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Peasant in transition : agrarian society in Western Sri Lanka under Dutch rule, 1740-1800

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Chapter One- Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The encounter between different social formations may be one of the most fascinating aspects of human history. It has sparked the curiosity of historians and widened their imaginations. Historians have provided ample example of these encounters.¹ Perhaps the most significant of these encounters may be that between Europeans and the peoples of Asia, Africa and America, starting in the last decade of the fifteenth century. The possession of guns and particularly cannon, which revolutionised warfare, naval power, advanced knowledge of geography, map-making and navigation, aggressive enthusiasm for disseminating Christianity and, above all, the commercial interest in obtaining lucrative commodities for the European market at cheaper prices introduced Europeans into the social structures of these Asian, African and American social formations. As this process of European expansion integrated itself with capitalism, arguably the most dynamic and all-encompassing phenomenon in human history, it became an indispensable part of society in these parts of the world.²

This study attempts to reconstruct some aspects of an early stage of this encounter in a part of the small island Sri Lanka in the mid-eighteenth century, which by then had been exposed to two colonial powers, the Portuguese and the Dutch. Its primary focus is the peasant social formation in the western maritime possessions of the Dutch United East India Company (VOC). The historical setting is the encounter between the Company and two major historical actors on the local scene: the peasant-cultivators and the indigenous chiefs. It investigates how these groups responded to the Dutch intervention, and the significant changes they underwent as they adapted to change.

The regional focus of the study is, however, somewhat narrower than the entire region in which the historical forces under investigation were at work during this period. The entire region covers the southern and western maritime possessions of the VOC in Sri Lanka (see the map no. 2- VOC possessions in Sri Lanka). Administratively, it consisted of the Colombo dissavony, administered by the *disāve* of Colombo stationed in Hulftsdorp, just outside Colombo fort. The southern districts that came under the Commandment of Galle, which also included Matara, administered by the *disāve* of Matara, the fort cities of Colombo and Galle, and some other pockets such as Colombo's *vier graveten* (four gravets). Negombo district and Kalutara district had separate administrative arrangements.

Some important physical characteristics gave significant homogeneity to the region. A relatively high degree of annual rainfall throughout the year, the soil conditions and geographical features made the region a single ecological zone. The average annual rainfall was in excess of 100 inches.³ There are generally uniform soil conditions throughout the region, with some exceptions which will be mentioned below. Another geographical feature of the region 'is a series of low ridges running in a north-south direction more or less parallel to the coast and increasing in height the further their distance from the coast. The rivers flowing into the sea from the central highlands cut across these ridges...'.⁴

Some areas of the region however do not match fully this general description. The coastal belt has its own geographic character which was quite significant in terms of social, economic and political developments, as will be seen in the following chapters. Some areas of the Matara *disāvany* belonging to present-day Hambantota district are also exceptional. Ecologically this area belongs to the so-called dry zone.

As mentioned earlier, this study however does not cover this entire socio-historical regional unit. While arguing that major historical developments of the time more or less

affected the entire region, it focuses mainly on four regional divisions of the Colombo *disāvany*: Salpity *kōrale*, Hina *kōrale*, Alutkuru *kōrale* and Hewagam *kōrale*.⁵ There is a special reason for this focus. This particular region, consisting of present-day Colombo and Gampaha districts, has had a great significance in the recent history of Sri Lanka. It became the main hinterland of the growing Colombo metropolitan. It also became the breeding ground for a number of the major ruling families which dominated Sri Lanka's political scene in the twentieth century. But the attention that this region received from researchers is extremely inadequate and it has not yet sparked the curiosity of historians, sociologists and anthropologists interested in matters relating to the colonial impact.

The main temporal focus of the study is the mid-eighteenth century, particularly the time of the new tombo compilation, which is the chief source of information of the study. Nevertheless, the latter part of the eighteenth century will be given due attention, as will certain developments—and data—of the preceding decades.

1.2 Historical setting

Although European intervention is the predominant historical force that shaped Sri Lanka in the last five centuries, several other factors also had a decisive impact. After the thirteenth century, we see a fascinating demographic configuration brought about by the convergence of several movements of people. These involved both the island as well as the southern part of the Indian mainland. Two major demographic movements have so far been identified. One was the process known as 'the drift to the southwest', a series of migration waves from the northern dry-zone plains towards the southern areas, following the collapse of social formations popularly known as *rajarata* civilisation. The other was a wave of migrations of South Indian communities to the north-western, western and southern coastal belts of Sri Lanka. Apart from these two, I identify several other internal demographic patterns in this study. The historical encounter of this multitude of movements resulted in a unique and structurally hybrid ensemble of social and economic relations in the region.

The kings, who had their centre of power in the fortified city of Kotte, established their supremacy in the region until the first quarter of the sixteenth century.⁶ At the height of their power, they managed to defeat rulers of Jaffna, known as Arya Chakrawarthis, who not only established themselves in the northern part of the island, but also extended their authority to the southward by stationing revenue collectors in such areas as Kegalle and controlling the pearl-fishery of the north-western coast.⁷ Kotte rulers elevated the fortified city of Sri Jayawardanapura Kotte to a higher level of cultural development with the help of the surplus of the peasant, which was extracted in the form of ground rent and unpaid-labour, known euphemistically as *rajakāriya* (literally 'duty to be performed for the king'). Conversion of this unpaid labour into exchange values produced such commodities as cinnamon and elephants which yielded significant profit in the brisk intra-Asian trading networks of which the port of Colombo, controlled by these kings, was an important centre. At the same time, this trade brought revenues from the merchants who landed there. Poets who were sponsored by the kings and other members of the ruling class composed poems, mainly what are known as *sandēshakāriya* (message poems) that praise the glory of the city in understandably much exaggerated terms.⁸

In the early sixteenth century the kingdom was on the verge of collapse. The reasons for this ranged from the low levels of surplus generation, which did not meet the needs of the ambitious ruling class, to the latter's consequent inability to maintain their authority over the vast region which had been brought under control at the height of their power. When the peripheral areas of the kingdom were being divided up among local subordinate rulers and sections of the ruling dynasty itself following intense internal

hostilities, the centrifugal forces in the region weakened. In this scenario, the European powers were poised to step in with a high level of military capability to restore the unity of the region, and implacable enthusiasm for controlling lucrative commodities such as cinnamon, elephants, and pearls. In the coming centuries, the Portuguese, the Dutch and lastly the English (who also conquered the Kandyan kingdom, the last bastion of the indigenous rulers, in 1815), brought Sri Lanka under a common historical fate, subjugation to western colonialism.

In 1521, King Wijayabahu VI was killed in a dramatic palace coup organized by his three sons and who divided the Kotte kingdom between them. From this time to the death of the Rajasinghe II, who posed a formidable threat to the Portuguese as well as to the Dutch, the region experienced almost continuous warfare involving Portuguese, Dutch and various indigenous elements. These chronic military confrontations had two important consequences. First, it significantly disturbed the demographic configuration of the region.⁹ Second, it led to the formation of the Kandyan kingdom, which for a long time curbed the expansion of colonial domination over a large part of the interior of the island.

In the course of almost two centuries of continuous warfare, the remnants of the pre-colonial ruling class were nearly extinguished. We see a prolonged period of resistance led by indigenous chiefs during the Portuguese rule (1597-1656). After they were brutally suppressed, no signs of formidable military threats emerged from the indigenous chiefs, apart from a few occasions when chiefs supported the Kandyan king in his military operations against the VOC. Although this indigenous chieftdom ceased to be a military threat to the colonial powers, they wielded significant political, economic and social power over the peasantry. The consolidation of colonial power in the eighteenth century was carried out mainly in collaboration with this chieftdom, although the alliance between the chiefs and the VOC was quite edgy.

The alliance with the indigenous chiefs was pivotal for the Company administration owing to the unique feature of its presence in Sri Lanka. The VOC presence in many parts of Asia was characterised by the establishment of trading posts. In Sri Lanka, in contrast, it became a formidable regional power.¹⁰ Thus the VOC establishment in Sri Lanka performed two roles simultaneously: those of sovereign and of merchant. The title used for the chief executive official of the VOC on the island--*de gouverneur en de directeur* (the governor and the director--reflects this dual role. The 'governor' represented the territorial interests of the Company while the 'director' represented the commercial interests. This unique situation came about by default rather than by design, following the protracted military confrontation with the Portuguese on the island, which was officially intended to help the Kandyan King oust the former in return for some lucrative commercial benefits. Nevertheless, after the Portuguese establishments, first Galle and then Colombo, fell into the hands of the VOC, the company continued to occupy them in defiance of the wishes of the king.¹¹

This civil control enabled the company to reap the maximum profits from the island owing to the nature of the organisation of production most of the commercial items on the island. Such lucrative items as cinnamon and elephants were royal monopolies. Moreover, gathering these was not a part of the day-to-day production process of the peasant. Their collection was a function of the unpaid labour owed to the sovereign by subjects. Thus the rulers had absolute control over these commodities. This situation could be contrasted with, for example, textiles of the Coromandel Coast or pepper of the Malabar Coast, where these items were produced by ordinary inhabitants for export markets. By entering into treaties with the rulers in these regions the Company could obtain these items via various middlemen. In Sri Lanka, this was the case only in such commodities as areca nut and other items such as pepper, cardamom and coffee, the last

being a colonial introduction. These items were of much less significance than cinnamon and elephants. Thus, those who held political authority over the territory and its population naturally controlled the supply of these items. By assuming the position of regional sovereign, the VOC controlled these important commodities. It also became the legitimate claimant for various taxes and dues from the peasant to the 'lord of the land', by virtue of being the sovereign.

There is nonetheless a difference between conquering a region and ruling it. The latter needed the consent of the population, mainly because reaping profits depended largely on their goodwill. It was the alliance with indigenous chiefs who were the real power holders at the local level that enabled the Company to consolidate and perpetuate its rule. This alliance however did not please the Company in the long run, as it observed with so much envy the growing influence of the chiefs and their ability to manipulate the system owing to their familiarity with indigenous institutions and customs. The Company was of the view that chiefs did so at its expense. This was indeed an accurate observation. It seems that some sections of the chiefdom increased their power and authority as a result of the privileges they enjoyed under Dutch rule.¹²

In the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the Company administration was attempting to strengthen its grip over the people by bypassing the chiefs, or at least by reducing their authority. Registering, mapping and surveying lands were the instruments for the reduction of their power, because these measures provided the Company with a knowledge of indigenous institutions, particularly land tenure, hitherto having accessible only through the chiefs. This situation has to be understood in the context of the growing demand for the surplus of the peasant.

The need to extract surplus from peasants increased under colonial rule. This may have been caused by several factors. First and foremost, the commercial interests of the colonial powers, particularly of the VOC as a commercial enterprise, demanded the maximisation of profit, which was achieved at the expense of the peasant producer. Second, the infrastructure and manpower needed for the maintenance of the administrative, military and commercial machinery were quite large. Third, the material culture of the Europeans which formed a significant part of the colonial establishment was much higher than the pre-colonial ruling class. There was also a tendency among indigenous chiefs to emulate the material culture of the Europeans.¹³

The growing demand for the surplus had its ramifications. In 1730s, unrest among the peasants led to violent uprisings that kept Company rule at bay.¹⁴ Although the situation became calm after the appointment of Baron van Imhoff (1736-39) as governor, another wave of violent reactions arose in 1750s. These confrontations were in addition to occasional minor outbursts of violent protest by the peasants.

It is interesting to see how chiefs reacted to these peasant uprisings. They seemingly used these opportunities to reinforce their position. Although, chiefs were quite content to collaborate with western rulers, they did not want the former to intrude in their sphere of influence. They wanted the Company to take for granted their existing authority over the peasants and to devise Company policies accordingly. Thus they seem to have used peasant resistance as leverage against the Company.¹⁵ Nevertheless, chiefs by and large had to sustain their alliance with the Company, because it was through the system of surplus extraction administered by the latter as sovereign of the land that they also got access to part of the surplus of the peasant.

Apart from the general tendency towards higher demand for surplus, another important change can be seen. After the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the collection of land revenue seems to have become more important. This cannot be considered an immediate change of policy, but can be seen as a logical step in the consolidation of the VOC's rule in the region. The late seventeenth century scene was

rather gloomy in terms of reaping of maximum profits from the VOC's newly acquired territory. Protracted military campaigns heavily damaged the production process, thereby reducing naturally the possibility of acquiring a significant share from it.¹⁶ Then came an era of settling down and putting things back on track. The major emphasis was on expanding the amount of land put under cultivation and improving the demographic situation.

The results did not match expectations. Though population growth was relatively encouraging,¹⁷ the increase in production was not so satisfactory. As cinnamon was the main source of income, it is understandable that the major emphasis was on increasing its production. Harsh measures taken to squeeze the optimum benefit from that crop ultimately led to violent reactions in the 1730s. Governor Van Domburg (1734-36) who was responsible for these harsh measures took another step forward by increasing the tax on gardens planted with coconut (*polayepanam*) trees without permission from the Company, from 1/3 to 1/2.

It is in this context that the growing emphasis on the collection of land revenue has to be understood. There was also another reason for finding non-cinnamon sources of income. According to the instructions of the directors of the VOC in the Netherlands, cinnamon sent to Europe had to be cost-free at that end, so the benefit to Colombo was next to nothing. This gave a strong incentive to maximize the other sources of income. A clear manifestation of this concern can be seen in the policies of Governor Baron van Imhoff. He took various measures to systematise the collection of land revenue, by far the most important of them being the inauguration of tombo compilation, which had been considered for some time.¹⁸ He also took measures to make the functioning of *Landraad* more effective.¹⁹ Moreover, he took various measures to curb the influence of indigenous chiefs over the people so as to boost the Company's grip over the latter.

Considerable interest was also shown in diversifying the economic activities of the people, thereby producing wider sources of income. Apart from promoting coconut and its by-products such as arrack, cultivation of other cash crops such as coffee, pepper and cardamom was also promoted.²⁰ Steps were also taken for improving internal waterways to facilitate internal transport. Thus, dissatisfied with the income from the existing level of productivity, the Dutch attempted to revitalise the production process and thereby the income generation capability. The wave of violent outbreaks in the 1730s had taught the lesson of the undesirability of increasing the extraction of revenue without improving the productivity. Moreover, Imhoff in particular maintained that the Dutch should be an active participant in the internal political relations of the peasant. His famous words "the chimney should smoke for both parties"²¹ has been perhaps misinterpreted by Kotelawele as meaning that Company policies should take "into account the interests of both the Company and the inhabitants".²² This is probably not what he meant. He was in fact referring to the relationship between the Company and chiefs, and particularly the latter's over the people and thereby their greater access to revenue from the land. What he meant was that not only the chiefs but also the Company must benefit from the land. His intention was therefore to reduce the influence of chiefs and extend Company's direct authority into the realm of the peasant.

Thus the historical scene of the mid-eighteenth century provides us with a useful point of departure for investigating structural effects of the early colonial encounter. There are two important factors upon which our investigation should be based: First, the attempts to diversify economic activities and systematise the mechanisms for extracting revenue, and second, the attempts to overpower indigenous chiefs, the other main contender for the surplus of the peasant. These efforts injected a new dynamism into the existing social and economic relations. They open up new windows through which to look at the relationships both between the peasant and his production process, and

among the peasants, the Company and indigenous chiefs. These issues will be taken up in the following chapters.

1.3 Historiography

The estate revolution that gripped Ceylon, a hitherto sleepy island colony which had been acquired by Great Britain from Holland some 50 years earlier, in the 1840's was typical of the profound economic transformation wrought throughout the world by the rapid expansion of international trade during the nineteenth century.

With this remark Donald R. Snodgrass commences his authoritative work on the economic transformation of Sri Lanka during the colonial period.²³ Snodgrass is not the only one who subscribed to this view. In her recent study on the rise of what she calls 'the colonial bourgeoisie', which is indeed a major contribution to the social history of Sri Lanka, Kumari Jayawardena echoes the same idea, although somewhat implicitly. She begins her work by observing that "From the time of Dutch rule, and during the first two or three decades of British occupation, the restrictive policies of the colonial state imposed a serious check on enterprise and accumulation and stifled the development of a bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka".²⁴ This attitude towards what I would call 'the early colonial encounter' has made a deep impression on the modern historiography of Sri Lanka. The sequence of the publication of the three volumes of the *History of Ceylon* series is exemplary in this respect. Parts one and two of the first volume, which cover from early times to about 1500, appeared, respectively, in 1959 and 1960, while volume three followed in 1973.²⁵ Volume two, covering the period from 1500 to 1800 appeared in 1995, twenty-two years later.

These long intervals may have been caused by at least two factors. First, there was a serious problem accessing the sources of the early colonial encounter, which are mainly in Portuguese and Dutch. There are few historians in Sri Lanka who are competent to use these sources.²⁶ Second, the mindset of Sri Lankan historians also played a part. The nationalist upsurge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave birth to a wave of historiography which aimed at discovering the 'golden era of the Sinhala civilisation' in what is popularly known as the '*rajarata* civilisation'. Those who were interested in modern developments focussed on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was assumed that the 'modern history' of Sri Lanka began in the nineteenth century, in the sense that the determining historical processes such as modern forms of government, plantation economy, the growth of nationalism, and so on, took shape in this period. Among those who upheld this view, G.C. Mendis is prominent.²⁷ Moreover, Colvin R. de Silva sees the 1833 Colebrook-Cameron reforms as the major breakthrough in Sri Lanka's modern history.²⁸ The following remarks with which Colvin R. de Silva concluded his two-volume work epitomise this thinking very well: 'In short, the foundations of the present political, administrative and economic structure of Ceylon were laid during the period 1796-1833, and the reforms of 1833 completed and rounded off that work, Ceylon was firmly set on the highway of modern development. A new era in her history had dawned'.²⁹ It was taken for granted that a comprehensive understanding of the shape of the 'modern Sri Lanka' was possible without a thorough investigation of the early colonial period.

It is important to notice here that two major studies on the last seven decades of Dutch rule, which in my opinion is the most important period of the early colonial encounter, still remain unpublished. Kotalwele's *The Dutch in Ceylon, 1743-1766* and Kanapathypillai, *Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon* (which covers from 1766 to 1796) were

both written in the late 1960s and though unpublished they have been used in some chapters of the *University of Peradeniya History of Sri Lanka*, vol. II.

Notwithstanding these assumptions, a number of studies have been done on the early colonial period. Apart from early pioneers such as P.E. Pieris³⁰ and Fr. S.G. Perera,³¹ a number of scholars have studied the Portuguese and Dutch presence with thorough investigations of the original Portuguese and Dutch archival sources. T.B.H. Abeyesinghe and C.R. de Silva studied the Portuguese rule while K.W. Gunawardane, S. Arasaratnam, D.A. Kotelawe and V. Kanapathypillai focused on the Dutch rule. Abeyesinghe's major work is *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon, 1594-1612*.³² He also wrote several other books and articles on the Portuguese impact on Sri Lanka, some aspects of Dutch rule, and the Kandyan Kingdom. His contribution to Sri Lankan historiography was cut short by his untimely death in 1985. C.R. de Silva wrote his PhD dissertation on the latter part of the Portuguese rule. This was later published as *The Portuguese Rule in Ceylon, 1617-1638*.³³ He made additional contributions to various aspects of the history of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Sri Lanka, which are cited extensively in this study. Gunawardane's major work *Foundation of the Dutch Power in Ceylon*, is on the early years of the Dutch presence in Sri Lanka. His other works include 'Muslims under Dutch Rule up to the Mid-Eighteenth Century',³⁴ and 'Dutch Policy towards Buddhism: Some Aspects of its Impact, c.1640 to c. 1740'.³⁵ Arasaratnam has written extensively on the Dutch presence in Sri Lanka as well as on Dutch and English activities in the South Indian region in the eighteenth century. His works are cited throughout this work. Apart from his dissertation, 'The Dutch in Ceylon, 1743-1766', Kotelawe has written a number of articles which are also cited throughout this study. He also contributed to the *University of Peradeniya History of Sri Lanka*, vol. II. Kanapathypillai's major work, *Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon*, also remain unpublished. He also wrote 'Helen or Costly Bride: The VOC and the Cinnamon Trade of Sri Lanka 1766-1796'.³⁶ Apart from these Sri Lankans, a number of European scholars have made major contributions; these include Jurrien van Goor, Lodewijk Wagenaar, Remco Raben, Gerrit Knaap and Alicia Schrikker.³⁷

A brief account of the general orientations and biases of these studies will help situate the present study in the context of existing historiography. I focus here only on the studies pertaining to the period of the Dutch rule in Sri Lanka. Looking at contributions of Sri Lankan scholars, several general orientations can be identified. First and foremost political, military and administrative aspects are the most favourite themes. In terms of the encounter between colonial powers and indigenous elements, the major emphasis has been on Dutch relations with the Kandyan kings. The four main Sri Lankan historians of the Dutch period have all devoted considerable attention to this topic. This was in line with the major pre-occupations of the historiography of the post-colonial period, which attempted to unravel biases in colonial historiography that implicitly or explicitly justified colonial expansion and manoeuvred historical events for the purpose.³⁸ Thus a lot of historians' energy went to giving a more detailed picture of colonial powers and indigenous rulers. Since this had to be done by using the sources produced by the colonial powers, which was quite understandably prejudiced, meticulous effort was needed to obtain a balanced picture.

Although the major area of interest was the confrontation between colonial powers and indigenous rulers, there is a substantial number of works on other aspects of the early colonial encounter. Arasaratnam, Kotelawe and Kanapathypillai have enlightened us greatly on its social and economic aspects. Arasaratnam and Kotelawe, in particular, have made substantial contributions on the social and economic policies of Dutch rule, with special attention to their impact on indigenous society. Their studies on the commercial and agrarian policies of the VOC and the emergence of new affluent social groups are to be especially acknowledged. M.U. de Silva and K.D. Paranavitana also

consider the social impact of the early colonial encounter.³⁹ Wagenaar (Galle) and Raben and Knaap (Colombo) have provided considerable insight into the development of urban spaces, which were extremely significant in the new emerging social formations. Van Goor's study on Dutch education illuminates another notable facet of colonial hegemony. These studies have certainly questioned the school of thought that attributes little significance to pre-nineteenth century colonial encounters, thereby exposing the need to re-examine the existing paradigm of the historiography on the colonial encounter in Sri Lanka.

It is now possible to contextualise the present study against the backdrop of this existing historiography. This study is however different from existing studies. On the one hand, it takes the investigation to the micro level in contrast to the macro bias of most of studies, except Wagenaar's, Knaap's and Raben's micro studies on two urban spaces. This study focuses on the social and economic situation in the rural spaces with a substantial micro approach. On the other hand, the point of departure of this study is the peasantry, whereas earlier works tended to take the colonial factor as their point of departure. If the latter narrates the historical process in terms of the expansion of colonial influence into the world of the colonised, the present study starts from the world of the peasant and goes on to analyse how the peasant dealt with the colonial intervention. This aspect of the study brings us to the important problem of how to define the peasant in the complex network of relations coming into being in the context of the consolidation of colonial hegemony.

1.4 Conceptualising the 'peasant' in the context of the colonial hegemony

What was the place of colonial rule from the objective point of view of the peasant producer? First and foremost it was *one* of the contenders for the surplus of the peasant producer, the other being the indigenous chieftdom. There may have been ideological reasons for the peasant producer to distinguish the colonial rule from the indigenous chiefs. Nevertheless, when it comes to the fundamental issue of delivering a part of his produce, there was no distinction. Thus, the difference between the peasant producer and those who extract part of his produce or labour is of greater importance than the difference between the colonisers and the chiefs. Without making this difference it is not possible to account for the complexity of the relationship between the peasant producer and the non-producers who claim the surplus of the former.

It should be emphasised that the dominant mode of explanation of the colonial encounter does not make this important distinction. It simply takes for granted the Manichean dichotomy between the coloniser and the colonised.⁴⁰ Monarchs, chiefs and ordinary peasant producers are lumped together, implicitly or explicitly, as one unit forming the 'colonised'. Any resistance to the colonisers is deemed to have represented the 'general will' of the colonised. This mode of explanation does not help us account for at least two situations characteristic of the colonial encounter. On the one hand, it is a commonplace that when there were rivalries between various contenders among indigenous ruling groups, one party might evoke the help of a colonial power against the others. It is interesting to notice that all parties were willing to do so.⁴¹ On the other hand, it was commonplace for peasants to complain to colonial administrators and to seek their help against indigenous chiefs when they felt that they were being exploited illegitimately. In both these cases it is clear that if there was any ideological ground on which colonial powers were perceived as outsiders and conquerors, those ideological concerns were superseded by the advantages those indigenous elements saw in collaborating with the colonial powers against other indigenous elements.

There is indeed a sharp difference between (nationalist) ideologies that modern historians attribute to the colonised, and which are considered to be the binding thread

against the coloniser⁴² and the actual ideological universe of the time. There were indeed pre-colonial ruling ideologies embodied, mainly, in popular religious beliefs, caste hierarchy and other ritual practices, and which brought together diverse social classes and communities to form a distinct ideological formation. They may have undoubtedly played a significant role in the resistance of natives against colonial powers. Yet, they do not explain all aspects of the colonial encounter. On the one hand, colonial powers did their best, with some degree of success, to articulate pre-colonial ideologies. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, there were many aspects of the colonial encounter that cannot be explained in terms of those ideologies. Thus, I propose that we have to look beyond these ideological explanations in order to locate the peasant's response to the colonial intervention in proper context.

In dealing with those who claimed his surplus, the peasant's major concern was to maximise the share that he could retain, if he could not disavow the claim altogether. At the same time, the exploiter would try to maximise his share. This is the most basic and long-lasting aspect of the social conflict of any peasant society in which the extraction of the surplus by a non-producing outsider prevailed. The 'conflict' as such might be overt or covert. Because the exploiter usually possessed military, political and ideological power, he was able to hegemonize the relationship over the peasant, which made the latter deliver part of his produce or labour to the former by 'consent' rather than by (overt) force, as if it was his legitimate share.

However, even the most powerful hegemonic ideological projects could not mitigate completely the process of the transfer of surplus. Peasants would find ways and means to enlarge their share within the subtleties of the intricate hegemonic relations. Witold Kula has shown how measuring grain was a mode of 'class struggle'. With reference to this issue he remarks: "[e]very transgression of rules amounts to a challenge to the prevailing social norms and meets with stiff resistance. We therefore have no hesitation in applying the concept of class struggle to the matters to be presently considered".⁴³ This could be compared with the way in which the peasant of this study manipulated the measurement of paddy-lands in order to reduce the amount of paddy tax (this will be discussed later in this work). When parties were competing for the surplus, the peasant would improve his bargaining position by means of shifting loyalties between them. When colonial powers had to compete with various indigenous stake holders for the peasant's surplus, shifting loyalty became an effective mode of bargaining. But the inverse was also true. When competing parties for the surplus collaborated with each other, the peasant was usually the loser. The situation therefore was contingent upon shifting alliances among the various parties.

