period as an important social group that played a prominent role in the economic and political spheres. At least some leading *kuṭumbika* families were closely associated with the protection of the sacred Bodhi Tree. They are singled out in many sources for the great riches they are said to have possessed. Some members of this community played a vital role in the military campaigns of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, and subsequently they could reach high positions in the administration and

68. *UCHC*., Vol I, pt. 1, pp. 178 ff.
69. *Cūlavaṃsa*, XXXVIII, 12.
70. *Ibid*., XXXVIII, 39-48.
71. *Ibid*. XXXVIII, 13-14.

further strengthen their social position.[72] Therefore, it is quite possible that the *kuṭumbikas* at the time of Yasalālakatissa were holding high office in royal court forming a section of the nobility. It is stated in the *Cūlavaṃsa*[73] that when Dhātusena captured power with the help of his kinsmen, many *kulīnas* also returned to Anurādhapura along with the king, and obviously the members of his own community, too, must have been among those *kulīnas*.

The information we have about the *kulīnas* during the time of Mittasena and later, though belonging to a period a few years subsequent to the conditions depicted in these accounts, may not have been very different from those of the latter part of the period under review. The evidence cited above clearly shows that by the fifth century A.D., the *kulīnas* had firmly established themselves as a powerful elite social group quite distinct from the ordinary people. If the *Cūlavaṃsa*[74] account which says that Dhātusena punished the *kulīnas* who protected neither the king nor the doctrine, can be taken at its face value, it would follow that the *kulīnas* were generally expected to protect the ruler and the religion. It is also clear that the *kulīnas* owned land, perhaps maintenance villages granted by the rulers for their services,[75] and that land ownership must have provided the economic base required for them to remain as a dominant elite group.

Thus both the Lambakaṇṇas and the Moriyas, possibly along with other clan groups, constituted the nobility and they enjoyed higher social status by dint of their wealth and privileged status in administration. These groups came to the forefront at a time when the importance of the *aya-parumaka-gamika* groups was fast disappearing. However, this does not mean that the new nobility had no links at all with the upper crust of the old order. It is quite possible that the descendants of the *aya-parumaka-gamika* groups and other elites, too, were among the constituent sections of the composite nobility of the period under review. Yet, what is significant is the rise of a

72. Karunatilaka, *op. cit.*
73. *Cūlavamsa*, XXXVIII, 39-40.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Hettiarachchy *op. cit.* p. 74.

kulīna group that had close associations with the royal court and the central administration, whereas the old nobility had its own power base and territorial strength that did not always derive from the authority of the royal court. The new *kulīna* group also became the nucleus of the ruling class from which the rulers emerged from time to time, and thus we see both the Lambakaṇṇas and the Moriyas ultimately establishing themselves as the two main dynasties of royalty contesting each other for power.

In a situation where the ruling class basically consisted of the *kulinas* who were generally considered as of high birth, a relevant question is whether offices in the royal court and government always corresponded with one's caste and social position. Several commentarial passages seem to indicate that *jati* or caste was becoming an important criterion in selecting persons for high office in government. According to the *Sumangalavilāsinī*[76], the kings bestow high office on those of good birth (*rājāno nāma jāti-sampannassa ṭhānantaraṃ denti*). The *Sammohavinidanī*[77] while elaborating on qualities of persons, mentions that when four sons of *amaccas* thought of seeking positions in the royal court, one of them believed that he would be able to secure a position by being ever watchful in attendance (*upaṭṭhāna*), and the second person thought that he could succeed by demonstrating his valour (*sūrabhāva*). The third decided to depend solely upon his *jati* while the fourth relied on his ability in counselling. Eventually all four of them realised their ambitions. In another instance, the same commentary while commenting on the word *surabhava* mentions that, should a person who possesses the quality of valour happen to be of low-birth, such a person may still be awarded (high) office by having his birth purified.[78]

Though this evidence points to the requirement of having to be of high caste in seeking office in the state, the last commentarial passage seems to indicate a very interesting deviation. In this regard, the phrase 'having purified birth' (*jatiṃ-sodhetvā*) deserves special

76. *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, Hewavitarana Bequest, p. 454
77. *Sammohavinodanī*, Hewavitarana Bequest, p. 214.
78. *Ibid.* pp. 214-215.

attention. This shows that persons who did not belong to the higher castes, too, could be given positions in administration after 'having washed' (*sodhetvā*) the social stigma attached to such persons' birth. It obviously means the elevation of the social position of the persons concerned in the hierarchical order. Since such appointments were made by the ruling monarch, the elevation of the social position of those persons, too, must have been effected by the king himself.

The fact that the king had the right to upgrade or degrade the social position of a person is attested further in the *Sammohavinodanī*.[79] In referring to an incident said to have taken place at the time of king Bhātikābhaya (22-07 B.C.), on which Liyanagamage too has commented,[80] it is stated that when a large number of people who had been accustomed to beef-eating were apprehended and brought before the king, they were ordered to pay a fine. Yet, the offenders were unable to pay the penalty and hence were made to work as scavengers in the palace court-yard. As scavenging was usually the occupation of the *caṇḍālas*, the punishment meted out to them must certainly have amounted to a social degradation. The story then goes on to say that the king, having seen a beautiful damsel who was the daughter of one of those punished, invited her to his harem and made her queen consort. Consequently her relatives, too, were reprieved and they lived happily. This story which is given in the commentary as an illustration of instances where *kamma* fails to produce retribution in the case of certain persons, clearly shows that the king could not only degrade people socially, but also had the power to upgrade them in the social scale if the need arose. Although it is difficult to draw general conclusions on the basis of this limited evidence, it may be argued that it points to the possibility of social mobility for lower sections of society, at least in a limited way. Such a phenomenon is quite striking in the sense that it brings into focus some degree of elasticity that appears to have characterised the caste-based social order.

The fact that ideas of social segregation were not deeply embedded in the social order is also confirmed by a commentarial reference

79. *Ibid.*, p.110.
80. *Op. cit; Kalyani*, Vol. I, pp. 56-57

in the *Suttanipāta* Commentary *Paramatthajotikā*. It says that people of both high and low castes (without difference), shared the same pillar installed at the bathing place for the purpose of rubbing their backs.[81] This not only shows that people of both high and low castes used the same bathing place, but also that for the people of high birth it was no social stigma to share the same rubbing pillar with the people of low birth. The manner in which such groups as the *candalas* who were at the lowest end of the social hierarchy were treated by the rest of the society may also be cited as another example of this liberal attitude. The *caṇḍālas* in early and contemporary India were usually relegated as outcastes, even below the position of the *sudras*. According to early Indian beliefs, pollution by a *candala* would automatically degrade any high caste person to the status of a *caṇḍāla*.[82] In early Sri Lanka too, they were looked down upon with a degree of contempt, but the general attitude of society towards them was not as contemptuous or as hard as it had been in India. Contact with *caṇḍālas*, particularly the consumption of food prepared by them, did not lead to pollution for other groups.[83]

Although we have only a few references to *caṇḍālas* in the period under review, even the limited evidence seems to suggest that the same flexible attitude continued into the later periods as well. For instance, the *Cūlavaṃsa*[84] records that king Buddhadāsa (340-368 A.D.) is said to have cured a *caṇḍāla* woman who had been suffering from a womb defect. From the manner in which the chronicle describes the incident, it is apparent that the king performed a surgical operation to correct the defect in the womb. It is significant that even the ruling monarch, whose ritual status was apparently the highest in society, did not consider it abhorrent or polluting to touch the body and possibly the blood of a *caṇḍāla* woman, an act in the context of Hindu ideas of caste that would certainly have led to pollution.

81. *Paramatthajotikā, op. cit.* p.195.
82. R. Fick, *Social Organisation in Northeastern India in Buddha's Time*, Calcutta, 1920, pp. 40-45 and R. S. Sharma, *Sudras in Ancient India*, Second Revised Edition, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 98 ff.
83. Karunatilaka, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

In spite of this element of discernible flexibility, marriage appears to have been one area where caste did figure prominently. The *Mahāvaṃsa* in several instances emphasizes the point that the royalty who were *kṣatriyas* according to the chronicler, always had marriage relations only with the *ksatriyas*. It says that prince Vijaya refused to be consecrated as king until a suitable *kṣatriya* maiden was procured.[85] The *Mahāvamsa*[86] highlights the same requirement in the marriage of Paṇḍuvāsudeva. However, there is more definite and reliable evidence to show that this was not necessarily the case, and that marriage b between the royalty and the nobility and even other groups was quite common in the early history of the island.[87] However, as Tilak Hettiarachchy has pointed out,[88] consanguinous marriages within the immediate family circle of the royalty was increasingly becoming a common feature with the growth of royal power. Although this practice was quite common in the later Anuradhapura period when the royalty boldly claimed *ksatriya* status, the first signs of this trend is discernible as early as the third century A. D.[89] Therefore, it is quite possible that the ideas expressed in the *Mahāvaṃsa* (which was written in the fifth century A. D.) are representative of the beliefs current at the time it was written .

Though the paucity of evidence does not permit us to draw any definite conclusions about concepts of marriage prevalent at the time, the limited testimony available seems to suggest that marriage between persons of equal birth status was becoming the norm For instance, the *Sammohavinodanī*[90] states that when a person has bad qualities, even the people of equal birth (*samajāti*) refuse to have marriage bonds with such a person. This no doubt is a reflection of the common attitude of that society that marriage between

84. *Cūlavaṃsa* XXXIX,
85. *Mahāvamsa;* VII,47.
86. *Ibid.,* VIII, 17.
87. Karunatilaka, *op. cit.*
88. Hettiarachchy *op. cit.* pp. 161-162.
89. *Ibid.,* p.162.
90. *Sammohavinodanī,* Hewavitarana Bequest, p. 313.

persons of equal births status was the ideal. The story of the weaver's daughter cited above[91] also shows that one's birth status remained a strong barrier against marriage between people of high birth and those of low birth. It is noteworthy that when the marriage between the weaver's daughter and the de-robed monk eventually took place, the social position of the husband,too, was relegated to that of the wife, for according to the story, he too, became a weaver.

The delineations attempted above, point to a fundamental change that was taking place within the social organisation of the island, sometime around the beginning of the Christian era. The most significant aspect of this change was the disappearance of at least three major groups that represented one of the two parallel systems of ranking. It is not immediately clear what factors contributed to the disappearance of these groups that played a vital role in the socio-political spheres, but it appears that the emergence of a new political order, in which royal authority and the power of the central government was becoming the most crucial element that made the power structure and the functions of the traditional local leasdership irrelevant. In this new political order, officers appointed by the ruler became a dominant section in society, and the functions and duties assigned to such officers as the *amaccas* and *raṭikas* encompassed virtually all the areas in which the *parumakas* and *gamikas* were dominant in the previous period. However, this does not necessarily mean that the traditional leadership lost all of its vitality and recognition. In the new circumstances in which officers in the state were gathering greater importance and increasing social prestige, it is most probable that the traditional elite, too, preferred the more attractive new titles and posts to old titles which were now fast losing their socio-political significance.

In this changing situation one can see a clear re-alignment of social groups, a process that seems to have commenced sometime before or around the first century A.D. In this new social formation, the most salient feature was the broad-based division of the populace into two groups on the basis of birth status. Thus we learn from the

91. See *supra.,* pp. 15-17

commentaries of the people of *ucca-kula* and *hīna-kula*. The groups that were considered to have been of high birth were the *kṣatriyas*, the *brāhmaṇas* and the *gahapatis*. In this classification birth status was the most important factor in determining one's social position. Of the groups that were included in the high birth category, the *kṣatriyas* and the *brāhmaṇas* represent the traditional Brahmanic system of social ranking based on ritual status. However, the references in our sources to *brāhmaṇas* in the next few centuries of the Christian era is fewer in number, and this may be attributed to the diminishing significance of the *brāhmaṇas* in a society, which was increasingly and firmly under the influence of Buddhism. Moreover, some concerted efforts made on the part of certain powerful rulers to suppress Brahmanic religious practices, may also have contributed to the decline in the significnce of the *brāhmaṇas* as a social group.

Although there is no evidence for the existence of a *kṣatriya* caste in Sri Lanka at any time in its history, the literary works written in later times would have us believe that the royalty consisted of *ksatriyas*. The firm establishment of royal authority over the entire island with the help of a hierarchy of regional officials appointed by the king, must certainly have elevated the status of the royalty far above that of many elite groups. It appears that the Sinhalese royalty, by about the fifth century A.D., if not earlier, had assumed *kṣatirya* status or at least that it had become common belief in society that its rulers were *ksatriyas*. The consanguinous marriages within the immediate family circles of the royalty, a feature which comes into vogue from about the third century A.D., must also have made them a distinctly separate group.

The growth of royal power also coincided with the rise of a new nobility from which the rulers drew members for positions in the administration. This new nobility consisted of several clan groups such as the Lambakaṇṇas and the Moriyas and possibly the descendants of traditional elite groups of the previous period. The Moriyas at least, it is certain, belonged to the *kuṭumbika* community, who enjoyed a powerful position in the political and economic spheres in the early period. It is significant that the nobility

grew steadily over the centuries, forming a class by themselves towards the end of the period under consideration. They owned land and other resources of production at a time agricultural production was expanding fast, as a result of major irrigation schemes begun by several rulers starting from Vasabha (65 - 109 A.D.).

The *gahapati* group which in the earlier period constituted the large majority of the population including several artisan groups, also appears to have undergone a fundamental structural change. The artisan groups no longer formed a section of the *gahapati* group; instead they are grouped among those of low birth. Yet it is not certain whether all artisan groups were considered as of low birth, but the available evidence shows that a wide range of artisan and service groups were included in this category. However, it is quite possible that the *gahapatis* still continued to be the majority among the population.

One important feature of the social organisation of the previous period was the fact that one's occupation did not necessarily correspond with his social position, but this was no longer the case in the period under review, for many artisan groups are now definitely classed as of low birth. Below the position of the artisan and certain service groups were the *caṇḍāla-nesāda-pukkusa* groups who formed the lowest stratum of society. Except for the fact that the *nesāda-caṇḍāla* groups formed the lowest end of the social scale, it is not certain whether each and every artisan and service group had been organized in a precise hierarchical order, the ritual position of which was predetermined as it was in the later periods.[92] It seems more likely that it was the broader division of high birth and low birth that remained the most important determinant factor, for this is the division that is frequently referred to in many literary sources.

We have very little information on the institution of marriage in this period, but the limited evidence points to the endogamous nature of the social groups. Marriage between people of equal

92. Ralph Pieris, *op. cit.* pp. 169-179

birth status was becoming the norm and,again, the broad-based social division appears to have played a vital role, for one's birth status remained a strong barrier against marriage between people of the high birth and low birth divisions.

In spite of the fact that status of birth had become the deciding factor in the social order, the general attitude towards caste seems to have been flexible to a considerable degree. It is rather striking that even people of low birth could be given high posts in the administration, after elevating them in the social scale. What is even more significant indeed is the king's right to degrade or upgrade the social status of his subjects. It appears that at times kings exercised this discretion rather liberally. This may have led to some degree of social mobility for enterprising individuals and groups though on a limited scale. These developments must certainly have contributed a great deal to lessen the rigidity within the caste-based social system, certainly to an extent unknown in ancient India.

A. Liyanagamage

KERALAS IN MEDIEVAL SRI LANKAN HISTORY: A STUDY OF TWO CONTRASTING ROLES

The Island of Sri Lanka, situated at the tip of the Indian subcontinent, separated from the mainland by a narrow maritime corridor of twenty two miles, has been repeatedly exposed to the impact of political developments in Southern India. The proximity of the mainland was self-evident to the Island's ancient chroniclers, too, to whom it was simply 'the opposite coast' (*paratīra*). The principal architects of the Island's ancient civilization nurtured by Buddhism, were the Sinhalese who had migrated from different parts of Northern India to form settlements in the southern Island. Their language and literature, art and architecture, and most other components of their culture as testfied to by a whole range of literary and archaeological evidence spread over the centuries, point to their North Indian affinities.[1] In the course of time, however, and quite naturally in the geopolitical context, Sri Lanka came into close contact with her neighbours in the mainland of the far south. While there is a substantial body of evidence on commercial and cultural relations between Sri Lanka and South India, a more prominent aspect in the historical records of the Island are the political relations with that region, which stands out clearly with the progressive evolution of historical kingdoms in the mainland, more particularly those of the Colas and the Pāṇḍyas in the east coast of South India. These relations

1. *A Grammar of the Sinhalese Language,* Colombo, 1938, see Introduction; 'The Origin of the Sinhalese Language,' Muhammad Shahidullah, *JRAS. Cey. Br.* (New Series, 1962), Vol. VIII, pp. 108-111; see also D. E. Hettiaratchchi, *ibid.* pp. 212-217; S. Paranavitana, *University of Ceylon of History of Ceylon* (=*UCHC*), Vol. I, Pt. 1, Colombo 1959, pp. 248-268.

took the form of political adventurers from South India seeking their fortunes in the Island, wresting power and ruling for brief spells, such incidents being recorded from as early as the second century B.C. These early incursions had developed into powerful organised invasions by the ninth and tenth centuries. These developments reached a climax with the Cola occupation of Rajarata for almost one half of the eleventh century (1017 - 1070).[2]

In this paper, however, we are not concerned with these events, but with two different and indeed contrasting situations which, nevertheless, have to be placed in this broad historical perspective. We shall examine two thirteenth and fourteenth century contexts when Keralas, though not the kingdom of Kerala and its rulers, figure in the politics of Sri Lanka.

Despite her location on the Malabar coast of South India, just across Sri Lanka's northern shores, Kerala is scarcely mentioned in the early historical records of the Island. Neither the *Dīpavaṃsa* nor the *Mahāvaṃsa*, the two Pali chronicles dated between the fourth and the sixth centuries, contains any reference to Kerala or its inhabitants, whereas the Colas and the Pandyas on the eastern coast figure in several instances and more frequently in the continuations of the Pali chronicle, the *Cūlavaṃsa*. In the early history of Sri Lanka, the rulers of Kerala are never accused of invading the Island, destroying Buddhist monasteries or removing the royal treasure - charges which are repeatedly levelled at the Colas and the Pāṇḍyas, more pronouncedly at the former.[3] The Keralas are mentioned for the first time in the *Cūlavaṃsa* in a tenth century context. It is stated that a Pāṇḍya king (unnamed) left his kingdom in fear of the Colas and came to Sri Lanka with his diadem and other valuables, evidently seeking the assistance of the Sinhalese ruler, Dappula IV (924 - 935). Due to internal strife Dappula was unable to intervene on behalf

2. *UCHC.* Vol. I, Pt. 1 pp. 304-351 ; *ibid.* Vol. I, Pt. 2, Colombo 1960, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, pp. 411-415 ; C. W. Nicholas, pp. 417-426.
3. *Cūlavaṃsa* (=*Cv.*), ed. W. Geiger, P. T. S., London, 2 Vols. 1925, 1927 Eng. Tr. Mabel Rickmers, 2 Parts Colombo, 1953, L, 33-36, LV, 15-22, LIV, 44-45.

of the Pāṇḍya ruler who then sought refuge in Kerala, leaving behind his diadem and royal treasure with the Sinhalese ruler.[4] Thereafter Keralas figure in a few instances in the role of mercenaries of the Sinhalese kings. Together with other South Indians such as Kaṇṇāṭas, the Keralas seem to have formed a sizable element in the armies of the Sinhalese rulers.[5] The practice of engaging the services of South Indian mercenaries dates back to very early times, Ilanaga (34-44 A.D.) and Abhayanāga (236-244 A. D.) being two of the earliest Sinhalese rulers to recapture their thrones from their political opponents with the assistance of South Indian armies.[6] The Keralas shared this mercenary role in Sri Lanka with their compatriots. Mahinda V (982-1029), a weak and inefficient ruler who was unable to pay his troops, had to face the disastrous consequences of this practice: "All the Keralas who got no pay planted themselves one with another at the door of the royal palace, determined on force, bow in hand, armed with swords and (other) weapons, with the cry "so long as there is no pay he shall not eat." The king fled to the southern principality of Roḥaṇa while 'in the remaining parts of the country the Keralas, Sīhalas and Kaṇṇāṭas carried on the government as they pleased.'[7] Similarly the Velakkāra mercenaries who may have had Keralas too, in their ranks, raised a revolt and prevented Vijayabāhu I (1055-1110) from avenging the physical harm done by the Cola ruler to his envoys, who were passing through Cola territory on their way to the Kaṇṇaṭa kingdom.[8] It is interesting to note that, though these mercenaries were thus at times a setback on the political designs of the Sinhalese rulers, they were also at other times participants in the unification of the island. Thus, the Keralas together with other foreign soldiers served in the armies of Parākramābāhu I (1153-1186) in his campaigns for the unification of the country.[9] It is further stated that an official with the title

4. *Cv.*, LIII, 7-9.
5. *Cv*, LV, 5-6, 12; LXIII, 24; LXIX, 18.
6. *Mahāvaṃsa*, ed. W. Geiger, reprinted London, 1958, XXXV, 27 ff., XXXVI, 42-51.
7. *Cv.*, LV, 4-12.
8. *Cv.*, LX, 36-44.
9. *Cv.*, LXIX, 5-7, 17-19.

'king of Malaya' was placed in charge of the Damila army in the Rattakara district.[10] Under Parākramabāhu I the Island reached the zenith of the unification process, with his authority unchallenged and firmly estblished throughout the country. Kerala mercenaries together with their compatriots from the neighbouring territories, had been in the battle field alongside the Sinhalese armies, thereby assisting Parākrambāhu to 'unite Laṅkā under one umbrella.' The useful contribution made by mercenaries in enhancing this military strength, must have been the dominant factor in the continued recruitment of mercenaries such as the Keralas over the centuries by Sinhalese kings. It is also possible that considerations of loyalty, in the sense that they were less likely to become partners in the machinations of rival aspirants to the throne, may have contributed to their regular enlistment. The fact that the Tooth Relic which had by this time become the palladium of the Sinhalese kings was guarded by Veḷakkāra mercenaries, may point to the validity of the point made above.[11] Provided they were paid regularly as agreed upon, and as long as the rulers were competent and effective in keeping them under control, in general these mercenaries seem to have carried out skilfully the assignments entrusted to them.

From the antecedents of South Indian mercenaries in the service of Sinhalese kings, particularly the Keralas, we move on to take up for consideration a specific situation of mercenary involvement in the politics of Sri Lanka on a massive scale, where Keralas figure prominently. These events occurred in the second decade of the thirteenth century, some thirty years after the death of Parākramabāhu I(1153 - 1186) in whose armies, as shown above, Kerala mercenaries had formed a sizable element. This time the Keralas formed the entirety of an invading army of massive strength, 24,000 strong according to the *Cūḷavaṃsa*, headed by a ruler named Māgha who hailed from Kāḷiṅga, identified with the modern district of Orissa in eastern India. One can be almost certain that Magha who came from far-off Kāliṅga, raised a mercenary army in Kerala opposite the shores of Sri Lanka. In order to facilitate our understanding of

10. *Cv.*, LXIX, 6-7.
11. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* (=*EZ.*), Vol. II, pp. 242-255.

the sequence of events, it would be appropriate to cite the account in the Pali chronicle:

> But since in consequence of the enormously accumulated various evil deeds of the dwellers in Laṅkā, *devatās* who were everywhere entrusted with the protection of Laṅkā, failed to carry out this protection, there landed a man who held to a false creed, whose heart rejoiced in bad statesmanship, who was a forest fire for burning down the bushes in the forest of the good, - that is generosity and the like - who was a sun whose action closed the rows of night lotus flowers - that is the good doctrine - and a moon for destroying the grace of the groups of day lotuses - that is of peace - a (man) by name Māgha, an unjust king sprung from the Kāliṅga line, in whom reflection was fooled by his great delusion, landed as leader of four and twenty thousand warriors from Kalinga country and conquered the Island of Laṅkā. The great scorching fire - King Māgha - commanded his countless flames of fire - his warriors - to harass the great forest - the kingdom of Laṅkā. While thus his great warriors oppressed the people, boasting cruelly everywhere: "We are Kerala warriors", they tore from the people their garments, their ornaments and the like, corrupted the good morals of the family which had been observed for ages, cut off hands and feet and the like (of the people), destroyed many houses and tied up cows, oxen and other (cattle) which they made their own property. After they had put fetters on the wealthy and rich people and had tortured them and taken away all their possessions, they made poor people of them. They wrecked image houses, destroyed many *cetiyas*, ravaged the *viharas* and maltreated the lay brethren. They flogged the children, tormented the five (groups of the) comrades of the Order, made the people carry burdens and forced them to do heavy labour. Many books known and famous they tore from their cord and strewed them hither and thither. The beautiful, vast, proud *cetiyas* like the Ratnavālī (ceṭiya) and others which embodied as it were, the glory of former pious kings, they destroyed by overthrowing them and allowing

alas, many of the bodily relics, their souls as it were, to disappear. The Damila warriors in imitation of the warriors of Māra, destroyed in the evil of their nature, the laity and the Order. Here upon they completely invested Pulatthinagara and captured Parakkama, that man of great might and valour. They put out the Monarch's eyes and plundered all his treasures, pearls, jewels and so forth. Then the leaders of the soldiers with Manabharana at the head, consecrated Kalinga Mägha to the glorious royal dignity of Laṅkā.

Now after the Ruler Māgha had in this manner taken possession of the kingdom and attained the royal dignity, he dwelt in Pulatthinagara. The Monarch forced the people to adopt a false faith and he brought great confusion into the four sharply divided castes. Villages and fields, houses and gardens, slaves, cattle, buffaloes and whatever else belonged to the Sīhalas he had delivered up to the Keralas. The *vihāras*, *pariveṇas* and many sanctuaries he made over to one or other of his warriors as dwelling. The treasures which belonged to the Buddha and were the property of the Order, he seized and thus committed a number of sins in order to go to hell. In this fashion committing deeds of violence, the Ruler held sway in Laṅkā for twenty one years.[12]

The destructive dimensions of this invasion as reflected in the narrative cited above, are self-evident. Before we proceed to comment on it, it is necessary to stress the fact that the invasion was not one led by a Kerala ruler, but the massive army which wrought damage on property and inflicted merciless cruelty upon man on a scale unknown in any previous invasion, was composed of Keralas. Keralas who are called 'warriors of Māra' in the chronicle, remain as prominently accused as king Māgha of Kāliṅga. The chroniclers, some of them certainly eye-witnesses of the events, the authors of the *Pūjāvaliya* and the *Hatthavanagallavihāravaṃsa* are unanimous in bemoaning the fate which had befallen the Sinhalese kingdom.[13]

12. *Cv.*, LXX, 54-79.
13. *Pūjāvaliya* (=*Pjv.*) Ch. 33-34, ed. A. V. Suravira, Colombo, 1961, pp 108-109; *Hatthavanagallavihāravaṃsa* (=*Hvv.*), ed. C. E. Godakumbura, P. T. S., London, 1956, p. 30.

What seems to have been even more painful to them was the destruction of Buddhist monasteries and the bodiiy violence inflicted upon Buddhists, clergy and laity alike. The members of the Order including the incumbents of these monasteries, fled Rajarata and withdrew to safer havens in the south-western and central parts of the Island, while others left the country to seek refuge in the Cola-Pandya territories of Southern India. One of the monks who had found refuge in the Pāṇḍya country, namely Sīhalācariya Bhadanta Ānanda says in his *Upāsakajanālaṅkāra* (Adornment of Buddhist Laity), that it was composed in the Pāṇḍya country 'when the entire Island of Laṅkā was (thrown into) confusion by the Damila (Tamil) conflagration' which had forced him and his brethren to take refuge there.[15]

The present writer has examined in detail elsewhere Māgha's repressive regime backed by his Kerala mercenaries, and here only its long-term effects will be set out briefly.[16] The chroniclers could come to grips with the gravity of the tragedy only by attributing it to the failure of the gods to protect the Island, on account of the evil deeds committed by the inhabitants of Laṅkā in their past (births).[17] Not only did their religion suffer at the hands of the Keralas, but the entire social order also seems to have been shattered. To the chroniclers these mercenaries were none other than 'the Kerala devils' and 'the warriors of Mara.'[18] Even if it be conceded that these narratives contain elements of exaggeration, their substance seems to rest on valid ground, especially as these chroniclers had been even-handed in dealing with previous invasions, often recording what was to the credit of the invaders.

14. *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* (= *Nks.*), ed. D. P. R. Samaranayaka, Colombo, 1960, pp. 87-88; *Cv.*, LXXXI, 1-16; *Hvv.*, p. 30.
15. Ed.H. Saddhatissa, P. T. S., London, 1965, p. 37 and concluding strophes at the end of the text; see also A. Liyanagamage, "A Forgotten Aspect of the Relations between the Sinhalese and the Tamils', *Ceylon Historical Journal* (= *CHJ.*), Vol. XXV, pp. 95-112.
16. A. Liyanagamage, *The Decline of Polonnaruwa and the Rise of Dambadeniya*, circa 1180-1270 A. D., (=*DPRD*), Colombo, 1968, pp. 105-132
17. *Cv.*, LXX, 54-59; *Hvv.*, p. 30; *Pjv.*, pp. 108-109
18. *Cv.*, LXXXI, 3-4.