1.5 Some methodological issues

The method of this study is structural analysis. It also deals with 'structural change'. According to the 'structuralist' theory, this conceptualisation may seem somewhat paradoxical. As Louis Dumont puts it, "a structure is present or absent, *it does not change*".⁴⁴ In other words, structure does not have a time dimension. In that case, how do we talk about 'structural change', as 'change' implies a time dimension? This problem relates to the role of the individual agent within the structure. Is s/he a mechanical puppet of the rules and laws of the structure, or does s/he possess some sort of autonomy to articulate the laws and rules of the structure? A number of theories have been advanced to solve this problem. Pierre Bourdieu's 'habitus' and 'dispositions' and Anthony Giddens' 'structuration' are by far the most important.

I would rather follow a different path to come to terms with the problem of 'structural change'. By 'structural change' I do not mean 'change *in* the structure', rather a shift from one structure to another, which may seem exactly what Dumont meant. But

what I mean by structure is not an empirical phenomenon; rather it is a conceptual category. This means that the structure does not exist out there, at least, as far as the concrete social agent is concerned. It is to be explored in the process of investigation. In Giddens' analysis the structure does exist as an empirical category and the agent comes to terms with it by getting acquaintance with it and thereby learns to work with it. This is the process he calls 'structuration'.

My approach is based on the conceptual differentiation between a structure and a social formation. Social formation is an empirical category, a particular social space that is historically evolved and empirically identifiable as a social universe of a group of social agents who maintain recurring relations. In such a social formation, a multitude of structures can be detected. A single agent may deal simultaneously with more than one structure. One particular action of an agent may link to different structures of which s/he may not necessarily be conscious. To take an example from chapter three: from the peasant's point of view, 'cultivation' is *one* social action. Nevertheless, the action of cultivation was structurally different in the paddy field and the garden. While the former is an element of the traditional pre-colonial structure the latter is an element of the colonial structure. The same goes for land tenure, as discussed in chapter four; various structures of land tenure could prevail simultaneously in one social space, and one particular social agent could function as the carrier of those different structures at the same time.

Table 1-1: Model of structural change

Action	Structural practice	Structure
Structure 1		
Cultivation	Chena cultivation	Pre-colonial peasant production
Structure 2		
Cultivation	Garden cultivation	'Colonial agriculture'

Moving on to the problem of 'structural change', I argue that it has to be understood at the level of the changing pace of the recurrence of the 'structural practices'. A structure exists not at the level of the social architecture but at the level of the recurrence of certain social practices. If the practices of the social agents that form the structure do not recur with reasonable regularity, the structure ceases to exist. The termination of the recurrence however would not necessarily take place overnight and could well be a gradual process. The difference depends upon historical forces at work. In this meaning, Dumont's conception of the structure in terms of the presence or absence as mutually exclusive polarities would not be of much help in explaining actual historical processes because the termination of certain structural practices may not be instantaneous. Thus 'structural change' in this study refers to situations in which the regularity of certain practices that reproduce a structure become progressively detached from the actions of the social agent. This model of structural change is illustrated in table 1-1. Since the 'action' of cultivation is essential for the life of the peasant, it cannot cease to exist. Yet the action of 'chena cultivation', a structural practice, can come to an end either suddenly or gradually. At the same time, the 'action' of garden cultivation may take place at a greater pace, which in turn brings about a different structural practice from that of chena cultivation.

The foregoing account of the structure and structural change leads us to deal with the 'time' dimension of the analysis in a distinctive way. It definitely does not allow us to handle the 'time' as a purely linear phenomenon. I would make a tentative distinction here between 'empirical time' and 'structural time'. Empirical time simply refers to the chronology, while structural time refers to the existence of parallel structures which embodies the same social action but with varying degree of the recurrence of structural practices. One structure may be becoming obsolete in terms of the decreasing regularity of the recurrence of structural practices while the other is becoming more dominant in terms of its increasing regularity. Thus, although the empirical time of two structures could be the same in the sense that both structural practices are performed by the agent simultaneously, the structural time is different because one structural practice links to a structure which was dominant in the past and is becoming obsolete while the other is becoming dominant in the present and the future. This distinction is pivotal in handling the time factor in this study. While this study is set mainly in the mid-eighteenth century, a considerable flexibility is maintained in terms of using sources belonging to the periods immediately preceding and following this, because the recurrence of structural practices does not follow a simple chronology. Information from earlier and later periods is drawn upon when there is insufficient information from the main temporal context of the study.

Such flexibility will also be maintained in handling the space for two reasons. First, a structural analysis necessarily needs in-depth analysis of social facts, which leads the researcher to focus on a limited geographical area. Yet at the same time, when structural changes form part of the study, such a narrow geographical focus becomes difficult, unless the study deals with a much longer period.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the flexible but careful handling of space can be used to overcome this problem. Thus, there are several levels of geographical focus in this study. At the general level, it is located in the western and southern maritime territory of the VOC administration. Thus focus narrows first to some *kōrale* divisions of the Colombo *disāvany*, second to a single *kōrale* and finally to some sample villages.

The second reason for the flexible handling of space is due to the nature of spatial distribution of certain structural practices. The recurrence of certain structural practices may be found in a more comprehensible form in the outlying regions of the main geographical focus of the study. For example, in chapter two constant references are made to Kandyan region in the reconstruction of the pre-colonial structure of the everyday life of the peasant. This flexibility is made methodologically possible because some important pre-colonial historical processes encompassed not only the region of our study but also some areas of the Kandyan territory. Significant caution is needed here because, for example, Kandyan territory possessed some autonomous historical developments as well.

This method of structural analysis demands a clearly defined set of concepts. It is therefore important to define some terms and concepts employed in this study. Some of the most significant concepts are defined below in short.

Colonial rule: I do not use 'colonial rule' in terms of the conventional Manichean dichotomy between coloniser and colonised. The term is retained to encompass the complex of economic and political practices by which Asian, African and Latin American social formations were integrated into the growing capitalist world system.⁴⁶ It will not be used therefore to distinguish the 'colonised' as 'the other' of colonial rule.

Surplus and surplus extraction: The term 'surplus' refers to the totality of labour-time that a particular producer devotes not for the sustenance of his/ her household, but for the sake of an outsider. The 'labour theory of value' of Karl Marx, to which this usage of the term refers, has been subject to extensive criticism.⁴⁷ I am not going to deal with

those criticisms here. Yet, I would argue that whatever the validity of those criticisms, the Marxist conception of 'surplus' is useful for explaining the relationship between a producer and a non-producer in an economic formation in which the former delivers to the latter part of what he produces, or a particular amount of his unpaid or under-paid labour.⁴⁸ In this usage, we can easily ignore the controversial part of the theory dealing with the origin of value. Criticisms are however more applicable, if there is any validity in them, in the case of capitalism, in which the process of surplus appropriation is considered a part of the production process itself. This is not so in non- or pre-capitalist economic formations where surplus appropriation is well outside the production process and the producer has no economic reason to render part of his produce or labour to the claimant for the surplus. The transfer is therefore facilitated by political, legal, military and ideological means.

Class and class struggle: By class I do not mean a clearly defined social group with a positive identity. Instead, I refer to certain manifestations of interests of groups of individuals, which are determined in terms of the way in which they function within the network of economic relations of the social formation. This approach is closer to Max Weber's conceptualisation of 'class situations' than to the classical Marxist notion of class. Hence, a class has to be distinguished from other identity groups such as castes, kinship groups or what Weber calls 'status groups'.⁴⁹ Class struggles can be defined as situations in which conflicting class interests manifest themselves in a particular time-space context. However, empirical expressions of the class struggle cannot be identified solely through the antagonistic polarisation of groups with conflicting class interests. It may take different forms of social conflicts and, therefore, components of conflicting class interests have to be detected through analysis of concrete social conflicts.

1.6 Sources

The main source of information for this study is the archives of the VOC. Archival materials concerning the affairs of Ceylon are found in three archives: the Sri Lanka National Archives (SLNA) in Colombo, the Nationaal Archief (NA) in The Hague, and the Arsip Nasional (ANRI) in Jakarta. The SLNA collection was heavily used for this study. Some research work was done in The Hague, too, while one file was perused at the Arsip Nasional during a two-day visit there.

With regard to the nature of information, there are different layers of the VOC archives of Ceylon. The top layer consists of such documents as Council minutes, correspondence with the High Government in Batavia and Company directors in the Netherlands. The bottom layer consists of various documents concerning the details of inhabitants, their property, taxes attached to them and the unpaid service that the inhabitants were obliged to render. These documents of the bottom layer form the main source of information for this study because they provide basic facts about the social and economic life of the people. These documents include, among others, tombos (land registers), various lists of service providers, gardens, indigenous headmen and so on, documents of land transactions, judicial proceedings, visits of commissioners to inquire into requests for Company lands for cultivation and complaints about destroying cinnamon trees.

These documents were the direct result of the progressive penetration of the Company rule into the indigenous society with a view to enhance its grip over the subjects in order to maximise the exploitation process. This process reached its peak in the mid-eighteenth century with the compilation of the tombos which form the backbone of the information for the present study. Apart from the general tombo collection there is another series of tombos known as 'school tombos' which have not been used for this study. The main tombo collection that is available presently consists of

two series, the 1760 series and the 1766-1771 series.⁵⁰ Apart from these two 'Landraad series', so named because they were kept in the possession of the *Landraad*, another set known as *tombobouder* (tombo-keeper) series is also available. This is equivalent to the 1766-71 *Landraad* series, although in historians' eyes there is a crucial difference between the two. The 1766-71 *Landraad* series is a revision of the 1760 series. Most important, the revisions were made to the 1760 tombo itself, as a result of which we are provided with extremely important extra information about deaths, births, marriages and immigrations that occurred between the compilation of the original and the revision.

The basic administrative unit of the tombo was the village (Dutch *dorp*). The compilation of tombos took place in two stages. In the first, what is known as the *hoofd tombo* (head tombo) was compiled. This gives details of family members, including names, ages, caste, the service that the family was obliged to render to the sovereign, and, in the case of certain castes that performed special labour tasks, their occupation. In the second stage, landed property of the family was recorded, which was called *land tombo*. In this, a detailed account of the landed property of each family was recorded under the name of the person whom I call the 'Principal Land Holder' or PLH. This was usually the most senior male in the family. There are however occasions when the widow of a senior male was the PLH. Moreover when there were no adult males in the family, the senior female became the PLH.

The landed property of a PLH was divided into two main categories, paddy fields (Dutch *zaaivelden*) and gardens (Dutch *thuijnen*). In some villages, meadow lands (Sinhalese *ōwiti*) which were occasionally cultivated with paddy were given as a separate category. Apart from this general classification, several other varieties of lands were classified under each village: *chenas* (the Europeanised term for the Sinhalese *ben* [singular *bena*], slash-and-burn cultivation) and *puran* (fallow paddy-lands). Although *chenas* were cultivated by individual families, the nature of their location made it difficult to classify on that basis. For each holding, the owner and the owner's relationship to the sovereign (who was considered the 'lord of the land'--see chapter four). This description included especially claims of the PLH and counter claims of tombo commissioners. This was followed by the classification of each holding according to their size. The size of a garden was measured according to the number of coconut, jak and areca nut trees planted. Empty spaces were described in terms of the number of coconut trees that could be planted. The size of paddy-lands was measured by the sowing capacity of grain in *amunum* (Europeanised form of the Sinhalese *amunu* [*amuna* sing.]) and *kuruni* (1 *amunum* = 40 *kuruni*). The size of each paddy land holding was entered in separate columns according to taxes that attached to them.

Apart from this general information about the people and their landed property, additional information was sometimes recorded. When a PLH owned more property outside the village of his residence, the relevant villages were specified. There are also notes on the PLH and land holdings, which were sometimes added later. The description of each holding also significantly varies, and some were quite detailed and included a lot of information on matters pertaining to inheritance.

Nevertheless, extreme caution is needed in using the information in tombos. Several factors have to be kept in mind in this regard. First and foremost, the compilation of the tombos itself was a tool for extending the Company rule into the realm of peasant society. It was therefore met with serious resistance from both ordinary peasants and from indigenous chiefs who enjoyed significant authority over the former and were entitled to part of the peasants' surplus. The work of tombo commissioners were often opposed and obstructed.⁵¹ The tombo collection of Matara *disāvany* was completely destroyed during the insurgency of 1761.⁵² Therefore the information provided by the people may not always represent their actual situation. Since chiefs played a major role in

the tombo compilation, their vested interest also would have played a significant role in manipulating the information. The fact that the revision of the tombo was carried out immediately after the Kandy-Dutch war of 1761-65 is also crucial. Certain demographic changes, for example, may have been the result of military confrontations. High death rates and migrations to the Kandyan land are key in this respect. Therefore, some demographic information may not represent long-term and general patterns. Thus it is not advisable to use them without comparing them with other sources when possible.

The 'permanent orders' of the Council, plakkaats and memoirs of outgoing governors also provide useful information. The last mentioned two sources have been published and the memoirs of the governors have also been translated into English, making them easily accessible to non-Dutch speaking researchers. 'Permanent orders' are a quick reference to the important decisions reached in the Council of Ceylon. As permanent orders have been properly indexed, they provide quick access as well. Sometimes I also use the minutes of the Council. They are important because they give a useful background for the decisions. It should be noted however that using Council minutes for this study is rather time consuming because lengthy discussions of the council has been recorded in these documents. Thus, for general background, such sources as memoirs of governors and other secondary materials were much more practical. Plakkaats were an important mode of communication between the Company and its subjects. Since plakkaats were always issued in a particular context, which was sometimes detailed in the plakkaat itself, these give important insights into the nature of the relationship between the Company and subjects.

There are also a number of miscellaneous documents which are useful in the study. A series of reports on cinnamon plantation belonging to 1786 gives valuable information on the condition of cinnamon plantations. There are also lists of service providers for the Company. It should be mentioned in conclusion that a complete investigation of all these valuable documents would require more research than is available within the time and other limitations of this type of thesis. It is therefore incumbent upon future historians to further investigate these archives in order to study this virtually unconquered terrain of the Sri Lankan history.

1.7 Organisation of chapters

Chapter two provides a systematic account of the social and economic life of a typical pre-colonial peasant village. It also attempts to abstract structural features of pre-colonial peasant life from the progressively changing scenario of the time of the study. As peasant settlements were not completely isolated formations even in their primitive form, their links to the outside world as well as the outside forces that shaped their destiny are important.

The third to sixth chapters focus on a number of themes which are central to understanding structural changes. The third chapter deals with the changes in the production process. It argues that changes have to be explained in terms of the new forms of land consumption and social division of labour. It also argues that change occurred in some branches of production while the main traditional branch of production, paddy cultivation, remained unchanged at the subsistence level. The rise of garden cultivation, the decline of traditional chena cultivation and the rise of cinnamon and coconut plantations are the main indicators of the changing patterns of production.

The fourth chapter discusses changes in the land tenure system, which were caused chiefly by colonial intervention. Despite the declared policy of colonial rulers to keep the traditional land tenure system in tact, the rising demand for land revenue, and measures that were taken to make the revenue collection more effective and to reduce the economic and political power of indigenous chiefs caused serious changes to the system

of land tenure. Moreover, there were fundamental changes in the way in which traditional ideological claims such as the sovereign's right to land were interpreted, articulated and put into practice, and these also resulted in structural changes.

The fifth chapter investigates the emergence of a new class formation and is based on the comparative discussion of two case studies. One focuses on the class formation of a traditional peasant social and economic setting while the other looks at the situation of a changing setting. Special attention is given in this chapter to explaining the rise of a landowning class, particularly the way in which it accumulated lands and managed to acquire labour from the peasants for the cultivation of their lands.

The sixth chapter is devoted to identifying patterns of social mobility as can be seen in the changing patterns of caste formation. Castes are viewed not merely as fixed elements of a hierarchical order but as evolving communities. This chapter attempts to understand how the pre-colonial dynamics of caste communities were linked to the colonial reality. It also re-evaluates conventional explanations on the ideology of caste hierarchy with the help of colonial and contemporary indigenous sources.

The seventh chapter discusses the findings of the study against some important debates on the transformation of peasant societies. It will suggest that the Sri Lankan case in the eighteenth century could be used in order to explain some basic issues concerning the role of early colonial interventions in transforming peasant social formations in Asia. In the epilogue a summary of the main findings of the study is presented and they are placed in the history of the so-called 'long eighteenth century' in the 'Monsoon Asia'.

Chapter Two- The world of the peasant

2.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to reconstruct the pre-colonial peasant's life in the context of a changing socio-economic environment. It starts with an idiosyncratic reconstruction of the life of a typical pre-colonial village settlement, after which the links of the peasants who lived in those villages and some aspects of the outside world which affected the peasant will be discussed. Thereafter I will try to give an overview of the different and changing demographic and socio-economic picture of the region with the aim of providing a proper background to understand the typical pre-colonial village. This will be followed by a detailed analysis of the main settlement unit of the peasant, the *gama* (± village or hamlet), and internal structural relations of that geographic space.

A special note is needed to justify the method of isolating a pre-colonial social space and set of social relations from an actual social environment which had been already subjected to colonial intervention for nearly two centuries. The justification for this method is the unevenness of the spread of colonial influence into different parts of the region. Hence the socio-economic space of the western maritime region of Sri Lanka as a whole had a character of a collage painting, where different structural practices, representing different historical times, formed a complex social ensemble.

2.2 Everyday Life of the Peasant

Travelling about five kilometres to the South from the Belummahara junction, located between the 27 and 28 kilometre posts of the Colombo-Kandy main road, one reaches the busy but small town of Weliveriya, from where the Weliveriya-Radawana road starts off eastward. A few kilometres further along this road one finds Wilimbula, a fairly large village, currently coming under several Grama Niladhari divisions⁵³ of the Mahara regional secretariat of Gampaha district. The geography is mainly characterised by small hills and valleys, some narrower strips and wider plains, formed in between gradually rising higher lands. The road crosses these hills and valleys. Almost all the lower valleys are converted into paddy fields while human settlements and scattered coconut plantations are found in the higher lands (see picture 1).

Before reaching Wilimbula junction, a small township with several shops, one finds the Malkele junction, where we will turn southwards along the minor local road to reach our destination, Radaliyagoda. According to the tombo of Mäda *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale*, Radaliyagoda was an 'annex' of Wilimbula, alongside two other annexes, namely, Puwakpitiya and Arapangoda (currently Aramangoda). Apart from being narrower and pebbled, the geographical location of the road is identical with previously described Weliveriya-Radawana road, with hills and lower valleys. The population of the areas is not high. If you travel in the midday you would not find passers-by frequently.

Travelling about two kilometres further you will arrive at your destination. It is not easy to find the place as Radaliyagoda is no longer a separate village and new-comers to the area have no idea about the place. A few households are scattered in the area but no one who lives there has any ancestral links with those who lived there 250 years ago.

According to the original tombo of 1760, this small village had a population of 18 people. Demetegodage Samantuwa, belonging to the caste group known as *padu* or *batgama*, had 17 members in his family, with whom he shared his estate as recorded in the tombo. The other sole resident of the village was Dematagodage Kirihonda, Samantuwa's brother who had been registered separately. When the tombo was revised ten years after, the number of family members of Samantuwa's family had dropped from 17 to 5. Samantuwa himself was no longer alive. The only survivor in the village from the 17-member family was his son who was now married and had two children. The rest were

either dead or, as recorded in the revised tombo, lived in 'King's Land'.⁵⁴ Samantuwa's brother, who was 40 years old at the time of the first tombo, was still living alone.

The demographic reality of the other surrounding areas was not significantly different from the situation of Radaliyagoda. Wilimbula, the largest nearby village had a population of 40 in 1760 and 34 ten years later. Arapangoda and Puwakpitiya each had 20 and 30 people respectively. If one compares these figures with the present population of these villages, a quick sense of the demographic reality of the area at that time can be obtained. According to the Government Census of 2001, five Grama Niladhari divisions of the area had a population of 5,783 persons. If we also bear in mind the fact that the area is still not densely populated by today's standards we can further enrich our sense of the demographic reality of the area 250 years ago. As we will understand later in this chapter, the situation here is representative of the population density of most of the villages in the region under review, with some notable exceptions that will be discussed later.

As this picture suggests most of the peasants in the interior countryside lived in small hamlets like those we have already seen. They were completely separated from each other and surrounded mostly by thick tropical jungles. Small hamlets comprised one or more households. The dwelling places were quite simple constructions and could hardly accommodate more than one nuclear family unit.⁵⁵ A nuclear unit generally consisted of the wife, husband and children. Polyandrous marriages in which two or more brothers lived with one wife were also quite frequent.⁵⁶

The most important task in the daily life of the peasant was to cultivate the paddy field (*kumbura*) and chena (*bene*).⁵⁷ In general paddy fields were located in the immediate vicinity of the settlement area although, they might be situated a few kilometres away from the place of residence.⁵⁸ Chenas were created in the slashed and burned jungles and the distance between them and the place of residence varied. A variety of dry-grains, vegetables and yams were grown in these chenans. Houses were built in spacious gardens known as *gewatta* (plural *gewatu*). Various trees useful for daily life were found in these gardens. They ranged from coconut, jak, areca-nut, banana, mango, lemon and many others. Rearing children and preparing food were the responsibilities of the women, who were helped by older female children. One of the most important and difficult tasks of a woman was fetching firewood from the nearby jungle. The task of rearing cattle too sometimes fell on her shoulders.

The peasant's daily needs were quite modest. European observers frequently referred to the idleness and contentedness of the peasant's life. Writing in 1802 the Reverend James Cordiner made the following remarks of the life of the peasant in Sri Lanka:

The men, in general, labour but little, where rice is not cultivated; and all the drudgery of life falls upon the women. The possessor of a garden, which contains twelve cocoa-nut and two jak trees, finds no call for any exertion. He reclines all day in the open air, literally doing nothing; feels no wish for active employment; and never complains of languor of existence. What has been ascribed to Indians in general is not inapplicable to this people. They say, it is better to stand than to walk; better to sit than to stand; better to lie down than to sit; better to sleep than to be awake; and death is best of all. If the owner of the garden wants any article of luxury, which his own ground does not produce, his wife carries a portion of the fruits to market, and there barter them for whatever commodity is required. ... The ideas of the common people seem not extend beyond the incidents of the passing hour: alike unmindful of the past and careless of the future, their life runs on in easy apathy, but little elevated above mere animal existence.⁵⁹

This description may seem somewhat stereotypical and shaped by the European views of non-European societies. Nevertheless, it also represents quite lucidly the sort of everyday life that can be envisaged in the narrow and isolated world of a small hamlet.⁶⁰

Observations of this kind by outsiders commenting from an urban vantage point about the simple and slow-moving lives of peasant societies were quite common. Hobsbawm has shown a similar attitude among the Scottish agrarian reformers in the late eighteenth century towards Scottish peasants who were less responsive to innovations.⁶¹ Marx also may have been in a similar frame of mind when he contemplated the 'idiocy of rural life'.⁶² Thus, although these remarks by Cordiner were not unbiased, they provide an important window through which to observe the rhythms of the day-to-day life of the ordinary peasant.

Apart from this monotonous daily routine, there were several special features. Festive occasions, religious events, rituals performed to heal the sick and for visiting and hosting relatives who lived outside the village broke the regular cycle of everyday life. There were several festive occasions. The Sinhala New Year, by far the most important festive season, fell in mid-April. Making special foods and either hosting or visiting relatives were highlights of the season. Marriages and female puberty were marked with festivities. Various rituals were conducted to heal the sick, as the causes of sickness were regularly believed to be supernatural. These rituals were generally performed by specialists of the *berava* caste. Some of them were quite sophisticated and lasted over night and had an entertainment value apart from the pragmatic purpose of healing the sick.

The most important part of the religious life of the peasant was to attend religious functions in temples.⁶³ Buddhist temples were not found everywhere in the region. A map compiled in 1794 shows several temples in the region. Kelaniya, Thihariya (currently known as Varana - see picture no.3) and Kuhulangama were located in Hina Korale.⁶⁴ Pilgrimage was a popular religious practice among the peasants and there were several important destinations. By far the most important were Sri Pada (Adam's Peak, for the Christian world), where Buddhists believe that Buddha left his footprint.⁶⁵ Though it was an extremely difficult and risky journey, some people attempted it with the utmost piety. The Kelaniya temple, located near Colombo, was another popular destination.⁶⁶

2.3 Links with the outside world

Though typical pre-colonial peasant settlements were separated from one another by thick jungles, they were not totally cut off from the outside world. Needless to say, absolutely isolated communities were hard to find even in the remote past, and narrow footpaths criss-crossed the jungle between village settlements and linked them to the outside world (see picture no.4).

There were a number of reasons for villagers to be associated with the world outside the peasant settlement. The most important was that these village communities were far from self-contained and in the period under review a number of items could not be supplied locally. Certain consumer items came from distant areas, and some essential goods and services made or provided by specialist castes were sometimes unavailable in the village itself, because the caste-based division of labour mostly extended beyond one single village settlement. In such cases the peasant had to step out of his hamlet to obtain those services.

Map No.6 gives an overview of the link of the peasant to the outside world based on the situation of Kahambihene [Hina/ Mäda]. Clothes, dried fish and salt were the most important items of long-distance trade and were in high demand among the peasants. The traditional pre-colonial peasant sold, chiefly, areca nut grown freely in his household gardens. Peddling traders, mostly Muslims, ventured along those minor footpaths to criss-cross the region to reach even the remotest villages to buy and sell or barter. There is also scattered information on market places. Both François Valentijn and James Cordiner state that one of the tasks of woman was to go to the market.⁶⁷ But in his seventeenth-century *Historical Relation of Ceylon*, Robert Knox emphasizes that: 'There are

no Market on this Island. Some of few shops they have in the Cities, which sell Cloth, Rice, Salt, Tobacco, Limes, Druggs, Fruits, Swords, Steel, Brass, Copper, &c'.⁶⁸ We do not know the extent to which the observations of Valentijn and Cordiner fit the reality of the interior areas. Most of their descriptions were based on the areas closer to the colonial centre where the situation was significantly different from the more remote and typical pre-colonial social and economic setting.