Quite apart from the destructive dimensions associated with the initial onslaught, it was the very nature of the regime, and what is more, its unusually long duration that aggravated its damaging effect. While the Buddhist clergy abandoned their monasteries, the nobility and courtiers as well as the common people were exposed to much the same fate. Members of the ruling class and other chieftains fled Rajarata and 'founded on diverse of the most inaccessible mountains a charming town (or) a village and dwelling here and there protected the laity and the Order so that they were in peace.'[19] Among such chieftains, 'On the summit of the Subha mountain hard to acscend by the foe, *senāpati* Subha had founded a town as Vessavana the town of *Āḷakamandā*, and dwelling here and fending off the Keraḷa devils, he protected the (surrounding) country, and the Order. While the available information on the precise nature of Magha's administrative setup is limited, the accounts in the chronicles point to a military - oriented rule: 'At that time the Damila kings Māgha and Jayabāhu had set up fortifications in the town of Pulatthi (nagara) famous for its wealth in the village of Koṭṭasāra, in Gaṅgāṭaḷāka, in the village of Kākālaya,[20] in the Padī district and in Kurundī, in Mānāmatta, and in the harbour of Mannāra, at the landing place of Pulacceri and in Vālikagāma, in the vast Goṇa district, at Madhupādapatittha and at Sūkaratittha, at these and other places and committing all kinds of violent deeds had stayed there for a long time.[21] Thus Māgha had built a chain of powerful fortresses covering mainly the north--western, northern and north-eastern littoral. He was supported at this stage by a Damila and Kerala force estimated at 44,000, it is possible that the invading Kerala army had been further strengthened by Keralas and Damilas, part of the local population at the time, who may have joined the ranks of the invader.

The foreign occupation of Rajarata lasted some forty years. Thrown into disarray, it was only towards the end of this period that the Sinhalese succeeded in organsing a centre of resistance against the invaders. Supported by the Keralas, Māgha was strongly entrenched in power at Polonnaruwa, while the Sinhalese were on a relatively weak footing in terms of both military and economic resources. Under the leadership of Parākramabāhu II (1236 - 1270), with his base of resistance at Dambadeniya, the Sinhalese finally succeeded in dislodging Māgha after a long-drawn struggle.[22] By the end of Māgha's rule, Rajarata's decline had reached the point of no return, and Parākramabāhu's efforts at restoring the glory of the ancient Sinhalese kingdom, in the long run, proved negative.[23] The *Pujavaliya* and the *Cūlavaṃsa* contain graphic accounts of the pathetic condition to which the ancient cities of Anurādhapura and Polonnaruwa had been reduced, at the time he arrived in Polonnaruwa after his victory over Māgha.[24] Politically, the annexation of Rajarata led to no lasting results. Although Parākramabāhu declared his victory over his enemies by holding his consecration at the ancient capital of Polonnaruwa, his control over Rajarata seems to have fizzled out in a few years. He carried out some restoration work at the ancient shrines in Polonnaruwa and Anurādhapura, but these offered little more than emotional satisfaction.[25]

There is little doubt that among the various factors which led to the decline and collapse of the Rajarata civilization, Māgha's repressive regime backed by the massive Kerala army, deserves to be underlined.[26] The irrigation network which was the basal pivot of the ancient Sinhalese civilization, had suffered immensely, evidently not due to wanton destruction but as a result of neglect

19. *Cv.*, LXXXI, 1-2.
20. *Cv.*, LXXXI, 3-4.
21. *Cv.*, LXXXIII, 15-19.
22. A. Liyanagamage, *DPRD., op. cit.*, pp. 130-131, 145-147, The *Sidat Sangarava* states that the waters of the Mahaveli was reddened by the blood of the Keralas when Patirājadeva (Parākramabāhu's minister) took to battle, *Sidat Saṅgarā Vistara Sannaya*, ed. Ratmalane, Dharmarama (1931), p. 216, v. 24. Another chieftain of this period, Senadhiraja Bhama, states in his inscription at Minipe; "He thus adorned the wide expanse of the earth with blood drawn out of the bodies of the enemies as if it were a thick cluster of red lotuses, and pleased the Goddess of Heroic Splendour with the play of the prowess of the arm." *EZ*. Vol. V, pp. 159, 153-154, 161.
23. *Ibid.* pp. 160-173
24. *Cv.*, LXXVIII, 90-101 ; *Pjv.*, pp. 136-137.
25. *DPRD.*, pp. 160-173.
26. *Ibid.* pp. 67-75 ; *The Collapse of the Rajarata Civilization*, ed. K. Indrapala, University of Peradeniya, 1971

and disrepair. The military-oriented regime of Māgha was ill-suited to generate the atmosphere in which the massive hydraulic systems of Rajarata could function smoothly. The latter presupposed the unchequered operation of an articulate bureaucracy, reinforced by custom and unwritten law. With the exodus of the Sinhalese nobility, defeated and confiscated of their wealth, Māgha was deprived of the backbone of the bureaucracy which was so vital to the successful operation of the irrigation-system. Apart from the physical harm done to these social groups, the deliberate disruption of the caste system may also have dealt a debilitating blow to the traditional social order.[27] Thus it may well be said that the Kerala mercenaries led by their leader Magha, dealt the ancient civilization of Rajarata the final and shattering blow from which it never recovered. And the jungle tide swept over the northern plain which had been the cradle of the Sinhalese civilization for over a millenium.

Far-reaching changes in the political scene were to follow from these developments. On the one hand, once Rajarata was abandoned the Sinhalese rulers had to set up their kingdoms farther south. Starting from Dambadeniya and moving through Yāpahuwa and Kurunegala, where they ruled for relatively brief periods, finally they reached Jayawardhanapura Kotte, close to Colombo on the south-western coast, and Gampola and Senakadagala in the central hill country. Thus within a period of some three hundred years, the seats of authority of the Sinhalese had moved from the Dry Zone to the Wet Zone. This also meant a significant change in the pattern of agriculture - from irrigated to rain-fed agriculture. Unlike Rajarata which was one extensive plain with occasional outcrops of rocks and hills, Māyārata consisting of the southern and south-western parts of the Island, and Malaya consisting of the central highlands, presented an entirely different geographical setting. The narrow stretches of plain gradually gave way to higher elevations until one reached the highest points in the central hill country. And the river systems originating in the central hill country and flowing westwards, eastwards and southwards, intersected the landscape further into

27. *Cv.*, LXXX, 75; *DPRD.*, pp. 116, 123-124.

a series of valleys and narrow plains interlocked by hills. This geographical setting, in contrast to that of Rajarata, was far from conducive to the emergence of centralized authority. Consequently one sees the rise of more than one seat of power, and more than one kingdom flourishing at the same time. Among them Dambadeniya, Yāpahuwa, Kurunegala, Kotte, Gampola and Senakadagala were the more important ones, while minor dynasties ruled at places like Dādigama, Peradeniya and elsewhere.[28] Political unification of the Island became far more difficult than in the past. Such was the geopolitical setting in the southern half of the Island after the abandonment of Rajarata.

At this time important and far-reaching political developments were taking place in the northern part of Sri Lanka. Rajarata with its irrigation systems abandoned, was no longer the hub of political and economic life which it once was, though minor settlements here and there continued to eke out an existence. Political chieftains called *vanniyars*, *vannirāja* and *vanni nirindu* in the chronicles (forest-chieftains) held sway over such settlements, owing but nominal allegiance to the Sinhalese rulers of the southern kingdoms.[29] There is evidence to show that there were both Sinhalese and Tamil chieftains, the latter possibly owing their allegiance to the Tamil kingdom in the extreme north, to which attention will be drawn later.[30] It may well be said that despite the presence of these minor chieftains ruling over limited settlements, abandoned Rajarata, exposed to the onslaught of the jungle tide, was one vast political vacuum. An important political development in the north during this period, running parallel to the rise of Sinhalese kingdoms in the far south, was the emergence of the Aryacakravarti kingdom with its centre in the Jaffna Peninsula. By the middle of the thirteenth century, Dravidians who had arrived in the Island as mercenaries of invading armies from South India, and as mercenaries of the Sinhalese

28. *UCHC.*, Vol. I, Pt. 2, pp. 614-683.

29. *Cv.*, LXXXIII, 10-11; LXXXVIII, 87-89; LXXXIX, 51-53; *Nks.*, p. 85; *Pjv.*, pp. 109-129.

30. *Cv.*, LXXXIII. 10-11; *Pjv.*, p. 116; K. Indrapala, 'The Origin of the Tamil Vanni Chieftaincies of Ceylon,' *The Ceylon Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. I., 1970, pp. 111-140.

rulers not to mention others who had migrated as traders, had grown to sizeable settlements.[31] The thirteenth century chronicle *Hatthavanagallavihāravaṃsa* refers to 'the many thousands of enemy forces with their kings, the Colas, Keralas and the like who had destroyed the world and the *Sāsana* and were living in Pulatthinagara' (Polonnaruwa).[32] We have already seen that Magha's Kerala army was originally 24,000 strong, estimated at 44,000 at a later stage. Not all of these mercenaries and other migrants from the lands of the Colas, Pāṇḍyas and the Keralas had returned to South India. It is quite likely that a majority of them settled in the northern parts of the Island, adding to the trading settlements in the ancient ports such as Mahātittha (Mantai), Sūkaratittha (Kayts) and Gokaṇṇa (Trincomalee). Just as the Sinhalese had to withdraw to the southern parts of the Island on the decline of Rajarata following Māgha's repressive regime, the Dravidian settlers had to withdraw northwards as sustenance of life tended to be more and more difficult in the inhospitable surroundings of Rajarata. Thus, for the first time in the Island's recorded history, the Jaffna Peninsula became a centre of political power, where a line of rulers referred to as Arycakravartis established their capital at Sinhanagar and ruled over a population which was then predominantly Dravidian.[33] This development had taken place around the middle of the thirteenth century and its growth is more noticeable in the next century. The origins of this kingdom are shrouded in obscurity largely due to the inadequacy of source materials. Apart from a few strophes in the *Kailācamālai* which is probably the earliest reference to its rulers, the Tamil chronicle *Yalpāṇavaipavamālai* which gives more information though in a legendary setting, was

31. K. Indrapala, "The Early Tamil Settlements in Ceylon", *JRAS, Cey. Br*, New Series, Vol. XIII, pp. 43-63. His Ph. D. Thesis (Univ. of Lond., SOAS.) is a comprehensive and dispassionate examination of this theme.

32. *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

33. S. Paranavitana, 'The Arya Kingdom in the North of Ceylon,' *JRAS.. Cey. Br.*, New Series, Vol. VII, (1961), pp. 174-224; see also S. Pathmanathan, *The Kingdom of Jaffna, circa* 1215-1450, *Ph. D.* Thesis, University of London, SOAS., 1969.

written as late as the eighteenth century[34]. The controversy among scholars regarding the origins of this dynasty of rulers need not concern us here. What is of interest and concern to us is the remarkable role played by a powerful Kerala family in the politics of Sri Lanka, as defenders of the Sinhalese kingdom which was repeatedly invaded by the Aryacakravarti rulers of northern Sri Lanka during the fourteenth century, when they had reached the height of power. This development presents an interesting historical constrast: the Keralas who had ravaged the Sinhalese kingdom a century before, are now at the centre of the political scene as defenders of that kingdom, pitched in a way against their own compatriots.

The Aryacakravarti rulers not only ruled over the entire Jaffna Peninsula but also extended their authority southwards to include the neighbouring littorals. The Sinhalese kingdom being located far south, much beyond Rajarata, and resting on a weak base in comparison to the earlier kingdoms of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, could offer no resistance to thwart the expansion of the northern kingdom. In fact the domains of the Aryackaravartis were separated from those of the Sinhalese rulers in the south by the vast expanse of territory which comprised ancient Rajarata, depopulated and abandoned by this time, forming as it were an extensive political vacuum. These circumstances facilitated the expansion of the area of authority of the northern rulers. Most valuable indeed is the brief account of Ibn Batuta, the Arab traveller who came to Sri Lanka in 1344 and met the Aryacakravarti ruler who is, however, not named[35]. The identification of persons and places mentioned in this account remains controversial, but that the 'Ariya Shakarvati' figuring there should refer to the Aryacakravarti ruler seems to be beyond doubt.

34. *Dakṣina Kailasa Puranam*, ed. P. P. Vaithiyalingam Tesikar, Point Pedro, 1916; *Kailayamalai*, ed, with summary of contents in English by C. V. Jambulingam, Madras, 1939; *Sekarasekaramalai*, ed. V. Sabapati Ayar, Jaffna 1902; *Yalpana-vaipava-malai*, Mudaliyar K. Sabanathan, Colombo, 1953; Eng. Tr. C. Brito, Colombo, 1897; K. Indrapala, *JRAS. Cey. Br.*, Vol. XIII (1969), pp. 43-45; S. Paranavitana, *JRAS Cey. Br.*, New Series, Vol. VII (1961), pp. 174-224.

35. Ibn Batuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa*, Tr, H. A. R. Gibb. London, 1925, pp. 256 ff., *JRAS. Cey. Br.*, 1882, p. 2.

His capital referred to as 'Battala' defies identification, but 'Manar Mandali' which marked the southern extremity of his domains may refer to Mannar on the north-western coast, mentioned as Mannarapattana in the Sinhalese and Pali sources. The northern ruler is described as 'the Sultan of Ceylon' who had control over the pearl fishery in the north-western coast. This would indicate that these rulers had extended their authority up to Mannar on the north-western littoral. Their control over the pearl fishery would have given them a lucrative source of revenue.

Once the Aryacakravartis were well entrenched in power in the Jaffna Peninsula, they ventured upon more ambitious designs, making inroads into the Sinhalese kingdoms located in the far south. Both literary and epigraphic evidence points to strong and effective invasions deep into the domains of the Sinhalese rulers. An inscription indited in Tamil, found at Kotagama in the Kegalla district and ascribed to the fourteenth century by Paranavitana, a ruler named Āriyan is mentioned. Though the purport of the epigraph is not clear, it seems to record a victory scored by the Āriyan, identified as an Aryacakravarti ruler. The *setu* symbol at the beginning of the record strengthens this identification. Kotagama where the inscription was found is only 13 miles to the north-east of Dadigama, where Parākramabāhu V (1344 - 1359) ruled. [36] More important information pertaining to the invasion of the Sinhalese kingdom by an Aryacakravarti ruler is found in an inscription at Madawela, in the heart of the kingodm of Gampola in the central hill country.[37] It is dated in the third regnal year of Vikramabāhu III(1357 - 1374) of Gampola. The epigraph states that the *maḍige* (transport) dues of the districts of Siṅduruvāṇa, Balaviṭa, Mātala, Dumbara and Sagama were granted to certain *brāhmaṇas* by Savulupati Mārttāṇḍam Perumāḷun Vahanse. The words *Savulupati Mārttāṇḍam* are not clear in the text and should therefore be taken with less certainty, but that the person who thus

36. H. C. P. Bell, *Report on the Kegalla District,* Colombo, 1892, p. 85; S. Paranavitana, *UCHC,* Vol. I Pt. 2, p. 642 and fn. 29.

37. *EZ.,* Vol. V. Pt.3. p.464.

granted these state dues to the *brāhmaṇas* was an Aryacakravarti ruler is virtually certain. Taken as a whole, this epigraph may be taken as adequate testimony to an invasion of the Gampola kingdom where the northern ruler had scored a significant victory, though it had by no means led to an annexation of the Sinhalese kingdom. This is confirmed by both the *Alakeśvarayuddha* (16th century) and the *Rājāvaliya* (18th century), which state that the Aryacakravarti rulers were superior in military strength and economic resources, and that they collected dues from the hill counry (*udaraṭa*) and low country (*pahata raṭa*) and the nine ports. These works further refer to the presence of the tax collectors of the Aryackravarti ruler in the Sinhalese kingdom.[38] Thus both lithic records and literary sources testify to the invasion of the Sinhalese kingdom by the northern rulers.

It is at this point when the Sinhalese kingdom had been reduced to a pathetic plight, threatened by the invasions of the northern rulers, that the chieftains of a family known as Alakeśvaras or Alagakkoṇāras, rose to the occasion and began to play a dominant role in defending Sinhalese domains against the invaders. Available information on the ancestry of and succession in this powerful family has been pieced together by S. Paranavitana.[39] Subsequently Ananda S. Kulasuriya has drawn attention to the political and economic factors behind the emergence of the Alakeśvaras and certain other important families who played a dominant role in the politics of fourteenth century Sri Lanka.[40] The first personage referred to as a minister in the Alagakkōṇāra family figures in the Kitsirimevan Kelani Inscription, set up evidently in the year 1887 of the Buddhist Era (= 1344 A. D.[41]). He is said to have been the tenth of that line. From this it would seem that the ancestry of the Alakeśvaras stretches into the past well beyond the fourteenth century. The minister referred

38. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya,* ed. A. V. Suravira, Ratna Press, 1962, p.19; *Rajavaliya,* ed. B. Gunasekera, reprinted Colombo, 1953, p. 207.
39. *UCHC.* Vol. I, Pt. 2, pp. 653-659.
40. 'Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14th century Sri Lanka,' *JRAS.,* 1976, pp. 136-155.
41. *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register,* I, (1916), p.153.

to above, is stated to have assisted the Buddhist hierarch Vilgammula in the restoration of the shrine at Kelaniya. There is ample evidence to show that the members of this family had risen to remarkable prominence, exercising authority in ministerial status, but virtually independent of the legitimate Sinhalese rulers.[42] They had also contracted matrimonial links with the Sinhalese royal family of Gampola. Three brothers of this family, namely Alagakkoṇāra, Arthañāyaka and Devamantrīśvara had been admitted to the Gampola royal family as joint husbands of Princess Jayasiri, sister of Vikramabahu III (1357 - 1374).[43] In this manner not only did the Alakesvaras virtually merge with the Sinhalese royal family but had also succeeded in wielding effective political power. According to Ibn Batuta cited above, 'Alkonar' equated by Paranavitana with Alagakkonara, is stated to have possessed the white elephant which was the emblem of supreme power. His dominions are referred to as 'empires'.[44] There is thus every reason to believe that by the middle of the fourteenth century, the Alakeśvaras had reached the zenith of their power.

A significant point which deserves to be stressed here is that the Alakesvaras, who thus dominated the Sri Lankan political scene during the fourteetnth century, did not belong to the Sinhalese nobility. As shown by D. B. Jayatilaka and Kulasuriya on the basis of the Niyamgampāya Inscription dated in the 17th year of Vikramabahu III, i.e.1374, which refers to Alagakkōṇāra as 'the lord of the excellent city of Vāṅci, crest jewel of the Vanik-(vaṃsa)', the origins of this family are traceable to Kerala.[45] It is interesting to note that this family belonged to *Vanikvaṃśa* which certain Sinhalese sources also refer to as *Veḷaṅdakula*, meaning 'trading caste.'[46] While land was the basis of wealth of the traditional Sinhalese nobility, the Alakeśvaras amassed wealth, it seems, by engaging in trade and commerce which was a new element in the economic power base.

42. *UCHC.* Vol. I, Pt. 2, pp. 644-645.
43. *Ibid.* pp. 655-657; *EZ.*, Vol. IV, 296-312.
44. *UCHC.* Vol. I, Pt.2, pp. 639-641.
45. *JRAS*; 1976, p.145.; Paranavitana had noted the Kerala origins of this family earlier, *UCHC., op. cit.*, 1960, p. 639.
46. Kulasuriya, *op., cit.,*

The fact that the Alakeśvaras were of foreign extraction does not seem to have given rise to any inhibition or complex in the members of this family, much as it had not created anxiety in the minds of the *literati* who chronicled these events. On the contrary, apart from narrating the services rendered by the Alakeśvaras to the promotion of Buddhist interests with a sense of gratitude, Sinhalese chroniclers have extolled in eloquent terms the victories scored by the leaders of this family in the battlefield, in defending the Sinhalese kingdom against invasions from the Tamil kingdom of northern Sri Lanka. It would now be possible to take a closer view of the momentous events in which the Alakeśvaras figure so prominently.

The *Alakeśvarayuddha* and the *Rājāvaliya*, the latter probably depending on the former, offer a graphic account of the conflict between the northern and the southern rulers and its final outcome:

> Of these kings (i.e. the Sinhalese king at Gampola and the Tamil ruler of the north), the Āryacakravarti, the strength of whose fourfold army and material resources was superior (to that of the others), caused various taxes and tribute to be collected on his behalf annually, from the nine ports and all the districts. In such circumstances, one day the great minister Alakesvara, surveying his army and vehicles, though "with such a mighty army as this, it is indeed not fitting that one should pay taxes to another king." Considering that a suitable fortress should be built and military operations conducted therefrom, he looked for a suitable site on which such a fortress could be built, he observed a piece of land upon which he could build a fortress of victory (Jayawardhana kōṭṭaya). There he had a lofty fortress erected, provided with cisterns and ponds for the storage of water, and consisting of ramparts and fortifications, and watch-towers and all other military requisites; around it he caused to be dug a deep moat; (in it) he stored food and drink, abundant paddy and rice, salt and coconut sufficient to serve for several years, stationed in the garrisons soldiers equipped with the five kinds of military weapons, and drove away the Āryacakravarti's tax collectors who had been posted in different places.

When the Aryacakravarti learnt of this, he became enraged like a snake struck with a rod; so he got down thousands of soldiers from the Soḷī country, summoned his own forces, and resolved to attack and capture, on the same day, the city of Gampoḷa and the fortress of Jayawardhana. With this resolve, he despatched troops in several hundred ships and another army by land. The troops that arrived by sea entered Demaṭagoḍa and Gorakāṇa and encamped wherever they were without exception. Those that came by land encamped at Mātalē. On hearing this news, king Bhuvanekabāhu who resided at Gampoḷa, was striken with fear and, unable to remain there any longer fled to the city of Raigama, with hundreds of his supporters. "What use have we of a cowardly king who has deserted an army such as ours," thought the people of Udarata (Hill country) and they, the force of Pasraṭa (the five districts of Uḍaraṭa), had consultations among themselves and surrounding the enemy camps by night, stormed into them before daybreak, slew many Tamils, and vanquished them.

Then the minister Alakéśvara rallied his forces together, mounted his elephant, broke into the midst of the enemy, slew many Tamils, ordered his elephant to crush the vessels that lay off Pānadurā-toṭa (Pānadura port) and Kolom-toṭa (Colombo port), routed them and entered the city of Raigama in triumph. King Bhuvanekabahu of Gampola re-entered the city of Gampoḷa.'[47]

From the foregoing narrative one could gain an idea of the relative strength of the Aryacakravarti ruler and his Sinhalese counterpart at Gampola. The stature and ability of Nissaṅka Alagakkōṇāra stands out in contrast to the weakness and cowardice of the Sinhalese ruler Bhuvanekābahu. The latter deserted his people in the hill country kingdom and descended on the plain to seek refuge with Alakéśvara (Alagakkōṇāra) at Raigama, at the height of the invasion.

47. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya, op. cit.,* pp. 1-3. The passage cited here is the English translation given by Kulasuriya, *op. cit.,* pp. 146-147; *Rjv.,* Eng. Tr. by B. Gunasekera, reprinted Colombo, 1954, pp. 57-58.

Once the enemy was defeated, Bhuvanekābahu returned to his capital though his own contribution to the defeat of his enemy was nil. Alagakkōṇāra built the fortress of Jayawardhana,stored adequate food and other requisites,collected troops and thus created an effective overall defence stategy. The Aryacakravarti ruler who invaded the Sinhalese kingdom both by land and sea, was decisively defeated. The invading vessels had come as far south as Pandura to the south of Colombo, and the fighting took place around Colombo at places such as Demaṭagoḍa and Gorakāṇa. The armies which had taken overland routes entered the hill country and encamped at Matale and elsewhere and attacked the Gampola kingdom. There is little doubt that Alagakkōṇāra's defence strategy and effective leadership contributed in no small measure to the ultimate defeat of the Aryacakravarti ruler. It is the fortifications erected by Alagakkonara and the sense of confidence and morale created by him during his stewardship, that enabled Parākramabāhu VI (1415-1467) subsequently to invade the Jaffna kingdom, leading to its annexation to the Sinhalese kingdom of Kotte. In other words, Alagakkoṇāra not only repulsed the northern invader when he attacked the southern kingdom, but had also laid the effective foundations on the basis of which Parākramabāhu VI, at a later stage, subjugated the Jaffna kingdom, thereby effecting the unification of the Island, for the last time prior to the arrival of Western nations in the Island.In passing it may be noted that, although medieval chroniclers had highlighted the achievements of the Alakéssvaras, modern historians, possibly in their enthusiasm to underline the greatness of Parākrambāhu, seem to bypass the significant contributions of the Alakésvaras,but for which the Sinhalese ruler's task would have been far more difficult if not impossible.

Finally it would be interesting to view 'the Kerala devils' and 'warriors of Māra', who wrought destruction upon the Sinhalese kingdom on a massive scale at the behest of their leader Māgha in the thirteenth century on the one side, and the Alakésvaras of Kerala who masterminded and led the defence of the Sinhalese kingdom against the Tamil invaders from the north of the Island on the other. One could even say that in this exercise, Alakésvaras had

led the Sinhalese against their own compatriots, in the sense that the northern kingdom at this time was peopled predominantly by migrants from Southern India, from the lands of the Colas, Pāndyas and Keralas.[48] Such a view of these events is not meant to write into them the meaning of a racial or ethnic conflict. On the contrary, it should rather take one in the opposite direction. A further point to be noted in the two contrasting situations is that, while the Keralas figuring in one destroyed Buddhsim, in the other they were its ardent supporters and patrons. The unprecedented harm done to Buddhism by the Keralas at one stage, may not be explained away by the suggestion that they were only carrying out the orders of their hirer in a mercenary assignment. At the same time it must be admitted that the Alakeśvaras were just one family working within a limited frame, though their role as patrons of Buddhism need not be underestimated on that score. In this respect, the latter were making amends as it were for the misdeeds of their ancestors.

Having lived in Sri Lanka for several generations, the Alakesvaras had domiciled themselves so completely that they had virtually identified their own fortunes with those of the inhabitants of the Island. It is worth noting that the Alakeśvaras were not the only Keralas in the Island at the time. Particularly from the fourteenth century onwards, migrants from Kerala as well as from the neighbouring South Indian territories, had formed settlements in the northern parts of the Island on an increasing scale. This development is reflected in both Sinhalese and Tamil historical sources of a popular nature. It is quie natural that in the face of growing Dravidian settlements in the Jaffna Peninsula and the adjacent areas, the Sinhalese who at one stage were the majority community in those parts, were reduced to a minority and were eventually submerged, retaining but faint traces of their Sinhalese identity. In other words it may well be said that they had come to be 'Tamilized' in the course of time. Undoubtedly the same process may have taken place in the reverse order in the areas farther south where the Sinhalese formed the

48. *JRAS. Cey. Br.*, New Series, Vol. XIII, pp. 43-63; *JRAS.*, 1976, pp. 138-140. Both Kulasuriya and Indrapala have drawn attention to the formation of these settlements.

majority. Tamil minorities living among the Sinhalese in those parts of the Island would have been 'Sinhalized' with the passage of time. The Alakesavaras were no exception to this historical process. Though their Kerala origins were not forgotten, for all intents and purposes the Alakeśvaras had virtually become Sinhalese. To say the least they had certainly identified their own fortunes with those of the Sinhalese. It is the irony of history that when the Sinhalese and the Tamils confronted each other in the battlefield, as indeed they did in the fourteenth century, the former would scarcely have known that they were not quite so Sinhala as they thought they were, much as the latter would hardly have known that they were ultimately not quite so Damila either. It is by no means fitting that this knowledge should continue to be the prerogative of historians.

D. A. Kotelawele

SOME ASPECTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE SOUTH WEST OF SRI LANKA C. 1700 — 1833

This paper seeks to examine the nature of society and social change over a period of nearly one and a half centuries. Its main themes are (1) the position of the dominant headmen and changes therein,(2) the position of castes and changes observed in the hierarchy and finally (3) the relations between the dominant section of society and the peasantry in general and the nature of changes in these relations in the South West of Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

The paper is based primarily on the official records of the Dutch East India Company and the early British administration in Sri Lanka. The evidence in these sources does not cover all aspects that need to be examined in a paper on social change. For instance, the ritual dimension of social relations is only rarely recorded if at all in official documents. For the Dutch as well as British sources are primarily concerned with administrative and commercial matters. Glimpses into society, social relations as well as social change therefore have to be gleaned from documentay sources which concern themselves with administrative and commercial matters.

The period examined is an extensive one and the changes observed therein are hardly radical. The agency for change, the foreign administration, was not concerned with changing society.

In fact the Dutch East India Company was becoming moribund in the eighteenth century and was very much a part of the ancient regime at home. The early British administration was extremely cautious of radical change. It was comprehensively contemplated only by the Colebrooke—Cameron Reforms of 1833. The Dutch administrative structure was maintained by and large till this time. Hence in illustrating the themes of this paper I have used evidence from the British sources to complement that of the Dutch.

The native headmen hierarchy was the effective enforcement agency for the duties that devolved on the *Disawe*[1], which were usually termed by the Dutch as "land services." These were primarily the services that the Dutch East India Company needed for the maintenance of law and order and the fulfilment of its commercial functions. The latter category of services consisted of the production and collection of such commodities as cinnamon, pepper, cardamom and arecanuts, as well as the capture and delivery of elephants. In addition, the maintenance of the Company's establishments in the island needed such services as the collection and production of building materials. These goods and services were regulated by the Dutch through the old Sinhalese service tenures sometimes known *as rajakariya*. These were based on the caste principle - each caste performing one or more services to the state in return for holding and enjoying land that theoretically belonged to the state.[2] In this context administration meant the enforcement of these services in the interests of the Dutch Company. In viewing this system of administration we find a whole system of related service obligations which can be broadly be classified into two. First, the one of general administration on which devolved the task of maintaining law and order and the services needed for the ordinary functioning of the system of administration which we might term general provincial administration. Second, the specialized agencies that were also based

1. Though the title of *Disawe* was a Sinhalese one, the office was held by an European officer and denoted a provincial administrator. During early British rule this changed to the title of Collector.
2. Codrington, H.W., *Ancient Land Tenure and Revenue in Ceylon* (Colombo, 1938), pp. 59-61.

on caste, and utilized for the commercial ends of the Company. The Mahabadde or the Cinnamon Department was in this category. A qualification needs to be made here, for some of the purely commercial aims not as significant as the collection of cinnamon were achieved through the agency of the general provincial administration. For example, the promotion of such crops as coffee and cardamom as well as the collection of arecanut was done through the agency of the provincial administration. The capture of elephants was in the charge of a separate headman and their care was the task of several castes coming under the provincial headmen.

The Dutch were not prepared to make radical changes in this system and this strand of Dutch social policy in the island is well illustrated by Governor Schreuder's comments regarding the attachment of the inhabitants to the institution of caste namely that the inhabitants

> are extrarodinarily high minded and are divided into various castes as regards which they make such distinction that one of a high caste will have no intercourse with one of a low, making no mention of the fact that no services of the most insignificant nature so ever might be imposed on them which might conflict with their fantastical (sic.) notions of established customs.[3]

The Sinhalese headmen hierarchy began with the Mahamudaliyar of the Governor's Gate, or the Chief Headman at the Governor's office. Being the officer closest to the Governor, the Mahamudaliyar was the liaison between the Dutch administration and the rest of the native administration, in fact even with the population in general. The Governors often consulted him on major issues concerning the population as when Schreuder appointed him to go into the causes of the widespread uprising of 1757-60.[4] Sometimes even retired Mahamudaliyars were sent to trouble spots to bring about order by the use of their local influence, as happened in the time of Van Gollenesse in 1744 in the Hapitigam Korale.[5] This officer was

3. Jan Schreuder, *Memoir of Jan Schreuder* (Colombo 1946) p. 49
4. K. A. 2904 fos. 550-565, Resolutions (secret) Jan. 9, 1761
5. K. A. 2534 fos. 76-91, G & C of Colombo to GG & C Batavia, April 30, 1745

also widely employed in the relations with the Kingdom of Kandy. The importance of these officers in the totality of administrative framework as well as in the relations with Kandy is underlined in the following statement of Schreuder :

> .... whilst speaking of the native headmen, I also consider it to be my duty to impress on your honour the necessity of appointing intelligent and trustworthy officers of the Gate since it is through that channel that much can be obtained and carried out by us....[6]

There were Mudaliyars attached to the Commandeur's office in Galle as well as the Dissawe's offices of Colombo and Matara. They ranked higher than those Mudaliyars who presided over the smaller administrative units of Korales and Pattus. The former attached to the respective European officers were the chief co-ordinators of provincial administration and the performance of the administrative chores of the Korales and Pattus, which consisted mainly in the turning out of service tenure holders and getting their services performed. In addition, they had a military function too and were in charge of companies of lascorins (native militia) under them. However, the lascorins were directly superintended over by an officer known as Muhandiram under whom were *Arachchis* each in charge of a company of 22 lascorins. Territorial units smaller than the Korales and Pattus, clusters of villages and larger villages seem to have been under headmen known as *Vidanes*, who functioned under the direction of the provincial officers mentioned earlier. At the village level the smallest headmen were the humble *Mayoraals*.

These officers were not paid in cash and their emoluments consisted of land grants to be enjoyed during their tenure of office. These grants were regulated according to the office in the following manner: a Mahamudaliyar was allowed 20 amunams of paddy lands as *accommodessans* (or land grants for service), Mudaliyar was allowed 14 amonams, a Muhandiram 14 amonams, a Korale 10 amonams,

6. Schreuder, *Memoir*, p.49

an Arachchi 14 amonams, a Mahavidana 4 amonams, a Vidane 1 amonam and Mayroaal 2 amonams as accommodessans. These and many other minor officers who were ancilliary to this organization were paid in the same manner. These land grants tended to be liberal at the beginning of Dutch rule and were being reduced to conform to one uniform regulation from the time of Governor Van Imhoff.[7]

This officialdom was broadly divided into two categories depending on the rank of the office. The first category from the Mahamudaliyar down to about the rank of Mahavidana consisted of the superior higher ranks, whose officers were drawn from the highest section or subcaste of the Goyigama caste. In contemporary Sinhalese terminology they were denoted as Appuhamys, Nambukara Appuhamys or Nanayakkaras. Dutch records define them as those who have descended from Mudaliyars, Muhandirams and Korales and were 'considered as noblemen."[8]

These higher ranks of the headman hierarchy were monopolized by a closely knit group of blood relations. (The early researches of Paul E. Peiris on Sinhalese Families amply demonstrate the close blood relationship that existed among the higher office holders in Sinhalese maritime areas under Dutch rule and even later in the early days of British rule in Ceylon.)[9] An example from the early nineteenth century when the Dutch pattern of administration through the native headmen still existed by and large is illuminating. The Mahamudliyar of the Matara District, the officer next to the District Collector was a de Saram. Next in rank to him was a brother of the Mahamudaliyar of the Governor's Gate, Colombo, who held the rank of the Mudaliyar of Gangaboda Pattu and the Four Bathgam. The Matara Mahamudliyar was a son-in-law of the above chief of Gangaboda Pattu. The ancestors of these de Sarams had held the high Office of Mahamudaliyarship

7. Schreuder, *Memoir*, pp. 50-52
8. CO 54/124 pp. 99-100, Memoir Godfried Leonard De Coste Disawe of Colombo, Dec. 15, 1770
9. P. E. Pieris, *Notes on Some Sinhalese Families*, Part III (Colombo 1911), Part IV (Colombo, n.d.)

of the Governor's Gate and other high offices for generations. The Mudaliyar of the Morawak Korale was the son-in-law of the Matara Mahamudaliyar. Next in rank in the Matara District was the Mudaliyar of the Weligam Korale, who was the youngest brother of the Mahamudaliyar of the Matara District. Both the Mahamudaliyar of Matara and the Mudaliyar of Weligam Korale were married to the two daughters of Mudaliyar de Saram of Gangaboda Pattu. The office of Atapattu Mudaliyarship of Matara was held by another brother of the Matara Mahamudaliyar.[10]

This situation was willingly tolerated by the Dutch who found the independence of this group politically dangerous at times as in the rebellions of 1757-60. Nevertheless, the Dutch were unable to take direct action to break the monopoly of this group of high officers as the following lament of Schreuder illustrates :

> I have often considered the desirability of conferring the chief posts among the natives, in respect of those headmen who have conducted themselves honourably and loyally, as hereditary appointments on their children and other descendants, and, on the other hand, of depriving all those who were found guilty of any serious offence or crime, according to the practice of the Kandyans of all posts of honour both as regards themselves and their families, but as that would take away a large number of Sinhalese gentry at present all hopes of ever attaining to any post of honour, and great discontent might arise therefrom, I cannot advise your Honour to adopt this course however expedient it might otherwise be.[11]

The strength and power of the higher officialdom was commented upon by early British administrators one of whom called it an 'imperium in imperio.'[12] Lower castes who found the officialdom an impediment to their social ambitions too found cause for resentment. Referring to this administrative stratum the leaders

10. CO 416/26 pp. 360-366, Report of Thomas Eden on Matara District, May 1, 1809
11. Schreuder, *Memoir*, p.49
12. CO 416/26, Report of Thomas Eden, May 1,1809

of the Durawa caste petitioning the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission complained that they felt the 'weight of another subordinate government formed of the Vellales (the Tamil term for Goyigama) in addition to that of Great Britain . . . . .'[13]

The strength, power and influence of the dominant section of low country Sinhalese officers were derived from many sources. As was noted earlier, they were the effective executive of the Dutch and controlled the labour organization for government services. Besides, they performed certain judicial functions too. The *Landraaden* that the Dutch established with a view to settling mainly civil disputes among the inhabitants, were requested not to function without the presence of the Sinhalese assessors who were drawn from among the highest Sinhales officers. And, during the Governorship of Van Gollenesse it was laid down that the ancient Sinhalese judicial procedures such as swearing by oil be followed in deciding disputes among the inhabitants. The officials who directed these procedures were the headmen. In addition, these headmen could also try petty disputes.[14] These judicial duties would have greatly contributed to the power and influence of the headmen.

Another source of strength of the headmen was their power over the appointment of minor headmen. This often allowed them to appoint their own relatives to offices with a view to promoting them to higher ranks later. With regard to outsiders too, this created a sense of fear and dependence among the minor headmen towards the superior headmen. Thomas Eden, the Collector of Matara in the early nineteenth century noted how interested the Mahamudaliyar of Matara was in appointments to the lower grades of headmen:

> He is certainly very tenacious of appointments of other headmen and contrives as far as he can to have something to do with inferior appointments. To keep himself and his relatives in power I believe he would do anything, as to anything else he is strictly honest and correct . . . .[15]

13. CO 416/32 pp. 282-302, Petition of Chiandos, Nov. 5, 1830
14. CO 54/124 pp. 25-29, 116-19, Memoir of Disawe De Coste, Dec. 15, 1770
15. CO 416/26 pp. 360-366, Report of Thomas Eden, May 1, 1809

The influence of the superior headmen over the appointment of minor headmen was institutionalized in the procedure of appointment of minor headmen during Dutch rule. Inferior headmen were usually appointed by the Disawe of a province, but according to de Costae, when such appointments were considered,

> ...a person applying for any of the aforesaid (i.e. offices such as *Vidanes, Atukorales, Pattangatyns, Aracchis, Kangans* etc.) offices, should exhibit to the Disawe a certificate of the Mudaliyar or Korale of the Korale of which he is an inhabitant containing a description of his caste, conduct and abilities as is the custom at present in order that the Disawe may be certain that he has not appointed any inferior servants unfit for the execution of duties or against the liking of the headmen of the Korales... [16]

Beside the various forms of administrative and judicial authority wielded by the headmen it was their wealth and the avenues of acquiring wealth that holding such office opened that contributed greatly to their power and influence. The emoluments they enjoyed by virtue of holding office were already referred to. Though these emoluments were limited by regulation from the time of Governor Van Imhoff, frequent rererences to headmen holding more than their due are encountered. Often this kind of excess holdings had its source in returned *accommodessans*. These *accommodessans* were treated often as *paraveni* or heritable private property. Attempts were made from the time of Governor Van Imhoff to strip the Sinhalese headmen of these illicitly held excess lands.[17] In addition to these holdings the headmen could obtain land grants for cultivation just as other inhabitants. In the post 1766 period, the new, more liberalised policy on cinnamon planting with a view to promoting private plantations enabled the headmen to gain even more of government land. In fact, the Mudaliyar of Salpity Korale, Don Daniel Alwis Goonetilleke Samarasinghe was even awarded a medallion by Governor Falch as the 'Best Cinnamon Planter' in 1733.[18]

16. CO 54/124 pp. 40-41, Memoir of Disawe De Coste, Dec. 15, 1770
17. Gustaaf Willem Baron Van Imhoff, *Memoir of Gustaaf Willem Baron Van Imhoff*, 1740 (Colombo 1911,) pp. 28-29; K. A. 2940 fos. 380-398, Resolutions, March, 3, 1762
18. Pieris, *Notes on Some Sinhalese Families III* pp.1-2

Being the socially and economically dominant section of the population, it was the headmen who could find the labour resources for the cultivation and improvement of such large land holdings. They used their own tenants as well as the tenants of the government for this purpose. When in 1766, the Dutch Governor requested the headmen of Matara to provide two hundred government tenants for transporting cinnamon from the Kandyan areas, the headmen raised objection to the request on the ground that these low caste tenants were already burdened with a host of other duties. But the Governor waived aside the objection saying that the headmen were concerned over the service burdens of the tenants because they used these tenants for their own private gain, indicating the manner in which the headmen obtained the services of the lower castes.[19] Perhaps the case of the Mahamudliyar of the Galu Korale (in early nineteenth century) who made full use of the tenants under his charge for private ends best illustrates the point. A petition against this officer alleged that he had built a house for each of his children by using the labour of the tenants under him. Preparation and hauling of timber, making bricks as well as preparing stone and lime required for these houses had been done by these tenants. He had also used the same source of labour for laying, planting and enclosing gardens, tending cattle, drawing toddy for distilling arrack as well as for making furniture. The same tenants were also obliged to bring presents to the officer on new year days and the wedding festivals of the Mahamudaliyar's family.[20] It was in all likelihood this kind of exaction that Schreuder referred to in the following comment on illegal levies of headmen : 'Nothing is practised by them so much as illegal exaction from the poor inhabitants, and nothing can less easily be detected or absolutely prevented than that, as they know full (sic) well how to command particular reverence among their own people.' [21] Evidently there was collusion and cooperation between the headmen and the tenants with regard to the exactions of headmen as against government services. It is also likely that the tenants regarded some of the services and dues rendered to the chiefs

19. K. A. 3067 fos. 1944-46, Resolutions, July 10, 1766
20. CO 416/31 pp. 235-247, Petition of H. E. Blok, Sept. 25, 1829
21. Schreuder, *Memoir*, p.48

as ancilliary feudal obligations coming down from ancient times and still found in the contemporary Kandyan Kingdom. The tributes exacted by the Mahamudaliyar of Galle on festival days clearly fell into this category.

So much for the main sources of power, wealth and influence of superior headmen. Ultimately, it was office-holding that led to the acquisition of power and wealth. This was specially so since the Sinhalese system of inheritance of property was such that all inheritors received equal shares. (Marriages within the kin group alleviated this situation to some extent.) This led nevertheless to the minute sub-division of landed properties, where even families with large estates would have been ultimately impoverished by sub-division. This problem was so endemic that the first British Governor of Ceylon, North, even considered the idea of introducing a form of inheritance akin to primogeniture.[22] What interests us here is the effect of this system of inheritance on the fortunes of headmen families. One important effect seems to have been the excessive dependence on office as the sole source of livelihood, wealth and influence among the well-born. The result was stiff competition for government employment which,at times even assumed sinister forms, as plotting with one's following for the overthrow of current office holders, as well as efforts to obtain office through undue influence.[23]

To be out of office meant social and economic disaster for those belonging to the Sinhalese gentry. The case of Don Juan De Alwis Weerasekera Appuhamy of Bentota illustates this phenomenon. De Alwis belonged to an ancient family of the area that had held high office. In his petition to the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission he claimed that his seventh ancestor held the highest office of the Galle district under the Dutch. Currently he was out of office and so was without means of sustenance befitting his social status. As he himself said in his appeal to the Commission '.... the petitioner who had a large family cannot preserve his reputation and obtain a

22. CO 54/2 p. 36, North to Court of Directors of the East India Company' Ja. 30, 1800
23. Schreuder, *Memoir,* p.48

livelihood by any means whatever unless he is appointed to some office under the government.'[24]

The foregoing account of the higher echelons of the Sinhalese headmen hierarchy would tend to suggest that this group formed an exclusive circle monopolizing all higher offices of the native administrative structure. This,however, was not quite so. For one thing, the highest sub-caste of the Goyigama was so numerous that the colonial power had a fair selection in making appointments. Governor Schreuder did appoint men from a wider circle despite his reservations in this respect.The widespread disaffection among the Sinhalese headmen in the rebellions of 1757-60 made such a step necessary.[25] And Thomas Eden, the Collector of Matara in the first decade of the nineteenth century, found many rivals to the Mahamudaliyar of the District among the local headmen, and built with his own patronage a rival group to what he termed "the Mahamudaliyar's party."[26] This phenomenon also illustrates how an European administration could create a privileged group loyal to its aims despite the entrenched interests of the highest ranking native power holders, a phenomenon we shall observe in the rise of caste groups in the period under review.

II

For the purpose of obtaining the services they required, the Dutch established two different kinds of relations with the castes in the southwest of Ceylon. First, the traditional form obtained from the time of Sinhalese kings and also to be found in the contemporary Kingdom of Kandy,[27] namely , that of obtaining the services of different castes through the respective superior headmen of the provinces, who were of the Goyigama caste. Second, an innovation of the Dutchs of establishing direct relations with various castes whose service,

24. CO 416/31 pp. 583-585, Petition of Don Juan De Alwis Weerasekera Appuhamy (received on Feb.18,1830)
25. Schreuder, *Memoir,* p.49
26. CO 416/26, pp. 360-366, Report of Thomas Eden, May 1, 1809
27. Pieris Ralph, *Sinhalese Social Organisation,*(Colombo 1956,) 59-102

were of special value for the Company. The system of obtaining the services of the lower castes survived despite the adoption of the second method, and the caste that came under the Goyigama headmen in this manner were referred to as 'Korale people' or people from the Korales. [28] The case of the cinnamon peelers illustrates the second method of obtaining the services by direct connections with a caste.

A few illustrations of these would be in order. In the year 1746 a person of the Durawa caste was appointed to the position of Kuruwe Mudaliyar or chief of the Elephant Department which captured and tamed elephants for trade. This appointment pleased the Durawas but was resisted by the other castes serving in the same Department. The latter refused to serve under the Durawa Mudaliyar. The result was that the Governor dimissed the Durawa Mudaliyar and once again appointed a Goyigama for the post. This displeased the Durawas who refused to serve under the Goyigama headman. As a compromise solution the Governor appointed the dismissed Durawa chief as the Muhandiram over the Durawa caste. It is reported that this solution worked.[29]

The increased building activity of the Dutch administration seems to have created the need for building materials among which was limestone, the delivery of which was the function of the caste known as Hunno. In 1759, the Governor signed a contract with the two chiefs of this caste by which the latter agreed to supply annually a specified quantity of lime in return for the service lands held by the caste as well as by the headmen.[30] The caste of fishers (Karawas) performed an important function for the Dutch by providing coastal transport, transport in inland waterways as well as by providing services at the ports in loading and unloading cargoes.[31] These

28. For an interesting dispute regarding the jurisdiction over Korale people see, CO 416/5, B3, Commissioner of Revenue to Chief Secretary, July 29, 1814
29. K. A. 2556 fos. 1085-87, 1121 Extract, Secret Resolutions of the Governor's Council, Sept. 29, 1746 and Oct. 9, 1746
30. K. A. 2851 fos. 2050-54, Resolutions, Nov. 14, 1759
31. CO/54/124 p. 100, Memoir of Disawe De Coste, December 15, 1770

services were no doubt vital to a maritime enterprise such as the Dutch Company's, and in this caste too, there were a number of important headmanships. By 1802, this caste had 2 Mudaliyarships, 2 Muhandiramships and 4 Mahavidanaships.[32]

The establishment of direct relations with the colonial administration seems to have been much desired by the castes that hitherto came under the superintendence of Goyigama headmen. The advantages in the leadership of such castes in direct relations are obvious. They meant important headmanships and the official status that went with them, greater opportunities for accumulating wealth as well as a life style akin to that of Goyigama officialdom. Consequent upon such gains in status and wealth, these castes claimed a higher status in the caste hierarchy. No doubt, it was the leadership that made these claims, but it is equally significant that they did not make these claims for their official status or the wealth that they amassed nor for their life style, but for a caste as a whole as we shall see on a closer examination of the phenomenon among the Salagamas.

The desire for castes to be placed under their own headmen away from the superintendence of Goyigama headmen under European officers is clearly seen in many caste petitions submitted to the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission in 1833. The Durawas claimed that the Goyigama headmen were trying to deprive them of their own headmen and bring them back under Goyigama dominance from the early nineteenth century.[33] The Navandannō (artificers) caste[34] as well as the washers of the Chilaw District [35] pleaded for their own headmen among other privileges.

It is, however, the case of the Salagama caste that fully illustrates the rising fortunes of a caste under the colonial regime. By origin, the Salagamas are one of the many groups who migrated to the island and integrated with its caste society. Whatever the early fortunes of

32. CO 54/49 pp. 1422-25, List of Headmen of Fishermen, June 25, 1802
33. CO 416/32 pp. 282-302, Petition of Chiandos, No. 5, 1830
34. CO 416/31 pp. 446-50, Petition of Navandanno, Nov. 17, 1829
35. CO 416/32 pp. 470-71, Petition of Washers of Chilaw, Jan. 11, 1830

the Salagamas were, by the time the Portuguese took control of the maritime areas of Ceylon,they were primarily engaged in the collection and preparation of cinnamon for the island's export trade. Cinnamon had increased in importance in the island's trade from about the thirteenth century and the Portuguese made every effort to profit by it. During Dutch rule cinnamon became the single most valued product of the Company's trade pattern in the island, and indeed it became one of the most jealously guarded monopolies. Its importance remained constant if not incresed during the course of Dutch rule in maritime Ceylon. Thus Governor Van Imhoff advised his successor: "The advantages of Ceylon are more of a political and geographical nature if the cinnamon be excluded; but if this spice be taken into consideration the scale turns at once, and no comparison with other lands is possible, because so far as is known, cinnamon is found nowhere in such good quality as in Ceylon."[36]Not only was Ceylon the sole producer of quality cinnamon, but in the course of the eighteenth century the price of cinnamon also more than doubled itself in the first fifty years and remained constant for the rest of the century.[37] After the British conquest of the island too, cinnamon continued to be a major source of revenue of the colonial government and its monopoly was abandoned only in 1833.

It was the Salagama caste, often referred to in colonial records as Chalias, who were used to cut and cure cinnamon in the jungles and in and around villages, and make it ready for export. Due to pressure on production and the consequent greater need for labour, other castes lower in the hierarchy too were drafted onto the work of the Cinnamon Department, the Mahabadda.The importance of the Mahabadda was such that the Dutch placed it under a European officer known as the Captain of the Mahabadda from the early days of their rule.

One of the earliest accounts of the Salagams under the Dutch is that of Joan Maetsuyker, the first Governor of the Dutch territories in Ceylon. At this early stage, the cinnamon peelers had been organized under four headmen known as Vidanes under the direction of the Captain of the Mahabadda. In Maetsuyker's words :

> For the peeling of the cinnamon a certain class of people of this island has been set apart called the Chjalias, a despised people among the inhabitants but to be made much of by us owing to the profits which they bring the Honourable Company and the fact that no cinnamon can be obtained except through them, wherefore they are provided with good holdings and maintenance . . . . .[38]

At this stage, the Salagamas were under the four Vidanes appointed for each of the mustering areas and the *durayas* or village headmen. The term *duraya* is customarily used to denote headmen of lower castes.

Even after the capture of Galle and Colombo by 1658 and until the end of the seventeenth century this situation seems to have continued. The instructions to the Captain of the Mahabadda of 1707, a revised version of earlier Instructions,[39] clearly state that the most important officer among the Salagamas was the Vidane. However, the rising importance of the cinnamon trade eventually had the effect of raising the importance of the caste as well as titles hitherto the exclusive right of the Goyigama headmen, came to be awarded to the Salagama caste headmen too. It seems that the first Mudaliyarship of the Salagamas was created in 1708.[40] From this time onwards the number of families holding headmanships increased and these headmen seem to have acquired a great influence on the administration as well as over the caste. This elite of the Salagamas was claiming the highest position in the caste hierarchy of the south west of Ceylon by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

36. Van Imhoff, *Memoir*, p.1
37. Posthumus, N. W. *Nederlandsche Prijsgeschiedenis, vol.* 2 (Leidena 1943) pp. 148-50
38. Joan Maetsuyker, *Memoir of Joan Maetsuyker,* (Colombo 1927), pp. 10-12
39. Valentijn Francois, *Oud en Nieuwe Oost Indien* (Amsterdam-Dordrecht, 1720) *Deel* 55 8*e Boek,* pp. 316-324
40. Sampson Rajapakse Mudaliyar, *A Memoir with a Sketch of the Salagama Sinhalese, Their Chiefs and Clans* (Colombo 1911), Appendix 1, pp. 36-7

In this manner the Salagamas found the commercial necessities of the Dutch East India Company an avenue of advancement through service. Faithful service was amply rewarded as the following Act of Appointment of a Salagama headman makes clear :

> Donatus Mageliaan Vidaan of the Chalias of the villages of Reygam, Dadaly, Magaly, and Lance Modera, as well as the Mohandiram or Chief over four ranks of Chalia lascorins, being a faithful and vigilant servant, is, by these presents, upon his urgent request, and the favourable testimony of the Chief of the Mahabadda, the Captain Lieutenant Abraham Emans, honoured with the office of Mudaliyar over the said four ranks of lascorins under the Sinhalese title of Namidirie, and with a view to further animate and encourage him in his zeal in the service of the Honourable Company, without however giving him a claim to any further maintenance or *accommodessan* than that which he already enjoys from the Honoura ble Company.[41]

The title sought was given upon the recommendation of the European head of the Mahabadda and the title itself was a traditional Sinhalese one.

Carel de Mirando was an important Salagama headman in mid eighteenth century. By 1758 he had served the Dutch for 35 years. His father did not hold any office other than that of an Aracchi or leader over a company of lascorins. Mirando's son became a Muhandiram of one of the Mahabadda districts.[42] His time in the Mahabadda was not spent in vain, and he acquired a great landed wealth, both as rewards for official service and also through private purchase. In a predominantly agrarian society the impact of great land holdings on social status cannot be mistaken. The kind of landed wealth that the headmen came to acquire no doubt greatly raised his social position. When *accommodessan* lands were granted by the government, usually the tenants too were included, providing an additional clientele thereby increasing the following of the headman. Carel de Mirando had been a hard task master over his own caste men who rose in

41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid. pp.* 20-34

rebellion against him and asked for his dismissal in 1757-58.[43] However, the Governor was so impressed with his long and faithful service that he not only refused to give in to the demands of the rebels but also awarded a medallion to Mirando for his services.[44]

At this time there were no cinnamon plantations and the Company requirement was collected from wherever it grew in the Dutch territories, as well as in the Kingdom of Kandy. By the middle of the eighteenth century a situation had developed in the Dutch territories where the shrub had declined in numbers and consequently the supplies to Europe were threatened. This induced two Dutch Governors, Loten and Schreuder, to resort to exceptionally stringent measures to resucitate cinnamon which finally resulted in the disastrous uprisings of 1757-60 that ended in the war with Kandy of 1760-66.[45] During these events the search for a policy to increase cinnamon production so as to make the Dutch territories independent of the Kingdom of Kandy in this matter, as well as to give greater consideration to the agrarian needs of the population under Dutch rule continued. These policies required the greater involvement of the generality of the inhabitants of the Dutch territories as well as the very real and effective co-operation on the part of the Salagamas. This led the government to place greater emphasis on the privileges that the Salagamas already enjoyed such as exemption from tolls at ferries, the right to ply vessels in the coastal trade of Ceylon free of anchorage dues, the free collection of salt from Hambantota and trade in the same, and exemption from the jurisdiction of ordinary courts of law. In addition, they were given greater consideration in the grant of lands for cultivation. As a result, in the last thirty years of Dutch rule in Ceylon there was hardly any disruption of cinnamon collection caused by the disaffection of peelers. Instead, the Salagamas became greatly attached to the interests of the Company, and even

43. For this rebellion and similar other see, D. A. Kotelawele, *The Dutch in Ceylon,* 1743-66, Ph. D. Thesis, University of London (1968) pp.68-88
44. Rajapakse Mudaliyar, *A Memoir,* p.8
45. Kotalawele, *The Dutch in Ceylon,* pp. 109-176
46. Kanapathypillai, V. *Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon,* 1766-96., Ph. D. Thesis, University of London (1969) pp. 244, 252, 299—300

became the instrument of enforcing harsh regulations on land They even served on commissions that reported on the suitability of granting lands for *chenas* (swidden), reported on *chenas* made illegally and supervised the destruction of garden crops that were on cinnamon lands.[46]

These new tasks gave the Salagamas an added sense of importance of the position of their caste. Thus while on the one hand they could claim that they served no other caste because of their new caste functions, they came to have a hold on the land holdings of all other castes. Thus a Salagama notable of the early nineteenth century referring to these privileges noted:". . they were masters of government forests about their districts of which a man of another caste has no right to fell a tree or clear any part without their leave and approbation . . ."[47]

There also appears to have been an increase in the number of higher titles accorded to the Salagamas. In the early eighteenth century there seems to have been only one Mudaliyarship of the Salagamas, whereas in the early British period there was a variety of Mudaliyarships.[48] At first the Mudaliyarship of the Salagamas seems to have been limited to the Interpreter Mudaliyarship as in the case of Carel de Mirando. The multiplication of Mudaliyarships seems to have occurred in the time of Governor Falck. In his time was created the office of the "Mohandiram of the Attapattu and Second Interpreter to the Chief of the Mahabadda." The person appointed to the position was Warnakoela Loewis Mendis. An year later this same person was appointed to the newly-created office of "Mudaliyar and Interpreter to the Atapattu of the Mahabadda."[49] The Atapattu is usually the native militia guard of the Governor, and this is the first time that we hear of a Salagama Atapattu guard of the Governor, this guard being usually composed of the Goyigamas. It may perhaps have been caused by the war conditions and helped by the greater desire to win over the loyalties of the Salagamas in the

47. CO 416/5 B4, Chalia Grievances by Gregory de Soysa.
48. Rajapakse Mudaliyar, A. *Memoir*
49. Rajapakse Mudaliyar, A. *Memoir*, Appendix 1, pp. 45 & 47

post 1766 period.[5] However, the net outcome is that a position hitherto set apart for the Goyigamas had been granted to the Salagamas too.