Nevertheless, the importance of the market in the life of the peasant is self-evident. S.B.D. de Silva has shown, in regard to the Kandyan provinces before they were occupied by the British, the existence of 'a variegated criss-cross of commercial relations mediated through monetary exchange'.⁶⁹ He has laboured through scores of scattered sources to construct a compact picture of the impact of commercial activities and monetary exchange and about the availability of wage labour which would have led to the adoption of monetary exchange and commercial activities in the Kandyan region.⁷⁰ As the Kandyan territory was even more remote from the main trade routes than the Company territory, a similar situation might have been found in the latter region. Referring to a period as early as the sixteenth century, Chandra R. De Silva observes that 'the use of money was certainly not confined to trading centres on the coast', and '...the revenue in cash from the royal villages alone brought the king of Kotte a sum well over 630,000 fanams ...'.⁷¹ Arasaratnam also suggested the widespread use of copper coins of small denomination.⁷²

The goods and services of specialist castes required journeys of long distances. These goods and services included basic household and farmers' tools and items of jewellery made by black, silver and goldsmiths of *āchāri* caste, the pottery made by *badahāla* caste, the ritual services of the washer caste, known as *radā*, which were employed for many rites of passage of the peasant, and the healing ritual services of the *berava* caste. There were some villages with a high degree of social division of labour. As will be discussed later, some larger settlements were home to a number of castes, which gave people easy access to caste-based services. But most villages did not have great caste diversity.

The tombos provide us with extraordinary information as to how the social life of the peasant extended beyond the limit of his hamlet. Marriages took place between people from villages located relatively far from each other.⁷³ There are also frequent references to the marriage relations with the Kandyan king's territory. Thus, the peasant family's kinship network extended beyond the limits of its hamlets. Hence the kinship relations might have been maintained between these inter-village kin groups, especially in case of marriages and other important landmarks of life. Relatives who lived in distant areas were usually invited for marriage ceremonies. In most cases, the marriage ceremony was a socio-cultural space where two parties from two geographically distant areas came together. Writing about the Kandyan region, Knox refers to the practice of visiting relatives and friends, who lived faraway, as well as hosting them as visitors.⁷⁴ This may have been the case in the maritime region as well.

Another common practice prevailing even in the known past was sharing labour between distant kin groups, particularly during the harvesting times. In these times some relatives, particularly married daughters of the family, together with their husbands and children, returned home during the harvest not only to supply the labour that was needed but also to fetch their 'legitimate' share of the harvest. Above all, some male members of the family had to leave his hamlet for specific period of the year to perform *rājakāriya*, the obligatory unpaid labour service to the sovereign.

2.4 The world of the peasant and external forces

Two important forces existed beyond the day-to-day life of the peasant, and frequently affected it: the political power and the market. The political formations in the

region under review were basically nurtured by the surplus acquired from the peasant. Though pre-colonial kings procured significant income from the brisk trade carried out in coastal harbours, the main source of income was the land revenue⁷⁵ and the income generated by converting peasants' *rājakāriya* labour into exchange value. When the Portuguese and later the Dutch replaced indigenous kings as sovereigns of the land, they inherited from their pre-colonial counterparts long-established mechanisms for extracting income from the peasant.

The political power touched the peasant's life in various other ways. In times of military confrontation, the life of the peasant was directly affected in two ways. First, if the region became a battleground, both his day-to-day life and production activity were severely affected.⁷⁶ Also, the main source of manpower for military enterprises was the peasantry. At the time of the indigenous kings, the 'peasant army' was their main strength, though a limited number of mercenaries were hired.⁷⁷ Under European powers, European soldiers were the main source of military manpower, although even then indigenous militiamen known as *lascarins* were widely used.⁷⁸

In peaceful times, the peasant was tied to the political power through a number of mechanisms by which part of his labour and the produce from the lands he cultivated were transferred to the hands of the rulers. These mechanisms extended even to the most isolated peasant settlements. Some members of the peasantry itself played the role of auxiliaries of these mechanisms of exploitation. There were many functionaries who carried out this task and known as *kariyakaravanno* (literally those who organised *rājakāriya*) and whom the Portuguese and the Dutch called *majorāls*. The transfer of surplus took two forms: a tax on the produce, actual labour, or both. Taxes were paid either in cash or kind.⁷⁹ The transfer of surplus in the form of labour was organised under the system known as *rājakāriya*.

A number of ideological mechanisms were at work to sanction this transfer of peasant's labour to the rulers. Religious ideology was prominent in this respect. The notion that the earth belongs to the king and that he, in turn, being its protector could legitimately claim part of the produce of the earth, was nurtured by religious ideology,⁸⁰ which was effectively used by the Portuguese and the Dutch alike.

In the case of the Dutch, in particular, it seems that the amount of surplus expropriated was increased and the effectiveness of the mechanisms employed thereby was enhanced. The notion of '*bhupathi*' was used and the income and unpaid labour received from the peasant thereby were meticulously calculated. Registration and surveying lands, tax farming, and other means were extensively used in order to enhance surplus extraction.

Sri Lanka in the early modern period was an important location on a dynamic trade route. This was an enormously extensive network that ran from Northern Europe in the northwest to China and Japan in the northeast.⁸¹ There were a number of ports along the west coast that functioned as entrepôts for this trade network, and which affected the Sri Lankan peasant in two significant ways. As already mentioned, the peasant had direct links with this trade network by way of exchanging some of his production with those goods that he needed from the distant markets. In addition, the importance of Sri Lanka in this trading network and particularly as a source of some valuable commodities, such as cinnamon and elephants, created brisk competition between rising European colonial powers and local ruling groups to control the island. This competition was an important factor in the life of the peasant from the early sixteenth century.

After this account of everyday life and the universe of the traditional pre-colonial peasant, I move on to a discussion of some general features of the region, which tells us a great deal about its changing circumstances.

2.5 Demographic patterns

There was great diversity in the population distribution across the region. Table 2-1 shows the distribution of Principal Land Holders (PLHs—which I consider as family units) in the settlements in some *kōrale* divisions of Colombo *disāvanī*. As there were considerable differences in the number of persons in one family unit, these figures may not give an exact picture of the relative population of these settlements. This does not however prevent us from discerning some general patterns. These figures can also be compared with the population figures in the Hina *kōrale* Māda *pattuwa* division, given in table 2-2. These two tables show the degree of variety in terms of the size of each settlement.

In terms of the population density, there was considerable variety. On the one hand there were settlements with an extremely high population density. Lakshapathi-Moratuwa (Salpity *kōrale*) had a population of more than 3,000 persons. On the other hand there were many villages occupied by only one family. The population density was high particularly in coastal areas where non-peasant economic activities were dominant. Two such communities could be highlighted: the *karāva* (or in the tombos, *visseris*) caste and the *salāgama* (or *chalias*) caste. *Karavas* were predominantly sea-fishers although under colonial influence they shifted towards other occupations. For example, the carpentry industry of Lakshapathi-Moratuwa was completely dominated by the *karāva* caste. The population density of *salāgama* settlements was also generally high. Even the number of people in family groups, as recorded in tombos, was extremely high. Their settlements were mainly in the present-day Kalutara and Galle districts and some villages in the Negombo area. The *durāva* caste, which was engaged in toddy-tapping from coconut palm in colonial times, was also a community with high-density settlements. Trading communities such as Moors and Chettys also lived in these areas in significant numbers.

It can be argued that the demographic pattern of the coastal belt, with its densely concentrated settlements, was shaped by two main historical factors. First was the migration of people from South India, which has a history that goes back at least as far as the thirteenth century BC.⁸² The second was the European colonial intervention, which made an enormous impact on the settlement pattern of the coastal belt. Growing economic, social and administrative activities under successive colonial powers in this area attracted a significant inflow of population from the other part of the island. Coconut and cinnamon plantations, construction works and other services essential for the urban population were among the economic activities in this coastal belt which needed a large labour force. These new economic activities were concentrated in the coastal belt from Negombo to Panadura. Fishers, carpenters, toddy-tappers, smiths, washers, potters and lime-burners were important occupation groups found in great numbers in these areas (see chapter 6 for more detail). There were also houses of affluent people in the area.⁸³ These may have belonged to the families of indigenous chiefs who were the intermediaries of the colonial administration as well as to those who benefited from new economic activities.

In the interior regions, where traditional peasant agriculture was the dominant form of production, there also was a significant diversity in the settlement pattern, but it was different from that of the coastal areas both historically and socio-economically. Although there was a significant influx of people of South Indian origin such as *karāva*, *durāva* and *chetty* in coastal communities,⁸⁴ internal migration was the dominant factor in shaping the settlement pattern in the interior. The inland demographic formation, which was distinct from the coastal area, was socio-economically shaped by the nature of traditional peasant agriculture and its changing aspects. The availability of better lands for paddy cultivation was the most crucial factor in the formation of settlement because the traditional peasant production mainly revolved around this production activity.

Table 2-1: Distribution of PLH groups in some settlement units of four *kōrale* divisions in the Colombo disavany

No. of PLHs	Hina	Salpity	Hewagam	Alutkuru
Over 100	2	1*	0	0
50-99	3	3	2	4
25-49	16	4	9	14
15-24	33	6	19	11
10-14	39	14	21	11
5-9	89	24	35	14
2-4	88	21	27	27
1	22	11	11	14
Total no. of villages	307*	104*	130*	111*

Source: Tombo

Note to table 2-1: This table however does not give the most accurate picture of the demographic picture of the region. On one hand figures for some villages are not available. On the other hand there is a significant diversity with regard to the number of each PLH group. Particularly in the coastal villages of Salpity and Alutkuru korales, number of persons recorded under one PLH was extremely high. But in the case of interior villages the diversity was not very great. Hina and Hewagam korales were exclusively consisted of interior areas. Therefore the picture that the two columns regarding those two korales give is more representative of the level of population distribution. The interior villages of Alutkuru *kōrale* are conspicuous by thin distribution of population. Two of the 50-99 category villages of this *kōrale* were coastal villages. The other two were also located adjacent to Hina *kōrale* where the demographic reality was quite different. Even most of the villages of the category of 25-49 had the same logic. Moreover, a number of villages in this *kōrale* were recorded as uninhabited.

Table 2-2: Population in Hina *kōrale* Meda pattuwa division

No. of persons	No. of settlement units
Over 200	3*
100-199	17
50-99	34
25-49	39
15-24	8
14 or less	9

Source: tombo

* Figures are not available for Alutgama with 119 PLHs which has probably the largest population

Note to the table 2-2: The pattern of population distribution was not indeed even throughout the *kōrale*. Apart from the number of people in a village the distance between each settlement was also varied. There were several areas not only with high density of population in each village but also villages were located closer to each other. Some areas in the Adhikari pattuwa of the *kōrale* which were closer to the colonial centre was both densely populated and village were closely located to each other. So was the regions sub-units of Weliweriya, Wandurawa, and Kelani Valley as has been discussed elsewhere in the chapter.

Some long-term demographic trends and colonial intervention also affected the patterns of population distribution and settlement formation. The demographic movement known as the 'drift to the south-west',⁸⁵ particularly, had a significant impact on the caste composition of settlements. (Its later development is discussed in chapter six.) The most important and long-lasting demographic change shaped by the colonial intervention was the population drift towards the colonial centre. Progressively increasing concentrations of people could be clearly seen in the outer ring of the colonial centre. The settlement pattern of Adhikari *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* and Palle *pattuwa* of Hewagam *kōrale* were greatly affected by this demographic trend. There were also some 'low-pressure' areas in the interior which attracted people from other areas, for example a number of villages in the Māda *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale*. This process was seemingly influenced by the inducement of the Company administration to increase the rice production. There were also high-density settlements, located, particularly, in those 'low-pressure' areas. What follows is an analysis of several cases which give an idea of this demographic diversity in the interior region.

Case 1: High-density settlements

Under this heading, I classify three settlements with an extremely high population density: Mahara (Hina/Adhikari), Alutgama (Māda/Hina) and Mapitigama (Hina/Gangaboda). They were occupied by 175, 119 and 64 families, respectively. The entire population of Mapitigama was 451 in 1760 and 425 in 1771. (Total population figures are not available for the other two cases as the relevant tombo files are missing). These three settlements were distinct from each other in their historical background and their location within the larger socio-economic context. Thus, it is important to give sketch of each.

Mahara seems to have been a quite dynamic area. A map compiled no later than 1794 shows that its location was important as cinnamon plantations and other important cash crops were found in abundance around this settlement. Moreover, Mahara was located at the hub of an important road network that connected various destinations including Colombo and Kandyan lands. Simon Casie Chitty gave the following description of this settlement in 1830.

Maharre, a village of Adikaripattoo, in the Hina Korle, 8 ½ miles from Colombo, on the road to Kandy. It has a populous neighbourhood and some good houses. It is the post station, and possesses a rest house with an excellent barrack for soldiers. The inhabitants carry on a trade with Colombo in cattle which they obtain from the interior.⁸⁶

Thus, surroundings that are characterised by high density of population, houses of good condition, location by the road to Kandy (the map of 1794 shows that this road existed at that time) and trade with Colombo in items collected in the surrounding areas were the important features of this settlement.⁸⁷ The first and third points are pertinent to the mid- and late-eighteenth century situation as well. Concerning houses, a report presented before the Council of Ceylon on 7 February 1750 by a team of commissioners who went to Mahara to investigate a complaint about the destruction of cinnamon trees, gives some important information. It describes the suspects' household items:⁸⁸ the kind of stuff that one probably would find in the dwelling place of a typical Sri Lankan peasant of that time. One house, belonging to a person named Joan Appuhamy, had four chairs and a table. Abel Appuhamy had two chairs and a table. Given the distance between Colombo city and Mahara, which is less than ten miles, one may assume that this area would have functioned as a supply area for the growing urban population.

Gerrit Knaap has shown that as early as the 1690s 'hundreds of Sinhalese came into Colombo every day to sell rice, cattle and other food in the market'.⁸⁹

Alutgama was somewhat different from Mahara both geographically and demographically. Located in the flood level of the Attanagalu Oya River, it had rich rice growing lands thanks to which the Company had a vested interest in the area. Apart from using the adjoining villages that belonged to Gampaha *vidāne* division to feed the garrison in Negombo, the Company retained Alutgama as a maintenance village (Dutch *dispense dorp*) of the governor. The diversity of castes found in Alutgama was also quite different from the general pattern of caste distribution in the region. Apart from the high concentration of the *padu* caste, a significant number of *durava* families was also found here, which is quite exceptional. (See chapter six for detail about caste distribution.) It seems as if the Company brought these caste groups from other areas to cultivate the lands.

The name 'Alutgama' is also noteworthy. It literally means 'new village'. Let us contemplate the use of the prefix '*alut*' (new). This prefix is used in the Sri Lankan context, when a phenomenon is linked with a new and unique history of its own. Such terms as '*alutgedera*' (new house), '*alutpalama*' (new bridge) are often used. In this sense, the name 'Alutgama' may have had a special significance. The question is, however, when did Alutgama come into being as a new village and in relation to which sort of villages was it distinguished as 'new'? The 'newness' may have had something to do with the extraordinary demographic and social composition of the village as a result of the colonial intervention.

Mapitigama is distinct from Mahara and Alutgama at least in one respect. It seems that indigenous chiefs of different levels wielded extraordinary economic and social power in this village. As will be discussed in chapter 5, the intensity of the class differentiation was also higher here than elsewhere.

The plateau in the valley of the Keleni River where this village was located had a unique history. It was the core region of the power of Sitawaka Rajasinghe who posed a massive military threat to the expansion of Portuguese power.⁹⁰ Following the fall of Sitawaka Rajasinghe and the subsequent consolidation of Portuguese power, the Portuguese captain-general converted Malwana, a village adjoining Mapitigama, into a sort of Portuguese administrative centre. Mapitigama was also among the twenty best villages possessed by the Portuguese captain-general.⁹¹ Located along the *Keleni* River it had some unique physical features, which made its paddy fields extremely fertile. The area was flat, unlike the hilly areas in the region and, therefore, the stretches of paddy fields were considerable.

Case 2: High-density areas

I include under this classification a number of areas which had a comparatively high population density. Each area consisted of a cluster of villages that had at least several villages with higher-than-average populations. It is useful to distinguish these clusters of settlements from those discussed above as high-density settlements. If those stood out amidst the surrounding villages because of their large populations, these clusters of settlements consisted of several villages with population densities higher than the other average peasant settlements. Four such clusters are discussed below: Weliwariya and surrounding villages (hereafter, Weliwariya formation), Wadurawa formation, Debehera formation, and some villages in the Keleni River valley—the Keleni Valley formation.

The **Weliwariya formation** had several villages with high population figures (see table 2-3). Moragoda, Mudungoda, Imbulgoda, Weliwariya and Embaraluwa had population figures in excess of 100 persons in 1771. Most of the villages showed a significant increase of population between 1760 and 1771 as well. As seen in the graph 2-1 the

increase in Weliweriya and Embaraluwa were formidable. A high degree of absentee land ownership⁹² was also a significant feature in the area. There were some sixty absentee owners altogether in the 12 villages. This suggests that there was a higher demand for the lands in this area, going hand in hand with the higher population concentration. The area had a higher potential for attracting people from other areas, as is evident from the caste composition. The area had no less than twenty-one *karāva* families. The presence of this coastal caste was not a regular feature in the interior and therefore seems to have represented a movement towards the interior. Thus their preference to settle in the areas is significant. The ability of the area to attract non-traditional groups may be seen as an indication of its attraction. The existence of two schools in this area (Imbulgoda and Weliweriya)⁹³ is another strong indication of the importance of the area and the extent of the colonial influence.

As shown in table 2-4, the **Wadurawa formation** had a number of villages with more than 100 persons. According to the 1794 map a *hoofdweg* (main route) crossed the area linking Wadurawa and Nittambuwa. There were also several cinnamon plantations in the area, which is an indication of the penetration of the colonial economy.

Our interest in the **Debahera formation** stems from its location on the periphery of the major settlement areas. The villages belonging to this formation were classified in tombos under the administrative unit of the Debehera district. All these villages were maintenance villages of high Company officials. An important feature of the Debehera formation was the high concentration of people of the *padu* caste. This caste had the lowest ritual status⁹⁴ among the numerically significant castes and was quite vulnerable to excessive exploitation, not only by the colonial rulers but also by indigenous chiefs. Thus, as discussed below in chapter six, these high concentration *padu* villages can be seen as a mode of mobilization of the labour of this caste by the Company.

The **Keleni Valley formation** had the highest population density of the four formations discussed in case two. Mapitigama, which was discussed under case one, was also located here. In this formation a decline in population can be noticed between 1760 and 1771, a reversal trend compared with the Weliweriya formation. One would be tempted to see a relationship between this decline of population and the Kandy-Dutch war of 1761-65.⁹⁵ Although we are not in a position to come to a firm conclusion about this, it is possible to argue that the impact of the war could have been higher here than elsewhere. Not only was the area located closer to the Kandyan territory, but also it was a 'battle ground' of the competition between indigenous chiefs and the Company.⁹⁶

Case 3: Low-density villages

Under this heading, I will look at some village settlements with a low density of population. The vast majority of villages enumerated in the tombos can be classified under this category. Two areas can be given as samples here: the Ogodapola formation, consisting of Ogodapola⁹⁷, Kahambilihea, Gorakadeniya and Bonegala, and the Wilimbula formation, consisting of Wilimbula, Puwakpitiya, Arapangoda and Radaliyagoda. These areas had extremely low-population densities and significant declines in population can also be seen. Geographically these low-density formations consisted of isolated villages. (A description of the Wilimbula formation has already been given at the beginning of this chapter and a detailed account of the Ogodapola formation will be given later in the chapter.)

Graph 2-1- population increase in surrounding villages of Weliweriya

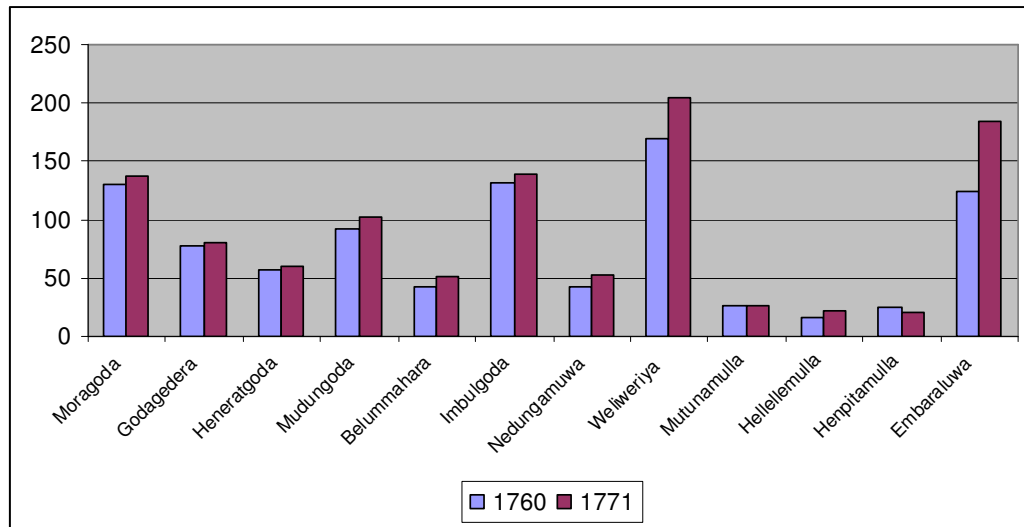


Table 2-3: Distribution of Population in Weliweriya formation

Village	Population (1760)	Population (1771)	% of increase
Moragoda	130	138	6.15
Godagedera	77	81	5.19
Heneratgoda	57	60	5.26
Mudungoda	92	102	10.86
Belummahara	43	51	18.6
Imbulgoda	132	139	5.3
Nedungamuwa	43	52	20.93
Weliweriya	170	205	20.58
Mutunamulla	26	26	00
Hellellemulla	16	22	37.5
Henpitamulla	25	21	-16
Embaraluwa	125	184	47.2

Source: Tombo SLNA/ 1/ 3690

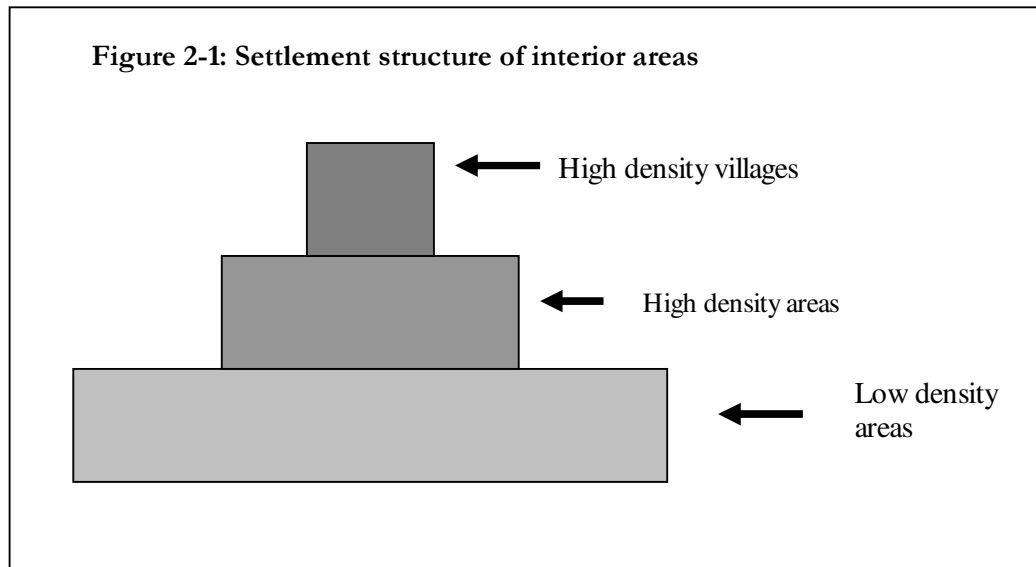
Table 2-4: High population density villages of Wandurawa formation

Village	Population
Wandurawa	224
Pattalagedara	121
Talgasmote	135
Kumbaloluwa	192
Galoluwa	174
Nungamuwa	211
Utuwanbogahawatta	107
Eluwapitiya	139
Hiripitiya	157
Panawala	100

Source: tombo

Summing up the foregoing discussion on the three settlement patterns it can be argued that they represent three layers of the settlement structure of the inland region (see figure 2-1). The dominant settlement pattern was the low-density village. There could be high-density clusters of villages within otherwise low-density areas. There is a sort of centre-periphery nature in these demographic formations, where high density villages could be seen at the centre, and low density villages in the periphery.⁹⁸ The Debahera formation, which was primarily a *padu* caste area, might be an exception to this demographic configuration. The high-density villages in this formation were definitely not a centre with the same social and economic significance as, for example, the Weliweriya formation. The other high-density areas represented relatively brisk social and economic activity. This scenario fits with the significance of these areas in the demographic history of subsequent centuries. The high-density areas emerged as semi-urban centres with one or more townships at the centre. Weliweriya (Weliweriya formation), Weyangoda (Wandurava formation) and Kirindiwela (Keleni valley formation) were among the towns that emerged in the following centuries. The high-density villages, described under case one, had emerged in, or closer to, the high-density areas. The specificity of these high density villages was that they had distinct histories and linked for the most part to the development of the colonial economy.

The following discussion on the structural relations of the life of the ordinary peasant is based on the situation of low-density areas. This is because it was here that the pre-colonial way of life was probably still dominant.



2.6 The horizons of the peasant's life

There were many boundaries that determined the horizon of the life of the peasant. Some of them lay beyond his day-to-day concerns, but they had a bearing on them. Boundaries determined by warring parties which fought for the control of the territory where the peasant lived and carried out his production activity were quite significant. The boundary between the territory of the VOC and Kandyan Kings also figured in their lives. Many battles were fought in the area in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the boundaries were redrawn frequently. Both sides often attempted to penetrate each other's spheres of influence and, in turn, to expand their own. Depopulation was systematically carried out in order to weaken the enemy. Rajasinghe II practiced this method quite successfully against the Company in the latter half of the seventeenth

century. He devastated many settlements located between the Kandyan territory and that of the Dutch, thereby creating a depopulated belt between two warring parties.⁹⁹ On the other hand the Dutch made every effort to bring back population that was removed.¹⁰⁰ Peasants were not free from such hazards even in the period covered by the present study. In the early 1760s one sees long-drawn military confrontations between Kandyan King and the Company.¹⁰¹ The peasants were virtually powerless, in the short run, to determine the course of these events, although they were forced to take part in them and were otherwise affected by them.

The most important horizon of the life of the peasant was the settlement in which he lived and where his production activity was organised. In the tombos these settlements have been identified by the general Dutch term *dorpen* (villages, or in Sinhalese *gam*). As discussed earlier, these settlements varied in size as well as in their social composition. It is important therefore to consider what constituted a *gama* (a single *gam*) in detail.

2.7 *Gama*: What's in a Name?