The number of higher titles granted to the Salagamas continued to increase during the early nineteenth century too, so much so, that we hear of a number of Mudaliyarships such as Mahamudaliyars, Atapattu Mudaliyars, and Totamuna Mudaliyars. In the 18th century the title of Mahamudaliyar usually denoted the chief Mudaliyar of the Governor's office, and latterly it referred to the chief Mudaliyars in the Galle and Matara districts. These offices were customarily held by Goyigamas. The assumption of the title Mahamudaliyar by a Salagama headman may have been caused by the necessity of distinguishing the chief headman of the Salagamas from the other Mudaliyars of the caste. But in the process the Salagamas had acquired at least a nominal title traditionally held by the Goyigamas. By Totamuna Mudaliyar was meant the chief headman of one of the main Mahabadda areas, usually divisions, for the purpose of mustering the peelers for work.[51]

The importance of the privileges as well as the number of headmanships in the caste which meant a sizable elite group within the caste, produced claims for a higher rank in the caste hierarchy. While the Salagama leaders at the end of the 18th century were claiming at least the second in rank in the caste order of maritime Ceylon, other accounts give perhaps the status of the caste in earlier times. Governor Maetsuyker's remarks on the caste was already referred to. Queyroz writing later in the 17th century but referring to much earlier times, speaks of the arrival of seven weavers from South India who were brought to the island by Moslem traders. This in fact is the kernal of the legend of the arrival of the Salagamas in the island. Accounts of the castes of the 18th century containing the ranking too, relegate the Salagamas rather low in the hierarchy. For example, Governor Loten's account ranks the Salagamas 7th in rank after fishers, Durawas and various groups of artificers.[52]

50. *Ibid*
51. Rajapakse Mudaliyar, *A Memoir*, pp. 3-4
52. J. G. Loten, *Memoir of Joan Gideon Loten* 1752, (Colombo 1946), p. 29

The most prolific propagandist for higher status for the Salagamas in the early 19th century was Adrian de Abrew Rajapakse, the chief Mudaliyar of the Salagamas. It seems that the necessity of propaganda, especially among the' European officials for the good of one's own caste has been realised by other castes as well. For instance, the petition from the Durawas in 1833 lamented that European accounts of castes in the island had been heavily biased against their caste in that most were influenced by the Goyigama view of caste status. The Goyigamas, who were closest to the European officialdom, naturally had influenced the accounts of caste. To counter this position, the petitions sent by the Durawas, one in 1807 to the Governor and another to the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission, contained an endorsing note from Pieter Sluysken who was an important one time employee of the Dutch in Ceylon, and who was still resident in Colombo. Sluysken in his note, gave an account of the privileges enjoyed by the Durawas under the Dutch.[53]

Mudaliyar Rajapakse as well as his father had been long standing servants of the Dutch in the Mahabadda, and had cultivated the friendship of some important members of the Dutch community living in Colombo. The one time Captain of the Mahabadda and later Commandeur of Galle, Diderick Thomas Fretsz was Disawe of Colombo at the time of the transfer of Dutch territories to the British. Both Fretsz and his son-in-law Rev. David Mayer, clergyman of the Dutch Reformed Church, were closely fraternising with the Rajapakses. In fact Rev. Mayer gave the Rajapakses a certificate stating their favourable disposition towards the Europeans and the Dutch in particular. It was in fact Thomas Fretsz who introduced the Rajapakse Mudaliyar to Greenhill, the first Superintendent of the Cinnamon Department under the British. The Rajapakses were promptly employed as the chief headmen of the Mahabadda under the new dispensation.[54]

The Rajapakses utilized these connections to promote the status of the Salagama caste. De Abrew Rajapakse succeeded in gaining

53. CO 416/32 pp. 282-302, Petition of Chiandos, NOv. 5, 1830
54. Sampson Rajapakse Mudaliyar, *op. cit.* Appendix 1, pp. 81-83

the friendship of Joseph Jonville who for a time was the Superintendent of the Cinnamon Plantation in Maradana in 1800 and later became the Superintendent of the Cinnamon Department, a position he held until the end of North's Governorship. In a letter addressed to the journal, *Asiatic Researches*, Governor North forwarded "an essay on the Religion and Customs of the Cingalese, drawn up by Mr. Jonville. . ." dated 27th September 1801.[55] But it was only in December 1800 that Jonville had confessd his total ignorance of the work of the Cinnamon Department itself.[56] Jonville's ignorance has been made good by his friend Rajapakse Mudaliyar. For the paper purporting to be authored by Jonville in *Asiatic Researches* has a section entitled "Abridgement of the History of the Chalias by Adrian Raja Pakse, a Chief of that caste."[57] The ubiquitous Rajapakse Mudaliyar has given this same account to Edward Upham for the latter's own publications.[58] In volume III of this work there is "A doctrinal tract communicated by Rajapakse" which contains the account of Salagama origins. It is almost the same as that of Jonville's in the *Asiatic Reaserches* but for a few discrepencies in detail.

Editor Upham says that the translation he was publishing was from originals collected by the antiquarian first Chief Justice of Ceylon Sir Alexander Johnston, which makes this account contemporaneous with the one published by Jonville.[59] There is among the papers of the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission on the Mahabadda, a 'History of the Mahabadda, and its establishment on the island of Ceylon' given by one A de A Rajapakse, 'copied from the Report of the Church Missionary Society.'[60] This means that the Rajapakse

55. See *Asiatic Researches* Vol. 7 (1803), p. 397
56. CO 416/5 B-12, letter, Jonville to North, Dec. 24, 1800
57. *Asiatic Researches* Vol. 7 (1803), pp. 438-444
58. Upham, E. *The Mahavansi, Raja-Ratnacari and the Rajavaliya, forming the Sacred and Historical Books of Ceylon; Also a collection of Tracts Illustrative of the Doctrines and Literature of Buddhism: Translated from the Sinhalese* (London, 1833) *Vol.* 3, *Preface p.* 111
59. *Ibid.*
60. CO 416/5 B2

Mudaliyar had indeed been at work among the missionaries too. Chief Justice Alexander Johnston was presented with a flag of the Salagamas by Rajapakse Mudaliyar who impressed on Johnston that the painting on the flag was, "the most ancient painting in Ceylon," and Johnston's impression of Rajapakse was that he was, "one of the most informed men in Ceylon."[61] The Mudaliyar was often successful in his aim. For instance, Jonville's paper in *Asiatic Researches* ends with this favourable endorsement: "It is certain that the Saleas, at present called Challias, descended from a very high caste, and they have always been held in great estimation., having except in late time been constantly exempted from paying taxes, and enjoying great honours."[62]

This propaganda activity announced the 'arrival' of the Salagamas and claimed for themselves a higher status. The status of the caste in the Dutch East India Company organization in Ceylon had the effect of raising the importance of the caste. This connection, along with the fact that the caste was not involved in inter-caste service relations helped the growth of a proud caste identity. The Salagama position in inter-caste service relations is thus emphasized by Rajapakse Mudaliyar: "The whole caste of the Mahabadda are solely occupied in performing the Government Service and their own agricultural views (sic.); as they will serve no other caste however poor they may be."[63] As for the growth of a strong caste identity priding itself on its status, a Superintendent of Cinnamon Plantations thus summed up the development :

> ... and the caste though not first in rank, and liable to constant service, from the numerous privileges, presents and assistance they enjoyed, the preference and marks of distinction shown them by the Government, the rewards and honours bestowed on all those who increased the cultivation, the almost veneration and respect the natives were brought to bear on the (cinnamon) plant, raised in them a laudable pride in their caste and services.[64]

61. Johnston, Alexander: An Account of a flag representing the introduction of the Caste of Chalias or cinnamon peelers in Ceylon, *Transactions RAS, (GB&I)*, Vol. 3. (1835). pp. 332-34
62. Joseph Jonville, *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. 7 (1803). pp. 440-446
63. CO 416/5 B-2

The independence of the Salagamas as a caste free from enmeshment in the service obligations of the caste organization is a point worth emphasizing. This is best done by comparing the Salagamas with a caste that was deeply embedded in traditional caste services. The case of the washers is illuminating. Their services were required by society for ordinary day-to-day needs as well as ceremonies, official as well as ritual. A group of washers who were converts of the Dutch Reformed Church Christianity, appealed to the Dutch Governor in 1759 to be allowed to wear coats and hats for men and stockings for women of their group, and to have the privilege of travelling in palanquins and of using umbrellas, referring to similar privileges they enjoyed under the Portugueseand their caste myth of origin at the time of King Gajabahu.[65] In the early nineteenth century a group of washers from Chilaw refused to serve one of their client castes, the barbers. A court case ensued in the Provincial Court of Chilaw, and the Court upheld that the washers were obliged to render their customary obligations to the barbers. The washers appealed against this decision to the Governor who set aside the Court's decision and laid down that the service arrangements were purely voluntary matters. At the time of the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission, the washers appealed for the same privileges that the Christian washers of Colombo enjoyed. They also asked to be placed under their own headmen, and refused once again to render the customarily enforced services to the other castes: "That it is certainly a duty incumbent on all castes of people to serve the Government respectively according to custom, but the practice of compelling one caste to serve another is injurious." The petitioners further requested: "That the washer inhabitants of Colombo, having access to the honourary ceremonies such as using carriages, palankeens, talipots, umbrellas, shoes and other necessary things, we

64. CO 416/5 B-3, Report of J. Maitland, Aug. 25, 1814
65. For an analysis of the Gajabahu myth as used by some groups see, Obeysekera, G. "Gajabahu and the Gajabahu Synchronism", in *The Ceylon Journal of the Humanities*, vol. 1 Part 1, pp. 35 ff.

therefore humbly pray, that we may also be allowed the same privileges as are allowed to the said washer inhabitants of Colombo, and other castes, that we may use the necessary dress etc. as far as lies in our power." They further said that even though as a result of an earlier appeal of this nature these pivileges were granted they were "still persecuted."[66]

The case of the washers is illustrative of the difficulties that a caste enmeshed in inter-caste service obligations faced, first, in disengaging themselves from the traditional obligations, and second, in winning the symbols of status jealously guarded by higher castes. Even though the Governor declared the services of the washers a matter of mutual voluntary arrangement, it seems this had not been recognized as such by the patron castes of the washers; and though certain sumptuary rights had been granted by the Governor insistence on caste services had continued.

The connection of the Salagamas with Buddhism in the island is another area where their 'arrival' was well pronounced. The growth of an elite within the caste seems to have been the primary cause of it. The newly acquired wealth and also leisure in the new positions enabled leading Salagama families to patronize traditional learning and take an interest in the revival of Buddhism in the island as a result of the activities of the Kandyan monk Velivita Saranankara. This revivalism begins in the middle of the eighteenth century. The spread of the new revived interest in Buddhism as well as in ancient learning in the Salagama caste, can be well observed in the work of Rajapakse Mudaliyars, father and son. The account of the origins of the world and the account of caste given in Upham's was compiled by the elder Rajapakse Mudaliyar and given to Governor Falck. This account shows a good knowledge of the ancient Pali and Sinhalese literature of the island. The younger Rajapakse inspired the work of Jonville. The latter's work revealed a similar acquaintance with ancient learning — clearly that of Rajapakse Mudaliyar.

66. CO 416/32, pp. 470-71, Petition of Washers (Presented on Jan. 11, 1830); CO 416/32, Petition of Chiandos, Appendix C by Pieter Sluysken.

In fact the Mudaliyar was very much aware of developments in the literary circles of contemporary Kandy, for Jonville's account refers to the recent completion of the "researches in the archives of the King of Kandy" by the Kandyan monk Tibbotuwawe. This is undoubtedly a reference to the completion of the latter part of the ancient historical chronical, *Mahavamsa*, by Tibbotuwawe.

The foundation of the Amarapura fraternity of the Buddhist order in 1800 after many preliminary failures, was in this way a clear sign of the growth of an affluent and literate strata within the Salagama caste. This can also be interpreted as a conscious imitation of the relations between the Kandyan Buddhist establishment and the laity as well as kingship. The ancient Sinhalese Buddhist historiography of the island saw Ceylon as the chosen land where the doctrins of the Buddha would be preserved in all its purity. From here developed the concept of *Dharmadvipa* according to which the destiny of the Sinhalese was inextricably intertwined with that of Buddhism.[67] Royalty in Ceylon, consequently, strove to patronize Buddhism and its establishments in order to legitimize their rule. The Nayakkar kings of Kandy who ascended the throne in 1739 were great patrons of the Buddhist establishment. In their lavish patronage of the Buddhist order, we notice the strenuous efforts of a foreign dynasty trying hard to legitimize its claims to kingship in the Kandyan Kingdom. The Kandyan aristocracy too were lavish patrons of the Buddhist order, and they were as a group connected by blood relationships with the Buddhist hierarchy.[68] The model of the relations between the king and the aristocracy of Kandy would certainly have stimulated the aspiring leadership of the Salagamas to establish their own fraternity of the order of Buddhist monks. And just as the monk - authors of the chronicle *Mahavamsa* tried to relate the fortunes of the Sinhalese with those of Buddhism, the Salagama propagandists tried to connect the arrival and establishment of the Salagamas in the island with

67. Perera, L. S., "Pali Chronicles of Ceylon", in Philips, C. H., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London 1961), pp. 33-40

68. Kotelawele, *The Dutch in Ceylon*, pp. 42-51

the important events of the island's history, the arrival of the Sinhalese and the formal introduction of Buddhism to the island.[69]

However, the immediate cause for the establishment of the Amarapura fraternity by the Salagamas was the refusal on the part of the Kandyan religious establishment to admit lower caste candidates into the order of monks. The reason for this was the Goyigama dominance of the Kandyan social, political as well as religious establishments. Certainly castes in the lower ranks seem to have treated the close connection with the Buddhist order as a mark of prestige. For instance, the ordaining of few candidates of lower castes during the initial enthusiasm of the religious revival under Saranankara seems to have been treated by such castes as a bestowal of status or at least recognition of it. For example, the Durawas while petitioning the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission claimed that their higher status as a caste was evident from the "fact of the Chiandos being the only caste of people to whom the sacred ordination (Upasampada) to the priesthood of the Budhoo was allowed by the late Kandyan Court to be obtained except the Vellales." [70] In this mental climate the establishment of the Amarapura fraternity can be seen as a mark and proclamation of the new status of the Salagamas.[71]

At this point it is expedient to examine the self image of the Salagamas as conceived and projected by their headmen. This is best done by analysing the 'History' of the Salagamas compiled by the Rajapakse Mudaliyars, father and son, in Upham's work as well as Jonville's publication. Jonville's paper begins with an attempt to unravel the chronology of the ancient history of Ceylon, and an account of the arrival of Vijaya, the legendary fore-father of the Sinhalese. After that there is a short account of Buddhist clergy followed by a brief description of the classical Hindu castes, Kings, Brahmins, Merchants and 'Tshoudras'. The interesting feature

69. Upham, *op. cit.*; Jonville, *op. cit.*
70. CO 416/32 pp. 282-302, Petition of the Chiandos (presented on Jan. 11,1830)
71. For the establishment of the Amarapura fraternity see: Malalgoda K., *Sociological Aspects of Revival and Change in Buddhism in Nineteenth Century Ceylon,* D. Phil Thesis, Oxford University (1970), pp. 137-144

of this account is the inclusion of a category of Brahmins, "who were manufacturers of silks and stuffs" known as Pesakara Brahmins or weaver Brahmins, This is an obvious attempt to give the Salagamas in Ceylon who according to the legend were originally weavers, a Brahmin ancestry. The Hindu classical order, however, was not extant in Ceylon: "But as all these castes are the castes of ancient and fabulous times, they can only be said at present to exist in books.'

The account then goes on to describe the caste order as found in the contemporary Kingdom of Kandy. The significance of this section, however, is in the evidence it affords on the caste controversies in the lowlands than for the information it provides on the Kandyan caste order. Regarding the highest ranking Goyigamas in Kandy, Jonville's account admits to their primacy in the hierarchy thus: "they alone hold high office of state there."; but the Goyigamas are referred to as those attached to marshes fit for paddy and also as labourers in an obvious attempt to classify them under the classical Sudras. As for the next in rank in the Kandyan Kingdom, the account says that there is a dispute between the fishers and the Salagamas. However, "The fishermen or Karawe cannot be of much importance in Candy, as the Candians at present can only fish in the rivers of that Kingdom." In actual fact both the Salagamas and the Karawas were only minor caste groups with not so high a status in the Kandyan Kingdom.[72] This view of the Salagamas and the Karawas being in conflict for the second rank in the Kandyan hierarchy of castes is merely a reflection of the controversy going on in the lowlands.

With regard to the lowlands we might have expected the Rajapakses to give a more detailed description of castes, for they had direct experience in the lowlands. But here we encounter an unwillingness to dwell upon the subject in these words: "In the part of the island belonging to the English there is a difference in the caste (sic.) but so confused, as to make it difficult to give an exact idea of them; the precise line between them not having been drawn

72. Pieris, ***Sinhalese Social Organisation,*** pp. 100, 177, 180, 176

in this part of the island. For the last twenty years, the Salagama or Saleas or Mahabadda have lost with their privileges, the priority which their utility entitled them to over the Vellales." The statement nevertheless grudgingly admits the precedence of the Goyigamas later on.

The version in Upham's work, by the senior Rajapakse Mudaliyar, gives the order of castes in lowland Ceylon as Goyigama, Salagama, Karawa, Durawas etc., and continues; "Among other castes, the Vellales and the Chalias contend who are the most honourable, but though the first say we are high, and the second say we are high, it must be acknowledged that, according to the usage which obtains in Ceylon, the Vellales is the highest (sic.) of the two." [73]

Another important feature of the Salagama legend in Jonville's account as well as in Upham's is the effort to connect the origin of the Salagamas with important events in Sinhalese history presented by the Buddhist historiography of the island. According to these accounts, the first of the Salagama migrants referred to as Pesakara Brahmanas came to the island with Vijaya, the legendary founder of the Sinhalese nation. The next migration of the Pesakara Brahmanas was at the time of King Devanampiyatissa, during whose time Buddhism was officially introduced to Ceylon. These two sets of immigrants, however, were not the direct ancestors of the Salagamas of the period we are concerned with, according to our accounts. They are said to have lost their skills in making cloth and gradually mingled with the agriculturists. Direct ancestors of the nineteenth century Salagamas arrived in Ceylon in the thirteenth century according to these accounts.[74]

The intent of this part of the Salagama legend must have been first, to claim brahmin ancestry, and second to connect the important events of the Salagama tradition with the important events in the

73. "A short description of the different castes on the island of Ceylon in, Upham, *op. cit.* pp. 333-354
74. Upham, *op. cit.*. pp 354-369; Jonville, *op. cit.* pp. 440-446

history of Ceylon according to Sinhala Buddhist historiography. There is an identical effort made by the Durawas too in their petition to the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission. One of the conclusions to emerge out of a study of another similar legend utilized by certain castes and groups in Ceylon, was that the group legend or myth was used by migrant groups to the island as a mechanism of integration into the social organization in the island.[75] No doubt the Salagama legend too performed a similar function originally.

It is useful to compare the Salagama view of themselves with that of others. Gavin Hamilton was the Agent of Revenue and Commerce of the Colombo District at the turn of the century under British rule. He thought that the privileges enjoyed by the Salagamas were detrimental to the revenues and inimical to social harmony, and feared that the tenaciousness with which the Salagamas defended their privileges would undermine the authority of the government. He wrote to the Board of Revenue and Commerce :

> I beg also to submit to the Board whether there is not much bad policy in thus separating a class of men from their fellow subjects, and whether a trifling advantage (the existence of which I must however dispute) should be sufficient to induce Government to disgust the body of the natives by a continuance of the privileges of the Chalias, and to perpetuate a dislike that exists between them and of other classes, occassioned on the one hand by a jealousy and on the other hand by the insolence natural to the favoured sect.[76]

Anthony Bertolacci was more out-spoken in his view of the claims of the Salagamas: "The importance of their present employment under the government has rendered them ambitions, and it is difficult to rule them. Prone to insult the castes which are superior

75. Obeysekera, G. "Gajabahu and the Gajabahu Synchronism", *The Ceylon Journal of the Humanities, Vol.* 1, (Jan. 1970) pp. 25-56
76. CO 55/48 p. 172, G. Hamilton to the Board of Revenue and Commerce Jan. 20,1802. Also same to same, CO 55/49, pp. 1063-67, May 13, 1802.

to them they have long aimed at attaining the privileges of the Vellales." [77]

Bertolacci's comment indicates the direction in which the Salagama caste had been moving, namely towards the status of the Vellales or Goyigamas. Rajapakse Mudaliyar's comment on the contest for honours between the Salagamas and the Goyigamas corroborates this. It is worthwhile to record the view of a Goyigama Mudaliyar from the low country to complement the picture. The Fourth Mahamudaliyar of the Governor's Gate in compiling a list of castes in the order of precedence, relegated the Salagamas to the tenth place.[78] The contemporary Kandyans saw social mobility in the lowlands in the following manner in a request to the British immediately after the conquest of the Kingdom by the British:

> The low country Modr.s (Mudaliyars) of Karawe, Durawe, Halagama and other Low castes have been created, and accustomed there to travel in Palanquins. In the Kandyan country, such things are never permitted.... & they (the Kandyan chiefs) request, that no person of these low castes be allowed to assume such honours within the Kandyan territory, but only the niyams (Sinhalese meaning genuine) Mudiyansela (nobility) of the Goyigama.[79]

The upshot of the changes in the caste order, best illustrated by the rise of the Salagamas, is that the idea of a hierarchical order of castes accepted by consensus came to be thrown into confusion. The elder Rajapakse Mudaliyar's comment on the situation best illustrates the point: "But it is not only between the Vellale and the Chalia castes that there is a contest for honour; the fishers and the

77 Bertolacci, Anthony, *A View of the Agricultural, Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon* (London 1817)., Bertolacci seems tohave adopted words of De Meuron's Report of 1798. c.f. CO/55/2 p. 164, De Meuron's Report, Nov. 3, 1798.

78 CO 59/27 pp. 45-55, Report of the Fourth Mahamudaliyar, June 8, 1818

79 *Special Publication Issued by the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.* Vol. XXV, No. 69 (Colombo 1977) "D'Oyly's Diary", p. 240

Chiandos are equally jealous of one another; and from thence down to the Rodiya there is a constant strife among the Sinhalese for honour."[80] Then there is a petition addressed to the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission from a group whose caste identity is uncertain, claiming: "There are those of low birth living in this island from ancient times, and from those times as well as the time of the Hollanders appropriate custom and practice have been observed. But this government(i.e. the British)has allowed the violation of such customs and practices and those of low birth are doing as they please."[81] These petitioners saw even the period of Dutch rule as one in which the proper order was maintained and wanted the Commissioners to revert to the disregarded "correct forms."

This uncertain situation regarding the status of castes in the hierarchy caused violent caste controversies in mid and late nineteenth century.[82] In fact the publications inspired by the Rajapakse Mudaliyars may be regarded as the opening shots in this battle of castes.

VI

We have so far been concerned mainly with the changes in the status of elite groups in the caste society of maritime Ceylon. Now let us consider the relations between this stratum of society and the generality of the peasantry, in order to determine the nature of changes in these relationships. The patron-client model of vertical social integration found useful in analysing many peasant societies,

80. Upham, *op. cit.* pp. 333-354

81. Co 416/29 pp. 479-490, Petition signed by some 713 persons, July 2, 1829; For a petition of similar tone see, CO 416/29, pp. 342-47; Petition of some Vellales of Matara, June, 9, 1829; see the following petitions which complain of the privileges acquired by the lower castes among other matters, CO 416/29 pp. 397-404, Petition o some 13 inhabitants of Galle, June 12, 1829; CO 416/29 pp. 389-96 Petition of some 33 persons from Bentota, June 20, 1829

82. *Ibid.*

and recently applied to South East Asia by James C. Scott [83] is of apt relevance in considering the changes in Ceylon.

Peasant life in Ceylon as elsewhere, was dominated by extreme scarcity which finally determined the peasant's social relationships. The peasant's access to land was limited; he had his own and his family's labour for exchange; but the productivity of this labour was low due to such factors as poor technology and lack of capital, marketing information and credit.[84] Furthermore, there were dangers from the environment, disease, accident, and dangers from human sources such as exploitation and injustice. To meet these circumstances the peasant builds mechanisms for protection as well as for advancement.[85] These mechanisms for preservation and advancement are threefold. First, kinship networks, secondly, village or hamlet solidarity and third and most important, patron-client ties.[86]

The populace in the south west of the island depended on paddy, chenas and garden crops for its food needs. But this sector of the island was chronically short of the food supply, and there is evidence that there was a growth of population through the early and mid eighteenth century. [87] Dutch Governors were conscious of this situation since rice had to be imported to the island to meet subsistence requirements. For instance, Governor Van de Graaf tried to make the Dutch territories self-sufficient in food supplies by renovating the ancient irrigation systems in the north west of the island. These efforts did not produce any appreciable results. So were the efforts of the British Governor Maitland. During his governorship Lieutenant Schneider was commissioned to report on the general condition of agriculture in the British territories. Schneider's reports pointed out the main problems facing the agriculturist such as lack of capital, the dilapidated state of irrigation systems, lack of storage facilities and even the lack of seed paddy needed to start a new agricultural season.[88] While subsistence agriculture was in a bad way, the policy of the Dutch administration[89] and that of the British to encourage cash agriculture did not help to improve the lot of the peasant. Natural hazards too continued to bring havoc on the lives of the peasantry. The years 1747 - 49 provide good examples of the kind of natural disaster that the lowlands of Ceylon were typically subjected to. The year 1747 saw such a poor harvest that the Dutch authorities pleaded with the Kingdom of Kandy to send to the lowlands as much paddy as possible for the relief of the lowlanders. Bad harvests were followed in the lowlands by a smallpox epidemic and "pestilent fever" (probably malaria), which ravaged the entire south west lowlands "between Kalpitiya and the river Walave." These calamities were followed towards the end of 1748 by heavy rains and resulting floods that did great harm to agriculture.[90]

In such circumstances it is not surprising that most institutions of protection and advancement found in other peasant societies, were present in Ceylon too. Obeysekere's study of Sinhalese land tenure from about the end of the eighteenth century has shown that the typical Sinhalese village was a property-holding corporation of blood relations.[91] The system of inheritance based on strict egalitarianism ensured inheritors an equal share of the land, thus attempting to equalize poverty, a feature of many peasant systems.

83. James C. Scott, "The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds and Social Change in Rural Southeast Asia", *Journal of Asian Studies,* XXXII, No. I (Nov. 1972) pp. 5-37; See also, Werthein, W.F., "Patrongage, Vertical Organisation, and Populism" in B Endo, H. Hoshi and S. Hazuda (eds.) *Proceedings, VIIth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, II,* Tokyo/Kyoto, 1968), pp. 16-18
84. For the particular conditions that dissuaded the peasantry of the south-west of Ceylon from taking to cash crops under the Dutch, see, Kotalawele, *AAG Bijragen* 14 (1967), pp. 4-16
85. John Duncan Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientalist Politcs, *American Politaical Science Review,* Vol. LXIV No. 2 (June 1970) pp, 411-12.
86. Scott, *op, cit. pp.* 114-15 Powell, *op. cit.* pp. 411-412
87. Kotelawele, *op. cit.,* pp. 20-21
88. Dixon, Wills, C. *The Colonial Administration of Sir Thomas Maitland,* (London 1939) pp. 56-7; CO 54/124 fos. 198-210, Schneider's Report on the District of Galle, Oct. 21, 1808
89. Kotelawele, *op. cit.* pp. 4-16
90. Kotelawele, *The Dutch in Ceylon,* p. 191
91. *Obeysekera, G. Land Tenure in Village Ceylon* (*Cambridge,* 1967)

Village or hamlet solidarity seen in shrines, communal offices and property were common in the Ceylon context too. The lowliest of the officials at the village level was the Mayoraal who performed many tasks for the village.[92] The communal property of the village such as common land for cattle-grazing as well as timber for the household needs of the villager, was a feature coming down from the ancient structure of a village. [93] The village shrine too was a legacy of ancient Ceylon from the days of flourishing Theravada Buddhism. Village rituals that expressed the solidarity of the village, even cutting barriers[94] too, were of ancient vintage.

Such mechanisms of security were inadequate and the peasants built ties of vertical solidarity as well. These ties have been termed patron-client relations: the patron, an individual of higher socio-economic status, uses his influence and resources for the protection and benefit of a person of a lower status, his client, who reciprocates by offering general assitance, including personal services to his patron. The distinguishing features of this relationship have been defined as having had as its basis, inequality and diffuseed flexibility as a system of personal exchange. [95]

The patron class in the south west of Ceylon consisted of the headmen of the higher grades, both provincial and caste. The peasantry were either direct tenants of the government, holding government lands in lieu of various services to the state, or tenants of the headmen in their *accomodessan* lands (lands granted to headmen for government service). The kind of power wielded by the headmen and their social status was dealt with earlier. Suffice it here to note the clientele of an important headman by way of an illustration. In the course of answering the questionnaire for the Colebrooke-

92 For the duties of the Mayoraal see, Van Imhoff, *Memoir*, p. 28

93. Obeysekera, G., "The structure of a Sinhalese Ritual", *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 2 (July 1958) pp. 192-202 For the prevalence of this ritual in 18th centrury see, Wachissara K., *Velivita Saranankara and the Revival of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Ph. D. thesis, Univeristy of London (1961), pp. 163-68

95. Scott, *op, cit.* p. 8; Powell, *op, cit.*. p. 412

Cameron Commission, Johannes Corea Wijesekera Abeyratne Mudaliyar of the Alutkuru Korale gave the extent of his resources and following. He claimed that he owned about 227 acres of land in the Colombo and Chilaw Districts. Of these 100 low-lying acres were planted with paddy, 25 acres with coconut, Jak and arecanut, 90 acres with young coconut trees, about 10 acres with coffee, cotton, pepper and cardamom, in response to a call by the Governor, and two acres unfit for cultivation were lying fallow. These lands were mostly cultivated with the labour of 'domestic servants' who could be easily obtained by headmen, according to Corea. This labour force was "subsisted and clothed" by Corea who paid no other remuneration except that their parents were "supplied with paddy, money and clothes in consideration of the services of their children." In addition, there were other labourers too, who were invited when occasion demanded and who were "provided with food and drink for the time and who would not, according to custom, accept any hire." Furthermore there was also the category of "Goyias" or tenant cultivators, who received a certain share of the produce once the crop was harvested. There was also the last and numerically the smallest category of 'coolies' employed on a daily wage.[96]

Corea's domestic servants were probably from impoverished peasant families who came from either a totally landless sector or the sector that held uneconomic holdings in the south west of Ceylon. Presumably, they depended for their's as well as at least a part of the maintenance of their parents on the headmen. The casual employees too could have hailed from the same strata, and would have refused to accept payment since they accept 'payment' in the form of other favours by being the headman's following. The coolies or wage labourers proper were relatively a rare phenomenon in the south west of Ceylon, as many early British Governors noted in their efforts to find labour for wages.[97] The tenant farmers were on the other hand, a group in more or less permanent dependent relationship with the headman since they tilled his land for a share of the crop. But there is no doubt they too formed a part of the headman's

96. CO 416 14 A15, Replies of Johannes Corea, March 25, 1830

97. Dixon, *op. cit.* p. 54

following. The growing landlessness in the south west of Ceylon in the eigthteenth century is indicated by frequent references in Dutch sources to a category known as *sellakkareas* or landless drifters, who were moving from one district to another refusing to perform any government services. They could be pressed for service at sight by headmen.[98]

Thus the economic strength of a headman could keep a fairly large labour force and following in his dependence. The headmen, as enforcers of the service obligations of the peasantry had another hold on the latter. Even after the abolition of the service-tenure system under the first two British Governors, what really happened was only the snapping of the connection between land and compulsory services. The latter had to be performed for a money wage, only to the government. For landholding, land taxes were imposed. Thus until the abolition of the system of compuslory services in 1833, the peasantry remained in the control of the headmen.

Furthermore, the peasantry was dependent on the headmen for the improvement of their status in the service hierarchy, since that required the approval and often the recommendation of the headmen as noted earlier.[99] For instance, throughout the eighteenth century Dutch documents abound in instances of efforts on the part of peasants trying to improve their lot by changing into easier and more remunerative service positions. Governor Van Imhoff noted that the job of the village functionary, the Mayoraal, was burdened with heavy duties and obligations without sufficient remuneration. Therefore the Mayoraals were constantly trying to become lascorins or native militiamen.[100] Governor Schreuder noted many other instances of service-tenure holders trying to improve their lot[101]. The judicial authority of the headmen, another source of influence of the headmen was already referred to in an earlier section.[102] Permission for bringing new land under cultivation was

98. Loten, *Memoir*, p. 28
99. See *supra*, section, 1
100. Van Imhoff, *Memoir*, p. 28
101. Schreuder, *Memoir*, p. 49-50
102. CO 416/26 J5, pp 77-102, C. E. Layard, General Report of the Caltura District, Dec. 31, 1810

usually given by the government after the headmen examined the lands to be newly cultivated. Also the general superintendence of all agricultural activity, the maintenance of irrigation facilities etc. too, were among the duties of headmen [103]

Thus the power wealth of the headmen of the south west of Ceylon fits well the definition of a patron given by Michael Kenny :

> I define the .... someone who is regarded (and who regards himself) at once as a protector, a guide, a model to copy, and an intermediary to deal with someone else or something else more powerful than oneself, whether or not such power is imaginary or real in a single context or in all, and whether or not the advantages to be gained from their patronage are material or intangible.[104]

The patronage role of the headmen of south west Ceylon was indeed very comprehensive, and the peasantry was dependent on them in a variety of contexts. They were also the model to copy since the growing ambition of any service-tenure holder was one of rising in official status. Many material advantages were bestowed upon their following by the headmen, ranging from providing a livelihood to help with official and social advancement. Presumably there were intangible advantages too, as we can deduce from that category of Johannes Corea's following who would work for him for merely the meals and customarily refuse to accept any payment. The headmen were certainly the intermediaries between the peasantry and the colonial government.

The peasantry on the other hand had mainly its labour to offer the headmen. In the context of a poor level of technology this was indeed a valuable asset. Johannes Corea's case as well as that of the Mahamudaliyar of Galle,[104] illustrates the way in which the head men utilized this labour. In addition, the peasants helped to form the 'following' of the agrarian elite of the south west of Ceylon. This

103. Michael Kenny, "Patterns of Patronage in Spain", *Anthropologica Quarterly*, Vol. 33 No. 1 (January 1960), p. 15
04. See *supra*, pp. 9-10

following was essential to the local prestige of the headmen as well as for strength in dealing with the central authority. Governor Schreuder gives an instance in which the headmen found their following handy: In the contest for office under the Dutch administration, the influential notables used the following to oust the rivals: "..... it not seldom is the case that one native endeavours, so to say, to bounce another out of his job, and in order to attain that object stirs up the subordinates of the officer whom he would displace to bring serious complaints against him." Presumably one notable was stirring up trouble for another with his own following that happened to be officially under another. Leadership in the local community and even official position thus could depend upon the strength of the following that a patron commanded. Symbolic deference to and strengthening of this role was perfected through the medium of gifts and deference paid to the headmen by their following on such occasions as marriages in the families of the latter, and on New Year celebrations as was noted in the case of the Mahamudaliyar of Galu Korale.

Such was the nature of the give and take in the patron-client relations in the society of south west Ceylon in the period under consideration, from which a balance of exchange has to be drawn. Scott has pointed out that the question of this balance being a crucial one in rural class relationships,

> .... the feeling of peasants individually and collectively, about agrarian elites has an objective dimension and is not simply a matter of consciousness or ideology. It presumes further that the peasants have some implicit notion of the balance of exchange of what it costs them to get the patron s service and that any substantial objective change in what balance is likely to lead to a corresponding change in the legitimacy of the exchange relationship.

If the balance of exchange is considered right by the peasantry, the relationship is taken as collaborative and legitimate, and if not exploitive.[105] According to Scott, in stable agrarian settings power relations between peasants and elites may have produced a norm of

105. Schreuder, *Memoir*, p. 48

reciprocity a standard package of rights and obligations – that acquires a moral force of its own. If changes in this set up threaten the peasant's existing level of benefits, it causes fierce resistance by the peasants. Built in this package of rights and obligations there is a cultural dimension too (e. g. caring for elderly parents as we saw in the case of Corea's domestic servants and crucial rituals). The collapse of this relationship of deference and compliance as a result of the disregard of minimal social rights by a patron will threaten the legitimacy of the latter in the eyes of the clients. A large scale collapse of such guarantees may threaten the existence of an entire patron class.[106]

The eighteenth century as well as the early nineteenth century in Ceylon does not provide evidence of such large scale loss of legitimacy by the patron class. There is evidence, however, of certain losses of legitimacy by particular patrons intermittently. This evidence is found in the uprisings of the period The clearest examples come from the rebellions among the Salagamas. During the course of the eighteenth century the demand for cinnamon in Europe grew rapidly: prices more than doubled in the first six decades of the century and remained so for the rest of it [107] Consequently there was greater pressure on the cinnamon peelers to peel more cinnamon with the attendant severe punishments for failing to deliver the specified quantities. Meanwhile there were frequent complaints that, as a result of the expansion of agriculture there were less and less cinnamon wood available for peeling. These circumstances would have led to the deterioration of the condition of the peelers, who already had to stay up to eight months a year in the woods and jungles in cinnamon gathering. These hardships led to frequent desertions of peelers to the Kandyan country as well as to uprisings. In one of the most serious ones in 1757-58, the peerlers complained severely against the Mudaliyar, Carel de Mirando, and demanded his dismissal. The Mudaliyar had been a hard taskmaster with the peelers. The demand of the peelers for his dismissal can be taken

106. Scott, *op. cit.* pp. 10-12
107 See *supra* pp 17-18. For more details of peelers uprisings see, Kotelawele, *The Dutch in Ceylon*, pp. 68-88

as an instance of the leader or patron losing his right to lead. The contiuned support of the Dutch Governor not only enabled de Mirando to remain in office but gain additional honours for long and loyal service. [108] In the post 1766 period when the rights and privileges enjoyed by the peelers appear to have increased considerably we do not hear of any peelers' uprisings. On the other hand when, the privileges enjoyed by the peelers came to be replaced after the British take over by a mere money payment from the time of Governor North, there were frequent complaints, and even physical violence against government officials who tried to enforce the new regulations.[109]

There are other instances too when the headmen were complained against during times of rebellions. In the Matara and Galle uprisings of 1757 - 60, there were complaints against many Sinhalese officers in very high appointments under the Dutch. The most common grievance was extortion by these headmen. Occasionally smaller caste groups complained against their minor caste headmen, as did some washers during the course of the same rebellions.[110]

However, these grievances were not the most important feature of the rebellions of 1757-60 which engulfed the entire south west of Ceylon. These uprisings were primarily caused by the measures to protect the growth of cinnamon (which even included the transfer of entire villages from areas considered fit for cinnamon to areas considered unfit for cinnamon), the reduction of the accommodessan lands of the headmen, the compilation of land and family records by which the lands held by all had to be declared to the government, measures taken to collect arrears of paddy tax (especially in the Galle and Matara area), and the efforts to collect arrears (moneys) due to the government for lands newly brought

108. CO 54/43 pp 149-51, Agent of Revenue and Commerce, Colombo to Arbuthnot, Sept. 22, 1802; CO55/38 pp. 608-9, Agent of Revenue and Commerce, Hambantota to Board of Revenue and Commerce Colombo, March 17, 1802
109. For an analysis of these and earlier rebellions of the 1730's and 1740's see, Kotelawele, *The Dutch in Ceylon,* Chapter IV
110. *Ibid*

under cultivation. It is evident from this summary of the causes of the rebellions that the peasant as well as the headman was affected by the measures of the government, though the latter since he held more lands was more concerned than the former. A Dutch officer, Lt. Col. Fedder who had spent a large part of his official career in Ceylon and was well acquainted with the native languages, puts the finger well on the true nature of the rebellions. His analysis of the uprisings was that the influential headmen who held large extents of land were adversely affected along with others, by the policies of the government and in their desperation were inciting their followers to rebel. In fact it was on this assumption that Governor Schreuder sternly ordered the headmen to quell the rebellions speedily or risk dismissal. On the same assumption Schreuder banished the most important distinguished leaders of the Sinhales official hierarchy in Galle and Matara as a means of quelling the rebellions. Working on the same premises, the Dutch authorities in Batavia ordered Schreuder to recall and restore these officials as a means of pacifying the rebels. [111]

After the transfer of the Dutch territories in Ceylon to the British in 1796, a rebellion of similar proportions occurred as a result of drastic changes introduced in the system of administration. The system of service-tenures was abolished, and Sinhalese Mudaliyars were replaced by South Indian Amildars. In addition certain new taxes, especially on ccount gardens, were imposed, These circumstances led to the rebellion of 1797. As a result it was realized that a return to the earlier system of administration was politic: the Indian officials were dismissed, the Sinhalese Mudaliyars reinstated, the new taxes given up and the service-tenure system restored.[112] This

111. U. C. Wickremaratne, *The British Administration of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon,* 1796-1802, Ph. D. Thesis, University of London (1964), Chapter 1; Colvin R. de Silva, (*Ceylon under British Occupation* 1795-1833, Vol. 1 (Colombo 1942), pp. 192-204
112. U. C. Wickremaratne, *The British Administration of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon* 1796-1802, Ph. D. Thesis, University of London (1964) Chapter 1; Colvin R. De. Silva, *Ceylon Under British Occupation,* 1795-1833, Vol. 1 (Colombo 1942) pp. 192-204

rebellion was similar in character to the rebellions of 1757-60 in that the headmen and their followers made common cause against the colonial government.

By and large then, the rural class relationships of patron-client remained strong through the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. There was no appreciable dissolution of patron-client bonds during the period, and vertical integration remained strong, even though individual and intermittent breaches of such bonds are met with. Nevertheless it is instructive to examine the three main conditions that Scott has postulated as causing the dissolution of patron-client bonds under conditions of colonial rule. These conditions are:(1) Social differentiation which leads to replacement of one or few strands of comprehensive exchange and dependency with multiple dependencies, each of less intensity and comprehensiveness. Under the conditions of dissolving comprehensiveness a peasant may develop several separate ties of dependence for his needs in land, for his relations with officialdom, and for his needs in times of economic stress such as loans etc.., (2) Growth of the colonial state that weakens the depedence of the patron on his clientele for the legitimization of his position, which makes the patron increasingly dependent on the colonial state for the stability of his position and status, thus paving the way for oppressive exchange relations with the clientele; (3) Commercialisation of agriculture eading to the same ultimate results.[113]

Regarding social differentiation, it was noted in the earlier sections of the paper that the comprehensiveness of the jurisdiction of the Goyigama headmen was giving way to caste headmanships of considerable power and prestige. The Salagamas provide a classic example of this, and the appointment of the first Muhandiram of the Chiandos during Van Gollenesse's governorship provides a further interesting example. The needs of the Dutch Company dictated that certain castes whose services were of importance, had to be given their own headmen and kept directly under European officials, thus removing the jurisdictions. This also created new

113. Scott, *op. cit.* pp. 16-19

patronage roles for the caste headmen which sometimes even clashed with the general jurisdiction of provincial officers, as happened in the early nineteenth century.[114] It is quite likely that the official as well as patronage roles of the newly created caste headmen clashed with that of Goyigama headmen.[115] In this sense the advent of the colonial state had the effect of solidifying caste bonds.

The renting of revenues was another area of activity where there was room for the creation of new patronage roles. But available lists of renters for the eighteenth century show that it was the headmen who were predominant among the renters, the most important of all being the paddy farms.[116] Another economically significant section of the south west of Ceylon, the Muslims, were debarred from the rents during the period of Dutch rule, but when these restrictions were set aside under the British, we find a significant number of Muslim renters entering the business of revenue farming from the early nineteenth century.[117] No doubt the wealthy Muslim businessmen were assuming patronage roles, though of a very restricted nature, in the rural south west of Ceylon by this time

Certain other institutions set up by the Dutch had the potential for creating new patronage roles. Among these was the school The schools established by the Dutch were primarily for propagating Dutch Reformed Church Christianity, but the schoolmasters had other wide-ranging functions as well They also acted as the registrars of births, marriages and deaths, and were expected to keep a register of these which came to be known as school *thombos,* a kind of parish

114. CO 416/5, B3, Commissioner of Revenue to Chief Secretary, July 29 1814.

115. CO 54/43 pp 149-51, Agent of Revenue and Commerce, Colombo, to Arbuthnot, Sept. 22, 1802

116. For an extensive list of renters, guaranters etc. of Galle and Matara see K. A. 2773 fos. 934-83, August 31, 1756

117 Wickremaratne, *British Administration of the Maritime Provinces, op. cit.*, 55-56, 49-50, 291 Some idea of the economic circumstances of the Muslim community can be gauged by further evidence in lists of sales of government cinnamon land. For example, of the 24 gardens put up for sale in 1803 in the Weligama Korale, 16 were purchased bu Muslim bidders. See CO 55/51, p. 490; CO 55/51 p. 620

register. Schoolmasters were allowed an allotment adjacent to the school for maintenance in addition to a paltry salary and some fees.[118] These functions were significant enough to create a new patronage role; but even here, members of families of village notables came to occupy these posts mostly. Moreover, when we consider the number of schools actually in operation (47 in Colombo Disawany[119] which had nearly 2000 villages),[120] it cannot be said that they thereby created a rival patronage role or that it led significantly to minimize the comprehensiveness of the patronage role of the headmen.

The Dutch officialdom which performed a mainly supervisory function over the native headmen had the potential for creating another patronage role. But their numbers were small and the overwhelming impression is that they depended heavily on the native headmen in the discharge of their duties. The compilation of the land and family registers, the thombos, was conceived as a means of reducing this dependence, especially on land matters. But even without an increase in the number and efficiency of the Dutch element in the administration, it cannot be said that this dependence decreased, or that the influence of the headmen over the inhabitants decreased, In fact it may be argued that since the compilation of the thombos as well as their revision depended on the co-operation of the headmen, the power and influence of the headmen actually increased.[121] Another institution created by the Dutch which could have led to the lessening of the influence of the headmen and creating of new patronage roles, the *landraad* too failed in this respect. The fact that it was primarily the Sinhalese customary law that was administered in these courts, and the regulation making the presence of the native headmen compulsory for the proper constitution of the court,[122] may indeed have added to the power and influence of the headmen.

118. CO 54/124 pp 37-38, Memoir of Disawe De Coste, Dec. 15, 1770
119. *Ibid*
120. Kotelawele, *AAG Bijdragen*, 14 (1967), p. 22
121. Kotelawele, *AAG Bijdragen*, 14 (1967), pp. 31-32
122. Kotelawele, *The Dutch in Ceylon*, pp. 307-16

(2) The growth of the colonial state during the eighteenth century thus did not lead to the total dependence of the headmen, the patron class, on the colonial state leading to oppressive circumstances for the clientele. Evidence does not point that way. The exception perhaps is the ordinary Salagamas who were the hardest pressed under the commercial necessities of the colonial state. The outright denunciations of the Mudaliyar Carel de Mirando by the peelers is a good example of the breakdown of patron-client ties in the caste, and the steadfast support of the Governor who even honoured the Mudaliyar, is a good example of the officer or patron depending entirely on the support of the colonial state.

During the period of early British rule, however, a situation developed in which relations between the patrons and clients in the south west of Ceylon could turn sour. From the very beginning of British rule efforts were made to curb the power and influence of the headmen. During the first two governorships of North and Maitland, the *accomodessan* lands of the Mudaliyar were withdrawn in place of a fixed salary, their judicial duties were taken away and the foundations of a comprehensive civil service laid.[123] The result of these changes and the terms of the systems of compulsory services are best described by Kannangara in a recent work on the early days of the British civil service in Ceylon :

> The net reuslt of these developments was a further partial transformation of the office of Headman from what it was at the advent of British rule. Certain feudal and traditional characteristics that had continued to surround the offices were much weakened though not entirely overthrown. Thus the loss of *accomodessans* reduced the capacity of the superior headmen to support retainers on the old basis, though society continued to present a need for them. The loss of judicial power reduced the means of supporting their authority, while that authority continued to be indispensable to the Government. It also reduced their capacity to maintain the

123. Colvin R. de Silva, *op. cit.* pp. 335-53; Sir Charles Collins, *Public Administration in Ceylon*, (London 1951)., Willis Dixon, *op. cit.* pp 52-55

socio-economic order on which their authority rested. The existence of a much larger number of European officials in the provinces, with executive and judicial power... made the headmen more vulnerable to attacks, especially by an opposing faction. But the close dependence of the Europeans on them, especially on those of superior rank, made them still much feared by the people.

... it is generally true that, deprived of their service lands, and made more dependent on the indirect advantages of office, less inclined to keep their rights within traditional limits, less conscious of traditional duties and less capable of executing them, less conscious of having responsible power, more conscious of private profit, and under imperfect supervision from above, the Headmen became even more oppressive and less useful to the community than before.[124]

The typical colonial state of the nineteenth century was emerging and the headmen were becoming increasingly the creatures of the government. Thus the stage was set for the dissolution of existing bonds between patrons and clients. This situation, combined with the large road building activity under Governor Barnes using the system of compulsory services, led to severe complaints being made against the headmen as well as other officials, who supervised the muster and enforcement of compulsory labour. The Colebrooke-Cameron Commission recommended the abolition of the entire system of compulsory services along with other reforms, with the intention of creating a free market in labour and land.[125]

Commercialization of agriculture of the type found in the nineteenth century colonial systems, seen in Ceylon too after the implementation of the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms (i.e. after 1833),was not found in the period we are concerned with. Nevertheless certain results of the Dutch commercial and agrarian policies

124. Kannangara, P. D. *The History of the Ceylon Civil Service* 1802-1833, (Dehiwala, Ceylon 1966), pp. 93-95
125. See, Report of Lieutenant-Colonel Colebrooke - Colebrooke upon the Compulsory services to which the natives of Ceylon are subject in Mendis, G. C. , *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers*, Vol. 1 (OUP, 1956), pp. 189-211.

as well as independent evolution, led to certain results similar to the ones flowing from the ninteenth century type of commercialization of agriculture. During the eighteenth century the system of landholdings in the south west of Ceylon evolved into one dominated by private holdings, from one dominated by inalienable service tenures. And the headmen came to hold large parcels of landed property privately. This led to great inequality of landholdings leading to greater dependence of the peasantry on the headmen.[126]

Furthermore the Dutch innovations regarding the instruments for transfer of property gave a legal stamp to the private holdings. From the late seventeenth century onwards, Dutch adminstration had been trying to bring the transfer of property, both movable and immovable, under direct supervision, specifying the instruments through which it could be effected. During Schreuder's Governorship it was once again laid down that property transfers by sale, gift or inheritance, had to be effected through the official forms provided by the secretariat and under the supervision of authorized officers.[127] It is highly likely that these regulations made room for the introduction of instruments of property transfer in line with Roman Dutch Law. This meant that landed property, among other forms of property, acquired a new and firmer legal status. The headmen were the closest to the Dutch administration and better placed to recognize the significance of the changes, and it was they who, as holders of large estates, were interested in perpetuating them in the families. They seem to have grasped the new opportunities for strengthening their claims to land, and a few of the testamentary documents from the Dutch period show that Sinhalese headmen were indeed utilizing the new forms for strengthening and perpetuating their claims to landed property.[128]

126. Kotelawele, *AAG Bijdragen* 14 (1967), pp. 20. 24
127. K. A. 2795, Unpaginated, Resolutions, May 4, 1757; Ceylon National Archives, 1/2444, Placaat of May 31, 1757; 2795, Unpaginated, Resolutions, May 4, 1757 Ceylon National Archives, 1/2444, Placcat of May 31, 1757
128. See for two examples, Pieris, *Sinhalese Families*, Part III, pp. 21-55, Pieris, *Sinhalese Families*, Part IV, pp. 70-73

From the very beginning of British rule in the island, efforts were made to clarify rights to land and create more soiidly based individual rights to land.[129] During the Governorship of Maitland the prohibitions on the Europeans owning land were made less stringent ,and in 1812 it was laid down that an European may own up to 4000 acres of land, thus paving the way for large scale European penetration and commercialization of agriculture.[130] The Colebrooke-Cameron reforms finally removed all restrictions on large scale ownership of land by Europeans.

There is also evidence of an increase of the population in the south west of the island in the eighteenth century[311] which. according to Scott, leads to the further strengthening of the bargaining power of the patrons as against the clients. This result ensues when the land available for the peasantry's subsistence decreases. But even though there were many restrictions to the expansion of arable land under the Dutch resulting from policies protecting cinnamon, since the headmen themselves administered these policies, it can be assumed that the restrictions were not very severely felt in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, it was possible for desperate peasants to flee to the lands of the King of Kandy as did many Salagamas in the course of the eighteenth century. Consequently, the rise in the population as well as the loss of 'slack resources,' following the restrictions on the use of uncleared common pastures, etc. in the process of protecting cinnamon, would not have led to a large scale tipping of the balance in the exchange relationship in favour of the headmen. The real deprivations of the 'slack resources' begins only in the 1840's with the colonial government passing the Waste Lands Ordinances. Thus the balance of patron-client relations during most of our period can be said to have remained fairly stable.

129. Wickremaratne, *op. cit.* pp. 101-104
130. Collins, *op. cit.* pp. 38-39
131. Kotelawele, *op. cit.* pp. 20-21

Note: I am grateful to the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Study for the facilities extended to me during the preparation of this paper while I was a fellow there from 1982 to 83.

K. M. P. Kulasekara

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF A BRITISH COLONY: THE KANDYAN SCENE IN SRI LANKA, 1815-1832

The religio-political syndrome has figured prominently in the administration of the British colonial empire. For instance, religion and politics combined in the establishment and management of settlement colonies. Although the Portuguese, and to a lesser extent the Dutch, made the propagation of religion (Catholicism and Protestantism successively) a part and parcel of their colonial policy in the East, the British gave a lower key note to anglicization in their administration of the Asian possessions such as India and Sri Lanka. This was clearly visible in the British administration of the Maritime Provinces of Sri Lanka. Politics had clearly assumed a priority over religion in the administration, in spite of the activities of religious pressure groups such as the Evangelicals. However, the attachment to Christianity and the conception of its civilizing mission, were sufficiently strong motivating factors to place the British ruler in dilemmas, both in devising colonial policies and in facing situations where practical and pragmatic decisions were quite in evidence. This essay seeks to examine the Kandyan scene in Sri Lanka where the religio-political syndrome created many practical problems to the British rulers, when diplomacy and tactic called for in carrying out an annexationist policy and the maintenance of political stability were the necessary urgent options.

Besides, British social policy in the newly acquired Kandyan Provinces, beginning in 1815[1] was formulated in an atmosphere teeming with rapid changes both in the realm of ideas and events. The British themselves were facing problems at home due to their inability to react quickly and adequately to changing socio-economic and political needs. It was an age in which Evangelicals, Utilitarians and Radicals in England stood for concepts such as the liberty of man, when reforming groups called for more humanitarian attitudes in dealing with social problems. It was natural that in such circumstances colonial policy should also come up for review, or at least that the policy makers would be influenced to some extent by the ideologies gaining ground at the time. For instance, in considering problems such as caste, slavery and polyandry in colonies such as Sri Lanka, the British would have been influenced by concepts such as those of liberty, equality, individualism and so forth. On the other hand, local problems called for local solutions, the maintenance of political security being the most important consideration.

In the realm of religious policy, matters were complicated by the fact that there were people who believed that the upliftment of the natives in the colonies called for a policy of Christianization. They thought that Buddhism was a superstitious religion. The Evangelical movement led by outstanding persons such as Wilberforce, was becoming a pressure to be reckoned with in formulating colonial policy. The Evangelicals criticized British religious policies in the colonies and the Evangelical political lobby in Parliament was gaining strength. However, a complete surrender to Evangelical demands would have been the surest means of alienating people with long-established, institutionalized religions. This factor placed the local rulers in a dilemma. It is in this context that British policy towards Buddhism would be examined here. It would also be shown that in spite of Evangelical pressures, political considerations predominated in the formulation of religious policy, particularly in view of the undertakings given in the Kandyan Convention, at the time of the cession of the Kingdom to the British. The British were reluctant to make changes in the local religious organization or in the relations between the state and religion on political grounds. However, political changes invariably bring about an element of social change. The transfer of political power from the Kandyan rulers to the British brought about in its wake an unavoidable change in the established and institutionalized religious organization, disturbing in turn the previous relationship between the state and religion.