The meaning of the term *gama* is a highly contentious issue. First, the concept *gama* has become a 'sublime object'¹⁰² in the popular ideology of the post-colonial period. Sinhala urban and semi-urban intellectuals with a rural upbringing have romanticized and glorified *gama* as an ideal form of social organisation.¹⁰³ If we do not take the trouble to clearly define '*gama*' when it is being used in a historical and an anthropological sense, there is a danger of falling into the trap set up by these popular ideologies.¹⁰⁴ Second, various socio-anthropological and political-economic meanings have been suggested. Third, the meaning of *gama* has gone through a series of semantic changes over the course of the time.

Codrington has lucidly elaborated different contexts of using the term: "The Sinhalese term *gama*, normally signifies a village, but the word is applied to an estate or even to one field".¹⁰⁵ Gananath Obeyesekere, who studied Madagama, a settlement in the Hiniduma *pattuwa* of Galle district, chiefly on the basis of field research in the early 1960s, with a useful historical focus, proposed three meanings for the term:

- (1) The primary meaning of *gama* is an estate, owned originally by a founding ancestor. Ideally agnatic descendants of this individual have *praveni* (ancestral) rights in the estate. Thus villagers continually make statements of the following order: '*Mata gamen aten panguvak aiti*- I owe 1/8 share of the *gama*.' It is clear that in this context a villager is thinking of *gama* as 'estate in which he has rights in the form of 'fractional shares' (*pangu*). For the purpose of land tenure this is the most important meaning of *gama*....
- (2) *Gameminussu* (people of the *gama*) refers to the people who live, in a physical sense, within the bound of the *gama*. Thus the *gama* is often used to designate the estate and the people living in it--the territorial and demographic aspect of the estate. I shall use the English term 'hamlet' to describe this territorial and demographic unit.
- (3) *Gama* is used for a collection of contiguously located hamlets loosely related by a web of cognatic and affinal kinship. Thus Ihala [upper] Madagama and Pahala [lower] Madagama are two contiguously located hamlets which form the village of Madagama. I shall employ the English term 'village' to refer to such administrative units....¹⁰⁶

While these meanings will be assessed against the information from our sources, my point of departure for the term *gama* is its geographical sense. Obeyesekere has pointed out in relation to the mid-twentieth century that it is difficult to render a geographical meaning to the *gama* because geographical boundaries that separate one space from the

other are no longer visible owing to the population explosion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,¹⁰⁷ which brought the edge of one *gama* close to that of another. This situation led Obeyesekere to the conclusion that the *gama* is “not a clearly defined structural unity”.¹⁰⁸ But unlike Obeyesekere’s period, the mid-eighteenth century was characterised by an extremely low population density. A comparison between the present day population and that of the mid-eighteenth century in some villages, as given in tombos, may give some interesting idea about the difference (see table 2-5).

Table 2-5: Comparative population figures in some villages of Meda pattuwa of Hina *kōrale* of 1760 and 2001

Village	1760	2002
Koskandawala	74	1889
Kirikittamulla	27	1239
Kahambilihena	41	737
Ogodapola	55	1972
Weerangula	113	1899
Mattagoda	36	909

Sources: toambo and Department of census and statistics of Sri Lanka, Census of Population and Housing 2001 (CD Rom)

Population figures in tombos show significant geographical distance between each settlement. In assessing the significance of this geographical distance we are compelled to re-evaluate the official use of ‘*dorp*’ (‘village’ in Dutch).¹⁰⁹ Normally, *dorp* was used indiscriminately for each and every settlement. This usage does not give us a sufficient idea of the socio-anthropological sense of the village. Thus, one should be extremely cautious when the settlement units listed in the tombos are taken into consideration. This problem may be self-evident in the case of large settlements. Settlements discussed previously in case one, namely Mahara, Alutgama and Mapitigama, had much larger populations than those in case three.¹¹⁰ If their geographical size is compared with the population figures one would be tempted to reckon that there were subunits within those larger settlements. The discussion below on the internal formation of the village offers some background for understanding this situation.

The suffixes of village names provide us with some important information on the geographical locations of the village. *Gedera*, *goda*, *watta* and *mulla* are some common suffixes with a direct bearing on the geography of the settlement. *Gedera* is probably the most interesting of them. It literally means house, which suggests that in their formative stage, those settlements originally consisted of a single household unit, or at least one family unit. Most of the villages with this suffix were found in the Udugaha *pattuwa* of Alutkuru *kōrale*, where the population density was extremely low. It is also important to note that according to the tombos there were a number of villages with only one family unit. Even when there was more than one family unit in a village there were cases in which all the families probably shared a common origin.¹¹¹ *Watta*, which means household garden, had a similar connotation and suggests a settlement that originated with one family unit.

The suffix *goda* literally means high land, but could also mean a cluster of things. The term *gangoda* is often used for a small peasant settlement area.¹¹² A *gangoda* may not necessarily be a *gama* or village. It specifically means a cluster of closely located peasant houses; hamlet would be a close translation. Thus there may be more than one ‘*gangoda*’ within a village. When a village name included the suffix *goda*, it is possible to assume that

at the outset the village was similar to a *gangoda*. *Mulla* literally means 'the corner' and also gives an idea of the geographical nature of the settlement, at least at its origin.

All four suffixes signified that the settlement began small. There was however other suffixes which were structurally different. Although some suffixes implied the nature of the geographical space of the settlement they do not give an idea about their size. *Pola* (literally place), *wala* (hole), *gomuwa* (jungle), *kumbura* and *liyadda* (both mean field) refer to the nature of a geographical location. '*Gama*', another common suffix, does not refer to the size or nature of a geographical location. It signifies a formal origin for the settlement, in contrast, presumably, to the informal and humble origins implied by the other suffixes. This was discussed earlier in relation to 'Alutgama'. The conclusion that could be arrived at from the above discussion on suffixes in village names is that the majority of villages began as minor settlements with a small number of peasant families.

Some villages in tombos have been classified as annexes of another village. It is not easy however to know exactly the relationship between a village and its annexes. In general, annexes were smaller settlements with a low population density and located around the main village. But there were some notable exceptions which make a general theory on the relationship between the main settlement and the annex difficult. Some main villages were smaller in population than their annexes. In such situations the logic behind classifying them as annexes is not clear. In some cases the caste factor may have functioned as the factor that distinguished a village from its annexes. There were some annexes with an exclusively non-*goyigama* people. Two annexes of Wilimbula (Hina/ Māda) were exclusively *padu* settlements. So was Katugasgoda, an annex of Tihariya (Hina/ Māda). Several other annexes were occupied by *badahāla*, *durāva* and *āchāri* castes. In such cases, annexes of villages can be seen as a way of maintaining the social distance between castes, which was a major factor in social organisation, as will be discussed below. But this cannot be generalised because only a few such annexes are found in tombos. There may have been other historical reasons for the emergence of annexes of villages that we cannot account for due to a lack of information.

The information provided by some other sources gives us a different picture of the nature of a village. Riebeiro, a Portuguese writer, says there were 21,863 villages in the south and southwest, of which 16,000 grew cinnamon.¹¹³ The *Mandarampurapuwata*, a Sinhala poem probably compiled sometime in eighteenth-century Kandy, gives even more dramatic figures: 250,000 villages in the Maya rata, which included Dambadeniya, Kotte, Sitawaka, Ethugala, Yapahuwa and Gampala cities (*pura*). Given the mythical character of the narrative of the text it is not possible to construe these figures literally. Nevertheless, if we read, following structural anthropologists, the myth as a mode of representation of reality, it is possible to argue that the *gama* as it was understood by the writer of the *Mandarampurapuwata* was not the same as the *dorp* found in Dutch tombos. Even the meaning that can be gleaned from Riebeiro seems different from that of the Dutch tombos. This is clear from the vast difference between the number of villages given by Riebeiro and the number of villages recorded in the tombos. Thus it is possible to argue that both Riebeiro and *Mandarampurapuwata* meant by a village or *gama* a much smaller unit of settlement than the Dutch *dorp*.

In summing up the preceding discussion, I would like to argue that there is a progressive transformation in the meaning of *gama* (*dorp*/ village) at the time of Dutch tombos. It was increasingly getting closer to the modern administrative sense. The latter was indeed what Obeyesekere found in the mid-twentieth century. In the early stages, they may have been small communities with identifiable geographic limits with one or more household units linked, probably, by kinship connections. This arrangement may have also facilitated the organisation of labour for the peasant production (see chapter three). At a later stage, particularly when the colonial powers penetrated the world of the

peasant, administrative convenience may have played the major role in defining the *gama*. As these new meanings went hand-in-hand with registering the population and the lands of the defined settlement, these meanings had an effective hegemonizing effect. Other developments can be seen as facilitating this later tendency. Demographic changes characterised by the concentration of people in certain areas and the emergence of new class formation (see chapter five) can be identified as two important developments. These developments could have resulted in the creation of larger village communities as discussed in cases one and two above. In the following pages, an attempt will be made to reconstruct a situation that represents a reality prior to these developments.

This reconstruction takes two forms. First, the geographic sense of *gama* is discussed in terms of boundaries. Second, the internal formation of a *gama* will be examined in the form of a case study.

2.8 Boundary and the geographical sense of *gama*

The geographical boundary of a traditional peasant settlement could be the thick jungle, a paddy field, a river or another sort of physical demarcation. By looking at the Ogodapola formation (Hina/ Mäda) discussed above in case three, an idea about different sorts of boundaries can be obtained. Ogodapola, Kahambilihene and Gorakadeniya of this formation are located around one stretch of paddy fields (see map no 7: settlement pattern of the Ogodapola formation). Kahambilihene is situated to one side of a stretch of paddy fields while Ogodapola and Gorakadeniya are on the other side. The Attanagalu Oya River functioned as a boundary between Meewala and Ogodapola. There was a significant distance between Gorakadeniya and Ogodapola, which would have been covered by the jungle which functioned as the natural boundary between the two villages.

The thick forest was not a delightful scene for the eyes of those who lived in the *gama*. Although it was the source for many needs of the peasant, it also signified fear, danger and death, and crossing the forest was extremely risky.¹¹⁴ The dangers were quite tangible, ranging from minor inconveniences such as leaches,¹¹⁵ thorny bushes, swamps and steep hills to more dangerous and poisonous snakes, harmful animals and, at worst, elephants,¹¹⁶ which could sometimes take one's life.

Apart from these visible and tangible dangers there were invisible ones. In the imagination of the peasant, the line between the *gama* and the forest was the frontier between the living and the dead. Dead bodies were always disposed to the jungle (*kelegahanawa*). Thus it was believed that the dead haunted the forest, and there was the danger of being seen or attacked by dead souls. Dealing with the dead was more difficult than dealing with living creatures and other physical obstacles.¹¹⁷ The only way to cross this terrain of fear, danger and death, namely, the forest, was along narrow footpaths, which did not encourage or please the traveller at all. There was a network of footpaths with small rest houses (*ambalam*) were built along some of these (see picture no. 2). The series of 1794 maps mentioned earlier depicted two types of foot paths *hoofdwegen* (main routes) and *klijne wegen* (minor routes).

This network of routes was essential for the Company to access the peasant's world. For commercial, administrative and military purposes, Company officials needed to penetrate the peasant's terrain. Moreover, the Company also wanted to pull peasants out of their isolated enclaves to procure their labour. Reaching cinnamon lands for cinnamon peelers, transporting peeled cinnamon and other goods such as timber, paddy, areca nut and so forth, collecting revenue, registering and surveying lands, quelling riots and other disturbances and bringing peasants out of their villages to fulfil their *rājakariya* (compulsory unpaid labour for the sovereign; see chapter three) were among the reasons for entering the peasants' terrain. Company officials therefore frequented the area quite regularly. Thus was the *raison d'être* of those *hoofdwegen* and *klijne wegen*. These routes were

maintained by using the *rājakāriya* labour. Casie Chitty's description of these interior routes is quite useful: "The line of road to interior was merely narrow foot path, winding through thick thorny jungles, and over steep hills; and in the rainy seasons, travellers were frequently stopped in their progress".¹¹⁸ This was the situation until the 'road revolution' began in the nineteenth century under the British.¹¹⁹ This network however did not reach every peasant settlement,¹²⁰ and many settlements had no access to the outside world via frequently maintained routes.

Thus, crossing this 'no man's land' was not something that pleased the peasant. There were however occasions when he was compelled to do so. At such times, the objective was to leave early in the morning and be back before sunset, as the darkness increased the danger of the forest. There are many folk stories and poems which represent the experience of venturing out of the *gama* and crossing the forest. All of them refer to the need of getting out of the forest as quickly as possible.¹²¹

2.9 The internal setting of the village

Although the traditional peasant settlement was not completely self-sufficient, most day-to-day needs were supplied from within. The major production activity was centred on the village settlements. In general a peasant settlement comprised one or more peasant dwellings, often built close to each other.¹²² These were situated in household gardens called *watu* (singular *watta*). There were various trees that were sources of many kinds of household goods.¹²³ The main production activity of the peasant was cultivation of the paddy fields and *ben* (chenas), which were separated from each other as well as from the peasant dwellings. Paddy fields were located in valleys between upper elevations while household gardens were found in higher lands in proximity to paddy-fields. Chenas were made by clearing the jungle and were located some distance from the settlement. As there were chena lands registered under almost every village it can be assumed that they were generally not very far from the residential area.¹²⁴ Paddy fields were found in various forms. They were either expansive stretches or narrow strips. The variation depended on the geographical setting of the valleys.

The geographical connection between the peasant settlements and the paddy fields could take several forms. In the case of narrow strips of fields, settlement areas could be found on either side. When the fields were expansive stretches several settlement areas were located around them. For example, in the Ogodapola formation, three villages, namely Ogodapola, Kahambilihena and Gorakadeniya, were located around one large stretch of paddy fields (see the Map no.7: Settlement pattern of the Ogodapola formation). There could also be cases where there was a significant distance between the paddy-field and the residential area. In general, a settlement area and the paddy fields cultivated by those who lived in the settlement did not always form a clearly identifiable geographic unit. One cluster of paddy fields might belong to the residents of several villages around them.

There were two factors that determined the internal geographic formation of a *gama*, namely kinship and caste. In the settlements where more than one caste was found a clear separation was maintained between each caste. This was because the social distance between castes was a way of reproducing caste distinctions. It was shown above how the social distance between castes may have played a role in distinguishing some settlements as annexes of a main village. When the caste distinction had to be maintained within a village itself, the distance was meticulously maintained. There was also a tendency in a close concentration of kin groups. This was important, because kinship was an important element in the organisation of labour (see chapter three). Three settlement patterns can be identified with regard to the caste and kinship distribution: settlements with many

castes and many kin groups; those with one caste and many kin groups; and those with one kin group (see table 2-6).

An additional note is useful regarding one-family villages. There were villages with more than one family unit, but in which the families were related to each other. At least two such cases can be cited. Radaliyagoda of the Wilimbula formation was recorded in tombo as occupied by two families of *padu* caste. One unit consisted only of the principal land holder (PLH), who was the brother of the PLH of the other unit. Gorakadeniya of the Ogodapola formation had three family units of the *āchāri* caste. But all these families had kin connections to each other (see footnote 139 of this chapter). Thus, the probable conclusion is that at an early stage of the evolution of these settlements they may have been one-family-villages.

Table 2-6: Caste/ family composition (465 villages)

1 caste	181
1 family	45
1 caste many families	136
Many castes many families	283

Source: tombos

The distinction between the production space and the residence space of a village was important to its internal formation. Two main production spaces--paddy fields and chenas, were clearly separated from where people lived. Only household gardens coincided with the residential area.¹²⁵ The *Weliyaya* (the stretch of paddy fields) was one formation divided into portions shared by cultivators of one or more villages. For example the main *weliyaya* of the Ogodapola formation was shared by cultivators of Ogodapola, Kahambilihene, Gorakadeniya and other villages.¹²⁶ Chenas too were clearly separated from the residence space (see the map no7.- Ogodapola formation). Chenas cultivated by the residents of one village could at times be found in another village. Information in tombos on chenas shows this may sometimes have been the case. No chenas were recorded at all in some villages while an extremely high number were found in adjoining villages. For example in Dompe (Hina/Gangaboda) no chenas were recorded at all. It is highly unlikely that the residents had no hand in this form of production since this was a large settlement with 345 residents. On the contrary, neighbouring Pallehelle (classified as an annex of Dompe) with only thirty-two residents, had 300 amunums of chenas, an amount which is quite disproportionate. Another annex of Dompe located between Dompe and Pallehelle also had no chenas recorded under its name. In this situation a considerable distance between the cultivator and chenas could be seen. This branch of production has often been characterized as a communal form of production, which brought together the members of many families in the production process.¹²⁷

This physical distance between the production space and the residential space had important implications for the internal formation of the village. It does not permit us to define the constitution of the village in relation to the production activity of the peasant. This statement may perhaps run against Asoka Bandarage's definition of the Kandyan village: "The ordinary Kandyan village consisted of tracts of paddy land (*ḷumburu*), a few small gardens surrounding the homes (*vatta*), a tract of periodically cultivated dry grainland (*ben*) and a tract of forest (*ḷāle*)"¹²⁸. Codrington's definition is also quite similar: "The gama normally consist of paddy fields, gardens of miscellaneous fruit trees, and chena (*hena*, plural *hen*), that is jungle land, cleared, burnt and cultivated periodically; in some places fields may be absent. The village territory consisted of gam-val, the inhabited

and permanently cultivated area and the waste”.¹²⁹ In these definitions the production space and the residential space are seen as located in a single geographical space of the *gama*. But these definitions do not fit into the village western wet-zone lowland region. The Kandyan Mountains, which Bandarage’s definition relates to, and the northern and eastern dry-zone, to which Codrington’s definition is probably more applicable, had different ecological and socio-economic organisation. In the Kandyan Mountains, paddy fields were made in the form of terraces on the hill slopes, where a closer structural proximity between the production space and the residential space could have been seen. In the dry zone, where the cultivation of land depended on irrigation water, villages were formed around small village-tanks (*gamwev*). In the western wet-zone lowland region, however, there was a very important structural distance between the residential space and the production space, thereby making it impossible to formulate a definition that would include both elements.

Thus the *gama* is considered here primarily as a geographic space in which the dwelling places of the peasant were located. The present-day state of the internal formation of some villages gives valuable insights for understanding their nature in the period under review. The later expansion of these villages owing to population increase generally took the form of exploding from one nucleus. If we carefully examine such changes, the original structure can be identified. My observations of the present distribution of dwellings of the residents of the three villages of the Ogodapola formation show that there is an extremely high density in the core area of the exploding structure while the distribution of dwellings gradually thins in the periphery. This provides a closer look at the original nature of the internal formation in these villages. In the case of Kahambilihene, the population explosion emanated from three nuclei, while Gorakadeniya had only one. This perfectly matches with the information in tombos pertaining to these two villages. In the case of Gorakadeniya, it seems that in the era of tombos, all three PLH groups lived closer to each other mainly because they were of one kin group. The population figures for the whole village—30 (1760) and 26 (1771)—also suggest that there may not have been more than at most six household units.

The following discussion of Kahambilihene is aimed at giving a clear picture of the internal formation of a village, against which the foregoing observations can be tested. This village was chosen for analysis for two reasons. First, its composition was important since there were two castes and more than one kinship group. Second, my acquaintance with its history and present-day situation is quite rich and it helps to locate the families recorded in tombos in the proper geographical locations within the village.

2.9.1 The Internal setting of Kahambilihene

According to the tombo, Kahambilihene had six PLHs, two of the *goyigama* caste and four of the *bakuru* caste (see table 2-7). The present-day situation of the internal formation gives a useful background for understanding the situation in the period under review. There are several concentration patterns in the present demographic composition of this village. In the first place there is a division known as *ihalagama* (upper-village) and *pahalagama* (lower-village).¹³⁰ Two parts are divided by a relatively large strip of land known as *medikele* (jungle-in-between).¹³¹ In the second place, *bakuru* and *goyigama* castes live in separate concentrations in the *ihalagama*.¹³² The present demographic formation helps us to locate the places of residence of each PLH group in the tombos. We can locate one with certainty, PLH two, Ramanayaka Morugamage Latham. Some members of the oldest kin group in the so-called ‘*pahalagama*’ still uses Morugamage as a part of their family name (*vāsagama*).¹³³ Thus, Ramanayaka Morugamage Latham resided in *pahalagama*. There is also no doubt that the geographical location of the present *bakuru*

concentration is the same as that of the tombo era, which is the southern corner of the village (see the map no.8- internal setting of Kahambilihena).¹³⁴

What remains then is PLH one, Parusellege Pulinghamy. There are two reasons to suggest that this PLH group resided between the *medikele* and the *hakuru* concentrations. In the first place, there is presently a heavy *goyigama* concentration between the *medikele* and *hakuru* concentrations, which is by far the most numerous concentration of the village. There is also the probability of a connection between the Paruselage *vāsagama* group and the main kin group in this area.¹³⁵ We can therefore conclude that the PLH group of Parusellege Pulinghamy lived in *ihalagama* sandwiched between *medikele* and the *hakuru* concentration.

Table 2-7: Demographic and social figures of Kahambilihene

Principal land holder	Caste	Service	Family members (1760)	Family members (1771)
Parusellege Pulinghamy	<i>goyigama</i>	<i>lascarin</i> of koraal	8	7
Ramanayaka Morugamage Latham	<i>goyigama</i>	Half majoraal	17	16
Tikkuwage Distia	<i>hakuru</i>	Half majoraal	6	5
Tikkuwage Malhonda	<i>hakuru</i>	Not given	6	3
Alankaradewage Undiya	<i>hakuru</i>	Extraordinary service	7	3
Dannoruge Sobenie	<i>hakuru</i>	Not given	14	7

Thus we can identify three sub-formations in Kahambilihene: the Ramanayaka Morugamage group in *pahalagama*, the Parusellege group in the *ihalagama*, and the *hakuru* concentration in the southern corner of the *ihalagama*. The geographical distance between the sub-formation where Ramakayaka Morugamage group lived and the rest of the village is quite obvious because of the existence of *medikele*. The low population figures suggest that there may have also been a recognizable geographical distance between the *hakuru* concentration and the Parusellege group. Though this distance was not as great as that between *ihalagama* and *pahalagama*, it would have been socially significant because of the need for maintaining the caste distinction at the village level.¹³⁶

There is one more problem to be addressed, that is the internal formation of *hakuru* concentration, which comprised four PLH groups. Although we are not well informed on this issue, some tentative observations are possible. Most important, the kinship connection between two PLH groups--Tikkuwage Distia (PLH three) and Tikkuwage Malhonda (PLH four)--was clearly indicated in the tombo, in which two PLHs are referred to as brothers. Therefore these two groups may have probably lived close to each other. Moreover, there was a strong tendency among lower castes to live in closely-knit localities.¹³⁷ This was mainly due to their relatively high communal consciousness. A high level of communal bond was essential to compensate for their extremely vulnerable position vis-à-vis the higher castes, particularly the *goyigama* (see chapter six for more detail).

The above discussion leads us to some conclusions about the internal formations of Kahambilihene. This settlement seems to consist of three separate settlements rather than one though it was given as such in the tombo, as three sub-formations were clearly separated from each other, geographically as well as socially, and both ritual and geographical distance were major factors in determining the internal formation of the settlement. There was no ritual dimension in the distance between the two *goyigama* PLH groups, though the physical frontier--*medikele*--set the two groups apart. The situation

could be compared with Gorakadeniya, where caste homogeneity and the probable kin connection between three PLH groups made the settlement a single unit.¹³⁸ Apart from the geographical distance between PLH groups one and two of Kahambilihena, kinship ties were important. It was this factor that determined how each of these groups was concentrated in distinct localities.

The following two sections will look briefly at two determinants, namely kinship and caste, in the internal formation of a village. The kinship factor is discussed in relation to the *vāsagama*, a part of a personal name which signifies the common ancestral origin among those who share it.

2.9.2 The *vāsagama* group and the internal setting of *gama*

Persons registered in tombos under one PLH may be part of one or more household units. The connection between the PLH and those who were registered under him or her was established by the part of the name, known as *vāsagama*, which was shared collectively by the PLH and the others, with the exception of those who were connected to the group by marriage, in which case his or her connection to the group was through the spouse. The *vāsagama* part of the name came before the individual part of it. Usually, the *vāsagama* part was made with the suffix ‘*ge*’, for example ‘Parusselle*ge*’ or ‘Ramanayaka Morugama*ge*’ (Kahambilihena).¹³⁹ It might also be without the ‘*ge*’ suffix, as in ‘Rajasekere Naindu *nainde*’ (Gorakadeniya). All the three *padu* caste absentee PLHs in Ogodapola were without ‘*ge*’ (Karunapedia *paduwa*, Wijesinghepedia *paduwa* and Rankothpedia *paduwa*). Moreover the ‘*ge*’ suffix was not to be seen in the nomenclature of the top-ranking indigenous chiefs, for example Don Balthazar Dias Wijewikrama Bandaranayaka, Don Alexander Abekoon and Don Micheal Heenkenda Jayasundara (all in Mapitigama).¹⁴⁰

If we take the *vāsagama* group as a socio-historical category we have to think about the connection, or the difference, between a *vāsagama* group and a PLH group. Obeyesekere’s definition of *vāsagama* group is a useful point of departure: “Literally *vāsagama* means *vasa* (‘residence’) and *gama* (‘estate’), that is, those who reside in and enjoy rights in, a common estate”.¹⁴¹ If we accept this definition there can be no difference whatsoever between the *vāsagama* group and the PLH group, because the latter was also one who shared a common estate registered under a PLH. There is however a serious difference between Obeyesekere’s ‘estate’ and those in the tombos registered under a PLH and shared by the PLH group. The former is an ‘estate’, believed to have been established by a mythical ancestor and shared by his heirs who bear a common *vāsagama*, where the *vāsagama* denotes the connection between the person who bears it and the estate. But in the case of tombos, the PLH was not a mythical persona but a living one, and therefore the bond between the PLH and the rest of the group, who could claim a share of the estate, was a living one. Moreover, according to the Obeyesekere’s definition, the *vāsagama* is a charter of right for the estate, which was not so in the case of tombos, in which people who were registered bore the same *vāsagama* but did not share a common estate. Let’s take an example.

In Ogodapola, PLHs numbers three and four had the same *vāsagama* and, incidentally, the same personal name: Rajapakse Patirege Naindehamy. We can ignore the resemblance between two personal names but that of the *vāsagama* is important. It was noted in the case of number four that he was a son of Siriheeddihamy (or Sirihendihamy), who probably belonged to the PLH group three. There are many such instances. Three PLH groups of Gorakadeniya and two PLH groups in Radaliyagoda fall into the same category.