1. The cession of the Kandyan Kingdom to the British is discussed in detail in K.M.P. Kulasekara, 'British Administration in the Kandyan Provinces of Sri Lanka, 1815 - 1833, with special reference to social change' Ph. D. thesis (University of London, 1984), pp.49-71. Also see Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon under the British Occupation,* 1795-1833, Vol. I (Colombo, 1953), pp. 129-67 and P. E. Pieris, *Tri Sinhala: The Last Phase,* 1796-1815, (Colombo, 1939).

Buddhism had a very strong hold on the people of the Kandyan Provinces of Sri Lanka. It had sunk deep in Kandyan society and politics in several ways. It was the officially recognized state religion. The Buddhist monks not only acted as religious leaders, who in general guided the moral and spiritual affairs of the people, but also constituted the *literati* of the land. Although the Buddhist doctrines did not accept caste distinctions, institutionalized Buddhism supported and strengthened the caste system. For example, the entire *sangha* organization was a *goyigama* monopoly and the highest offices were largely confined to the persons of the *radala* grade of the *goyigama* caste. Moreover, the *sangha* organization had also emerged as a powerful economic group because the temples possessed a large proportion of lands in the country, thereby creating a sort of monastic landlordism. All these factors made the Buddhist clergy a very powerful group in society, having close connections with the state and commanding an enormous influence over laymen. In fact, there were occasions when some *nayaka theras* or head monks played the role of state counsellors as well.[2] The *sangha* hierarchy was so well organized and established in Kandyan society that John Davy, a physician who served in the British army at the time of the Kandyan conquest and who wrote a book entitled *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and of its Inhabitants with Travels in that Island* remarked in 1821: 'In few countries of the world is

2. Labugama Lankananda (ed.), *mandarampura puvata* (Colombo, 1958) verse 607, p.80; John Davy, *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and of its Inhabitants with Travels in that Island* (London, 1821; published later as Vol. XVI of *The Ceylon Historical Journal*. Dehiwala, 1969. Page references are from *The Ceylon Historical Journal*), pp. 232-3.

the "establishment" of religion more regularly organized than in Ceylon.'[3]

At the cession of the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815, the British found themselves in a dilemma as regards the policy on Buddhism that should be followed. On the one hand, on account of political and security reasons the British were compelled to take into consideration the important role played by Buddhism and the *sangha* in Kandyan politics and society. But such a disposition was, on the other hand, not agreeable with their Christian beliefs. Conditioned by Christian doctrines, they did not have any genuine respect for Buddhism. For them, Buddhism was a superstition and its rituals, some of which were influenced by Hinduism, were idolatory. The inclination towards the protection of local religions was against the rationale behind colonial policy. Colonial policy in general was not compatible with egalitarian ideas accepted by rationalists at the time, or in other words, with the age of reason. Therefore the colonialists sought moral grounds to defend colonial rules such as those meant to propagate Christianity, spread Western education and culture and introduce European institutions by making changes in local social institutions. However, in the specific context of Sri Lanka, political considerations were decisive in the formulation of British policy towards Buddhism. This is evident from an examination of British policy on Buddhism embodied in the Kandyan Convention of 1815 and adhered to subsequently.

Although the British did not entertain any respect for Buddhism, they followed a very favourable policy towards Buddhist institutions

3. Davy, p. 218 Dr. Kitsiri Malalgoda points out that Davy's observation would have been apt for the 1760s and 1770s rather than for the 1820s as the authority structure of the 'establishment' had been effectively challenged in the Maritime Provinces and as the decline in the religious sphere went hand in hand with that in the political sphere in the Kandyan area. Kitsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 1750-1900: *A Study of Religious Revival and Change* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1976), p. 73. But it appears that Davy's observation is valid to a large extent even at the beginning of British rule in the Kandyan Provinces, in view of the immediate but temporary strengthening of the position of the nobles and the monks consequent to the favourable policy of the British following the cession despite the general tendency of political decline, Kulasekera, op. cit., pp. 70-1.

from the very inception of their rule in the Kandyan Provinces. When they signed the Convention with the Kandyan nobles on 2 March 1815,[4] Buddhism was declared 'inviolable' and its rites ceremonies, monks and temples were assured of protection.[5] Ironically, the British who considered Buddhism a superstitious religion became its guardians. Robert Brownrigg, the British Governor of Sri Lanka, 1812—1820, himself felt uncomfortable about this article of the Convention and told Bathurst, the Secretary of State, that it confirmed 'the superstition of Boodhoo in a manner more emphatical than would have been my choice.'[6] However, he defended his action by explaining the circumstances which led him to come to such an agreement: he ensured special protection for Buddhism because he realized that this was indispensable for the establishment and maintenance of British political authority in the Kandyan Provinces.[7] Even the Home Government was aware of the real significance of this fact so that, while approving the article of the Convention it only expressed some doubt about the term 'inviolable'. Brownrigg was thus called upon to defend the use of this term. He argued that it was only a word for the Sinhalese expression *kada kala nohaki*, meaning 'cannot be broken down' and he affirmed that it never had a wider meaning in his mind than that 'the Budha Religion should not be abolished or obstructed'.[9]

4. On 2 March 1815, the Convention was read to the *adigars*, *disavas* and other Kandyan nobles who assembled in the *magul maduva* or the Hall of Audience. It was actually signed on 10 March 1815. *Diary of Mr. John D'Oyly*, 1810-1815, with an introduction and notes by H. W. Codrington (Colombo, 1917), entries of 2 March 1815 and 10 March 1815, pp. 223 and 231.

5. Article 5 of the Kandyan Convention. The entire document is included in *Ceylon Government Gazette*, 6 March 1815 and in G. C. Mendis (ed.) *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers*, Vol. II (London, 1956), pp. 227-30, among various other manuscript and printed sources. A Sinhalese copy of the Kandyan Convention is printed in T. B. H. Abeyasinghe, L. S. Dewaraja and G. P. V. Somaratne, *udarata rajadhaniya*, 1470-1818 (Colombo, 1977), pp. 160-3. An English translation of the Sinhalese text is printed in P. E. Pieris, *Sinhale and the Patriots*, 1815 - 1818 (Colombo, 1950), pp. 591-3.

6. Brownrigg to Bathurst, 15 March 1815, CO 54/55.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Bathurst to Brownrigg, 30 August 1815, CO 55/63.

9. Brownrigg to Bathurst, 1 June 1816, CO 54/60.

This policy was chiefly determined by circumstances such as the inadequacy of British military power, British indebtedness to the Kandyan nobles for their collaboration in the success of the annexation, and the promises and pretensions made during the Kandyan expedition which were in turn embodied in the Convention.[10] Consequently, the motives and interests behind British policy towards Buddhism were political. One could argue that these political motives were more dominant in the formation of their policy towards Buddhism than in other aspects of their social policy. The patronage and protection they extended to Buddhist institutions can be viewed as an attempt to win over a powerful and influential social group - the Buddhist clergy - to their side and thereby utilize the religious sentiments of the Kandyans in general in support of their rule.

The British rulers, through their connection with Buddhism, also tried to manipulate certain beliefs and concepts prevailing among the people regarding the legitimization of political power and to create a psychological acceptance of their rule in the minds of the Kandyans. Immediately after signing the Convention, the British were successful in inducing the nobles and monks to bring back to the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy the Tooth Relic of the Buddha which had been secreted at the time of the invasion. There was a deep-rooted and long-standing belief among the Sinhalese that the possession of the Tooth Relic legitimized the right of a King to rule the country. At times when there were several rulers, the person who possessed the Tooth Relic was considered the legitimate King. In other words, the possession of the Tooth Relic by a

10. The fall of the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815 can be viewed as an outcome of a collaboration between the British and the Kandyan nobles. The cession of the Kingdom to the British took place at the climax of the power struggle between the King, Sri Vikrama Rajasinha and a faction of nobles led by Ahalepola, in which the British played a successful diplomatic role making the nobility, as a whole, a group of collaborators. The collaboration of the nobility made it impossible for the British to make drastic changes in the Kandyan socio-economic and political system, except for the abolition of the Kandyan monarchy and the right of the Nayakkar dynasty to the throne. This is evident from the political settlement arrived at the Kandyan Convention in 1815. This theme of collaboration in relation to the cession of the Kandyan Kingdom to the British in 1815 has been developed in Kulasekera, op. cit., pp. 49-71

ruler gave him a religious sanctity and legitimized his position. In these circumstances, the act of the British rulers in bringing back the Tooth Relic can be viewed as an attempt to obtain religious legitimization for their political overlordship.[11]

Brownrigg thought that the Kandyans identified themselves strongly with Buddhism, and that for the maintenance of British control over the Kandyan Provinces patronage towards Buddhism was essential. He wrote :

> The Reverence felt towards it (Buddhism) at present by all classes of Inhabitants is unbounded and mixed with a strong shade of jealousy and doubt about its future protection and . .. in truth our secure possession of the Country hinged upon this point.[12]

He was also aware of the close relationship which had existed between Buddhism and the Kandyan state, the deep-rooted belief that Buddhism had guarded the independence of the Kingdom from the invasions and influence of foreigners, and the tremendous power and influence exercised by the Buddhist clergy over the entire Kandyan society. Brownrigg wrote :

> It is currently received that there existed a close connection between the Independence of the Kandyan Kingdom and the Reign of Buddhism. Budha it is believed had engaged to protect their Monarchy against all foreign power and influence.[13]

He noticed the influence of the monks on society and attributed it to the seclusion of the Kingdom from European influence and to the cultural and mental backwardness of the Kandyans :

> The Kandyans have for three Centuries maintained a barbarous independence by the great natural strength of their Extraordinary Country, and a systematic exclusion of all Euro-

11. Colebrooke noticed that the possession and exhibition of the Relic was regarded by the Kandyans as the most important of the prerogatives of the Kandyan King to which the British Government had succeeded. Colebrooke's report upon administration, 24 December 1831, CO 54/122.
12. Brownrigg to Bathurst, 15 March 1815, CO 54/55.
13. Brownrigg to Wilberforce, 13 June 1816, CO 54/60.

peans, scarse allowing the least intercourse in Peace, and always displaying most rancorous Hostility in War - They are extremely ignorant and superstitious, and consequently the Power of their Priesthood is considerable.[14]

He conceived that hasty and injudicious attempts at 'great Religious and Moral improvement, in a Country which has for ages been consigned to barbarous ignorance... might do serious mischief, and much retard the great Work of Conversion.' Therefore he thought that measures likely to offend the 'prejudices and superstition (of the Kandyans) ... assuredly require(d) circumspection and prudence.'[15]

Although to many British officials in Sri Lanka this arrangement appeared to be the most expedient, politic and practicable course of action, it was not compatible with the prevalent religious notions and beliefs in England. Especially the Evangelical Wilberforce and some other protestants strongly objected to the article of the Convention, which ensured unconditional protection for Buddhism. They feared that this article might operate against the propagation of Christianity in the Kandyan Provinces and the admission of Kandyans into the Christian Church. They anticipated that the Buddhist monks might in the future complain of the circulation of the Bible or the conversion of Buddhists to the Christian faith as a violation of the Buddhist religion, unless this article of the Convention was explained as intending only the toleration and free exercise of that religion.[16] In reply, Brownrigg pointed out that even as a convinced Christian he was compelled to agree to it, because of the power of the Buddhist monks over the Kandyans and because of the need to facilitate 'political union with a new and strange people'.[17]

The undertaking to protect Buddhism created a local problem too for Brownrigg. Immediately after the war, the British rulers were faced with the task of protecting temple treasures from their

14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. Butterworth to Bathurst, 9 October 1815, CO 54/58.
17. Brownrigg to Wilberforce, 13 June 1816, CO 54/60.

own camp followers, because the army attempted to acquire certain valuables belonging to the Temple of the Tooth as prize property There was a conflict between the Governor and the army officers On the approach of the British expedition, gold, silver, brocade dresses, jewels, precious stones, money and other valuables belonging to the Temple, along with the moveable royal treasures had been removed to the jungle and various villages under the orders of the King. A large part of these valuables was seized by the army. The claims made by the nobles and monks for their return created a problem for Brownrigg. The controversy threatened his policy of winning over the Kandyans by patronizing the *sangha* and the temples. The nobles and monks demanded the immediate restoration of the valuables to the Temple, because those articles were considered indispensable for the annual religious ceremony which was to be held in April. The army officers, however, were not prepared to restore them.[18] The Prize Agents, while admitting that many of the articles claimed by the nobles and monks had belonged to the Temple in Kandy, argued that they had acquired the character of state property under certain circumstances. Firstly, since the property had been removed from the Temple into the jungle by the express orders of the King, the property was completely at his disposal and was consequently 'not only Royal or State Property, but applicable at his will and pleasure for purposes of War and aggression.'[19] Secondly, the removal of property into the jungles from either houses or temples amounted to an abandonment which placed it out of the protection held out either to temple or private property by the Proclamation of 10 January 1815.[20] It was also argued that no temple or sacred place had been entered or approached in search

18. Proceedings of the sub Prize Committee, 25 March 1815, enclosed with Brownrigg to Bathurst, 21 July 1815, CO 54/56.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.* This Proclamation which showed the pretended benevolence of the British who declared that their actions were directed against a tyrannical king and that the rights and privileges of the nobles and people and their religion would be protected, was issued during the course of the British invasion. A printed copy of this Proclamation was enclosed with Brownrigg to Bathurst, 17 January 1815, CO 54/55. In the words of Colvin R. de Silva, this was 'a clever, if self-righteous and magniloquent, piece of propaganda'. Colvin R. de Silva, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 158.

of property.[21] Lastly, during the previous government, all title to private property emanated from the absolute power of the King, and so his order for the removal of the property from the Temple was in fact a resumption of former donations. In short, the articles fell under the description of goods which were liable by the definitions of the Prize Act to be seized as private property.[22]

The Governor rejected all these arguments and declared his 'inflexible conviction' that his 'conscience as well as the Honor of His Sovereign and His Country' equally required the solemn pledge of protection held out by the manifesto of the war to be construed in a manner totally different, 'that is to say with simplicity and good faith adhering to the substantive meaning of terms offered by the British Government and abstaining from all refinements tending to narrow their plain sense and fair interpretation.'[23] Incidentally, he pointed out that certain property of the Temple of the Tooth which had been secreted in the village of Pettigoda on the approach of the British army, had been removed from there by some Malay soldiers and others and brought into the custody of the Prize Agents.[24] Finally, he ordered the immediate restoration of what was proved to be the property of the Temple - proved by inscriptions or other evidence. He also ordered the delivery of the articles which were considered necessary for the performance of the ceremony of the Temple on the occasion of the Sinhalese New Year in April.[25] Thus amidst the objections of the army, Brownrigg took steps to restore most of the valuables to the Temple. Although the army officers complied with the order, they criticized it with reference to an act of Parliament on army prize money passed on 14 July 1814. In reply, the Governor pointed out to the Secretary of State that his decision was an 'act of justice to the Temple' and an indispensable condition for satisfying the monks, and therefore was 'a political object of the first importance.'[26] This conflict between the Governor and the army officers over the restoration of Temple property was

21. Proceedngs of the sub Prize Committee, 25 March 1815, enclosed with Brownrigg to Bathurst, 21 July 1815, CO 54156.
22. *Ibid.*
23. General orders of Governor dated 6 April 1815, enclosed with Brownrigg to Bathurst, 21 July 1815, CO 54/56.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Brownrigg to Bathurst, 24 June 1816, CO 54/60.

actually a conflict between the political interests of the civil power and the personal interests of military officers. The ideas expressed by the Governor and the final prevalence of his opinion clearly showed the political significance attached by the British government to the protection of temple property.

The religious policy followed by the British had placed them in the position of the Kandyan King in the sphere of religious functions. Under the monarchy, the King was the chief economic benefactor and chief guardian of Buddhist institutions, the principal custodian and supporter of the education and discipline of the monks, the person who made the highest appointments in the religious hierarchy and the final judge who decided on disputes among the monks. The measures taken by the British after signing the Convention showed the continuance of some of these functions. For example, in 1815 the *nayaka theras*, or the head monks of the Malvatta and Asgiriya chapters, and the *anunayaka theras*, or their deputies, were appointed by Brownrigg on the recommendation of John D'Oyly, the Resident of the Kandyan Provinces, 1815 - 1824. In making these appointments, the British took particular care to remove an innovation which had been made by the previous King and reverted to an older custom. The last King had appointed three *nayaka* and three *anunayaka theras* over the Malvatta chapter instead of one for each office. Reverting to the older practice, the British appointed one *nayaka thera* and one *anunayaka thera* over the Malvatta and Asgiriya chapters respectively. Besides, the last King, a few months before his dethronement, had levelled some charges against the *nayaka thera* of the Asgiriya chapter and dismissed him from office. These charges were re-examined by the British before the monks of the two temples and high-ranking nobles. Since the charges were deemed to contain no evidence that the *nayaka thera* had acted against religion or the laws governing the priesthood, he was re-appointed to the office.[27] In addition to these actions concerning the *sangha*, high lay dignitaries of the Buddhist organization such as the *maliga diyavadana nilame* and the *basnayaka nilames*, or chief lay administrators of the Temple of the Tooth and four

27. *Ceylon Government Gazette*, 15 March 1815; *D'Oyly's Diary*, entry of 10 March 1815, p. 231.

principal *devales* in Kandy, were also re-appointed.[28] Besides making the highest religious and lay appointments in the religious organization, Brownrigg on a few occasions, personally tried some cases involving temple property.[29]

However, in spite of these acts, the absence of the King and the ascendancy of foreign rulers led to a certain weakening of the relationship which had existed between the state and the religious organization under the monarchy. Under British rule, the economic patronage of the state to Buddhist institutions was limited because the new rulers refrained from making land grants to temples. Their assistance was confined to the maintenance of the temples and their rites, and to the due performance of ceremonies. The responsibility of the rulers to support the education and to keep the discipline of the monks faded away almost completely since the British did not take any interest in such matters, on the ground that it was not a part of their duty. This does not mean that every previous Kandyan ruler had taken a special interest in such matters. But responsibility had rested with the King. Actually, towards the end of the Kandyan monarchy, the Buddhist organization had suffered a great decline. This decline was perhaps hastened under the British rulers, who did not consider themselves responsible. Besides, even in judicial matters, though the Governor tried some cases concerning temple property, they were usually adjudicated by British officials residing in the Kandyan Provinces. Finally, the absence of the King created a psychological vacuum in the minds of both monks and laymen because the new rulers were foreigners and Christians. On the other hand, the British were also not in a position to understand the true sentiments of the Kandyans.With the absence of the King as head of the religious organization, the Kandyans felt a sense of

28. *Ceylon Government Gazette,* 8 March 1815 and 15 March 1815; *D'Oyly's Diary,* entries of 10 March 1815, 14 March 1815 and 18 March 1815, pp. 229, 233 and 235.

29. A speech made by the Governor on the 20th May 1816 before the Adigars, Dissavas and other Kandyan Chiefs assembled in the Hall of Audience, at Kandy, on various matters connected with the Administration of the Kandyan Provinces, *A Collection of Advertisements, Minutes, General Rules and Circular Letters circulated from time to time by the Authority of Government* (Colombo, 1825), p. 351.

insecurity almost immediately after the conquest. Brownrigg remarked upon the changed situation as it appeared to Buddhist monks:

> ... it was found that the Priests had great fear and scruples lest their Religion should be disparaged and the sacred Relick carried away and they even ventured to suggest that a Sinhalese King would be necessary for the Protection of the Temple and of the Budha Faith, an Idea which ... (was) natural enough to occur to them.[30]

At the same time, the monks demanded the undisturbed possession of the lands and other property of the temples.[31]

The British patronized and supported Kandyan Buddhist institutions in several ways.They tried their best to abide by the promises given in the Convention.They made no change in the administration of the temple lands (namely, *viharagam*, *maligagam* and *devalagam*) or in the customary practices and socio-economic and religio-cultural relationships based on land, caste and service. They also did not interfere in traditional religious ceremonies. The superintendence of the affairs connected with the temples and the lands attached to them was personally entrusted to D'Oyly, the Resident. This involved recommending to the Governor, at first personally and later through the Board of Commissioners, the names of religious and lay candidates for high office in the religious organization.The Resident also supervised the attendance of people bound to the temples by service tenure and the payment of their contributions in money, in produce or in other articles. After the death of D'Oyly in 1824, since the office of Resident was not continued, those duties were entrusted to the Judicial Commissioner.[32] As under the monarchy, temple lands were exempted from tax. The Government took care to protect temple property from administrative mistakes on the part of British officials who were ignorant of local customs. For example, the Commanding Officer at Ratnapura stopped the

30. Brownrigg to Bathurst, 20 July 1815, CO 54/56.
31. *Ceylon Government Gazette,* 15 March 1815.
32. Evidence of John Downing, Judicial Commissioner, 15 September 1829 CO 416/20, G-13.

cultivation of a field belonging to the Angammana *viharaya* because he wanted to dig there for precious stones.When the monks of the *viharaya* complained, the Governor, on the recommendation of the Resident, ordered the Commanding Officer not to interrupt the cultivation of that field.[33] Moreover, although the Biritish did not grant lands to temples, they rendered their patronage and support to religious ceremonies. Elephants and articles such as cloth and ivory which were considered necessary for religious ceremonies were given by the Government to the monks and temples. [34] The British administrators intervened to procure from the persons who enjoyed temple lands the payments due in kind and in cash, and the labour services for religious ceremonies, rituals and repairs to temples. Besides, when preparations were made to bring the Tooth Relic into the Temple, Brownrigg gave the monks a building within the palace adjacent to the Temple-'a Tower or Pavilion of some elegance consisting of an upper and lower room.'[35] He also told Bathurst that 'the relinquishment of the Building tho(ugh) a great donation to the church, was little or no sacrifice on the part of Government'.[36] The act of bringing back the Tooth Relic itself was of immense political importance. This is clear from the observations made by D'Oyly:

> It is apparently a mere matter of Religion, but is in truth of the highest Political importance... and I may repeat here the sentiment... that we have this day obtained the surest Proof of the Confidence of the Kandyan Nation and their acquiescence in the Dominion of the British Government.[37]

Hardinge Giffard, the Advocate Fiscal, who later became the Chief Justice, remarked:

33. D'Oyly to Sutherland, 14 May 1815, SLNA 6/521 ; Lt. Malcolm to Capt Prager, 21 May 1815; Sutherland to D'Oyly, 25 May 1815, SLNA 7/262a.
34. D'Oyly to Sutherland, 14 May 1815 and 12 June 1815, SLNA 6/521 ; D'Oyly to Sutherland, 30 September 1815, SLNA 6/524.
35. Brownrigg to Bathurst, 1 April 1815, CO 54/55.
36. *Ibid.*
37. The Tooth Relic was brought back on 24 April 1815. Brownrigg quotes a letter addressed to him by D'Oyly dated 24 April 1815, in his dispatch to Bathurst, 20 July 1815, CO 54/56.

> To gratify their priests, who rule the Headmen, the British resident (Mr. D'Oyly) went in sclemn procession to their prir cipal temple in Kandi, walked barefooted up to the altar ar d made offerings to their idol - all in his official character. This I believe is the first instance for four centuries of a representative of a British Government - publicly sacrificing in an Heathen temple.[38]

The British also provided other overt signs of their respect for Buddhism. In the course of a procession of Muslims on 12 December 1815, an attack was made, in the streets of Kandy, upon a Buddhist monk of the Asgiri *viharaya*, by casting ashes or dust on his face and by breaking his fan into pieces. D'Oyly took immediate steps to hold an inquiry but the offenders could not be identified. But in order to 'manifest the sense which the Government entertains of the outrage done to the Priest and its desire to afford redress', an advertisement was published offering a reward of fifty rix dollars for the apprehension of the offender. Immediately after the incident, such Muslim processions were prohibited in the future since they were found to be 'gross violations of the Public peace.'[39] In another instance, a Buddhist monk of the Seven Korales presented to the Governor an ola signifying his desire to abandon Buddhism and embrace Christianity. The Governor who was 'fully sensible of the delicacy attendant on such a measure', rejected the application.[40] Besides, Brownrigg was careful not to allow missionaries to propagate Christianity in the Kandyan Provinces.[41] All these acts make it clear somewhat ironically that the British rulers tried to mantain the confidence of the Kandyans at the expense of Christianity and Islam. This favourable policy of the British towards Buddhism was confined to institutionalized practice. Except for Sir

38. Giffard to Croker, 28 November 1817, cited in P. E. Pieris, *Sinhale and the Patriots*, 1815-1818, p. 652.
39. D'Oyly to Sutherland, 14 December 1815, SLNA 6/521 ; Sutherland to D'Oyly, 26 December 1815, SLNA 7/262a.
40. Sutherland to D'Oyly, 5 July 1816, SLNA 7/215.
41. Because there was a Catholic community in certain villages near Matale and Kurunegala, some Roman Catholic priests were allowed to visit their flock. However, they were required to obtain official permission from the Government.

Alexander Johnston, the Chief Justice at the time, no other British official took any interest in Buddhist doctrines, precepts and teachings as some of British administrators did towards the latter part of their rule in Sri Lanka.[42] This too indicates that the motives behind the policy were purely political. However, in spite of this favourable policy, the relationship which had existed between the state and the Buddhist organization during monarchy was disturbed under the British, although the links were not completely broken.

British policy after the rebellion of 1817-18[43] led to a further disturbance in this relationship. The protection which was ensured for Buddhism in 1815 was extended to other religions as well in 1818 by the declaration that while the Buddhist monks, ceremonies and processions were to receive the respect which they had previously received, 'it is in no wise to be understood that the protection of Government is to be denied to the Peaceable exercise by all other Persons of the Religion which they respectively profess or to the erection under due License from His Excellency of Places of Worship in proper Situations.'[44]

This modification of the British stand with regard to Buddhism could be attributed to several reasons. It could be argued that this modified position was a personal attempt by Brownrigg to escape from the embarrassment which he faced in 1815 by promising protection for Buddhism in 'the most unqualified Terms.' As we have seen, the fact that this particular clause of the Convention was subject to some questioning on the part of the Home Government and to serious criticisms on the part of the Protestants made Brownrigg uneasy. He consoled himself and the Secretary of State:

42. Sir Alexander Johnston, after he returned to England, had the following Sinhala chronicles translated and published: *mahavamsaya, rajavaliya and rajaratnakaraya*. f. 118, CO 54/96 and f. 242, CO 54/100.

43. P. E. Pieris, *Sinhale and the Patriots,* 1815-1818 (Colombo, 1950) has surveyed this episode in detail with a great deal of sympathy for the Kandyan viewpoint. See also, Colvin R. de Silva, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 168-200.

44. Proclamation of 21 November 1818 (see note 52 below), article 16.

> I am so far from considering the Kandyan People as permanently debarred from the light of Christianity, that I think it is required to predict, that the gloom of ignorance and superstition which has hitherto enveloped that unfortunate Region, will at no distant period be materially dissipated, by the gradual and insensible diffusion of religious knowledge.[45]

Thus it appears that he was looking forward to an opportunity to change the strong terms of the legal document in order to escape from Protestant criticism, while at the same time attempting to be consistent in his policy on Buddhism. He got this opportunity after the outbreak of the rebellion, since the British Government considered that the involvement and support of a large number of Kandyans relieved it of its commitment to protect local institutions.[46] The solution to Governor's problem ccincided with Christian missionary interests in the colony. In the context of broad Christian missionary activities in the Maritime Provinces of Sri Lanka at the time,[47] the extension of protection to other religions was in effect an opening of the Kandyan Provinces to Christian missionaries, who were eager to propagate the gospel in those areas. This protection, in fact, did not mean much to other local religions, namely, Islam and Hinduism, whose adherents were numerically small and politically insignificant. Thus this measure can be regarded mainly as a step taken by the rulers to satisfy the Christian missionaries. After about 1823, the British rulers allowed Christian missionaries to enter the Kandyan Provinces for their activities though missionary activity was never extensive during the period surveyed here. The missionaries made requests before 1823, but they were refused. For example, in 1820, the Church Missionary Society made an application to the Governor requesting permission to establish a school in the Seven Korales, but the Governor turned it down on the

45. Brownrigg to Bathurst, 1 June 1816, CO 54/60.

46. Preamble to the Proclamation of 21 November 1818. The active role played by a large number of nobles in the rebellion is discussed in Kulasekera, op. cit., pp. 81-2.