We can safely conclude that, in contrast to Obeyesekere’s definition, in our context, the *vāsagama*, or as Obeyesekere put it, the genealogy which embodies in the *vāsagama*, was

not a 'charter of right'.¹⁴² Thus, if we are discussing the land tenure, as in the case of Obeyesekere, the *vāsagama* factor can be easily ignored. But in the internal formation of peasant settlements this had a strong significance. This was due to the fact that those who shared a common *vāsagama* belonged to one kinship network. When there were more than one PLH group sharing a common *vāsagama*, at least some of those cases may have been caused by the division of an estate. If a member of a *vāsagama* group left the existing estate to form a new one this was generally done by leaving the village or at least the hamlet where the original estate was. The case of Demetagodage Samantuwa (PLH one-Radaliyagoda, Hina/ Māda) may point to such a situation. He, or one of his ancestors, may have left Demetagoda,¹⁴³ located closer to Radaliyagoda, to form a new estate in Radaliyagoda.¹⁴⁴ When there were more than one PLH group in one hamlet sharing the same *vāsagama*, there is a strong possibility that it was caused by the division of the estate.¹⁴⁵

The above discussion reveals that the *vāsagama* could have existed in two ways, as a binding factor of a PLH group which shared an estate, and as a mere manifestation of kinship association between those who shared the *vāsagama*. In the second sense no property rights were implied. This second sense was however important in the internal formation of the peasant settlements. When the number of estates in a village grew either by the division of an original estate or encroaching on new lands, or perhaps by a combination of both,¹⁴⁶ the link between *vāsagama* and the right to the estate would have ceased to exist as far as those who formed a new estate were concerned. This does not mean that the kinship structure ceased to function. It could lead to the formation of a sub-community inside the village. This could be exactly the case in Gorakadeniya and perhaps also in Ogodapola, in the case of PLH groups three and four. This can be seen clearly in the present internal formation in Kahambilihene. Though the common estate has been divided into many parts among the heirs of the kin-group, kinship ties play a major function on many occasions, mainly in the labour organisation and family rituals. This would have been much stronger in the mid-eighteenth century given the low density of population and geographical isolation of settlements.

2.9.3 Caste in the internal setting of *gama*

The way in which the caste distinctiveness was maintained at the village level has already been shown in the discussion of the internal formation of Kahambilihene. Nonetheless, some further details are useful. Although the majority of villages were multi-caste, and there was a significant number with a single caste as well, the caste composition of the settlement formation in a typical pre-colonial peasant area was dominated by the *goyigama* ascendancy. As shown in table 2-6 (see page 34), out of 465 villages where the internal caste distribution was reviewed, some 181 were single-caste villages, while the other 283 included two or more castes.¹⁴⁷ Out of 181 single-caste villages, 152 were *goyigama*. Out of 29 non-*goyigama* single-caste villages, 12 were *padu*.¹⁴⁸ A noticeable feature of multi-caste villages was that in almost all of them *goyigama* concentrations were found. Only 11 were multi-caste and non-*goyigama*.

Multi-caste villages can be divided into several types. The most common were those where few families of one or more of those castes what I shall call service and manufacturing castes were scattered together with the *goyigama* caste. Service castes include washers (*radā*) and tom-tom beaters (*berava*),¹⁴⁹ while the main manufacturing castes were smiths (*āchārī*) and potters (*badahāla*). These castes were widely distributed throughout the region.¹⁵⁰ The other type of multi-caste villages was that in which *padu* and *hakuru* castes were found side by side with the *goyigama* caste. However heterogeneous the village, the *goyigama*/non-*goyigama* distinction was closely observed, and physical, social and ritual distance was systematically maintained.¹⁵¹

2.10 Some concluding remarks

The world of the peasant was an increasingly changing one in the mid-eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the majority of peasants still lived in isolated village settlements located beyond the main 'contours' of colonial activity, although the influence of changing forces was strongly felt everywhere. The demographic setting of the period showed significant variety in settlement patterns, to which colonial intervention contributed greatly. The dominant settlement pattern was small and isolated villages separated from each other by tropical jungles. These settlements also were internally divided into sub-units based on caste and kin-groups. The traditional economic life, based fundamentally on subsistence agriculture and the limited needs of day-to-day life, discouraged the expansion of the horizon of the peasant's life beyond the limited terrain of peasant production. Although the social division of labour and some aspects of social life linked the peasant of the isolated settlements to the outside world these factors were not strong enough to break the structural isolation of peasant life.

There were of course forces which were powerful enough to disturb this slow rhythm. External forces such as the market and political authority evolved over a long time to become an integral part of the system. Warfare and political turmoil disturbed the production process and day-to-day life and sometimes forced peasants to move out of their established settlements. But it seems that the dominant socio-economic relations survived those occasional hazards, perhaps with some changes. The low density of population, limited needs of the life, availability of sufficient lands for cultivation and favourable ecological conditions made changes and fundamental innovations less imperative.

As will be discussed in the following chapters, the colonial encounter would make a difference. It possessed the potential to break the traditional equilibrium between the peasant's world and the outside world through the increasing demand for the surplus, regulation of land availability and new, more effective modes of surplus extraction and social control. These factors were strong enough to penetrate the world of the peasant and to transform it. They had a long-lasting impact on the social and economic life as shall be evident from the new developments in class and caste formations.

Chapter three- System of production and its changes

3.1 Introduction

V.S. Vyas has identified a number of factors which are important in understanding the structure of an agrarian production unit, namely the basis or size of land holdings, gross or net produce, value added, capital employed, extent of wage labour, extent of marketable surplus and gross or net worth of the enterprise.¹⁵² These factors can be used as indicators of change in a system of agrarian production. The system of peasant production in the region under study was however too simple to apply such a complex scheme. I suggest three factors derived from Vyas's scheme to understand changes in the system of peasant production in question, specifically the level of rice production, the pattern of land consumption in various branches of production and the organisation of labour.

3.2 Level of rice production

Despite significant efforts made by the Company to increase the output of rice production, which was far and away the chief production activity of the peasant, with a few exceptions it hardly exceeded the subsistence level. Several areas produced a sizable surplus from which the Company received significant revenue in paddy. If we consider only the western maritime possessions of the VOC, some parts of the Matara dissavony exceeded all other areas in rice production. Villages known in the Dutch sources as 'Baiggam'¹⁵³ and Giruwaya *pattuwa* were rich rice-growing areas which provided the major part of the VOC's paddy income.¹⁵⁴ These high productivity areas were however located outside the southwestern wet zone ecological system, the region on which this study focuses. Ecologically these high productivity areas were closer to the northern, north-eastern, and eastern dry zone. Soil conditions in this ecological zone¹⁵⁵ were more favourable to paddy cultivation. Low annual rainfall meant that the paddy-field had to be fed by irrigated water, which gave the farmer the ability to regulate the water supply properly.

Within the core area of this study, there were two important rice growing systems, which I shall identify tentatively as the 'Gampaha system' and the 'Weke system.' These were fed respectively by the Attanagalu Oya River and the Keleni River. There had been a fierce competition between the VOC and the indigenous chiefs to control the paddy lands in these two areas. To all intents and purposes, by the mid-eighteenth century the VOC had gained the upper hand over the indigenous chiefs. In 1751, Governor Van Gollennesse triumphantly declared that he had been able to recover these areas for the Company: "The valuable villages of Gampaha and Weke were, immediately after my arrival on this island, withdrawn for the Company and according to Their Excellencies' express order these fields may never be accommodated or given away to anyone under whatever pretext".¹⁵⁶

In general, the Company employed several methods to increase rice production in its possessions on the island. In the early stages of its administration, the Company was keen to bring more land under paddy cultivation. When the shortage of labour was deemed to be a major problem, the Company even resorted to buying slaves in South India and setting them to work in the paddy fields.¹⁵⁷ In the late eighteenth century, great attention was paid repairing abandoned irrigation works. A massive scheme of repairing tanks in northern areas was launched with a view to increasing the extent of paddy lands under cultivation.¹⁵⁸ Under Governor Falck there was an extremely ambitious project to increase the rice production in the area surrounding Colombo. The aim of this project was to reclaim some 21,000 *morgen*, or 40,000 *amunums* of land in the large marshy area of

Muturajawela, situated between Colombo and Negombo, and to bring them under cultivation. The project however failed to meet expectations and had to be abandoned.¹⁵⁹

The caste composition of Alutgama (Hina/ Mäda), discussed in chapter two, reveals that the Company may have brought people into rich rice growing areas that were under its direct control to increase the amount of lands under cultivation. It was also mentioned that this village was a maintenance village (*dispense dorp*) of the governor. The large concentration of people of the *padu* caste in this village was not typical of the caste distribution in the area. It is therefore probable that the Company used this extremely submissive caste community, which was always vulnerable to excessive exploitation, as an effective source of labour for the cultivation of land in the villages under its direct control.

There were two major structural obstructions which militated against any attempt to increase production: firstly the productivity per unit was extremely low; secondly, the area of land which one person was capable of cultivating was small. The latter was mainly attributable to the fairly rudimentary tools available to the peasant.¹⁶⁰ As far as can be discerned there was no major effort made to eliminate these two structural barriers.

Compared with many other Asian rice-growing areas, the yield in Sri Lanka during this period was extremely low. The best contrast can be made with areas such as Bengal and Java. Speaking about the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, Chandra R. de Silva mentions that the yield in the region was in the range of five to twelve times of the sowing extent (or 1:5 to 1:12).¹⁶¹ A more elaborate account can be found in Colvin R. de Silva's *Ceylong under British Occupation*, where he writes about the early nineteenth century. He claims: "[t]he average harvest yield was only six to tenfold, the best fields giving no more than twenty and the worst as little as threefold".¹⁶² He compares this situation with "...Sumatra, where the yield was thirty to a hundredfold, and Bengal, where the average was twenty-fold".¹⁶³ Presumably the maximum yield of 1:20, which Colvin R. de Silva proposed the best lands could produce, may not be applicable to rice-growing areas of the south-western lowlands. Therefore it would be reasonable to use Chandra R. de Silva's suggestion, based on Portuguese records, which would have definitely been based on the yields in western, south-western and southern regions.

B.H. Farmer has said that the varieties of rice grown in Sri Lanka are low-yield *indica* varieties, in contrast to high-yield *japonica* varieties grown in other Asian countries.¹⁶⁴ He also gives a vivid explanation on the other factors affecting the low yield of rice in Sri Lanka under traditional peasant production:

Traditionally, the peasant cultivates with simple wooden implements, or by 'mudding' (i.e. by driving pairs of buffaloes round and round the flooded fields...); he has no real manuring or rotation, though cattle are grazed on fallow fields; and, generally, poor seed is used, and is sown broadcast, the higher-yielding method of transplanting being rarely practiced. It is not surprising that yields are lower than they need be, although it is unfair, in view of soil and other conditions, to compare these yields in Ceylon with those in other countries and to lay the whole of the blame on the peasant.¹⁶⁵

Some governors did toy with the idea of encouraging the farmers to transplant seedlings instead of sowing the seed. Governors Van Gollennesse and Schreuder both attributed their inability to induce people to adopt this innovation, which was the usual practice in areas like Java, to the laziness of the people.¹⁶⁶ The efficiency of the tools of production determined the cultivable extent of land per person. No significant changes were seen in this respect. The only innovation which was adopted was more use of buffaloes. It seems that there was a scarcity of this useful beast. In the early nineteenth century, the British Governor North imported them from India and distributed them among local cultivators.¹⁶⁷

In view of this static situation, no significant changes could be seen in the prevailing level of production. It was indeed not until late in the twentieth century that these two structural barriers were overcome thanks to the use of chemical fertilizer and the introduction of machines such as tractors. Having ascertained the state of play, we may now switch to an examination of the structural relations of peasant production. I consider this a useful point of departure from which to understand the changing aspects of peasant production.

3.3 Three systems of production

Three production systems can be identified in the region under review: traditional peasant agriculture, which was based on the household consumption of the producer; manufacturing production, which involved certain caste groups; and plantation agriculture. Looking at the number of people involved, the most important of these was peasant agriculture. A glance at the social division of labour immediately reveals that the major part of the labour capacity in society went into this sector of production. Many numerically dominant caste groups earned their livelihoods exclusively from peasant agriculture, while a significant amount of the labour output of manufacturing and other service castes was also used in peasant agriculture. The *goyigama* caste, numerically by far the largest, was exclusively agriculturalist, save for a minority who were chiefs and some of whom may not have tilled the soil. The *bakuru* and the *padu*, the two other numerically large castes, were also exclusively agricultural peasants.¹⁶⁸ The two main ingredients of the peasant agriculture were wet paddy cultivation and slash-and-burn cultivation, popularly known as *chenas*. Household gardens in which a number of trees essential to the peasant were grown also occupied an important place.

The number of tasks linked to the various caste groups in the social division of labour was many and diverse. Among the castes linked with specific labour functions were: *karāva* (fishing); *durāva* (toddy tapping); *āchāri* (smiths); *badahāla* (pottery-making); *radā* (washing); *berava* (charming and devil dancing); and *hunu* (lime burning). In addition to these, there is a long list of caste groups associated with various labour functions but which were not numerically very significant.¹⁶⁹

All these castes, with the exception perhaps of the *karāva* caste, were involved in the peasant agriculture as well. It is highly likely that those of *karāva* caste who engaged in sea-fishing did so as a full-time occupation.¹⁷⁰ But this was not the case with many other service and manufacturing castes, where cultivating the soil was practised side-by-side with the caste occupation. It is difficult to find manufacturing castes in Sri Lanka similar to the weavers in India, who produced for the market on a full-time basis. Nevertheless, in the expanding urban areas, there was a growing tendency for caste-based occupations to be transformed into exclusive sources of livelihood. This was most marked among toddy-tappers (*durāva*), smiths (*āchāri*) and washers (*radā*). Such trends were exclusively linked to the changing patterns in the production process.

This was also a period in which market-oriented plantation agriculture was emerging as a significant activity. This mode of plantation agriculture was fundamentally distinct from the household gardens as practiced within the traditional peasant agriculture. There were two defining features by which these plantations were distinguished from the structure of the peasant production. First and foremost, plantation crops were intended exclusively for the market. Cinnamon and coconut were the main plantation crops while there were some scattered plantations for areca nut, jak, coffee, pepper and cardamom. There was also a progressive separation between the labour and the land, not in physical sense but in terms of control. This occurred because of the probable separation between the ownership of (at least large) plantations and the labour employed in them.

3.4 Changing patterns of land utilization in the peasant production

The production space of traditional peasant agriculture in Sri Lanka was divided into three spatial units, namely, paddy-field, chena and the household garden. Incontrovertibly, the most important was the paddy-field which provided the peasant's staple food, rice. Paddy was grown mainly in wet fields prepared in valleys. There were significant variations in these paddy-fields in terms of fertility. Fields in the low-lying areas of river basins were more fertile because of the alluvial deposit formed by the constant flooding of rivers. Some lands encompassed vast stretches, while others were confined to narrow strips. Fields located on the higher elevations above the flood level, mostly narrow strips, were inherently less fertile.¹⁷¹

Table 3-1: Distribution of chenas

Area	No. of Villages	No. of PLHs	Population	Chenas (Amms.)	Chenas Per capita
Hina (Adhikari)	21	375		489	
Hina (Udugaha)	71	418	3272	2814	0.76
Hina (Mede)	59	337	6874	1281	0.18

Source: tombo

Table 3-2: Distribution of chenas in Weliveriya formation and surrounding villages

Village	chenas (per capita)
Weliveriya	0.09
Mutunamulla	0.23
Hellellemulla	0.5
Heenpitamulla	0.64
Embaraluwa	0.16
Imbulgoda	0.21
Belummahara	0.46
Mudungoda	0.27
Average	0.22

Source: tombo

Table 3-3: Distribution of chenas in Wlimbula formation

Village	chenas (per capita)
Wlimbula	1.5
Puwakpitiya	1.0
Arapangoda	0.75
Radaliyagoda	0.55
Average	1.07

Source: tombo

Since the yield of the paddy-fields was quite low, paddy cultivation was supplemented by chena cultivation. In areas ecologically unsuitable for paddy cultivation, chena cultivation took pride of place. Udugaha *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* provides a fine example. Most of this region is relatively hilly and ecologically less suitable to paddy-cultivation; consequently chenas preponderated here. This region can be compared to such other regions as Adhikari *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* where paddy-cultivation was more widespread and chenas were less significant (see table 3-1). Arguably, chena cultivation was fairly inefficient as a mode of agricultural production. Its primary requirement was a large amount of lands. After it had been used for several seasons the land had to be left fallow for some years before it could be used again. Therefore such a system depended on the availability of an enormous amount of land if it were to be effective.

Although the household garden played an important role in traditional peasant production, its place was obviously less significant than that of the paddy-field and the chena, and it required comparatively less labour-time to maintain.

The fundamental feature of the changing aspects of the land utilization in peasant production in the mid-eighteenth century was the decline of the chenas and the rise of household gardens. This caused a great impact on the traditional equilibrium between each element of the peasant production.¹⁷²

There were interesting regional variations in the distribution of chenas. As indicated in the table 3-1, the average per capita ownership in the Udugaha *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* was 0.76 ammunams, whereas the figure had dropped to 0.18 ammunams in the Māda *pattuwa* of the same *kōrale*. This regional variation was significant because the latter region was located closer to the colonial centre than the former. The colonial impact on the socio-economic structure of the Māda *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* was much higher. More regional variations could be identified within the Māda *pattuwa* itself. Tables 3-2 and 3-3 show the distribution of chenas in two geographically close but socio-economically different pockets of the Māda *pattuwa*. As discussed in chapter two, the Weliweriya formation (table 3-2) was an area with a rapidly changing social and economic situation compared to the adjacent Wilimbula formation (table 3-3) which was more backward and peripheral. In the eight villages of the Weliweriya formation there was an average of only 0.22 ammunams of chena per capita, against 1.07 in the Wilimbula formation. Within the Weliweriya formation itself even greater differences could be observed in relation to each village. For Weliweriya, the core village of the formation, there were only 0.09 ammunams per capita as against, for example, Heenpitamulla, a peripheral village, where the figure was 0.64. I argue on the basis of these figures that there was a decline in the significance of chenas as a mode of cultivation in areas more exposed to colonial social and economic forces.

3.4.1 Company policy towards chena cultivation

A great deal of ink has been spilled about the tug of war over chena cultivation between the VOC and the peasant.¹⁷³ Measures taken by the Company to protect cinnamon shrubs had a negative impact on this centuries-old system of cultivation. Among the causes for riots in the 1730s, the measures taken to regulate chena-cutting were prominent. These riots were particularly widespread in Hina *kōrale*.¹⁷⁴ Though the rigorous manner in which the measures were implemented under Governor Van Domburg (1734-36) was mitigated under his successor, Van Imhoff (1736-39), there was no fundamental reversal of the policy. More riots, purportedly caused by the issue of chena-cutting, were reported in the 1740s. The Council of Ceylon appointed a committee on 18 May 1743, to investigate unrest in the Dunagaha *pattuwa* of Alutkuru *kōrale*, which had erupted in the face of the refusal of permission for clearing the jungle for chenas.¹⁷⁵

There was another severe wave of unrest during the term of the Governor Jan Schreuder in the late 1750s.¹⁷⁶

The Council devised a procedure for granting permission to cut chenas, which subjected chena cultivation to a long-drawn-out bureaucratic process. First a request had to be submitted, after which the Government would appoint commissioners to visit the land in question. If the commissioners certified that no cinnamon was to be found in that land, permission would be given.¹⁷⁷ The procedure was made known by a *plakkaat* issued on 30 September 1743.¹⁷⁸

Whereas many kinds of complaints have come to us from time to time, concerning chena-cutting everywhere in the countryside, irrespective of the punishments imposed for this by the *plakkaat* published on 9 January 1705, many excesses caused by cutting chenas have been committed, effecting the destruction of cinnamon and other trees, and thereby of significant inconvenience to the Company....

So it is that we on the 28th of August last and on the third of this month in our council have approved and have made known both the aforementioned placcats to be renewed, likewise we expressly forbid, as far as the first is concerned, anyone [he or she] to cut down any forest or allow them to burn it down in order to prepare it for a paddy-field, before they are visited or written permission for the making of such chenas shall be granted by the commissioners, who shall be nominated respectively by the *Disave* or land regent, overseer of the Mahabadde for that purpose, in order to prevent the burning or destroying of cinnamon and other trees serviceable as timber. After such cases have been investigated, [they have to be subjected] to hard labour in the public works of the Company on penalty of being put in irons for six months or other such penalty.

Table 3-4: Requests for chenas in Colombo disavony: report of the *dessave*- 1768

Area	No. of Applicants	Extent of lands requested (amunams)	Quality of cinnamon plants found		
			Peelable	Young	Old
Salpity korale	185	67	278	532	353
Hewagam korale	544	376	708	1878	1809
Hapitigam korale	427	153	481	1461	781
Raigam korale	377	179	492	37	1196
Hina korale	945	337	276	2765	2286
Pasdun korale	599	401	699	1373	2365
Walallawity korale	111	85	220	284	486
Kalutara district	24	22	73	68	120

Source: Kanapathypillai, Dutch rule in maritime Ceylon, p.247

Moreover, on 18 October 1743, the Council ordered the *Disave* of Colombo to maintain a separate roll of the requests made for chena-cutting. Altogether, there were nine *plakkeaten* issued to regulate chenas between 1743 and 1760.¹⁷⁹ In most of them the substance of the above-cited *plakkaat* was reiterated and at times some points were elaborated more. The *plakkaat* of 27 January 1745, for example, prohibited exceeding of the permitted term for a particular chena. One issued on 31 July 1747 added corporal punishment to those authorized previously. Moreover, the *plakkaat* issued on 21 June 1759 imposed the same punishments on the culprits as well as on the headmen who failed to prevent the cutting of illegal chenas. This continuing process of reissuing the

same orders at short intervals shows that this policy made a huge impact on the people and also that defiance was not uncommon.

The Company entertained an interesting view of how *chenas* should be made in a way that benefited cinnamon growing, 'to cut *chenas* in the densest forests and sow them only for one year, after which cinnamon, having secured light and room thereby, would grow luxuriantly...'.¹⁸⁰ It is highly unlikely that this view would have been shared by the peasant because it certainly needed extra effort and more labour-time.

It is clear from our sources that these regulations were scrupulously implemented. A large number of reports on land visits bears witness to this. Even as late as the last three decades of the eighteenth century, well after cinnamon plantations were spreading rapidly, regulations for protecting cinnamon trees were thoroughly observed.¹⁸¹ Table 3-4 shows the link between the bureaucratic process involved in giving permission for *chenas* and protecting cinnamon trees. The table is based on the report by the *Disave* of Colombo on the requests for *chenas* for 1768, which meticulously calculated and classified peelable, young and old cinnamon trees in the lands for which permission was sought for cutting *chenas*.

Although it is difficult to come to a firm conclusion about the exact impact of these measures on the practice of *chena* cultivation, judging from the strong resistance from the peasants there is little doubt about the magnitude of the problem they caused. Kotelawele and Wagenaar have documented Governor Jan Schreuder's measures and how they led to riots among the people.¹⁸² These regulations and the severity with which they were implemented must have been hugely discouraging to the peasant who depended on *chenas* for much of his food supply. More research is needed to ascertain the impact of this situation on the food supply. But the chronic shortage of rice which the Company felt more keenly than anyone else may have been worsened by these restrictions on *chenas*. Perhaps the best indicator of the impact was the degree of resistance against the measures.

While the traditional pattern of land consumption suffered a great setback vis à vis *chena* cultivation, new forms of land consumption were emerging in the form of gardens and plantations.

3.4.2 Changing role of gardens

Although the garden was the least important the three production spaces in traditional peasant production, it played an important role because of the areca nut, which the peasant exchanged for what he needed from distant markets. Portuguese sources also show that pepper vines were found in some villages as a garden crop. Portuguese tombos refer to pepper vines as a source of income for the lord of the land in some villages.¹⁸³ Dutch tombos enumerate only coconut, jak and areca nut as garden crops. Many other crops in gardens provided sustenance for daily life, and a variety of fruits such as banana, mango and other substitutes for staple foods such as breadfruit were regularly found in gardens.

Garden crops can be broadly divided into two: Crops meant for household consumption and those grown mainly for the market. Although the traditional market crop was areca nut, a changing scenario is found in the mid-eighteenth century, when coconut and to a lesser extent jak were also becoming more marketable commodities.

The policy of the Company towards gardens was a somewhat paradoxical one. On the one hand it promoted garden crops such as areca nut, pepper, coffee and, following the inauguration of cinnamon-culture in 1770, cinnamon. On the other hand it imposed severe restrictions on the conversion of *chenas* into gardens and, particularly, the creation of illegal gardens, that is those made without the permission of the Company.¹⁸⁴ There had been an increasing tendency to convert *chenas* into gardens in the eighteenth

century. The 'tombo keeper reported in 1761 that in the preceding 30 years the number of plots of land held by the inhabitants had increased from 12,000 to over 30,000.¹⁸⁵ Looking at data in tombos makes it clear that this increase was mainly due to the proliferation of gardens. It is quite understandable that the importance of gardens was growing at a time when the restrictions on *chenas* were becoming severe.

Variations in the relative importance of paddy-fields and gardens in different socio-economic sub-regions provide valuable information about the shift towards gardens. Table 3-4a shows the relative position of paddy-fields against coconut trees in a village. It shows the higher importance of coconut in core villages, including the villages of Weliweriya formation and Mapitigama (Hina/ Gangaboda) in comparison to the peripheral villages of Ogodapola and Wilimbula formations. The difference between Ogodapola and Weliweriya is quite interesting. In the former, there were 178.42 kurunis of paddy-fields for a hundred coconut trees. In the latter this figure was 40.89. The socio-economic difference between these two villages is crucial. In Ogodapola, there were several powerful *goyigama* families with high level of paddy land ownership and, therefore, pre-colonial social relations were dominant (see section 5-3 of Chapter five). On the other hand, as shown in the chapter two, Weliweriya had a changing socio-economic situation with the potential to attract outsiders. If we assess the preference for coconut and paddy in the two villages it is possible to see a shift towards coconut in Weliweriya. The case of Mapitigama is also interesting. If we assess the figure of sixty-seven percent taking into consideration the importance of the area with fertile paddy lands and the presence of many powerful headmen families with significant share in the paddy land ownership, it seems that coconut was becoming more important there, too.

Table 3-4a: Relative importance of paddy and coconut (Percentage of kurunies of paddy for coconut tree)

Core villages		Peripheral villages	
Village	Paddy/ coconut %	Village	Paddy/ coconut %
Mudungoda	49	Kahambilihena	54
Belummahara	93	Gorakadeniya	159
Imbulgoda	57	Bonegala	65
Weliweriya	41	Ogodapola	172
Embaraluwa	37	Wilimbula	99
Moragoda	82	Puwakpitiya	101
Mapitigama	67	Arapangoda	104
		Radaliyagoda	45

Source: tombo

At first sight, the figures for Kahambilihena and Radaliyagoda seem to disprove the assumption about the shift, as both villages show a higher preference for coconut in spite of being peripheral villages. The difference in these villages can be explained by the preference displayed by low-caste peasants for coconut. Usually paddy-lands were less accessible to members of lower castes than to the dominant *goyigama* caste. It is therefore understandable that lower castes were shifting towards non-traditional areas of production when the opportunities were available to do so.

Among the crops that the Company encouraged peasants to grow in their gardens were coffee, pepper and cardamom.¹⁸⁶ The last mentioned was found less in Company territory than in the Kandyan land. However by 1757 Governor Loten could report that there were 27,101 pod-bearing cardamom plants on Company lands, and 8458 "which were almost on the point of maturity". They were found, he said, in Hewagam, Hina and

Pasdun *kōrales*.¹⁸⁷ Governor Gollennesse referred to a cardamom plantation in Eswatta of Hewagam Korale, planted by *Mudaliyār* Paul Alvis, with 17,285 plants.¹⁸⁸ The figures on the delivery of this crop were not so impressive. Loten gave the following figures: 1751/ 2, 45 lb.; 1752/ 3, nothing; 1753/ 4, 91 lb.; 1754/ 5, 52 lb. and 1755/ 6, nothing.¹⁸⁹

The Company also promoted pepper and coffee as garden crops, particularly in the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁹⁰ A few scattered coffee and pepper plantations are marked on the maps of 1794 (see the note to maps in page xii). If one compares these with the delivery of the two crops shown in table 3-5, it becomes clear that the main source of delivery must have been non-plantation sources. Company officials frequently complained about the indifference of the people towards the cultivation of these two crops. Kotelawele attributes two factors to this indifference. One was the inadequate prices offered by the Company; the other was the fear of 'government service being increased' as a result of the cultivation of these crops.¹⁹¹ In the case of pepper, as with cardamom, it seems that the major part of the delivery came from Kandyan lands. In 1750, when the total delivery was 95,498 pounds, 75,175 pounds came from the Kandyan land.¹⁹² Moreover, there was a constant fluctuation of the Company policy towards pepper and coffee depending on the overall policy of the Batavian government. Thus it is safe to assume that the immediate impact of these crops on garden production was not significant.

Table 3-5: Delivery of pepper and coffee (in lb)

Year	Amount (pepper)	Amount (coffee)
1742/ 43	-	78,135
43/ 44	31,978	153,975
44/ 45	78,748	89,000
45/ 46	122,004	-
46/ 47	116,008	-
47/ 48	57,884	62,250
48/ 49	135,916	198,904
49/ 50	95,498	95,698
50/ 51	-	-
51/ 52	226,240	-
52/ 53	57,564	108,000
53/ 54	198,495	53,750
54/ 55	87,388	37,750
55/ 56	-	592,250
56/ 57	243,521	-
57/ 58	127,173	-
58/ 59	298,218	-
59/ 60	218,252	-
60/ 61	199,282	-

Source: Kotelawele, 'The VOC in Sri Lanka 1658-1796', 429,432

3.5 Coconut, areca nut and jak trees as garden crops

The traditional place of areca nut as a market oriented garden crop has already been mentioned. The story of coconut and jak trees seems quite different. Their pattern of cultivation in the gardens as well as large plantations shows that they were making a difference in the traditional place of the garden in the system of peasant production. The level of domestic needs of these crops is important to understand the level of their market orientation. Coconut was mainly used in cooking, and coconut oil was also widely used, but almost every part of the tree was useful for the peasant. Thus coconut palm was a must for every household. Usually the traditional use of jak tree was as a source of jak-fruit, a substitute for rice as a staple food. Two full-grown trees must have been more than enough for an average family, as the fruit bearing capacity of the tree is quite high. Moreover, one need not even own a tree to fetch a jak-fruit when it was needed because they were found in such massive quantities that even in the recent past it was common to find rotten fruits lying under trees.

Bertolacci has calculated that ‘...a full grown and healthy [coconut] tree will give 50-60 nuts in the year’.¹⁹³ If the household need for coconut is assessed at two per day, fifteen fully grown trees would have been sufficient to meet the household consumption of the peasant family. This number may have been somewhat higher if the peasant's need for coconut oil is taken into consideration. The level of the coconut oil consumption in the mid-eighteenth century cannot be judged from what it has been in the recent past, because it was among the sources for lighting the house.¹⁹⁴ Thus I propose to take four coconut trees per person and 20 trees per average family as the cut-off point for domestic consumption. We can assess the data of the gardens from tombos against these calculations of the domestic consumption needs of jak and coconut.

Table 3-6: Garden crop in Udugaha pattuwa of Hina *kōrale*

Crop	No. of trees	Per capita
Coconut	33389	10.2
Jak	13503	3.67
Arecanut	42463	11.56

Source: tombo

Table 3-6 shows the number of trees of each garden crop in the Udugaha *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale*. I chose the figures of this area because, as already shown, it was one of the remotest of the VOC's western maritime possessions. The per capita ownership of coconut palms is the most important figure here. A figure of 10.2 per person was well above the level of the household need for coconuts, which means that some part of the produce must have gone to distant markets. Clearly, the distribution was not equal throughout the region. Though this *pattuwa* comprised one administrative unit, several sub-regions can still be identified on the basis of socio-economic conditions. Some parts of the region which were closer to the Wandurawa formation (see section 2-5 of Chapter two) were socio-economically closer to the characteristics of the latter area. In these areas the distribution of coconut palms was much higher than in the other remoter areas. Even within one sub-region, variations were noticeable in each village. It is also important to remember that in certain villages, one or more family units had a higher level of ownership of coconut palms than others.

The data in the table 3-7 (see Appendix III for table 3-7) helps us take a closer look at the pattern of distribution of coconut palms as a garden crop. In this table, data are

provided for eight villages located in different socio-economic sub-regions. In general these eight villages can be divided into four categories.¹⁹⁵ As discussed in chapter 2, Mapitigama was a densely populated village with a number of families of indigenous chiefs. Some 82 out of 156 gardens had more than 20 palms each. Per capita ownership of coconut palms in this village was 14.76, much higher than the estimated need for domestic consumption, which is four trees per person. The figures of Mudungoda were even more impressive. The per capita ownership here was as high as 20.46. Out of 21 gardens in this village, 19 had a surplus generating capability. This village belonged to the Weliveriya formation, in which the impact of the colonial economy was quite high.

Table 3-8: Ownership of coconut trees by each family in four villages of Hina korale

Village and number	PLH	Coconut trees owned	Per capita ownership
Kahambilihene 1		47	6.71
Kahambilihene 2		123	7.68
Kahambilihene 3		120	24
Kahambilihene 4		200	66.66
Kahambilihene 5		58	19.33
Kahambilihene 6		60	8.57
Gorakadeniya 1		52	6.5
Gorakadeniya 2		54	7.71
Gorakadeniya 3		51	4.63
Bonegala 1		130	9.28
Bonegala 2		189	9.45
Ogodapola 1		195	8.86
Ogodapola 2		110	13.75
Ogodapola 3		64	16
Ogodapola 4		64	12.8
Ogodapola 5		20	20
Ogodapola 6		160	17.77
Ogodapola 7		11	2.75
Ogodapola 8		17	4.25

Source: tombo

The other villages were in general peripheral to the colonial economy. Out of them Ogodapola and Waturugama (Hina/ Mäda) were special in that some powerful village level headmen formed an economically well-to-do section. Per capita ownership in these two villages was 14.45 and 15.44, respectively. In Ogodapola 12 out of 20 and in Waturugama 12 out of 15 gardens had a surplus generating capability in coconut. In the other four villages 16 of 33 had more than needed for domestic consumption. The per capita figure for them was Kahambilihena 14.82, Gorakadeniya 6.03, Bonegala 9.38 and Wilimbula 10.41.

Table 3-8 provides an even closer view of the pattern of ownership of coconut gardens. It gives data on the ownership of coconut palms by each family unit in the four villages of the Ogodapola formation described in chapter two. Out of the total of 19 family units in the four villages all but one had more coconut trees than needed for domestic consumption. One family had 66 trees per person. As these figures will be analysed in more detail in chapter six it is not necessary to do so here. The general trend towards growing coconuts for market consumption is however quite obvious.

The significance of the jak tree as a garden crop has largely escaped the attention of scholars researching the period. (I could not find any discussion of the significance of this tree in the changing socio-economic context.) When the numerical distribution of jak trees in gardens is taken into consideration against the backdrop of the rising demand for timber, particularly at the colonial centre, it is evident that it was not simply jak-fruit which was valued. Ship-building, building constructions and the furniture industry were growing fast and required a large supply of timber, and the jak tree would have been a major source of good timber.¹⁹⁶

Table 3-10: Arecanut delivery 1742-1750

Year	Amunums	Nuts
1742	14,179	7,896
1743	9,935	17,524
1744	17,009	3,671
1745	15,984	17,097
1746	18,621	17,281
1747	10,689	17,223
1748	12,796	134
1749	11,555	23,478
1750	11,579	2,401
Total	122,351	10,705

Source: Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 68

The sheer number of trees in a garden does not necessarily imply a market orientation. The accessibility to the market was more important than the availability of trees. Transportation of timber was not an easy task at a time of few or no roads. Therefore it is not advisable to rely on the number of trees in a garden in assessing its market orientation.

If we analyse the available data keeping these factors in mind, it is possible to draw some conclusions. Table 3-9 (see the Appendix III for table 3-9) gives the distribution of jak trees in the gardens of eight villages in the Hina *kōrale*. Although all the villages analysed in the table had gardens with a fairly impressive number of jak trees, Mapitigama and Mudungoda are noteworthy. The case of Mapitigama is quite easy to explain. Apart from this village being more responsive to the demands of the colonial economy, it was located by the Keleni River, which made the transportation of timber easier. The case of Mapitigama was indeed representative, because jak trees were cultivated in many other villages along the Keleni River.

A main route (*hoofdweg*) connected Mudungoda with the Keleni River, which may have facilitated the transportation of timber. Data in tombos also show that the jak was an important tree in the other surrounding villages of Mudungoda. Even Waturugama, where four gardens with more than 50 trees were found, was connected to the Keleni River by a *hoofdweg*. Apart from the villages given in the table, the jak tree was quite abundant in the Adhikari *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale*. Since this area was close to the colonial centre, this was understandable. Many villages here had easy access either to the Keleni River or to a main route.

It is also important to take note of areca nut, as this was one of the main traditional crops with a clear market orientation. In 1740s, occasional fluctuation and the overall decline was the most outstanding characteristic of areca nut delivery (see table 3-10). Governor Gollennesse attributed this oscillation to the smallpox epidemic which ravaged the island in the 1740s.¹⁹⁷ The Company's policy towards areca nut would also probably

have been detrimental to its production. As far as the Company was concerned, this crop presented a lucrative source of income and measures were taken to secure a high profit margin. The producer was compelled to deliver part of its product free in lieu of tax. The remnant fetched a very low price f. 0.8 to f. 1.8 (Guilders) for per ammunum of 28,000 or 30,000 nuts, in the mid-eighteenth. The meagre buying price contrasted with the f. 18.1 to f. 24.12 (Guilders) for which the Company sold areca nut.¹⁹⁸

Such a disparity would undoubtedly have discouraged the producer to step up the production of his primary traditional cash crop. There seems to have been a significant 'illegal' trade in this item too. A *plakkaat* was issued on 31 January 1743 with the intention of preventing areca nut smuggling.¹⁹⁹ It might have been against the backdrop of this situation that the Company decided to withdraw the areca nut tax announced on the *plakkaat* of 12 September 1790, by which the Company also gave up its monopoly rights to the areca nut trade, about which the inhabitants had complained continuously.²⁰⁰ Thereafter, the Company would buy an ammunum of 30,000 nuts for Rd. 3, and the producer was left free to sell the produce to anyone else as he wished. It would be tempting to suggest there was a relationship between the vicissitudes of the areca nut and the growing popularity of the coconut palm as a garden crop. Whatever the causal relationship, peasants shifted their attention from areca nut to coconut as the main marketable garden crop.

This shift towards the coconut from areca nut can clearly be seen by comparing the coconut/ areca nut ratio in different areas. In 71 villages of Udugaha *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* the ratio of areca nut to coconut was 1:1.271 (that is 1 coconut tree for every 1.271 areca nut trees). The figure in the 59 villages of the Māda *pattuwa* of the same *kōrale* was 1:1.124—a difference of 0.13 in favour of coconut. We have to take into account the ecological difference in the two regions because the Māda *pattuwa* was more favourable for coconut palm. Nevertheless, if we look at different socio-economic sub-regional units in the Māda *pattuwa* itself we could get a more accurate idea. In the Weliweriya formation the ratio was 1:1.09, as against 1:1.59 in the Wilimbula formation and 1:1.51 in the Ogodapola formation. There were some single villages where the figure was even more favourable towards coconut: in Imbulgoda of the Weliweriya formation 1:0.89, Mudungoda 1:0.71, and in Moragoda, a village adjacent to Weliweriya formation, an impressive 1:0.63. The fact that these differences were seen in the same ecological but different socio-economic regions proves beyond doubt how the new economic situation changed crop diversification in gardens.

Apart from gardens, some attention should be given to *ōwiti* lands, 'flat meadow lands, strictly speaking by the side of a stream or *oya* subject to periodical cultivation'.²⁰¹ In tombos, these lands were generally classified as paddy-fields, and their main use at that time was doubtless paddy cultivation.²⁰² But in the recent past *ōwiti* were widely used for a number of crops intended mostly for the market. The way in which *ōwiti* has been defined in various historical periods probably points to its changing role as arable land. In addition to tombos, other Dutch records identify them as lands cultivated with paddy and other fine grains such as *kurakkan*.²⁰³ Ferguson's *Dictionary*, written in 1903, defined them as those lands cultivated with fine-grain and yams.²⁰⁴ The widespread use of *ōwiti* in the mid-eighteenth century may suggest the high demand for lands.²⁰⁵ Since they were not ideally suited for paddy cultivation their later use for other marketable crops is understandable. Especially important was that more diverse crops could be grown in *ōwiti* than in wet paddy lands. Thus farmers with access to *ōwiti* could be more sensitive to market demand. The extremely low yield when cultivated with paddy would have been a strong reason to convert them to other production uses when the opportunity was available to do so.

3.6 The market for garden crops

Our knowledge of the relationship of areca nut, pepper and coffee to the market is quite rich, thanks especially to the documentation of Arasaratnam and Kotelawe.²⁰⁶ Concerning coconut and jak timber, our knowledge is quite meagre, although we do know there was high demand at the colonial centre for these commodities and their derivatives such as arrack, coconut oil and coir. The coconut plantations in the coastal areas catered to this demand, but we do not have sufficient information at the present level of research to give a structural overview of the relationship, if any, of coconut production in the remoter areas and the market at the colonial centre. Judging from the considerable surplus generating capacity of coconut in the inland region, one could infer that they were meant for the distant market. It is highly unlikely that there was a sufficient local market for this surplus, because peasants were virtually self-sufficient in coconut for their domestic consumption.

It is obvious however that there must have been a mechanism to bring coconut to the colonial centre from the inland areas, because 1/3 of the coconut produce was taxed. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that producers often defaulted on payment of the garden tax, as is evident from the tombos.

The situation with regard to the jak timber is even more obscure. The Company would definitely have procured part of the timber supply free of payment as its share as 'lord of the land'. But the prevalence of large plantations such as those found in Mudungoda and Mapitigama would have definitely had a market orientation. These questions call for further research.

Whatever the actual relationship between those crops and the market by the mid-eighteenth century, the general proliferation of garden cultivation as a branch of production had important long term effects. The inland areas were increasingly becoming the supply hinterland of the growing urban population. As Gerrit Knaap has observed, this relationship was at work, probably on a small scale, as early as 1690s.²⁰⁷ In the early nineteenth century, Simon Casie Chitty observed that the supply hinterland of Colombo city had expanded at least to Mahara (Hina/ Adhikari).²⁰⁸ This would have expanded further with the rise of population in the late nineteenth century.²⁰⁹

Moreover, with the expansion of the market for coconut in the nineteenth century and the growing interest of wealthier sections in investing on coconut plantations the access to the market became much easier.²¹⁰ Even small gardens with few coconut trees became suppliers to this market, and continued to do so until the present day. Therefore it is possible to argue that though the market for the produce of these rapidly emerging gardens was not all that lucrative by the mid-eighteenth century, this trend was good anticipation for the developments of the nineteenth century.

3.7 Plantations as a new mode of land consumption

At this juncture, it is important to distinguish a garden from a plantation, as most of the crops which I discuss here as plantation crops were also found in gardens. As it is unsatisfactory to define the difference with reference to a single feature, I propose to adopt a three-fold criterion.

Function: The defining feature of the garden in the traditional socio-economic setting was that it referred mainly to the geographical space in which the peasant dwelling was located. The English term 'garden' (*tuin* in Dutch) can be translated either as '*gewatta*' or '*watta*'.²¹¹ In contrast, a plantation was a geographical space specifically meant for one or more crops, usually with emphasis on a single crop grown specifically for the market.

Size: The traditional household garden was generally a relatively small area consisting of a few coconut, jak and areca nut trees, among others. Areca nut trees were mainly meant

for the market, while others were intended for household consumption. Conversely, a plantation would be varied in size from smaller ones to extremely large ones (for example in the case of coconut, range from ones with 200 trees to several thousands).

Labour relations: At least in some cases there was a separation between ownership and labour in plantations. This would have definitely been so in regard to large plantations and, particularly, those owned by chiefs and other social elements who did not labour in the production process.

Two maps of 1794 showing the Alutkuru and Hina *kōrales* provide a vivid picture of the spread of plantations. The map of Alutkuru *kōrale* shows the stretch of land that extended from Negombo to Colombo parallel to the coast as an unending series of cinnamon plantations. There were several extremely large plantations in this region, one of which extended over several miles. There were others scattered all over Alutkuru and Hina *kōrales*. There was a large cinnamon plantation adjacent to the Colombo city, called *maradaan*, where 150 people worked. Plantations were also found in the coastal belt from Colombo to Moratuwa. The real extent of the spread of coconut plantations was not represented on those two maps, as they were marked only when they were located by the roads. Apart from cinnamon plantations, these maps also show plantations for coffee, pepper, areca nut, coconut and teak. There were at least two more crops which could be classified as plantation crops, namely jak and cardamom. At least one cardamom plantation was found in Company territory, in Eswatta of Hewagam *kōrale*, with 17,285 plants.²¹² There were also some plantations where jak trees were found in abundance.

By far the most significant plantation crops were coconut and cinnamon. Cinnamon plantations made a big difference to the land consumption in the coastal belt from Negombo to Moratuwa, where these became the dominant consumers of land in the late eighteenth century. It should be noted however that this impact was not destined to last long. Cinnamon plantations slowly disappeared over the nineteenth century and today they are restricted to Kalutara and Galle districts. The case of coconut was exactly the opposite. Coconut plantations were emerging as one of the most dominant factors in land consumption and its early signs were clearly visible in the mid-eighteenth century.

3.7.1 The rise and fall of cinnamon plantations

The cultivation of cinnamon was inaugurated in 1771.²¹³ Before that cinnamon grew in the wild and was peeled and collected using, chiefly, the labour of the *salāgama* (in the tombos *chalias*) caste. The Company suffered from a chronic delivery shortage owing to the vagaries of the conditions in this mode of supply. There were a number of thorny issues to cope with. The king of Kandy controlled a large amount of the cinnamon-growing lands, and the Company relied on his goodwill to collect the harvest there. Receiving permission for this was a troublesome affair. Annual embassies with gifts had to be sent to the king's court, and protocols involved in the audience of the king were quite humiliating for the European servants of the Company. The king used this annual occasion to symbolically assert his authority over Company-controlled territory. Although the financial cost to the Company for this was relatively low,²¹⁴ the procedure for receiving the permission was both uncertain and tedious. The fact that special clauses were inserted in the peace treaty of 1766 gave free access for Company peelers in the Kandyan land bears witness to the importance of the issue.²¹⁵

Protecting cinnamon trees from the indigenous people was also a matter of great concern. As already mentioned, damaging cinnamon plants was prohibited and a number of regulations had been issued to that effect, but these were routinely violated. Cinnamon plants were often harmed in the preparation of household gardens and *chenas*, and the strict measures taken against this contributed significantly to the deteriorating relationship between the people and the Company.

Table 3-12: Regional distribution of cinnamon gardens in the Colombo dissavony

Area	No. of gardens	Size (Amunu/kuruni)	Overseers Needed
Colombo four Gravets	23	1056/ 06	274
Vidane Kotte	6	11/ 20	18
Vidane Wattala	4	9/ 30	9
Vidane Kaleniya	4	2/ 30	4
Alutkuru <i>kōrale</i> [Ragam pattuwa]	37	789/ 13	50
Alutkuru <i>kōrale</i> [Dasiya pattuwa]	25	83/ 20	66
Alutkuru <i>kōrale</i> [Dunagaha pattuwa]	13	41/ 26	38
Negombo District	12	60/ 30	46
Hewagam korale	9	18/ 16	28
Hina <i>kōrale</i> [Adhikari & Meda pattu]	14	132/ 30	58
Hina <i>kōrale</i> [Gangaboda & Udugaha pattu]	13	22/ 23	28
Salpity korale	19	202/ 14	146
Moratuwa	22	201/ 25	105
Raigam korale	18	67	67
Panadura district	9	23/ 03	30
Kalutara district	29	76/ 19	107
Hapitigam korale	36	56/ 03	86
Pasdun korale	13	22/ 29	50
Walallawiti korale	7	8	6
Total	313	2887/17	1318

Source: Reports of commissioners, showing the cinnamon plantations in the various districts and villages of the Colombo desaavony, addressed to the dessave (SLNA/ 1/ 3677-no pagination)

Mobilizing labour for collecting, peeling and transporting cinnamon was also an arduous task. A number of problems had to be dealt with. Maintaining good relationships with cinnamon peelers was of the utmost importance. These people had to spend long spells in the woods during the two annual peeling seasons in order to deliver the stipulated amount of peeled cinnamon. This was an extremely difficult task and peelers frequently failed to deliver the amount due.²¹⁶ Resorting to violent insurgencies as well as absconding to Kandyan lands to avoid the burden was common.

It was against this background that the VOC turned its attention to cinnamon cultivation, though not without some internal opposition. Those who objected maintained for a long time that cinnamon could not be cultivated. It has been shown that this attitude was deliberately maintained for fear that the plant would be smuggled out of Sri Lanka by European competitors. But the need for an adequate and unhindered supply surpassed this concern. The result was the proliferation of cinnamon plantations after the successful experiment in 1770.

Thereafter the number of cinnamon plantations grew at a remarkable pace. Kanapathylillai has calculated that there were 24 million cinnamon plants at the end of Governor Falck's tenure in 1785, and 609 million at the end of Governor Van de Graaf's term nine years later.²¹⁷ A report compiled on the cinnamon plantations in the Colombo dissavony on 1786 and the 1794 series of maps provides a vivid picture of the quick growth of cinnamon plantations. According to the report, there were 313 cinnamon plantations in the Colombo dissavony, covering 2872 amunams and 17 kuruni of land that required more than 1312 persons to look after them²¹⁸ (see table 3-12).

There were some distinctive features in the regional distribution of these plantations. By far the most important area of distribution was the coastline from Negombo to

Kalutara. The plantation in the Colombo *four gravets* covered 1056 amunums of lands, while 984/ 39 were found in the region from Negombo to Colombo. In the coastal belt from Colombo to Kalutara, 503 amunums and 39 kurunis of land were covered by cinnamon plantations. Thus the entire coastal region accounted for 2524 amunums and 26 kuruni altogether, or 87 percent of all the cinnamon plantations in the Colombo dissavony. These early plantations were established in the areas most conducive to cinnamon growing. It is also noteworthy that in those areas a traditional system of peasant production was not firmly rooted, although some expansion towards the inland region where the peasant production was dominant can be noticed. *Mudaliyār* Bandaranayaka's 100-amunum garden in Biyagama (Hina/ Adhikari) was by far the largest in the inland areas. Other inland gardens were smaller.

Table 3-13: Ownership of cinnamon plantations in 1786

Owner	No. of plantations owned	Amount (amunu/ kuruni)
Company	38	2022/ 02
<i>Disāve</i>	3	41/ 00
<i>Mudaliyārs</i>	68	387/ 13
<i>Muhandīrams</i>	51	89/ 25
<i>Mahvidāne</i>	14	118/ 26
<i>korāla</i>	5	4/ 15
<i>atukorāla</i>	2	00/ 14
<i>vidāne</i>	33	75/ 26
<i>ārachchi</i>	18	22/ 30
<i>Wibadde</i>	2	1/ 10
School master	3	3/ 05
<i>Kangān</i>	8	2/ 35
<i>Mahabadderāla</i>	2	24/ 00
<i>Majorāl</i>	1	00/ 05
<i>Baas</i>	1	2/ 00
<i>lascarin</i>	2	00/ 20
<i>nainde</i>	1	00/ 06
Gamekeeper	1	00/ 10
<i>tolke</i>	1	00/ 03
<i>mohottirāla</i>	1	00/ 15
Clerk	1	00/ 10
Others	33	72/ 4

Source: Reports of commissioners, showing the cinnamon plantations in the various districts and villages of the Colombo desaavony, addressed to the dessave (SLNA/ 1/ 3677-no pagination)

These figures on the early plantations seem quite low if compared with the extent of land covered by cinnamon plantations according to 1794 maps (see the note to maps in page xii). As mentioned above cinnamon plantations increased from 24 million plants from the end of Falck's tenure to 609 million plants at the end of Van de Graaf's tenure (1794). These maps probably show the situation of this latter stage.

The remarkable expansion of cinnamon plantations does not reflect the long-term impact it had on the existing socio-economic setting. As mentioned earlier, these plantations disappeared from these areas in the nineteenth century. Colvin R. de Silva's study shows significant changes in the state of the cinnamon plantations in the early British period. Early British administrators 'found these plantations to be expensive and

difficult of management as they were of varying sizes, only partially cultivated, and scattered between Chilaw and Matara'.²¹⁹ They therefore developed a new scheme for concentrating them in a few compact plantations. Even the two large plantations near Colombo and Negombo which were selected for the new scheme were not in a proper condition. However, the government was trying to revitalise large plantations in Maradana of Colombo, Kadirana of Negombo, Ekele of Alutkuru *Kōrale* and Moratuwa of Salpity *kōrale*, with little success. De Silva notes that in 1805 they were in a bad condition and not been fully cultivated.²²⁰ Though the situation improved somewhat over time, the place of cinnamon in Ceylon's export trade diminished significantly. What is more, the major areas of eighteenth century cinnamon plantations were subject to increasing urbanisation.²²¹

What, then, was the real impact of these plantations on the social and economic relations of the region? I suggest that the impact has to be found in two factors linked with these plantations: the ownership patterns of the plantations and the labour supply.