47. For Christian missionary activities in Sri Lanka during the early British period, see C. N. V. Fernando, 'Christian Missionary Enterprise in the early British Period', in four parts, *University of Ceylon Review,* VII, 1949, pp. 198-207 and 269-81; VIII, 1950, pp. 110-15 and 203-6.

ground that 'it is not deemed under existing circumstances particularly advisable to sanction the measure for the present.'[48] Similarly, a request made by the Wesleyan Mission to proceed to the Kandyan Provinces to open a school was refused on the ground that the interior provinces were not sufficiently tranquillized to justify the attempt.[49]

In the political context immediately following the rebellion, the guarantee of protection for all religions can also be related to the broad British policy of reducing the power and influence of the Kandyan nobles.[50] Brownrigg had an unfavourable opinion of Buddhist monks. He knew that they had a tremendous influence over the laity and saw them as a group of conspirators:

> The Priests appear to be grand Movers of these Plots and by their influence over the chiefs falling in with any sentiments of disaffection and Causes of Complaint, they can at all times organize a Party.
>
> Their own counsels are secret, their emissaries numerous, and their access and means great.
>
> It is hard to fathom their true sentiments, being by habit and education deep and artful dissemblers.[51]

The fact that a large number of monks strongly supported the rebellion confirmed his views. Besides, certain nobles who were lay administrators of temples also took part in the rebellion. In these circumstances, the Government's withdrawal from the responsibility of protecting Buddhism can be viewed as an attempt to loosen its connection with Buddhism and thereby to reduce the influence of the monks and the nobles.

48. Lusignan to Rev. Lambrick, 20 January 1820, cited in T. Ranjit Ruberu, *Education in Colonial Ceylon* (Kandy, 1962), pp. 127-8.
49. Ruberu, op. cit., p. 128.
50. The reduction of the powers and influence of the nobles by the British is discussed in detail in Kulasekera, op. cit,. pp. 83-9, 121-4, 128-32.
51. Brownrigg to Bathurst, 5 November 1816, CO 54/61.

However, the article in the Proclamation of 21 November 1818,[52] declaring the protection of the British Government for other religions too, did not prevent the rulers from continuing the extension of their patronage to Buddhism on a somewhat reduced scale. This was done on the ground that the influence of the monks was still immense. Therefore the former policy of the British towards Buddhism did not undergo a fundamental change even after 1818. The Proclamation of 21 November 1818, itself made the Buddhist monks and religious institutions a privileged sector. The monks as well as all Buddhist ceremonies and processions were to continue to receive due respect. In addition, only the Buddhist monks were allowed to give evidence in the judicial courts while seated.[53] Besides, the lay administrators or the *diyavadana nilame* and *basnayaka nilames* were allowed to receive the usual fees called *dakum* when making appointments in the temple villages, although such fees were abolished with regard to all other appointments.[54] Moreover, 'desirous of shewing the adherence of Government to its stipulations in favour of the Religion of the people' the authorities exempted the temple lands from the grain tax to which all other paddy lands were liable.[55]

In addition to the privileges legally enacted by the Proclamation, the other aspects of the policy hitherto followed towards Buddhism was continued to operate to a large extent even after 1818. The head monks and deputy head monks of the *sangha* organization and the lay administrators of temple lands continued to be appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Board of Commissioners.[56] The names of the candidates were brought before the Board by the Resident until 1824 and subsequently by the Judicial Commissioner,

52. This Proclamation promulgated a new system of government for the Kandyan Provinces. For the text of this Proclamation, see *A Collection of Proclamations and other Legislative Acts of His Majesty's Government of Ceylon affecting the Kandyan Provinces* (Colombo, 1822), pp. 22-32; see also G. C. Mendis (ed.), *The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers,* Vol. II (London, 1956), pp. 231-43.
53. Proclamation of 21 November 1818, article 50.
54. *Ibid.*, article 17.
55. *Ibid.*, article 21.
56. Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, 17 February 1829 and 30 June 1829, CO 416/21, G-42.

and their respective opinions were decisive in making recommendations. Even in the judicial sphere the Buddhist monks continued to be given special privileges. For example, except for capital offences, they were not punished with imprisonment for offences for which laymen would suffer such punishment. Instead, they were fined.[57]

In addition, the British Government continued to extend its patronage and support to religious ceremonies and festivals. For example, in 1829, an amount of £30 was advanced to the *diyavadana nilame* for the two elephants that he bought for religious ceremonies.[58] For the celebration of the *vesak* festival on the full moon day in May, articles such as salt, cloth, oil, jaggery, curry stuff and fruits were delivered on Government account. Salariesam unting to about £ 9 were paid to the men and women who were employed in taking care of and dressing the provisions, and paddy or rice was issued every year to the Temple of the Tooth and the monksaccording to custom.[59] The Government gave its financial assistance to other festivals and ceremonies in a similar manner. It also provided items and articles necessary for the maintenance of the Temple. [60] Moreover, allowances either in money or in kind were granted to several monks in Kandy.[61] Apart from these, as under the monarchy, the Tooth Relic which was under the charge of the Board of Commissioners was exposed to view from time to time under the patronage of the British rulers. For example, in 1828, the Relic was exhibited in the presence of the Governor and other British authorities. William Colebrooke, who, as a member of the Commission of Inquiry, investigated the general administration, revenues, establishments and expenditure of the colony, observed :

57. Agent of Government, Madavalatanna to Judicial Commissioner, 15 June 1830 and Judicial Commissioner to Agent of Government, Madavalatanna, 16 June 1830, Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners 22 June 1830, CO 416/21, G-42.
58. Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, 7 April 1829, CO 416/21 G-42.
59. Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, 5 May 1829 and 27 April 1830, CO 416/21, G-42.
60. Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, 7 July 1829, CO 416/21 G-42.
61. There is a statement of these allowances in Wright to Commissioner of Inquiry, 6 September 1830, CO 416/21, G-37.

> ... This ceremony, which was conducted with great pomp had been but rarely renewed by the Kandyan Kings, from the manifest inconvenience of drawing so large a concourse of people from their districts.[62]

The British extended their patronage and support even to Buddhist ceremonies such as *pirith* chanting which they themselves considered superstitious. Such ceremonies were performed, according to the beliefs of the Kandyans, 'for the purpose of propitiating the Gods in favor of rain and for the prevention of sickness.' They were of course not frequent, but whenever they were performed, they were patronized and supported.[63]

Furthermore, the British administrators continued to act as mediators in exacting *rajakariya* for the principal religious institutions. For example, the Judicial Commissioner, on the request of the lay administrators of the temples (namely, *diyavadana nilame* and *basnayaka nilames*), gave orders through the provincial Agents to procure from temple land holders, labour services for the repair of the temples and for religious ceremonies, festivals and processions in Kandy.[64] In addition, persons in the temple villages who were employed in road service were released to enable them to perform their services to the temples.[65]

62. Colebrooke's report upon the administration, 24 December 1831, CO 54/122.
63. Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, 2 March 1830, CO 416/21-G-42.
64. Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, 31 March 1829, 21 July 1829, 11 August 1829, 13 October 1829, 17 November 1829 19 January 1830, 26 January 1830 and 1 June 1830, CO 416/21, G-42. The principal ceremonies and festivals of the year were the new year ceremony in March and April, the *asala perahara* in July or August the *katti mangallaya* in November and *alut sal mangallaya* in January. In addition, there were minor ceremonies.
65. Judicial Commissioner to Agents of Government, Yatinuvara, Madavalatanna and Maturata, 1 June 1830, Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, 8 June 1830, CO 416/21, G-42.

Even after 1818, the motivation behind British policy towards Buddhism was purely political. As late as 1829, George Turnour,[66] the Revenue Commissioner, summarizing the motives which had led to the formation of British policy on Buddhism, stated:

> I consider that the natives in general are still very decidedly attached to their religious Institutions, so much so that the local Government has hitherto considered it politic to give them every support and countenance, with the object of conciliating the people and of preserving the tranquillity of the Country. Any interference with a view to change would certainly be regarded by the chiefs and people as well as by the Priests as subversive of those Institutions.[67]

Despite the implementation of this policy, the relationship between the state and Buddhism was further disturbed and Buddhist institutions were subject to further weakening, after 1818. This situation was caused to a large degree not so much by deliberate policy but as a consequence of some of the political and economic measures adopted by the British themselves, such as the reduction of the power of the nobles and the extensive exaction of gratuitous labour for government service.[68] This shows the close interconnection between Kandyan social institutions: measures taken in one direction affected the other. Thus, although they took deliberate steps to protect certain institutions, other steps taken by them which

66. George Turnour (1799-1843) served the Kandyan Provinces in various capacities. He was appointed the Agent of Government in Sabaragamuva in 1821 and was promoted to the post of Revenue Commissioner in 1828. After the administrative changes made in 1833 on the recommendations of the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission, he became the first Government Agent of the Central Province. In 1841, he was appointed Assistant Colonial Secretary and Treasurer. Both Colebrooke and Cameron commended him as a very efficient civil servant. He took a particular interest in traditional Sri Lankan culture and translated into English a part of the local chronicle, *mahavamsaya*.

67. Evidence of Turnour, 2 September 1829, CO 416/20, G-11

68. The system of *rajakariya* or the exaction of gratuitous labour for government service in the Kandyan Provinces under the British is discussed in detail in Kulasekera, op. cit., pp. 172-87.

had different objects in view, adversely affected those institutions which they tried to protect and maintain. The total outcome was a further weakening in all the institutions associated with Buddhism

Certain measures adopted by the British slightly disturbed the service relationship between the persons who enjoyed temple lands and the administrators of such lands, namely, the *diyavadana nilame* and *basnayaka nilames*. As a consequence of the deprivation of political authority and especially the loss of judicial powers after 1818, these lay administrators had now to depend on British administrative officials for the exaction of services and dues from the people in the event of negligence on the part of the latter. On such occasions, the lay administrators had to depend on British officials to enforce traditional Kandyan customs.[69] For example, on a complaint made by the *diyavadana nilame* to the Judicial Commissioner that the inhabitants of certain *maligagam* in Sabaragamuva, the Seven Korales and the Four Korales had failed to attend the *perahara* festival with their dues, the Judicial Commissioner sent orders to the headmen of those villages through the respective Agents of Government, calling for an explanation and directing immediate payment.[70] Besides, the exaction by the British Government of some compulsory paid services for public works and compulsory gratuitous services for the building of roads from the people who enjoyed temple lands, greatly affected their labour services to the temples. The lay administrators and incumbent monks of the temples repeatedly complained to the Judicial Commissioner on this matter. On many occasions, the latter attended to these complaints and took measures for procuring uninterrupted labour services to the temples. For example, when the *basnayaka nilame* of the *Kataragam devalaya* in Kandy complained that he was left without the means of carrying out even the indispensable daily duties of the establishment after the inhabitants of a certain village, which was exclusively allotted

69. Evidence of Turnour, 2 September 1829, CO 416/20, G-11; Evidence of Downing, 15 September 1829, CO 416/20, G-13.

70. Judicial Commissioner to Agents of Government, Sabaragamuva, the Seven Korales and the Four Korales, 10 October 1829, and their replies, Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, CO 416/21, G-42.

to the *devalaya*, had been summoned for road service, the Judicial Commissioner, with the consent of the Revenue Commissioner, took steps to exempt that village.[71]

In spite of these steps taken by the British rulers in favour of the temples, it is clear that this type of incident which arose as a result of their political and economic measures, led to a disturbance in the relationship between the holders of the temple lands on the one hand, and the incumbent monks and lay administrators of the temples on the other, and also to a certain weakening of the link between the Government and the religious institutions. That such a change had taken place is supported by the evidence that services to the temples of Kandy from persons living in remote provinces were not much pressed for under the British. John Downing, the Judicial Commissioner, stated before the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission that although there were many people who ought to come from great distances and perform the services at Kandy, he had never enforced them. He further said that he had never compelled people from Sabaragamuva or Uva to attend, although the general notice had been issued to them as well as to the others. He also stated that he did not impose any penalty for non-attendance although such people were liable to fines according to the Kandyan law.[72] This official attitude certainly affected temple services. Turnour also noticed that the religious festivals were not 'so numerously attended as they used to be.'[73] Thus, there was a certain slackening of the rigidity formerly exercised in the enforcement of services to the temples. As far as the incumbent monks and lay administrators were concerned it involved a weakening of their position.

The policy adopted by the British regarding the registration of temple lands further weakened the relationship between the temples and the Government. The extension of temple lands was checked, since donations were limited under British rule. The British Government did not make any land grants to temples. However,

71. Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, 10 February 1829 CO 416/21, G-42.
72. Evidence of Downing, 15 September 1829, CO 416/20, G-13.
73. Evidence of Turnour, 2 September 1829, CO 416/20, G-11.

private individuals still continued to donate lands, and some people, in order to evade the grain tax, tried to deceive the British officials on the pretext that their lands were temple property. The Government therefore in September 1819 ordered the incumbent monks and lay administrators to register with the Revenue Commissioner or local Agents of Government all the lands that belonged to their temples as of 21 November 1818. All subsequent donations and bequests made without the permission of the Government were declared unlawful.[74] The enactment itself was important in that the British Government asserted a legal control over the donation of lands by private individuals. The motive behind this policy was to restrict donations to temples because they deprived the Government of its grain tax. In fact, the Government consented only in a few instances to lands being donated to the temples by private individuals.[75] The registration of temple lands, which was begun in 1819 as a check on the evasion of the grain tax, led to two kinds of irregularity. First, some temple lands were registered as being smaller in extent than they really were. Secondly, lay property had been registered as bona fide temple property.[76] In other words, on frequent occasions, the relatives of the monks in the *viharas* and of the trustees of the *devales* were induced to fraudulently register some of their lands as temple lands in order to evade the tax. In spite of all the efforts of the Government to register temple lands, it was found in 1822 that some temple lands were still not registered. Therefore, another attempt at registration was made by the Government which proclaimed in May 1822 that the temple lands which had hitherto not been registered should be registered and requiring an explanation as to why they had not been registered before under the former proclamation.[77] In the point of view o

74. Proclamation of 18 September 1819, *A Collection of Proclamations and other Legislative Acts of His Majesty's Government affecting the Kandyan Provinces,* pp. 46-8.
75. Evidence of Turnour, 25 September 1829, CO 416/20, G-11.
76. Turnour's report on the settlement of grain tax in the Four Korales and the services required from the people for the construction and repair of roads, Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners, 20 October 1829, CO 416/20, G-25.
77. Proclamation of 21 May 1822, *A Collection of Proclamations and other Legislative Acts of His Majesty's Government affecting the Kandyan Provinces,* pp. 72-3.

the Government, the success of this policy in checking the abuses and irregularities prevailing in the temple lands was very doubtful because Turnour, the Revenue Commissioner, later discovered many others when preparing the commutation registers.[78] However, the incumbents of the temples did not willingly accept this process of registration, although they did not offer any direct resistance to it. Even in this matter, the British were careful not to implement the requirement in its entirety. Although they came across persons who had not registered, they did not make any artempt to punish them.

In conclusion, it may be said that the British rulers were confronted with a religio-cultural and political dilemma in formulating a policy towards Buddhism. While missionary pressure and their own Christian convictions led them to be reluctant patrons of Buddhism, political and social stability called for Government assistance and interference in activities related to the Buddhist establishment, although on an increasingly limited scale.

78. The commutation registers were prepared in the implementation of the commutation system, under which the grain tax was commuted to a fixed annual payment in grain for a term of three years whether the lands were cultivated or not, instead of the previous method based on the assessment of the produce of each crop. This system is examined in detail in Kulasekera, op. cit., pp. 163-71.

Kapila P. Vimaladharma

A NOTE ON THE MATALE UPRISING OF 1823

The rebellions of 1818 and 1848 are two important landmarks in the history of Sri Lanka in the early stages of British occupation. Between these two major events of resistance to British rule over the Island, there were at least five other comparatively less known uprisings which seem to remain overshadowed. They were the agitations in Wellassa in 1820 by a group headed by a pretender, the Matale uprising of 1823, a plot discovered in Bintenna in 1824, offensive activity against the British suppressed in 1830, a suspected conspiracy in 1835, and the trial of a Buddhist monk in 1843 for high treason.[1] This paper takes the form of a note on one of these intervening events, namely the Matale uprising of 1823. While it is not a detailed analysis of the uprising, the biographical and background information on its participants given here may be of some benefit to scholars engaged in research on this phase of British rule in Sri Lanka.

These sporadic attempts at resistance to British rule were ruthlessly suppressed both by military engagement and by making effective use of the weak points in the rebels.

The 1823 uprising was spearheaded by certain local officials and inhabitants who were mostly from the Matale District. The names of some of these participants and the punishments inflicted on them are given in a despatch from the Governor of Ceylon to the Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs in London.[2]

Kahawatte Unnanse, priest of Matale[3], who ... was the principal organizer and active agent in the plot and Koswatte Rate Rala[4] who had been also actively concerned in the disturbances in Tamankaduwa in 1820 and then pardoned were selected as persons most fitted for capital punishment and were sentenced to be hanged, which sentence was carried into effect near the town of Kandy on Tuesday, the 5th of the present month (i.e: August, 1823).

The following persons whose offences stood next in order of criminality have been sentenced to banishment for life from this island:

Wegodapola Rate Rala[5]

Migahakumbure Adikaram[6]

Lenawala Mohottala[7]

Wegodapola Halvadana Nilame

Murutoluve Omera Mohottala or Vidana[8]

Potawe Duraya[9]

Kongahawela Attuwena Koralaya[10]

Warakagastenne Pihina Rala[11]

Dagandeniye Aratchi

Kahatagasmudune Dugganna Rala

Bambaragahahene Gammehe[12] and

Pubbiliye Alutwatte Rate Rala[13]

and will be sent to the Mauritius in the ship "Princess Charlotte" now about to sail.

Oligame Duraya,[14] Bambawe Vidhana[15] and Maningomuve Vidhana[16] have been sentenced to be imprisoned at hard labour for five years; Dambagalle Koralaya and Dambagalle Neketrala[17] for the same;

Siyambalagahawela Kapurala, Ratnayake Kumbure Aratchy[18] Dambagalle Gurunnehe, Bambaragahawatte Punchi Rala and

Meua Gamaya[19] for twoyears; Ganderawatte Rala[20] and Kendangamuw Ukku Banda[21] for imprisonment for two years; Aluthwewe Banda[22] for six months. Kristna Retty the person whom the priest and the leaders of the plot had selected to be the ostensible king, although as I before have reported he was a man of no connection with the former Royal Family and of very inferior degree and who had served in the Commissariat Stores as a labourer, has been sentenced to two years imprisonment at hard labour and to receive on the 18th instant fifty lashes in Kandy and on the 23rd instant fifty lashes at Fort McDowall in Matale.

What is of interest in this list is the multi-caste, and though to a lesser extent, even the multi-ethnic element in the composition of the rebel group. There are middle level officials and minor headmen, priests and laymen, high-caste and not so high-caste persons, Sinhalese, Muslims and Vadugas. Omeru Mohottala was no doubt a Muslim. Dambagalle Gurunnehe, too, could be a Muslim. Kristna Retty, going by his name, was possibly a migrant from Vadugadesa or Andhra Pradesh.

The list of rebels indicates that they did not belong to the superior rank of the officialdom. The plot was worked out by two Buddhist monks with involvement of three Rate Ralas, one (Rate) Adhikaram, two Mohottalas, three former palace officials (Haluvadana Nilame, Dugganna Rala, Pihina Rala), one Korala, two Arachchis, one Atu-Korala, two Vidanes, two Durayas and eleven ordinary villagers of whom two functioned as Gammehe/Gamaya, one as a Kapurala and another as a Nekati Rala. Of the three ex-palace officials, the Haluvadana Nilame and the Dugganna Rala were different from and superior to the local officials, but they did not belong to the higher echelons of the officialdom.

Of the thirty persons punished for their part in the 1823 disturbances, fifteen were from the Udugoda Korale and nine from the neighbouring villages, all of them located in Matale district; three were from Dumbara in the Kandy district and two from the Anuradhapura district, and where Kristna Retty came from is not

given. Since about three fourths of the rebels were from the Matale district, the incident may well be called the Matale uprising of 1823.

These events were not confined to the Matale district. In the Nuvara Kalaviya district, one Ratmale Unnanse who was a Buddhist monk, turned pretender and with the aid of some minor headmen of that district, staged an uprising which was severely suppressed by Major Traver who captured him together with Mudiyanse (native chief), who were thereafter despatched to Kandy to stand trial. (SLNA 5/11/51 - March, 1823).

NOTES

These events are briefly noticed by J. E. Tennent, *CEYLON,* Tisara Prakashakayo, Dehiwala, 1977 (6th edition), p. 620, fn. 2. However, they find no mention in the authoritative *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon, Vol. III,* Peradeniya, 1973.

2. Sri Lanka National Archives - No. 5/11/203 No: 37 of 16th August 1823

3. It has not been possible to identify Kahawatte Unnanse. From the document under reference it is clear that he was from Matale. There is a hamlet called Kahawatte near the village of Galagama in Asgiriya Korale, Matale District. Mattamagoda Dissava who was a leader of the 1818 rebellion was a resident of this village of Galagama. It is possible that a number of persons of Galagama and the neighbouring villages were involved in the 1818 rebellion. In fact a few leading persons of Galagama left the village soon after the rebellion and settled down in other parts of the district such as Dambulla and elsewhere, and perhaps, lived incognito for fear of discovery and arrest. Kahawattegedera Kawrale who held lands in the village of Yatawatte in Asgiri Korale, Matale District, (Revenue Register of 1829) may be another person of the same family

There is another village by the same name Kahawatte in Pallegampaha, Harispattuva, Kandy District. During the time of King Sri Wickrema Rajasinhe some lands belonging to a Kahawatte Unnanse (priest) became *purappadu* (succession-less) and were transferred to the Asgiriya temple (A. C. Lawrie: *A Gazetteer of the Central Province of Ceylon,* Vol.I (1896), Vol.II (1898), Govt. Printer, Colombo p. 397). The principal family of this Kahawatte was related to the Dambukola family of Matale and to the Dehigama family of Yatinuwara. It is possible that Kahawatte Unnanse of the 1823 incident hailed from Dumbukola.

There is yet another Kahawatte family referred to in the documents. In Hulangamuva village, Kohonsiyapattu, there was a Kahawattegedera family descended from one Kahawatte Rala who owned the

village Kahawatte on a sannasa. He was married to a woman from Harispattu. From the evidence given by his descendents living in Hulangamuva before the Judicial Commissioner of Kandy (cf. SLNA/23/5 of 10th May 1819) it seems that Kahawatte Rala lived sometime in the late 17th century. Kahawatte-gedera Kawrala who held certain service lands in the Yatawatte village of Asgiri Pallesiyapattu in 1829 may be a descendant of Kahawatte Rala (cf. Revenue Register of 1829 at the Land Settlement Department, Colombo).

4. The village of Koswatte is located in Udugoda-Udasiyapattu. In 1820, Koswatte-gedera Aratchi'a was living in Dembava village adjoining Koswatte (Census of 1820, Land Settlement Department, Colombo). In 1829, Koswatte Rala held lands in Maningamuva (Revenue Register of 1829).

5. Wegodapola is situated in Udugoda Pallesiyapattu.

Lawrie, p. 931, states that Wegodapola Rate Mahatmaya and his son Haluvadana Nilame were banished for their involvement in the 1818 Rebellion, and that the RM died there, but the son returned about 1832 and died two or three years afterwards. Lawrie obviously has mistaken the banishment of the Rate Mahatmaya (also called Rate Rala) and his son five years later in 1823, as our document shows. It is interesting to note that the Ratu Mahatmaya's younger son, Wegodapola Nilame who was himself a Rate Mahatmaya of Matale East was also involved in the 1848 rebellion and was dismissed from service.

The Wegodapola Rate Mahatmaya, Snr., was closely related to the Alutwewa family of Matale. (Lawrie, p. 931) The Alutwewe Banda who was imprisoned for six months for his involvement in the 1823 uprising, therefore, was a kinsman of the Wegodapola RM.

6. Meegahakumbura is a hamlet within the village of Kohona in Udugoda-Udasiyapattu, Matale District.

Meegahakumbure Adikaram was also known as Kohona Adikaram Soon after the banishment, his wife appeared before the Judicial Commissioner in December 1823, and laid claim to her husband's property which she said was wrongly confiscated by the Crown for the Adikaram's treason (SLNA/23/11 of 19th December 1823). The Adikaram's paternal uncle, Meegahakumbure Loku Mohottala having no children had adopted the Adikaram's eldest son, to whom the Mohottala had bequeathed all his property. It is this property that the government was accused of having wrongfully confiscated. In the mid-18th century, Meegahakumbure Aramudale Mohottala held some service lands called Moragaspitiya and Miyanakolamada in the village of Kohona (Matale Disave Hamuda Lekam Mitiya of 1768 A.D., Land Settlement Department).

An Adikaram of a district was called Rate Adikaram to distinguish him from the Maha Adikaram, the Chief Minister of the State. Rate Adikarams were appointed to assist the Dissaves of Matale and Uva.

There is mention of a Meda Mahanuwara Adikaram in Dumbara. Even in the Matara district, during Dutch times, there was an Adigar(Adikaram) equivalent to the Dissave's deputy. (cf. *Francois Valentijn's Description of Ceylon*, ed. S. Arasaratnam, Hakluyt Society, London, 1978, p. 82). D'Oyly observes that in the Kandyan Kingdom, "the designation of Mohottalle may be understood to apply also to Dessavony Adikarams... and that under the term superior Koralles may be also comprehended Ratteralles, Liyaneralles, Undiyeralles, &c. Headmen vested authority inferior to that of a Dessave or Ratta Mahatmeya over a whole district or sub-division thereof" Sir John D'Oyly — *A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom*, second edition 1975, Tisara Press, Dehiwala, p. 108.

7. Lenawala is in Udugoda-Pallesiyapattu, Matale District. Following Lenawala Mohottala's banishment, his family seems to have got scattered. In 1820, there were only two families, viz. Ihala-gedera Appuhamy and Egoda-gedera Banda (Census of 1920) who may have been related to the Mohottala. The census does not indicate that the Mohottala himself was resident in the village of Lenawala. The Revenue Register of 1829 records a Lenawala-gedera Apphumy as having held lands in Lenawala. The same register mentions a Lenawala Rala holding some service lands in the nearby Kandangamuva village, but his relationship to the Mohottala cannot be established with certainty. It is said that some descendants of the Mohottala were living in the remote village of Monaragala. The present day Lenawala family of Matale claims descent from the daughter of the Mohottala. The only male descendar entered the priest-hood, a condition attached to the land grant.

8. Murutoluva is in Wagapanaha-Udasiyapattu. Omeru was also called *Mohottala* and *Vidane*. The two terms indicate two distinct offices, the former higher than the other. Mohottala was a scribe, secretary or registrar whilst Vidane was a minor supervisor of workmen. Therefore, at a time when the crossing of official levels and the mixing of titles was not permitted, why Omer should be called by both tiltes, is difficult to understand, unless he was simultaneously performing both functions holding one post and 'acting' in the other as modern officials would have it.

Of course this incongruity becomes explainable, if it is conceded that a certain current usage in referring to officials, is only a continuation of an older tradition. One who is not used to the ways of the rura people would find it hard to understand why people always refer to an Assistant Commissioner, Asst. Director, Asst. Government Agent etc as the Commissioner, Director, Government Agent respectively, when they know quite well that the Assistant is one or two tiers lower in the hierarchy than the chief of the department or district. This habit of jumping hierarchy may be due to the force of tradition; but it certainly is one

of the devices the seasoned peasants resort to, to please and flatter an unsuspecting local official. There is of course some difficulty here. When one addresses an assistant by the title which correctly belongs to the chief only, then how does one address the chief himself? The peasant extends the self-same principle, and this time places the chief on a still higher pedestal by pre-fixing the official title with the superlative word "Maha" (Big or Great). Thus the chiefs become the Great Commissioner, Great Director, Great Government Agent, as the case may be and the understanding chiefs do not seem to mind the peasants having a little fun for themselves. So that probably was how Omer was called both Mohottala and Vidane at the same time; the former an elevated title of address, the latter the designation of the substantive post.

9. Potava was a *Gabadagama* in Udugoda-Pallesiyapattu. In 1768, there were four persons, viz. Dotuva, Vattuva, Setuva and Malla who had service lands in the village, according to the *Matale Hamudava Lekam Mitiya* of 1768 (Land Settlement Department, Colombo). The Potave Duraya of 1823 must therefore be a descendant of one of them.

10. Kongahawela was earlier in the Gangala-Pallesiyapattu but later transferred to Udugoda Korale. Attuwana Koralaya must be the same as Attukorala a subordinate headman ranking below an Aracci or village headman.

11. There is a Warakagastenna, a village in the Haris-pattu, situated close to border of the Matale District. Dagandeniya and Kahatagasmuduna are two hamlets within Udurawana village in Patha-Dumbara. The *Pihina Rala* (cook) and *Dugganna Rala* (Attendent) at the palace were obviously holding those posts during the regime of King Sri Wickrema Rajasinha.

12. Bambaragahahena is in Wagapanaha-Udasiyapattu. Gammahe was a village-elder and leader.

13. Pubbiliya came within the Udugoda Korale earlier, and like its neighbour Kongahawela, was linked to Gangale Pallesiyapattu later. Aluthwatte Rate Rala has not been identified. For the good conduct of the people and the chiefs of Pubbiliya and Kongahawela during the 1818 rebellion the British government reduced their taxes to 1/4th share. (Lawrie, pp. 465;744). It was from the village of Pubbiliya that the British soldiers recovered the Tooth Relic which the rebels had spirited away from Kandy during the 1818 rebellion.

14. Oligama was a *gabadagama* in Udugoda-pallesiyapattu. Oligama Duraya was the headman of his people in the village.

15. Bambawa is in Kandapalla Korale. Vidhan or Vidhane was a low ranking supervisor attached to the village chiefs' personal estates and households.

16. Maningamuva is in Udugoda Korale.

17. Dambagalla is in Kanda Palla Korale. There is also a village named Dambagalla in Gangala-Pallesiyapattu, but these persons seem to be from the former village. Koralaya was the same as Korala, headman of a Korale or a collection of villages. The *Nekath Rala* was the village astrologer and the Gurunnehe was a Muslim resident.

18. Siyabalagahawela is in Udugoda Pallesiyapattu. The census of 1820 records the family of one Siyabalagahawela Kapurale, who was perhaps the same person involved in the 1823 disturbances—Ratnayake Kumbure Aratchi cannot be traced. "Kumbure" (Paddy field) Aratchi (headman) is an uncommon term. It was the *Vel-Vidhane* who was the supervisor of cultivation work. In the Dambava village there was a Ratnak-gedera Keerala, aged 40 years, and a Ratnak-gedera Dingirala, aged 60 years, in Millawana village. (Census of 1820).

19. Bambaragahawatte is in Laggala-Pallesiyapattu.

20. Gandarawatta is a hamlet of Wegodapolla. In the mid-19th century a Gandarawatta Rala settled down in Unduruva-Halmillava, Kalagam Pattu, Anuradhapura district, and one of his descendants had a *binna* marriage to a lady from Hulangomuva and lived there.

21. Kandangamuva is in Udugoda Palesiyapattu. In 1820, there were two families viz. Pahalawalauve Ukkubanda, aged 20 years, an Ihalawalauwe Ukkubanda, aged 50 years. In the same village was living Watte Walauwe Kaudupelelle Nilame, obviously married in binna in to the Watte Walauwe family, whose son-in-law was Ratmale Banda, aged 30 years (Census of 1820). One Kandangamuwe Ukku Banda is mentioned in the 1829 Revenue Register (p. 72).

22. Aluthwewa is in Udugoda Pallesiyapattu. In 1820, Ekanak-gedera Aluthwewe Rala was living in Dambawagama (Census of 1820). He is the same as Ekanayaka Aluthwewe Rala who held some service lands in Millawana and Uda Dambawa in 1829 (Revenue Register of 1829, p. 33). The Aluthwewa family was related to the Wegodapola family. Gandara watta Rala may also have been a kinsman of the Wegodapolas, for Gandarawatta is a hamlet within the Wegodapola village.

P. D. Kannangara

THE CASTE PROBLEM AND THE STUDY OF THE MODERN PERIOD OF SRI LANKAN HISTORY [1]

This paper does not raise a new problem concerning Sri Lankan history but focuses attention on the importance of a particular aspect of history to which sufficient attention has hitherto not been paid by historians researching into the past. The recurring need for the re-writing of history is widely accepted. Two reasons affirm this need. One reason is that researchers throw up new facts which sometimes tend to confirm conclusions based upon old facts, but at other times, serve to change the overall view thus requiring a redrawing of the historical picture. The other reason relates to the realm of interpretation. As times change the views and outlook of the historians too change. Even the appearance and meaning of previously known facts tend to change. However, this need for re-interpretation should not be identified with propaganda for a particular cause. Christopher Hill who wrote the book *the World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution*, put across the idea forcefully. 'History has to be re-written in every generation because although the past does not change the present does: each generation asks new questions of the past and find new areas of sympathy as it re-lives different aspects of the experience of its predecessors. No amount of detailed working over the evidence is going to change

1. This article is based upon a lecture delivered before the Royal Asiatic Society, (Ceylon Branch), Colombo. 28 Nov. 1983.

the factual essentials of the story. But the interpretation will vary with our attitudes, with our lives in the present. So re-interpretation is not only possible but necessary. Each generation to put it another way rescues a new area from what its predecessors arrogantly and snobbishly dismissed as the lunatic fringe'.[2]

Some comment is also required on the use of the phrase 'the modern period of Sri Lankan history.' The periodization of Sri Lankan history is a matter that has given rise to unsettled problems. The present division into the ancient, medieval and modern periods is at most a Western oriented one which may or may not suit the facts of Sri Lankan history. The common-place temptation is to regard the arrival of the Portuguese, the first of the European powers, as the beginning of the modern period of Sri Lankan history. Most of the books written on the modern period sub-divide it into the Portuguese, Dutch and British periods purely on the basis of the fact that a part, or the whole of Sri Lanka, was under the conquest of one of the colonial powers, during a particular period of time. It should however be noted that other divisions are possible. For instance, taking into consideration the fact that both the Portuguese and Dutch did not make any fundamental changes in the traditional socio-economic order in the Maritime Provinces and that this same order remained intact in the Kandyan Kingdom up to its conquest by the British in 1815, one could argue that the introduction of capitalism to Sri Lanka around 1833 marked the beginnings of the modern period of Sri Lankan history. The assumption in this article, too, is that the modern period began with the arrival of the Portuguese.

The caste system in the Sinhalese Maritime Provinces shows features not fully identical with the caste system in Tamil districts. This is due to the fact that the caste system in Tamil areas is more intimately connected with the Hindu religion and Hindu rituals. Again, on account of the fact that the caste system in the Sinhalese Maritime districts functioned under two European powers prior to the advent of the British, it developed special features not found in the caste system in the Kandyan Kingdom which went down

2. Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution,* 1974, p. 5.

under foreign rule only in 1815. The point stressed here is that generalizations regarding the dynamics of caste change in the Sinhalese districts of the Maritime Provinces are not valid for other areas. There is thus the need for indepth studies which take into account regional variations.

It is necessary at this stage to reflect upon the caste system as it existed in Sri Lanka prior to the arrival of the Portuguese. It is certainly possible to agree with Professor Bryce Ryan, that 'in caste as in race and culture the Sinhalese are the children of India.'[3] He goes on to point out that by the time of the arrival of the Europeans, or even long before, the conventional fourfold division was but a memory of the past. The caste system existing in the Sinhalese areas could be regarded as a 'unique variation ' of the Indian system, an independent growth under Indian influence, more particularly South Indian influeu ce.[4] In the Tamil areas, though the castes were similar to those of the Sinhalese, the content of caste relations was that of South India.

The origin and evolution of caste does not fall within the purview of this study. But a few relevant points should be noted : (*a*) one great difficulty in tracing the origin and evolution of the caste system is that terms such as *jati*, *kula*, *gotra* have a multiplicity of meanings.[5] For instance, in modern parlance the term *jati* is used to denote a caste, at times an ethnic community, and in recent times the Ceylonese nation. (*b*) The assimilation of groups of recent immigrants from South India led to the rise of three caste groups in the Sinhalese areas, *Salagama*, *Durava* and *Karava*. The Sinhalese kings appear to have channelled these later migrants to specific occupations which Ralph Pieris characterizes as a process of 'secularization' because these groups were not bound to serve the *Goyigama* caste, the state or the temple in a ritual capacity.[6] Besides, they were called upon to play important new roles under European colonial rule. (*c*) The Varna classification, namely, the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas,

3. Bryce Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon: The Sinhalese System in Transition,* New Brunswick, 1953, p. 3.
4. *Ibid.* p.8.
5. Michael Roberts, *Caste Conflict and Elite Formation: The Rise of a Karava Elite in Sri Lanka,* Cambridge, 1982, pp. XVII, 40-41.
6. *Ibid.* pp. 8, 48-49, 234.

Vaisyas and Sudras appear to have been of little relevance at last from medieval times till, on account of caste rivalry in the 19th century, caste spokesman utilized the model in an attempt to establish caste superiority.[7]

Much more relevant to the subject of this study than the origin and evolution of the caste system is the indisputable fact that the caste system functioned under a socio-economic and political structure which may generally be described as 'feudal', though it should be erroneous to equate it with the European model. Under this structure the ultimate ownership of land and the final authority of the state was vested in the king. In the Sinhalese areas caste determined the social relations under a mode of production based upon an inter-related system of complex land tenures and *rajakariya*[8] Caste was thus, next perhaps only to kinship, the determinant in all socio-cultural, economic and political relations in the Sinhalese areas. On account of the influence of Hindu ideology the socio-cultural linkage was perhaps stronger in the Tamil areas. It determined the modes of production and distribution, the relations between the king and his subjects and among the subjects themselves. The entire socio-economic and political structure was based upon the principle of rights in return for services. These services whether ceremonial, utilitarian, high or low were linked with caste.

The importance attached to the caste system must now be viewed in contrast with the scant attention paid to it in historical writings of the modern period. It is generally accepted among the Sinhalese and Tamils themselves and even among scholars that caste is of immense significance not only historically but in their day to day lives. In both urban and rural areas, though its importance is diminshing, there is a recognition that 'significant social and political developments cannot be properly understood without an appreciation of caste differentiations.'[9] On the other hand, caste studies have largely

7. For instances see G. A. Dharmaratna, *The Kara-Goi contest*, Colombo 1890, and J. W. P. *Caste and Class: The Aristocracy of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon*, Colombo, 1897.
8. P. D. Kannangara, *The History of the Ceyon Civil Service* 1802-1833 Dehiwala, Ceylon, 1966, pp. XI - XXXI.
9. Janice Jiggins, *Caste and Family in the Politics of the Sinhalese*, Colombo 1979, p.7.

been confined to anthropological and sociological studies and not to an incorporation of the caste factor in historical studies. This neglect of the caste factor in historical studies was well noted by Janice Jiggins who wrote :

> Few writers on the politics of Sri Lanka have attempted (indeed few have even mentioned) the interaction of caste and politics at the village, constituency or the national level, merely indicating a few instances where caste factors have intervened, then resting content with a short sentence asserting their general importance.[10]

It would be useful at this stage to pause for a while and inquire about the possible reasons behind this neglect. One reason suggested here is what could be termed as 'the Mahavamsa tradition of history or the Mahavamsa model' which placed emphasis on dynastic considerations, important personages and their deeds and the patronage extended by the rulers to the Buddhist *sasana*. This tradition is very much alive even today as is evident from the behavioural pattern of elites including both *Swabhasha* and English educated elites and from the attempts made to write the Mahavamsa up to present times, in spite of the fact that in recent years, many new angles of vision have been made to bear on the facts of history. Even when the dynamics of caste interaction brought about a newer interest in caste in the 19th and 20th centuries, especially in the minds of elite circles, the tendency has been to encourage the compilation of histories, diaries, memoirs, documents and biographies intended to prove the higher descent and status of a particular caste or family or a particular individual of a caste. The 'most scholarly example' of this is the inspired writing of M. D. Raghavan on the *Karavas* entitled *The Karava in Ceylon: Society and Culture*.[11]

The second reason for the suppression of the caste factor in historical analysis may be traced to the moral dilemma in which the Sinhalese Buddhists were placed with regard to caste. By the time Buddhism arose, there existed the *varna* fourfold division.

10. *Ibid.* p.7.
11. *Colombo*, 1961.

The Buddha's egalitarian message that one becomes a *brahamin* not by birth but by deed, contained an idealism far removed from social realities. The Buddhists throughout the ages and in different contexts and times faced the difficult task of reconciling ideals with social realities. Ryan noticed this difficulty thus :

> Informed Buddhists of the laity and clergy alike repudiate sacred foundations for the caste hierarchy. The less sophisticated may not deplore caste organization but find it religiously irrelevant. On the other hand, faced with social realities, the Buddhists accepted the social system and even rationalized it through their doctrine of karma. Organized Buddhism, following the example of the secular feudal order, utilized the caste hierarchy and the concept of caste services to draw its strength.[12]

The moral dilemma of the Buddhists may in part explain the relatively small place given to the discussion of caste matters in Buddhist literature. This attitude persists up to present times among Buddhist scholars.

Thirdly, colonial historiography also contributed to the relatively insignificant role assigned to the caste factor in historical writings. As Jiggins noted:

> As scholarship approaches the last few hundred years, the Sinhalese disappear behind the activities and concerns of their colonial rulers, first the Portuguese then the Dutch, till we find the Sinhalese only behind the presence of military men, administrators, missionaries and planters.[13]

Thus in a long tradition of historical inquiry, the emphasis has been on the diplomatic and war activities of the colonial rulers, the political, administrative and socio-economic policies followed by one Governor or the other, and so forth. Some of the writings falling within this category devoted a chapter or two to describing the socio-economic conditions prevalent at a particular time, specially

12. Ryan, *op. cit.*, p.34.
13. Jiggins, *op. cit.*, p.1.

in relation to the activities of the colonial rulers, but even these paid very scant attention to caste as a factor in the dynamics of socio-economic change.[14] The subject of caste was regarded as belonging more to the field of anthropological and sociological study rather than historical inquiry.

Fourthly, to my mind the relative absence of the caste factor in historical inquiry stems from the dynamics of caste change and interaction itself. Changes that occured in the caste system under colonial rule made people adhere to it especially in family matters such as kinship and marriage ties, being at the same time unwilling to speak about it openly especially in public affairs. Caste like sex in Victorian society became a taboo subject rarely spoken of openly.[15] The British rulers first fostered this attitude by their policy towards caste. Neither the British administrators nor the missionaries followed a clear cut policy on caste, except for displaying a vague egalitarianism. Idealogically and even from a practical standpoint certain decisions of the Government such as the abolition of *rajakariya*, the reform of the jury system, the non-recognition of caste in census matters and so forth, worked against the official recognition of caste.[16] On the other hand, the maintenance of the Headman system, almost totally on a caste footing, and the policy of aristocratic resuscitation adopted by such Governors as Robinson, Gregory and more openly by Gordon and McCallum, inevitably reversed the tendency towards discouraging caste privileges.[17] These double norms invariably

14. Most historical works on the modern period of Sri Lanken history would substantiate this point.
15. In open conversation the caste of a person is a matter of gossip. Letters in the English alphabet such as G. K. H. are used to denote a person's caste. The rare exception is advertisements in the marriage columns of newspapers, and that too, in an anonymous manner. Perhaps this is an indication that the dynamics of caste change is such that in the social context of today it appears to be a necessary evil.
16. In the early census reports in the Maritime Provinces people were categorized according to race, religion and also caste. This amounted to an official recognition of caste. In the later census reports caste categorization was dropped.
17. This tendency is well seen in attempts made by Governors Gordon and McCallum to restore the former Kandyan ranks, the summoning of Native Durbars and so forth. For further details McCallum to Crewe 9 Sep. 1908, C.O. 54/718. Also proceedings of the Durbar of native chiefs, *Legislative Council Papers*, 1908-1909, *Sessionsal Paper* XVIII, 1908.

affected the subjects too. Besides, these attitudes of mind were associated with socio-economic changes in the 19th century, in particular, changes which brought about a status system outside that which was associated with caste. The growth of capitalism, both commercial and plantation, the spread of education, more specially English education, and the rise of the professions, led to the emergence of the so-called middle classes. Status aspirations based on class lines began to cut across those founded upon caste.

On the one hand, caste consciousness instead of abating, took a new dimension. In the case of the *Goyigama* elite it brought about a strong sense of drawing together in the face of disturbing 'personal consequences of changes whose first benefits had passed to them alone.'[18] With regard to elites of the coastal castes, the *Karavas*, *Salagamas* and *Duravas*, sought a greater social status and political visibility through petitions to the rulers, origin stories and myths. This led to bitter caste polemics and even to the formation of loose caste lobbies 'whose base extended beyond commerce and industry, the professions and administration to politics.'[19] Elites of caste groups depressed socially and economically were motivated by a sense of deprivation for themselves and their caste groups and were becoming increasingly conscious of the disabilities and the lack of an equality of opportunity.[20] The net

18. "Even after caste lost its economic significance in relation to the state with the abolition of *rajakariya* its political significance remained in the Headmen system. Because of this the chief Headmen were selected from the Goigama caste. Concepts of caste continued to be real in the social life of the people. Two essentials of caste, endogamy and ritual status continued." E. R. Leach, (ed) "Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North West Pakistan" *Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology*, Cambridge, 1969, p. 87.

19. Roberts discusses at length the prevalence of caste lobbies in Sri Lanka during the 19th century. He maintains that such lobbies were strictly not similar to the caste associations which sprang up in India. See Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 170-172, 180-206.

20. An early example of such consciousness arose concerning the qualifications required for the seclection of Jurors. See Kannangara, "Junior Partners in British Colonial Administration in Sri Lanka," *Kalyani: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, University of Kelaniya, Vols III and IV, 1984/85, pp. 261-62. Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 21 Sep. 1843. S.L.N.A, 5/172.

result was that society as a whole became more caste conscious and extremely sensitive to caste matters. Few topics generated more heat as the precise status or affiliation of this or that person or group. P. E. Peiris recorded in 1911: 'it is perhaps correct to say that there is nothing that stirs so much animosity among the Sinhalese people as questions of caste, class and family.'[21] On the other hand, the growing class consciousness among the elites placed them in an embarrassing position with regard to caste. Even if by upbringing, interest and even by conviction, they were inclined to disregard caste, they were still tied to it. H. A. S. Hulugalle well expressed the typical embarrassment of the educated and westernized urban Sinhalese: 'This (meaning caste) is not a subject the educated like to talk about, especially if they have been to schools in which there is a good mixture of races, religions and castes, though everyone seems to know to which caste a friend belongs.'[22] This attitude of mind affected scholarship too. It is therefore not surprising that placed in this situation, scholars, the historians in particular, adopted the line of least resistance by avoiding the subject altogether.

Janice Jiggins notes: 'Even sociologists and anthropologists have been restricted in their works by accusations and counter-accusations of ulterior motive whenever they have attempted to clarify even the historical aspects of caste'.[23] Roberts recalls his experience subsequent to the publication of a research paper entitled 'The Rise of the Karavas.' Referring to the caste polemic that prevalied even as late as the 1970s, he points out that an association calling itself the Kshatriya association complained against him to the Wimalaratne Commission for using the label *Karava* to describe this particular caste.[24] Thus for many reasons noted above the caste factor has not figured adequately in historical analysis. A main contention in this article is that this neglect has been costly in terms of a fuller understanding of historical events, of the fun-

21. P. E. Peiris, (ed.), *Notes on some Sinhalese Families Part III: being the Diary of Adrian de Alwis Goonetilleke Samaranayake Mudaliyar of Salpiti Korale for the years* 1771-1775, Colombo, 1911.

22. H. A. J. Hulugalla, *Don Stephen Senanayake* Colombo, 1975, p. 159.

23. Jiggins, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

24. Roberts. *op. cit.*, 57.

ctioning of our institutions, of solo-economic and political change and of the behaviour of men and women who were actors on the stage of history.

This last section of the article draws attention to some of the branches of history where a wider and fuller understanding of historical changes would have been possible if the caste factor had been taken into account, indicating in the process, various lines of inquiry, themes and wherever possible suggesting working hypotheses. Adopting a division of convenience let us begin with economic history.

In the realm of economic history it is obvious that the caste factor can be of vital importance because in pre-colonial times caste was closely interconnected with the land tenure system and *rajakariya*. Changes made in land tenures and *rajakariya* were therefore bound to affect the caste system and vice-versa. An important question that arises is to what extent such changes brought about an occupational mobility thereby disrupting the caste structure of society. It is true that the final abolition of *rajakariya* changed the caste basis of the economic relations between the state and the citizens. But did the occupational basis of caste disappear overnight as a result? It is again true that because of the fact that all castes were engaged in paddy cultivation, the formation of a peasant class with some common economic interests was activised. But generalizations about the rural sector of the economy are made without taking into consideration the fact that even today certain castes following specialist occupations continue their traditional vocations for economic reasons. Peasant agriculture is one of the relatively unresearched fields in economic history and it is naturally here that traditional socio-economic relations based upon caste persisted to a very large extent. Another important question is why did certain arts and crafts stagnate, during the colonial period? Was it due to lack of state patronage to the castes engaged in them? Even today when caste distinctions are less important, the trades of potters and the arts of music, drumming and dance and so

forth, suffer because of their traditional association with low caste functions.[25] This question deserves the most serious empirical investigation.

Even in the plantation sector caste may have played a role in abour management because caste appears to have played a role among Indian labourers in Sri Lanka. The Indian labourers are known to have lived in cooly lines tightly bound by networks of caste and kinship.

In detailed studies of the structure and organisation of indigenous business concerns and plantations, the caste complexion appears to have played a historical role. But it should be brought out not with a view to determining which caste was superior to the other, but more with a view to demonstrating how, and to what extent, mercantilist and capitalist development assailed the caste structure of society.[26]

A social history of modern times which does not limit itself to a mere description of social conditions of a particular period but extends to a comprehensive examination of the dynamics and dialectics of social change has yet to see the light of day. Such a history would necessarily have to take into account problems such as intra-caste and inter-caste relations, changes in caste inter-relations on account of innovations made by colonial rulers, and economic forces of class within caste, and caste versus class as determinants of social status.

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25. Howard Wriggins, *Dilemmas of a New Nation,* Princeton, 1960, p. 24

26. It is the contention of this article that mercantilist and capitalist developments in Sri Lanka assailed the caste structure of society. Roberts asserts that his book *Caste Conflict and Elite Formation: The Rise of a Karava Elite in Sri Lanka,* 1500 - 1931," describes and analyses the emergence of an elite of capitalists and Western educated men and women among the Karava people in Sri Lanka during the colonial era" (Roberts op. cit., p. 1). The extension of this line of inquiry into other caste groups and an attempt to determine in what manner and to what extent such developments led to class formations in Sri Lanka would no doubt be a fruitful area of study.

As Roberts rightly notes, this involves a reference to the continuities as well as changes in the caste structure, to the rigidities as well as the solvents in the forces that governed social relations.[27] Of special importance is the study of the nature of caste mobility. In this respect one has to take into account several trends. (*a*) Upward or downward mobility of whole caste groups with the patronage of colonial rulers, the non-*Goigama* caste headmen leading resistance to badges of inferiority imposed by custom. (*b*) Intra-caste mobility of persons or families again through patronage extended by the rulers or through changes in patron-client relationships between persons belonging to the same caste group. (c) Mobility through the relaxation of traditional restrictions, customs, changes in the life style, residential location and names, especially caste and *ge* names. (*d*) The most difficult form of mobility i.e. inter-caste mobility through inter-marriages.

Besides the problem of the social distance between elites and the masses and the manner in which caste entered into the picture is a complex matter and worthy of the attention of the social historians. A special problem that calls for more detailed empirical examination is the phenomena of intense caste rivalry which took place from about the 2nd half of the 19th century. The polemical literature which this controversy generated provides the historian of literature with a rich field for contemplation.[28]

In the field of religious history, Kithsiri Malalgoda in his work has ably demonstrated that a study even in the realm of religious developments could be more fruitful when it is placed against the social background. He has shown how the struggle for caste mobility has had its repercussions in the Buddhist organization in the form of the growth of Buddhist Sects and sub-Sects (*Nikayas* and sub *Nikayas*). This inquiry could be fruitfully extended beyond this field. It is well known that Christianity drew most of its converts from among the low country coastal castes especially from *Karavas*. An inquiry into the problem of caste and Christianity

27. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

28. This polemical literature is abundant in contemporary newspaper articles and comments, both Sinhalese and English, petitions, memorials pamphlets and so forth.

along the lines of the book bearing the same title relating to India written by Duncan B. Forrester would be most welcome.[29] The missionary records could throw new light on this aspect of the problem.

Educational policies and developments have been studied without much concern for the social background in which they took place. It is a known fact that the nineteenth century educationists as well as the colonial government, were faced with problems such as selecting localities for the siting of schools, the need to make special arrangements for teacher recruitment, the provision of special seating arrangements for children in class rooms, all on account of caste rivalry and caste prejudices.[30] This aspect of the educational problem certainly needs further empirical investigation, especially with a view to determining the availability of educational opportunities to certain areas and groups of people.

In the constitutional and political field it is well known that the Sinhalese Kings regulated the caste system and upheld caste principles. A fruitful line of research would be an inquiry into what happened when this function was taken over by colonial government, taking into account variations in the caste systems of the Tamils and Sinhalese and that even among the Sinhalese. The late conquest of the Kandyan Kingdom led to differences between the Maritime and Kandyan districts on account of state intervention. The State figured prominently in Sri Lankan history as the organ through which social positions were allocated, and social gains legitimated. Did this process continue under colonial rule? Did the Sinhalese continue

29. Kithsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 1760-1900, California, 1976; Duncan B. Forrester, *Caste and Christianity: Attitudes and Policies on Caste of Missions in India*, London.

30. For instance, in reply to a petition sent to the Speaker of the House of Commons, against Governor Gordon, alleging caste preferences in the admission of students to the School of Agriculture, the latter replied: "As the Wellalas is the Agricultural or Farmer Caste and as the School of Agriculture is essentially a School for the Sons of farmers possessing land who are there taught to improve their paddy cultivation, and instructed in the cultivation of other crops, that school will undoubtedly remain for many years to come an essentially Wellala Institution." Gordon to Secretary of State, 1889, C.O.54/583.

to see the colonial state as a source of legitimation for social distance and social status even when the traditional system was giving way to alternative status systems through westernizaion . In the Headman system, which functioned as a lower branch of the colonial bureaucracy, some of the headmen, especially those at the village level, appear to have earlier had a caste rather than a territorial jurisdiction which in British times got transformed into a pure territorial one. The colonial powers manipulated the caste basis of the Headman system to suit their particular interests. Thus, the Dutch appointed higher grade *Karava* and *Salagama* headmen and invested them with larger areas of authority, thus curtailing the powers of the *Goyigama* headmen. The British did away with the caste headmen thus virtually turning the Headman system into a *Goyigama* bureaucracy.[31] This poses the larger question as to whether the colonial powers manipulated the caste system and caste rivalry in order to maintain political stability.

The latter period of British rule was marked by revivalist movements, nationalist movements and constitutional reform movements. The low country Sinhalese and Tamil elites played a prominent part in these movements, as against the Kandyan elites. Though no single caste can be given total credit for originating or sustaining these movements, their caste and class basis needs further elucidation. In this connection several problems come to mind. What was the role played by the new *Nikayas* in the emerging Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism which was ranged against both Christian missionary activity and colonial rule in general? A frutiful field of inquiry would be the nature of the connection between the *Dayaka Sabhavas* of the low country temples of the new *Nikayas*, because unlike some of the upcountry temples endowed with land, they were more depended on the patronage of the laymen, especially the new rich. Again the establishment and expansion of the legislature, the introduction of territiorial constituencies and the elective principle leading to universal franchise, led to new dimensions in the political activities among the Ceylonese. They lead to a whole lot of new questions. For example, how did caste affect the delimitation of constituencies, the choice

31. For further details See Kannangara, "The Headman System in the British Administration of the Maritime Provinces of Sri Lanka, (Ceylon). *Kalyani; op. cit.*, Vol. 1 Nos. 1 and 2. Vol. Two, 1982, pp. 177-204.

of candidates at elections, in voter reaction, formation of cabinets and so forth? This leads to the study of interest groups within professional and voluntary organizations, political parties etc., which again demonstrate the importance of the caste factor. Wriggins notes that in the politics of Sri Lanka, though least organized in a formal sense, groups of the type based on caste and family influence played a significant role.[32] This of course is not to suggest that caste rivalries were the decisive factors in parliamentary politics but only to insist that they should be taken into account in any historical assessment of the working system.

In conclusion, a word of caution is necessary. The introduction of the caste factor into historical analysis has often led to caste polemics. In 1876 a leading monk Rev. Weligama Sri Sumangala wrote a book named *Ithihasaya* in which he argued out the case for *Karava* caste superiority. This provoked a reply from another well known monk Rev. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala who argued out the *Goyigama* case.[33] According to Roberts the polemics even entered the debating chamber of the Royal Asiatic Society in the form of a so called historical debate.[34] In having another look at Sri Lankan history caste polemics should be avoided at all cost. Only an empirical and analytical approach after having had another look at source material appears to be safe. This can of course be re-inforced by conceptual apparatus taken from sociological studies. In this connection Roberts has provided some insights in his latest venture: *The Rise of the Karava Elite in Sri Lanka,* 1500-1931. One has to bear in mind that though caste is perhaps no longer valid in the economic sense, and is fast disappearing or becoming unimportant in politics, it is still alive in society on account of caste endogamy. My contention is that if caste is a cancer in the body politic, the only way to get rid of it is to make it a part of history.

32. Wriggins, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
33. Roberts, *op. cit.* p. 159.
34. *Ibid.* p. 161.

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