3.7.2 Ownership of cinnamon plantations

By far the biggest owner of cinnamon plantations was the Company (see table 3-13), which owned 2022 amunums and two kurunis, or 70% of all the plantations in the Colombo dissavony. This also included some plantations that indigenous chiefs planted on behalf of the Company. Among those the Company owned were the biggest plantations near Colombo city and Ekele of Alutkuru *kōrale*.²²² *Mudaliyārs* also owned large number of plantations, which amounted altogether to 379 amunums and 13 kurunis. Other chiefs such as *mubandirams*, *mahavidānes*, *vidānes*, and *ārachchis* also possessed significant number of plantations.

It is also significant that a vast cross section of the society took part in this plantation, although in varying degrees. A *nainde*, who performed some menial services for the Company, owned a small garden of 6 kurunis; a person of *bakuru* caste owned a garden of 15 kuruni. *lascarins*, *majorāls*, *kankānams*, school masters, a foreman of bricklayers, a *vidāne* of silver and black smiths, and a *mahabadderāla* are also known to have owned gardens.²²³ There were a number of owners whose positions were not specified. Overall the impression is that many non-traditional groups who were not part of the hierarchy of indigenous chiefs or the traditional labour organisation, but who probably benefited from new economic opportunities, took to cinnamon culture as a means of enhancing their fortune. (See chapter six for a discussion of this phenomenon).

As the issue of labour supply will be discussed separately now I turn to look at the expansion of coconut plantations.

3.7.3 Coconut plantations

The cultivation of coconut took several forms: 1) Gardens not exceeding supply for the household consumption. 2) Gardens with a surplus generating capacity. 3) Large plantations exclusively meant for the market. 4). Small plantations in coastal areas which were meant for toddy tapping. The difference between categories one and two and four has to be clarified. In many ways category four was similar to categories one and two in terms of size and the employment of domestic labour. The difference was however in the structural relations with the overall production process. Categories one and two belonged to the same structure of traditional peasant production as seen in cultivating paddy-fields and chenas. The production relations of the cultivators of gardens of the fourth category were distinct because, at least, many toddy tappers did not engage in peasant production and their main production activity was probably toddy tapping. Thus the economic function of their coconut gardens was completely different from that of peasant gardens.

Table 3-14: distribution of coconut plantations exceeding 200 trees

Area	200-499 (small)	500-999 (medium)	1000- (large)	4999	5000 or more (mega)
Salpity <i>kōrale</i>	133	29	3		7
Hina [Adhikari]	16	1	2		0
Hina [Meda]	52	2	0		0
Hina [Udugaha]	13	0	0		0
Hina [Gangaboda]	15	3	3		0

Source: tombo

Table 3-15: Ownership of large and medium size coconut plantations in Hina korale

Area (Village/ <i>pattuwa</i>)	Owners position	No. of trees
Yatowita/ Gangaboda	<i>mudaliyār's</i> widow	2000
Biyagama/ Adhikari	<i>majorāl</i>	1700
Udupila/ Adhikari	Saparamadu	1500
Mapitigama/ Gangaboda	<i>mudaliyār</i>	1300
Weelgama/ Gangaboda	<i>chetty</i>	1200
Pattiwala/ Adhikari	Not specified, probably elite	855
Yatowita/ Gangaboda	<i>mudaliyār</i>	800
Moragoda/ Meda	Not given, <i>goyigama</i> caste	580
Mangalatiriya/ Meda	Not given, <i>goyigama</i> caste	513
Weelgama/ Gangaboda	<i>mudaliyār</i>	500
Weelgama/ Gangaboda	burger	500

Source: tombo

In this discussion, however, I define as 'a plantation' only those lands where there were more than 200 trees per unit. I propose the following scheme to classify them based on the number of trees each unit contained.

Small plantations	200	-	<500
Medium plantations	500	-	<1000
Large plantations	1000	-	<5000
Mega plantations	5000		and above

Table 2-14 shows the regional distribution of these coconut plantations in the Hina and Salpity *kōrales*. Mega plantations were found exclusively in coastal areas. Dehiwala, Kalubowila, Wellawatta and Galkissa had seven such plantations. Inland plantations tended to be small although several large plantations were found in inland areas. Out of the 108 plantations in Hina *kōrale* only 11 had 500 or more trees; the rest had 200 to 499 trees. Looking at the map no.9 showing coconut plantations of Hina *kōrale* some significant patterns can be identified in the distribution of plantations in the Hina *kōrale*. The distribution was fairly dense in certain areas. Three such regions can be discerned: 1) the area from Weliweriya (Hina/ Māda) to Nittambuwa (Hina/ Udugaha); 2) some villages in the Gangaboda *pattuwa*; 3) some villages in the Adhikari *pattuwa*. The majority of the large and medium plantations were located in second and third regions. The most

significant characteristic of these areas was that they were located by the Kelani River, which would have provided easy transportation. Only one large and two medium plantations were located outside these two regions. As has already been identified in chapter two, the region where the Weliveriya and Wandurawa formations were located had a higher impact of the colonial economy. A large number of small plantations was distributed in this region.

Coconut was emerging as a favourite economic activity among indigenous chiefs. Table 3-15 shows that the majority of the owners of large- and medium-sized plantations were high ranking chiefs, mostly *mudaliyārs*. It is also important to note that groups such as *chettys*, *burghers* and even minor headmen like *majorāls* owned large or medium plantations. The relationship between coconut plantations and the economic interests of chiefs and other well-to-do elements was a major factor in the quicker expansion of the former.

Kanapathypillai indeed attributes the failure of cinnamon plantations to the chiefs' attraction to coconut growing and its long-lasting impact on the pattern of land consumption.²²⁴ The Company redistributed vast tracts of lands which were classified as '*s Compagnies grond*. Chiefs were well placed to acquire those redistributed lands owing to their political leverage. There was also illegal acquisition of lands by the chiefs. How the chiefs benefited in this manner is discussed in chapters four and five. The aftermath of this new pattern of land consumption was not felt in the short run, particularly because of the low population density, but the land conflicts between chiefs and peasants became a serious issue as the population grew.²²⁵

3.8 Changing aspects of the traditional labour organisation

Several factors triggered the ineluctable reshaping of the pre-colonial social division of labour. New economic activities emerging outside the realm of peasant production, the rising demand of labour from the colonial administration for its economic and administrative functions and the growth of the urban population demanded new sources of labour supply. There were several sources to meet this demand. Probably the most important source were the coastal castes which were less involved in the traditional peasant production. This made it relatively easy for them to adapt to new economic activities. Besides these castes, there was a sizeable slave population in Colombo and other cities such as Galle (table 3-16). Although these sources should not be overlooked, the main focus here is on discovering how the labour organization in the peasant production was affected by this new demand for labour.

In the pre-colonial world, no significant economic activities took place outside the traditional peasant agriculture. The majority of the people lived in villages where tiling the soil was the dominant production activity. There were, however, several exceptions to this rule. Various ports, including Colombo, Galle and Puttalam, were centres of a sizeable seaborne trade and concentrations of non-farmer social elements. But it seems that these places were not as busy as their later colonial counterparts. The picture which R.L. Brohier has drawn of Colombo under the Kotte kings is cogent evidence of this. He says that the area surrounding of Colombo harbour consisted of one street with 'cadjan godowns' and was occupied mainly by Muslim merchants and a fishing community.²²⁶

Information about the social division of labour among the coastal castes and other coastal communities before the colonial economy began to draw on them for its labour needs is scanty. With the notable exceptions of the fishing community, which probably consisted of the members of *karāva* caste and the merchant community which may have been composed of muslims and *chettys*,²²⁷ no traces of other non-agricultural economic communities are to be found. Though *salāgama* and *durāva* castes emerged as non-agricultural economic communities in the colonial period, their position in the pre-

colonial social division of labour is somewhat obscure. Since the *salāgama* caste peeled cinnamon, not as their livelihood but for the king in return for the land which they cultivated, they may have probably been integrated in the peasant agriculture, although they have been constantly referred to as weavers. Although some *durāva* concentrations were found in the inland areas, we do not know when this phenomenon began; nor do we know whether this caste was engaged in toddy-tapping in the pre-colonial times on the same scale as they did under colonial powers. *Mandarampurapuvata*, a sinhala poem composed probably late-eighteenth century, referred to a *maharābadda* (toddy department) which gave toddy and jaggery.²²⁸ This reference is however not sufficient for a firm conclusion on this caste community.

Table 3-16: Slave ownership in Colombo

Male	Households	Slaves	Slaves/housh.
European Company Employee	179	845	4.72
European citizen	34	217	6.38
Mestizo Company/ citizen	17	40	2.35
Topass	7	23	3.29
Port/ black/ indigenous	27	63	2.33
Fisher	9	21	2.33
Sinhalese	4	4	1
Sinhalese smiths	4	23	5.75
Chetty	28	87	3.11
Moor	1	1	1
Paravar	3	4	1.33
Javanese	1	2	2
Unknown	4	6	1.5
Female			
Eur. Widow/ single	3	80	26.66
Mestizo widow/ single	4	7	1.75
Indigenous/ black widow/ single	14	40	2.86
Unknown women/ widow	69	316	4.58
Total	408	1779	4.36

Source: Raben, 'Colombo and Batavia, 115

In the absence of any more apposite information, it has to be concluded that peasant agriculture accounted for the major portion of the labour supply in the social formation. However, the situation was not monolithic. There was a significant social division of labour in which the total labour supply was distributed in various production and service activities. There are local literary sources which represent some aspects of the social division of labour. *Mandarampurapuvata* classified villages according to various occupations.²²⁹ *Janawamsaya*, a sinhala chronicle, also provided a long list of various occupation groups.²³⁰ Although the labour functions that they described undoubtedly existed, it is difficult to obtain an authentic picture from the mythical character of these representations.

While caste formation accounts for some aspects of the social division of labour, it should be emphasised that the dominant historiography of caste formation has over-estimated the occupational functions of castes. As will be discussed in chapter six, caste distinctions cannot be explained entirely in terms of occupational specialization. Bearing this in mind, we can analyze the data in table 3-17, which shows the caste distribution in the Māda *pattuvā* of Hina *kōrale*. The *padu*, *hakuru*, *durāva* and *karāva* castes are classified

in this table as cultivators, although they are generally identified with non-agricultural occupations. The reason for classifying *padu* and *bakuru* castes as cultivators is detailed upon in chapter six. The case of the *durāva* and the *karāva* may require some explanation. Some *durāva* families were found in the inland villages in which there were large coconut plantations. It would be tempting therefore to assume that they worked in those coconut plantations, presumably as toddy-tappers.²³¹ Although the *karāva* caste engaged in fishing in the coastal areas, this could not have been the case in the inland villages. While many *karāva* PLHs in inland villages served the Company as boatmen for their *rājakāriya*, it is not possible to say whether this labour function gave them their livelihood, and the fact that they had a substantial ownership of paddy-land suggests that they played a major role in cultivation. As the *karāva* and *durāva* presence in the inland villages seems to have been mainly a phenomenon of colonial times, they may not have played a major role in the pre-colonial social division of labour in the inland areas.

Table 3-17: Social division of labour (old) Caste distribution in Meda pattuwa of Hina Korale

Caste	Main occupation	No. of families	%
<i>goyigama</i>	Cultivator	491	61.14
<i>padu</i>	Cultivator	112	13.94
<i>bakuru</i>	Cultivator	48	5.97
<i>radā</i>	Washer	45	5.6
<i>Āchāri</i>	Smith and Carpenter	30	3.73
<i>Karāva</i>	Cultivator	29	3.61
<i>Durāva</i>	Cultivator	19	2.36
<i>Berava</i>	Tom-tom beater	12	1.49
<i>Badahāla</i>	Potter	11	1.36
Barber	Barber	2	0.24
Unclassified	Unknown	4	0.49
<i>Total</i>		803	

Source: thombo

The main artisanal castes were *āchāri* (gold, silver and blacksmiths and carpenters) and *badahāla* (potters). Their percentage in the Māda *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* was 3.73 per cent (30 families) and 1.36 per cent (11 families), respectively. Generally speaking they were dispersed over the area in single families. There was another important feature of the nature of these manufacturing castes: they too had a hand in the cultivation of lands. Table 3-18 (see the Appendix III for table 3-18)) provides details about six *badahāla* families in the Māda *pattuwa*. Their paddy-land ownership was not very high, and sometimes they had no paddy lands at all. Their settlement pattern does not differ significantly from that of the smiths.

Inevitably, part of the labour supply in the social formation was diverted towards the needs of the ruling class. This diversion was organized by the *rājakāriya* system, a part of which was used to till the soil, in the form of cultivating the *muttettuwa* or demesne of the village, the return of which was acquired by the king or grantee of the village.²³² The rest of the *rājakāriya* labour fulfilled the other multifarious needs of the ruling class.

3.8.1 Colonial rule and the social division of labour

As mentioned above, under the colonial rule the new demand for labour came from three sources, namely, the new economic activities, the economic and administrative needs of the colonial government and the growing urban population. Since the labour of the peasant remained strongly bound to the soil under the pre-colonial agrarian production system, mobility was highly restricted. The demand itself therefore did not guarantee the supply. Even when the realm of the peasant production was rigorously constrained by measures such as laws against chena cultivation, no significant voluntary labour outflow was to be seen from the peasant production. The adjustability of the peasant to changes was seemingly quite high. This was indeed largely due to the primitive needs of the peasant. It has been discussed in the chapter two how European observers complained about the peasants' alleged 'laziness' and aversion to change and innovation. It is also notable that when large-scale coffee plantations were started in the nineteenth century, the British government had to turn to South India for plantation labourers.²³³

However if there was a decisive breaking up of the structural equilibrium of the peasant production and even subsistence living standards could not be maintained, peasants would migrate off the land. In such a situation the growing demand for labour in other accessible areas represented an ideal solution.²³⁴

As already discussed above there was a progressive breaking up of the structural equilibrium of the peasant production, particularly in the way lands were allocated to each sector of the peasant production. Moreover, as will be seen in chapter four, the increasing demand for surplus by the Company significantly diminished the sustainability of the peasant with the prevailing level of productivity, which was, as shown earlier, not increasing. Graph 3-1 and table 3-19 show how the revised taxation on paddy lands following the tombo compilation potentially reduced the per capita ownership of paddy-land of peasants in several villages. It increased again due to the death or migration of peasants.

The need for migration was greatly reduced by the high rate of mortality which maintained the demographic balance. Occasional epidemics such as smallpox that ravaged the county in the early 1740s and warfare also contributed to this situation.²³⁵ This is however somewhat paradoxical. High mortality rates could also mean the fall of the labour supply, which would in turn reduce the extent of lands that could be cultivated by one labour unit (i.e. a family). Thus, high mortality rate itself did not reduce the gap between sustainability and productivity. The nature of mortality shows however that it did indeed help to maintain the balance. The death rate for children and women was quite high. As under-aged children and women were considered dependents by the Sri Lankan peasant as in any other patriarchal society, this decreased the number of family dependents. There were other ways of keeping the number of dependents low. Knox mentioned that killing infants was widespread in the Kandyan region.²³⁶ We do not know however if this method was practiced in the low-country region.

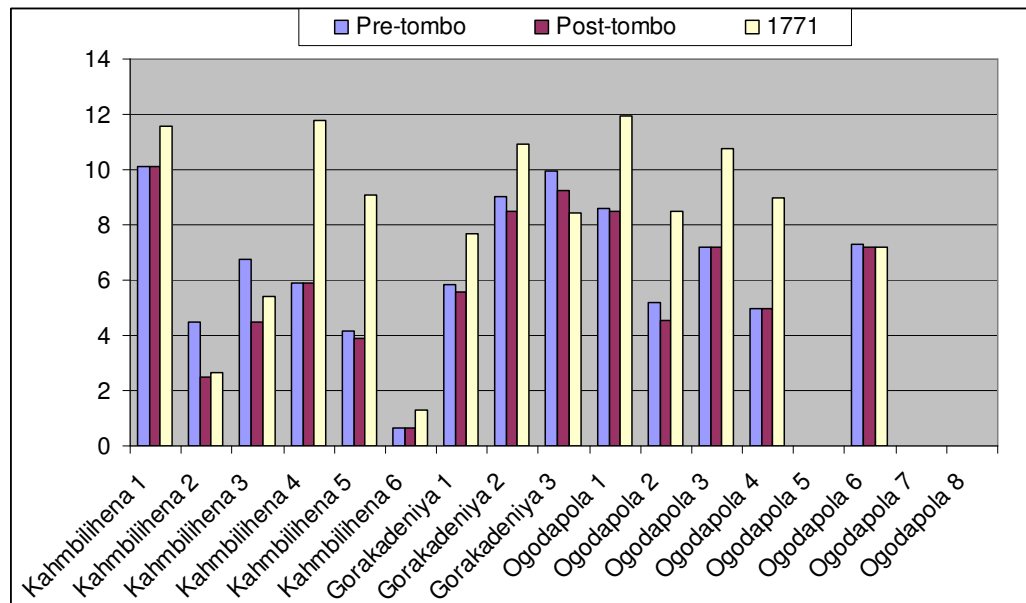
The marriage system was likewise manipulated to serve this end. If there were too many women dependents in a family, every effort was made to send girls out of the family by getting them married as soon as possible. Otherwise more male members were brought into the family in the form of uxorilocal (*binna*) marriages in which the husband came to live with the wife. Information in tombos suggests that the average age of marriage for female was extremely low. When women were brought in, polyandry was an effective means of reducing the number of additions to the family. It not only reduced the number of women in an extended family, but also reduced the number of children. As has been shown in chapter two, polyandry was widely practiced.

Table 3-19: change of the sustainability of peasant family in 3 villages

PLH	Pre Tombo	Post tombo	1771	Caste	Service
Kahmbilihena 1	10.125	10.125	11.57	<i>goyigama</i>	<i>lascarin</i>
Kahmbilihena 2	4.5	2.5	2.65	<i>goyigama</i>	Half majoraal
Kahmbilihena 3	6.75	4.5	5.4	<i>bakuru</i>	Half majoraal
Kahmbilihena 4	5.9	5.9	11.8	<i>bakuru</i>	
Kahmbilihena 5	4.14	3.9	9.1	<i>bakuru</i>	Extraorddinary service
Kahmbilihena 6	0.64	0.64	1.28	<i>bakuru</i>	
Gorakadeniya 1	5.86	5.56	7.65	<i>āchāri</i>	Timmerman
Gorakadeniya 2	9.05	8.48	10.9	<i>āchāri</i>	Timmerman
Gorakadeniya 3	9.95	9.25	8.41	<i>āchāri</i>	Timmerman
Ogodapola 1	8.6	8.47	11.93	<i>goyigama</i>	
Ogodapola 2	5.2	4.53	8.5	<i>goyigama</i>	
Ogodapola 3	7.18	7.18	10.775	<i>goyigama</i>	Half majoraal
Ogodapola 4	5	5	9	<i>goyigama</i>	Half majoraal
Ogodapola 5	0	0	0	<i>goyigama</i>	
Ogodapola 6	7.31	7.18	7.183	<i>āchāri</i>	Timmerman
Ogodapola 7	0	0	0	<i>āchāri</i>	Gold smith
Ogodapola 8	0	0	0	Berava	Tom tom beater

Source: tombo Hina *kōrale* Mede pattuwa

Graph 3-1 change of the sustainability of peasant families in Ogodapola formation



Although there were significant demographic fluctuations in the inland areas where peasant production was dominant, there was no major exodus of population to the urban centres. In Colombo, the percentage of people with inland origins was quite low. In 1694 only 12.8 per cent (201 persons) of the Colombo population were classified as Sinhalese, which included people from inland areas. This may have included not only those with a peasant agricultural origin but also indigenous chiefs and other representatives of non-agricultural groups. In the period of tombo, there were 230 *bellale* (*goyigama*) persons in

Colombo out of the total of 3397. Apart from this, 15 families with 85 persons were classified as Sinhalese.²³⁷ Moreover small numbers of people from service and manufacturing castes were also found.

In other areas where the population decreased as a result of evictions, the opposite trend could be observed. As has already been discussed in chapter two, there were a number of 'low-pressure' areas with a high potential of absorption such as Alutgama and those of Weliweriya formation.

Migrating to Kandyan lands was also of significance. When the need arose to move out of the locality of one's residence and, probably, prevailing socio-economic condition, the Kandyan lands would have been a much more desirable destination for the peasant. Apart from identifying more closely with the Kandyan ruling class than with the Dutch, there were also close social ties. Marital relations with people in the Kandyan lands were numerous. Moreover, lands were probably freely available and demand for surplus from the ruling class was also lower. The modes of surplus extraction in the Kandyan kingdom were not possibly as effective as under the Company rule.

Above all, the breaking up of the existing equilibrium of the peasant production was apparently not disastrous. Peasants were not uprooted from their lands to the extent that they were forced to move out of the area. On the contrary a new equilibrium emerged with a new mode of land consumption in which household gardens had an important place. This helped the peasant maintain a minimum livelihood and restored his bond with the soil.

In contrast to the agricultural castes, the labour mobility of the coastal castes, other coastal communities such as Muslims, *chettys*, and *paravars*, and service and manufacturing castes was higher as their ties to the soil were weaker. The Company treated Muslim, *chetty* and *paravar* communities as foreigners and obtained their free labour through the system called *uliyam* service.²³⁸

The case of the *salāgama* caste was somewhat exceptional and needs special consideration. Since the ability to mobilize their labour depended exclusively on their traditional obligation for delivering cinnamon to the lord of the land, the availability of their labour was associated with the *rājakāriya* system. Thus, there were severe restrictions imposed upon them in order to curtail their social mobility. Inter-caste marriages were strictly prohibited so that the offspring would not escape the task of cinnamon peeling.²³⁹ Even their geographic mobility was regulated by restricting them to a closely-located cluster of villages. According to Governor Gollennesse there were 2,924 peelers in his period, up from the previous figure of 968 heads in 1697.²⁴⁰ This increase had indeed made him abolish the system of '*geld kanneel*' (money cinnamon), according to which each peeler was paid a nominal sum for extra delivery.

The situation was different in the case of the *karāva* and *durāva* castes, where there was a significant spatial mobility. Although *karāva* people were classified in Dutch records as '*visser*', as a community they were not exclusively fishermen. Those who engaged in fishing had of course the obligation of delivering part of their catch to the Company in lieu of their *rājakāriya*.²⁴¹ The occupational diversity among them was quite high. An extraordinary case in this respect was the carpentry industry in Moratuwa (Palle/ Salpity). This large coastal settlement with more than 3000 inhabitants (148 PLHs) was largely occupied by *karāva* people, most of whom were carpenters. They were also widely used as boatmen in the interior waterways. Lands had been given to them in some inland villages for rendering this service. Moreover they were used for assisting in catching elephants and transporting timber.

The case of service and manufacturing castes was also significant. The defining feature about these caste groups was their specialised labour skill for which there was a growing demand in the colonial centre. While part of their labour was extracted by the Company

through the *rājakāriya* system, they were inclined to 'voluntary migration' towards the colonial centre too. There were many localities in and around the colonial centre where each of these groups was concentrated. Since this phenomenon is discussed in detail in chapter six, I do not go into detail here. It is however important to repeat the fact that these caste groups were integrated into the colonial social-economy at a faster rate than other agricultural castes of the inland areas.

There were two main modes through which part of the labour of the traditional peasant was brought into contact with the new economic reality: the *rājakāriya* system and the plantations.

3.8.2 Draining labour out of peasant production through *rājakāriya*

As far as the social composition of the *rājakāriya* system is concerned, it had two forms. Certain forms of *rājakāriya* were performed by those who did not labour in the production process. Service functions of top- and mid-level chiefs whose economic power depended on their access to the surplus of the peasant production can be classified as such. They facilitated the mobilization of *rājakāriya* labour, but the bulk of the *rājakāriya* service was performed by those who laboured in the production process. From the point of view of the sovereign, there was no difference. A ritual edifice had evolved with the king at the top of a hierarchical order, while the rest of society was organised in a network of service functions centred on the king. In the Kandyan kingdom there were a number of practices in which this ritual edifice was represented. Two such important instances were the daily routine of the Court, which was organised around the glorified body of the king which had been elevated into a divine status²⁴², and the 'Kandy Perehera' which came into being in the latter half of the period. Representatives of all the social elements from top court officials to the lowest social segments marched through the city with the highly venerated casket of the 'tooth relics of Buddha', while the king watched the procession from a specially made stage.²⁴³ In this ritual construction, *rājakāriya* meant simply serving the king. Whether the service was performed by the *mahaadbhikarama* (prime minister) or an ordinary peasant made no difference, at least in theory. In both cases the service provider had to worship the king in fully stretched position in front of him (*dandanamaskaraya*).

This highly elaborated ritual edifice however concealed the real distribution of power and the socio-economic implications of the *rājakāriya*. In that sense, H.L. Seneviratne's characterisation of 'Kandy Perehera' as a "microcosmic representation of all the salient features of Kandyan society"²⁴⁴ has to be revised: 'it was not a true representation but a false and ideological representation'. At the political and ideological level, it concealed the significant distinction between the ruling class and the ruled, the latter largely consisting of the peasantry. At the social and economic level, the distinction between those who enjoyed the surplus of the production and the real producer, namely cultivators and artisans, were covered up.

Hence, the *rājakāriya* has to be redefined so that it can be seen not simply as a system by which the king was served by the subjects, but as a mode of surplus extraction by the ruling class. Thus the ritual and other functions performed by the members of the ruling elite, which were also considered *rājakāriya*, has to be distinguished from the labour tasks performed by cultivators, artisans and other types of primary producers.

The *rājakāriya* divided the total labour supply in the social formation into two separately functioning circulation systems. One was the labour used in the production activity meant primarily for the sustenance of the labourer and his/ her family. This might be the cultivation of land, manufacturing, other services provided by various castes and so on. The other labour circulation system was the *rājakāriya*. Under pre-colonial and Kandyan kings, this was organised into various departments known as *badda*. Since the

whole edifice was based on the regular functioning of the basic production activities, the smooth functioning of the system depended heavily on the working balance between the two systems of labour circulation. As the performer of *rajakāriya* was simultaneously the producer in the other system of labour circulation, the functioning of one system should not have disturbed the other. In the classical pre-colonial setting the equilibrium was guaranteed by two factors: the relatively low demand for the surplus of the peasant, and the low subsistence level of peasant which demanded relatively little labour to produce the daily needs of the peasant family, thereby making labour time which went for the *rajakāriya* affordable.

Ralph Pieris's study of Kandyan social organisation shows that there was a reasonable balance between the two systems under the Kandyan kings.²⁴⁵ If we evaluate the information that our sources provide on moving people to the Kandyan land, some tentative observations can be made about the balance between the two labour circulation systems in the two territories. Not only did the tombos record many instances of people moving to the King's land, it was common for cinnamon peelers to take refuge in the Kandyan lands to escape the burden of cinnamon peeling. When there was a regular flow of people when the Company needed a bigger labour supply, it is not difficult to assume that the relative conditions of labour in Kandyan lands were better than in those of the Company. Nevertheless, equating the Kandyan situation with the whole pre-colonial reality is problematic, since in many respects Kandy had distinct characteristics. But in terms of the two systems of social labour circulation there is no reason to believe that there would have been a fundamental difference. Presumably neither the Kotte ruling class not numerically larger nor culturally higher than its Kandyan counterpart; nor were the peasants' needs. As we know more about the Kandyan kingdom, it is not unjustifiable to evaluate the colonial situation as against the pre-colonial situation that could be seen in the Kandyan kingdom.

We cannot however say that a 'perfect' balance was always maintained even in pre-colonial situations. There were occasional fluctuations, particularly in times of war. Protracted military confrontations were a defining feature of the sixteenth century. Contemporary observers have noted that Sitawaka Rajasingha could easily muster a peasant army of 50,000 men.²⁴⁶ Although there may be an element of exaggeration here, it shows the extent of demand for military service. Previous researchers have shown how detrimental these military confrontations were to the production process.²⁴⁷

If in the pre-colonial period, the demand for *rajakariya* labour was high enough to disturb the balance between peasant production and the *rajakariya* system only in emergency situations, it was a permanent feature in the colonial situation. As has been already mentioned, this was due to three factors: economic interests of the colonial forces based on the maximisation of profit, the large administrative machinery, and the growing urban elite, who were mostly Company officials (either Europeans or indigenous chiefs), who could claim the *rajakāriya* labour for their own use.

One of the basic norms in the working logic of the *rajakāriya* system was that those who performed it were by no means remunerated. Even in military service, serviceman had to bring his provisions for fifteen days and when they were exhausted he had to replenish his supplies himself. The rationale for this unusual practice was that the soldier provided his service in return for the land he held from the king and thus he was obliged to deliver his service whenever needed. This shows, even in times of war, at least in theory, the two systems, i.e. *rajakāriya* and peasant production, were deemed to have prevailed unhindered, because this should have been the case if the constant supply for those who were engaged in military service was to be guaranteed.²⁴⁸

Although colonial powers in general and the Dutch in particular employed the system, perhaps implicitly, on the same ideological basis, the fundamental underlying principle of

the system was clearly violated. For most of the *rājakāriya* services, provisions were supplied. This was called *maintementos*. We know of at least three groups who were supplied provisions during their *rājakāriya*. They were cinnamon peelers, *lascarins* and those who worked in cinnamon plantations (in other works than the peeling). This could have definitely been the case for those engaged in construction works, coolie works, and other labour. Sometimes some groups such as some *lascarins* were disengaged altogether from cultivation as a result of their higher involvement in *rājakāriya*. These developments that led to the relative disengagement of *rājakāriya* providers from the peasant production were not seemingly intentional from the point of view of the colonial administration, but the logical consequence of the high demand for labour. The cases of cinnamon peelers and *lascarins* provide two interesting examples in this respect.

Cinnamon peelers were given *maintementos* including rice, dried fish, salt, arrack and clothes when they were in the woods during the two peeling seasons (*hooge oegst* and *kleine oegst*). In the traditional pre-colonial system, by contrast, they peeled cinnamon for the sovereign in return for the lands they cultivated. Later, particularly under the Dutch, the high demand for cinnamon required change in the system. There was also a system of making payments in money rather than giving provisions.²⁴⁹ Payment was also made for extra delivery, which was called *geld canneel* (money cinnamon). Though this payment was only nominal and was mostly substituted for the poll tax, it had clear socio-economic implications as it was against the traditional norms of the *rājakāriya* system. The case of *lascarins* too is important. There were a number of villages the revenue of which was granted for *lascarins* and their headmen (see table 4-2 in chapter 4).

Looking at the demand for *rājakāriya* labour suggests that the experience of cinnamon peelers and *lascarins* are applicable to many other categories of labour. *naindes*, coolies and those who performed extraordinary services were in very high demand. Large numbers of coolies were needed to accompany Governors and other high officials of the Company on their tours of the island and the annual embassy to the Kandyan court. Catching elephants too required large numbers of labourers. When cinnamon plantations were growing in the late eighteenth century, they required an extremely large labour supply. Table 3-10 (see page 52) gives the number of labourers each plantation needed. The source of the supply for this labour was *rājakāriya*.²⁵⁰ Those who worked in the cinnamon gardens too were paid *maintementos*.

Apart from the changes in the working norms of the system, the amount of labour that drained out of the peasant production through *rājakāriya* was seemingly higher than in the pre-colonial period. Though more research is needed for a proper picture of the effects of these two changes, their significance can be gauged by looking at certain specific cases.

The manner in which participation in *rājakāriya* affected each group was different. In the case of cinnamon peelers, peeling cinnamon became a major production activity in the long run. Their progressive detachment from traditional peasant production gave them leverage to benefit from new economic opportunities. Given the importance of their labour for the Company, the members of the cinnamon-peeling *salāgama* caste were emerging as a highly dynamic and relatively privileged group. Although there had been a serious clash of interests between them and the Company in former times, at the end of the eighteenth century their social situation was becoming better.²⁵¹

The position of the *lascarins* was also interesting because it directly related to the social and economic conditions of the inland areas. Coinciding with their gradual detachment from cultivation of the soil they were emerging as small-scale land holders at the village level. Although the social origin of *lascarin* service was the military service under the indigenous kings, this group cannot be classified as such under the Dutch administration. They performed a vast range of services for the day-to-day function of the

administration, which required considerable man power.²⁵² As table 5-9 (page...) shows, there were 2412 *lascarins* in the Colombo *disavany* only.²⁵³

There were two categories of *lascarins* defined in terms of the way in which they received their *accommodessan* or maintenance grants.²⁵⁴ Some were granted the income from villages, while others were exempted from taxes for the land they cultivated. It would be interesting to see if these two modes of remunerating *lascarins* had any connection with the nature of their service. There were some *lascarins* whose service was apparently full-time. It is possible to assume that in many cases those who received income from villages served on full-time basis, like those who belonged to the governor's guard and were obliged to live in Colombo city. They were indeed among those who received village income. Other *lascarins* were perhaps not detached entirely from peasant production.

Tables 3-20 (see Appendix III for table 3-20) and table 5-9 (page...), which shows the distribution of the performers of *rājakāriya*, give an idea of the relative demand for each group of labourers. They show the huge demand for menial labour, such as coolies, *naindes*, wood-cutters, timber transporters, *karemarukārayās* (probably carriers of heavy loads), and so on. The duties performed by coolies and *naindes* seem to have overlapped, and the difference between the two was evidently one of social status. Coolies were mostly from the *padu* caste, the lowest of the numerically bigger castes (see chapter six) whose low social origin made them vulnerable to excessive exploitation. They sometimes dared to express their dissatisfaction over excessive exploitation. Coolies of *mahabadda* (cinnamon department) once came up with a complaint that they were treated badly for the heavy work they performed. They were especially outspoken on the 'privileged' position held, allegedly, by other groups such as *lascarins*, cinnamon peelers, and messengers, who received *maintementos* and annual gifts, although their work was easier.²⁵⁵ The coolies were used for heavier and socially inferior tasks such as bearing palanquins, transporting goods²⁵⁶ and so on. If we take into consideration the fact that coolies consisted of traditionally submissive social groups, their complaint makes clear that they were affected to the extent that the minimum level of subsistence could not be maintained through the usual engagement in the traditional peasant production.

Naindes were evidently used mostly on Company plantations.²⁵⁷ Land ownership of *naindes* suggests that they were becoming less engaged with the peasant agriculture. A *nainde* was entitled to twenty kurunis of paddy as an *accommodessan* (see the appendix I for the list of *accommodessan* entitlements). It is not clear whether this was granted in the form of a tax exemption for lands they cultivated or in the form of land revenue. Tombos show however that the former was very often the case, although as discussed below there were instances in which they did not possess paddy lands at all. In the Adhikari *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* there were many *naindes* who owned very little land. When this situation is compared with the low distribution of *chenas* in this area, it is possible to assume that the traditional peasant production was becoming less important for maintaining their basic subsistence needs.

There was also a tendency of *rājakāriya* servicemen turning into wage-labourers. Governor Gollennesse refers to some local employees of the Company who were paid by money. He includes in this category carpenters, sawyers and hawkers.²⁵⁸ As these three groups are given only as examples, many such groups must have existed.

3.8.3 Labour supply for plantations

Of the two main plantation crops, cinnamon and coconut, the former was the most labour intensive. In the pre-plantation context, labour was needed mainly for peeling and transporting. But plantations brought about more labour needs. Clearing and preparing the ground and looking after plants were highly labour intensive, while the cinnamon

plants needed scrupulous attention until they grew up to the peeling stage, as Kanapathypillai explains:

[...] planted cinnamon needed more care and attention in the first few years. In the first two years the plots had to be weeded three or four times a year, after which two weedings a year sufficed. The weeds had to be buried between the rows and soil drawn up around the plants. Further, the plants had to be coppiced in the second or third year, the stems cut down to within a few inches of the ground, and the cut surfaces earthed over. Four to six shoots only were to be left growing from the stump, and kept straight by pruning. When the plants were ready for peeling, they had to be pruned of all unwanted or distorted shoots and stumps, and more soil drawn up around the plants.²⁵⁹

In addition to peelers, for the 313 cinnamon plantations in the Colombo *disāwany* as found in 1786, 1318 persons were needed to look after them (see table 3-12 in page 55). With the extremely high growth of cinnamon plantations in the ensuing period, this demand no doubt multiplied several times.

There were several types of plantations: 1) those belonging to the Company; 2) those planted by others, indigenous chiefs in particular, on behalf of the Company; and 3) those held by individual owners. For types one and two, the chief source of labour was *rājakāriya* labour.²⁶⁰ We have no specific evidence concerning the labour supply for the type three. One can assume that indigenous chiefs would have employed *rājakāriya* labour legitimately or illegitimately. There were many plantations owned by individuals who were not chiefs, but in general, they were not very big and their labour needs were modest. In many cases those small plantations needed only one labourer each (see table 3-12 in page 55).

It is evident however that the labour supply was a great problem for cinnamon plantations, and the major reason for the dire situation of the cinnamon plantations in the early years of British rule. Signs of this problem can also be seen, on a smaller scale, in the early stages of the plantations. The 1786 report of the Colombo *disāwany* plantations cited a number of neglected ones. Some five plantations in the Ragam *pattuwa* of Alutkuru *kōrale*, two each in Kotte and Kelaniya *vidāne* division of Hina *kōrale* were classified as abandoned, partially planted or covered by jungle. A letter to the *disāve* of Colombo dated 20 October 1786 by an indigenous chief who oversaw cinnamon plantations gives a vivid picture of the state of some plantations in the Salpity *kōrale*.

In the Salpity *kōrale* many cinnamon gardens have been neglected without guards for many months, without anybody passing by to look after them. The hedges have almost all collapsed. Young cinnamon trees have been damaged by cows. Many saplings planted in 1786 have been largely devoured by the cows. [Consequently] permanent guards should be placed in the cinnamon gardens of Pitakotte belonging to the Thomas Perera Muhandiram; cinnamon garden of the second school master of Kotte; the cinnamon garden of the second school master of Nawala [...].²⁶¹

It is important to note that cinnamon plantations have totally disappeared from the areas in which they were found on a large scale in the late eighteenth century.²⁶² Presently they are found only in some areas of Kalutara and Galle districts. The interesting feature of the present location of cinnamon plantations is that they are the areas where the *salāgama* caste was chiefly concentrated. This may have been due to the labour specialisation of this caste. It is quite likely that mobilizing *rājakāriya* labour for the highly skilled work of care for cinnamon plants was extremely difficult and could not be sustained in the long run.

Mobilizing labour for coconut plantations was a totally different story, the requirements being both qualitatively and quantitatively lower. Unlike cinnamon, coconut

plantations were, as shown above, a fast growing in the inland regions where peasant production was dominant. Since coconut was familiar to the peasant, it was easier for him to respond to the labour needs of coconut plantations. There are two aspects to be taken into consideration in this particular case. First, most of the plantations in the interior regions were small, with less than 500 trees, thus the labour needs were not high. Second, owners of coconut plantations in these areas were mostly indigenous chiefs, the majority being village-level headmen; the higher the chief's position, the greater his access to the peasant's free labour. The mobilization of labour by the chiefs for their own economic interests was not always legitimate, but the Company took it for granted that this was something that could not be eliminated completely, and Van Imhoff proposed a scheme for persuading chiefs to engage more in agriculture, in view of their ability to extract the labour of the ordinary peasant.²⁶³ But the Company did not tolerate excesses. Gollennesse mentioned a case in which the *kōrāla* of Hina *kōrale* had taken away 13 *naindes* who were given to another village headman for the improvement of a pepper plantation.²⁶⁴

There is evidence of another way of diverting peasant's labour into coconut plantations, outside the above mentioned system based on traditional authority. This was based on a contract between the land owner and the peasant. Colvin R. de Silva describes the system as follows:

The cultivation of gardens was on a somewhat different footing. 'Estates in this country are cultivated upon various contracts and agreements'; the headmen informed the Commission of Enquiry. 'Some are cultivated by the proprietors themselves. Some ... by allowing people, who watch the jak and coconut plants ... the whole of produce of yams and sweet potatoes, etc. which they themselves cultivate in them. Some ... on condition to allow half or two-thirds of the produce of the yams and sweet potatoes and fine grains cultivated therein, in which case the proprietor assists him to clear the ground. Some ... give half or one-third of the ground itself to the planter as well as in the trees. With regard to gardens which are partly planted and not brought to a perfect state of cultivation there is a custom of giving them to extend and complete such plantations farming out the fruit-trees to the planter himself for a low rate.'²⁶⁵

This system became quite widespread in the ensuing period when the realm of the traditional peasant production continued to shrink as a result of growing coconut plantations, and this situation still prevails to a significant extent. Although there is no precise evidence for the existence of this contract system in the mid-eighteenth century, the changing pattern of property ownership which was the backdrop of this system can be easily identified. Landlessness and the diminishing area of *chenas* are quite suitable to the emergence of such a system. Property relations in Mapitigama (Hina/ Gangaboda) provide a good example for this emerging trend. One of the characteristic features of property relations in this village was the high degree of unequal distribution of landed property (see chapter five for the class formation of Mapitigama). When there was a high level of accumulation to be seen at one end, landlessness or extremely low land ownership prevailed at the other end. There were a number of *naindes* who did not possess paddy lands at all. Moreover, two landless families of the *durāva* caste, which is typically identified with toddy tapping from the coconut palm, were also found here. This scenario strongly suggests that their labour had been diverted to a type of production activity that was different from traditional peasant agriculture. When this potential labour of *nainde* families is compared with the potential labour demand for the coconut plantations in the village, it is not difficult to assume that they would have been used by the plantation owners in one way or the other. Since the degree of land ownership among those *nainde* and *durāva* families would not have provided a minimum subsistence

level, it is likely that their engagement in coconut plantations was based on a system similar to the contract system described by Colvin R. de Silva.

3.8.4 Changing labour relations among manufacturing and service castes

Quite understandably, the demand for the labour of manufacturing and service castes was higher under colonial rulers than in pre-colonial contexts. The Company took meticulous care to mobilize their labour through *rājakāriya* and maintained special lists of artisans classified according to their skills.²⁶⁶ The geographical distribution of these castes shows a high degree of migration towards the colonial centre. Since these castes relied less on cultivating soil for their livelihood, it was easier for them to move out of the areas of residence. The concentration of most of these castes in Colombo city was disproportionately high (see the table 6-2 page...). Although potters (*badahāla*) and lime-burners (*hunu*) were not found in Colombo, there were several nearby localities where they were concentrated. Smiths also tended to be concentrated in certain villages close to the colonial centre.

While part of their labour was extracted by the Company through the *rājakāriya* system, a significant part of the rest of their labour time may have been absorbed by the new non-peasant economic sectors. The discussion in the chapter six will provide more insights on these aspects of these castes.

3.9 Some concluding remarks

Although no significant changes were to be seen in the level of rice production, the main production activity of the peasant, significant changes were taking place in land consumption and the social division of labour. Through these two factors of change, the process of production was progressively integrated into the colonial economy. The decline in significance of chena cultivation and the increased importance of gardens were the primary factors which disturbed the existing equilibrium of the peasant production. To a great degree, these changes helped break the subsistence nature of peasant production. When paddy cultivation did not meet the subsistence level, chena cultivation compensated for the deficit. On the other hand, gardens not only provided the peasant with various crops for household consumption; they also had major potential for production geared to the market. It is quite clear that marketable production was gaining the upper hand over items of domestic consumption. The growing importance of coconut and jak is extremely significant.

Coconut plantations have had a long history. Siriweera has laboured through many sources and gives a number of references to coconut as a crop not only for household gardens but also for large plantations.²⁶⁷ However there are no grounds for believing that coconut had the importance in the traditional peasant agriculture that it would gain in the mid-eighteenth century and later. Although jak was an item of domestic consumption, the growing number of trees in gardens shows that growth occurred not simply to meet the needs of domestic consumption of jak-fruit but, probably, but in view of the high demand for timber.

Tendency of market orientation of gardens had great long term effects. As the core inland regions of this study began to supply the growing urban centres with goods for the market, the role of the garden became pivotal. Since paddy cultivation hardly exceeded the subsistence level, its market sensitivity was low,²⁶⁸ and most of the additional rice needed in the urban centres was imported.

The growth of plantations greatly impacted the realm of peasant production, restricting its ability to expand. It also reinforced the integration of the economic life of

the interior to the colonial economy, because the plantations were based on the demands of distant markets.

Traditional labour relations changed in two ways. The increasing demand for *rājakāriya* labour disturbed the balance of the distribution of total social labour between peasant production and the labour requirements of the ruling class. This resulted in making certain social groups less engaged in peasant agriculture. The *salāgama* caste was progressively less engaged in peasant production. *lascarins* who were traditionally part of the peasantry were now emerging as land owners and their labour was being detached from the peasant production. Moreover, as the amount of labour dedicated to *rājakāriya* grew, the relative amount of labour-time left to meet the peasants' subsistence needs decreased.

Landlessness seemingly became a growing phenomenon. Tombos regularly refer to *leeglopers* (literally 'loafer'). In Mitirigala of Hina *kōrale* there was remarkably high degree of *leeglopers* without paddy or other sorts of lands. Some of these families had migrated to the Kandyan lands, which is a clear indication that they would have found it difficult to make their livelihood under the prevailing conditions. Usually *leeglopers* were those who did not perform any *rājakāriya* service and therefore were not entitled to *accommodessan* grants. Thus there were opportunities to absorb their labour into non-peasant economic activities in a different form to *rājakāriya*. It is important to mention that in Mitirigala a large amount of paddy lands was owned by *Mudaliyār* Louis de Saram. Thus one would be tempted to reckon *leeglopers* as a potential source of labour for cultivating those paddy lands. The low level of land ownership among certain *rājakāriya* performing segments is even quite evident. The case of the *naindes* in the Adhkari *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* was already mentioned earlier. Even coolies, who were quite submissive and whose living standards were probably much lower, found it difficult to be satisfied with what they received from their farming, which would have encouraged them to plead for some extra *maintementoes*.

Three non-peasant-production economic activities accounted for most of the labour, hitherto consumed by the traditional peasant production. Plantations needed by far the greatest labour supply, and a few cinnamon plantations owned by non-chiefs - and therefore not qualified to receive *rājakāriya* labour - depended on labour not supplied by the traditional labour organisation.

The situation with regard to coconut plantation is more interesting. This sector absorbed labour at the expense of the traditional peasant production. Many owners of coconut plantations were chiefs and, therefore, were in a position to extract *rājakāriya* labour. In the long run, this diversion of labour was detrimental to the traditional peasant production because coconut plantations were an ever-growing non-peasant-production activity. Thus as suggested by the growth of the 'contract system' on coconut plantations, this diversion of labour represented a permanent relocation of labour.

New economic activities that came into being in an around the colonial centre were the third significant consumer of labour. The main source of labour for these activities were members of coastal castes who were less, if at all, attached to the traditional peasant production. Members of other non-coastal castes concentrated in these areas also responded to the emerging demand for labour.

All in all there was an upsurge in economic activities outside the basic structure of peasant production, which drew significant amounts of labour and land out of the peasant production. The significant feature of these new economic activities was that they were much more dynamic than the two main branches of peasant production, namely, paddy and chena cultivation. Thus, these new sectors grew at the expense of the peasant production. Although the effects of these changes were not widespread enough in the mid- and late eighteenth century to result in a complete structural break down of

the peasant production, they gave birth to new competing economic structures that would replace the existing structure of peasant production in the coming centuries.

Chapter four - Land tenure and its changes

4.1 Introduction

Because lands were the focal point of the extraction of the peasant's surplus by the ruling class, land tenure was an important issue. Land tenure refers to the way in which the control and use of lands were defined in terms of the relationship between the cultivator and the sovereigns who claimed either a share of what those lands produced or part of the labour of the cultivator. This chapter attempts to understand the impact of the colonial intervention on land tenure in the western maritime region of Sri Lanka in the mid-eighteenth century. It will explain the changes brought about in the traditional pre-colonial land tenure as a result of the way in which the VOC administered its interests over lands and their tenants. Two factors brought about changes. On the one hand there were changes in the ways in which the sovereign's share was calculated, administered and collected. On the other hand, innovative measures were taking place as to how lands and land revenue were used as a source of remuneration for servants of the state.

In general, the modes of extraction of peasant's surplus by a non-producing outsider would be classified into two ways. It could take the form of forceful extraction by robbing and pillage. This is not a rare occurrence in the human history. Alternatively it could take the form of delivering the surplus by consent rather than by force, based on the hegemonic relationship of the recipient over the peasant.

The claim for the surplus would be justified in number of ways.²⁶⁹ In the case of the peasant, the basic justification was the theory of the 'Lord of the Land' (*bhupthi* in Sinhala). As will be discussed later, this theory has been defined in a number of ways, but however one interprets the theory, the amount of the surplus that the peasant ultimately delivered to the ruling class was contingent upon at least three factors: the living standard of the peasant, the level of the ruling class's demand and last but not least the bargaining power of each party—the class struggle between the cultivator-producer and the ruling class. It has already been shown that the demand for surplus under the colonial rulers was much higher than under the pre-colonial rulers. Since the level of production hardly exceeded the producer's subsistence level, sharpening of class conflict could be anticipated.

The mid-eighteenth century was a crucial stage in this class struggle. In the 1730s there was a wave of peasant insurgencies that kept VOC rule at bay. Although certain administrative reforms brought about a temporary harmony the problems were not completely solved. Insurgencies re-emerged in the late 1750s and were enmeshed with the war between the Kandyan kings and the VOC between 1761 and 1766. Insurgencies were, however, only one manifestation of the discontent. The land tenure system is, I propose, one area where this conflict manifested itself. Resorting to open confrontation in the form of uprising could be the ultimate mode of resistance. When overthrow of the ruling class was not the outcome of the uprising, the peasant had to adjust to the situation or establish a new social contract with those in charge. This chapter discusses the structural changes brought about in the land tenure system as a result of the encounter between the peasantry and the ruling class.

An additional remark on the ruling class is essential here. As far as the peasant is concerned there were two main camps in the ruling class, namely, the colonial masters and the indigenous chiefs. Although these two camps both relied on the surplus of the peasant, they also had conflicting interests, which will be discussed in chapter five.

4.2 Main features of the pre-colonial land tenure

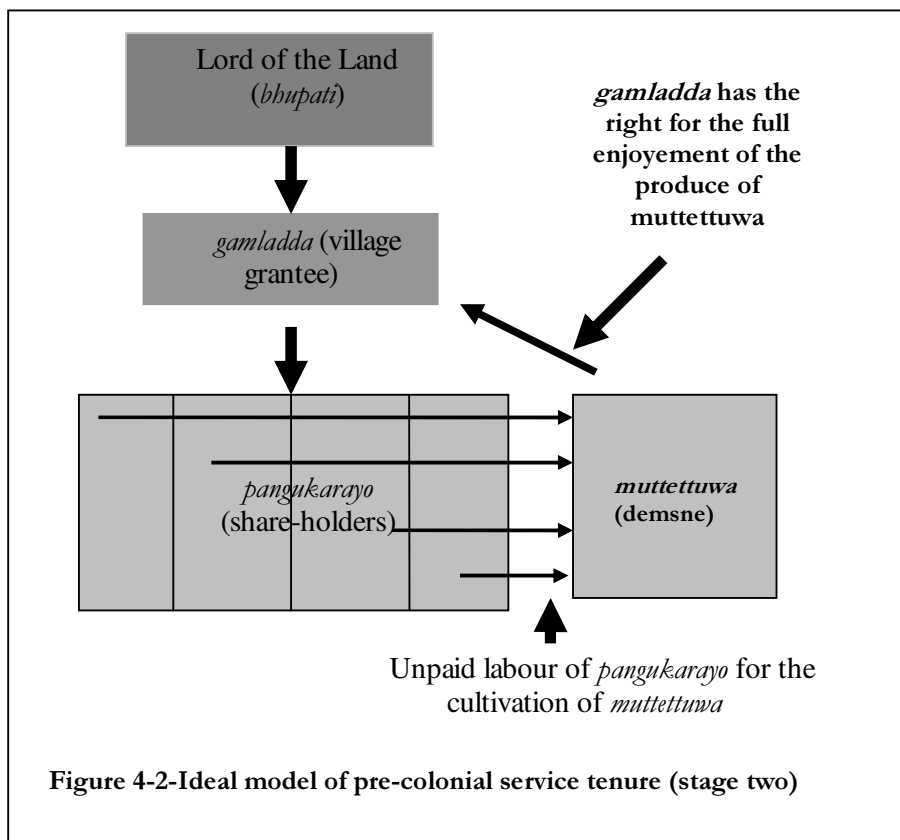
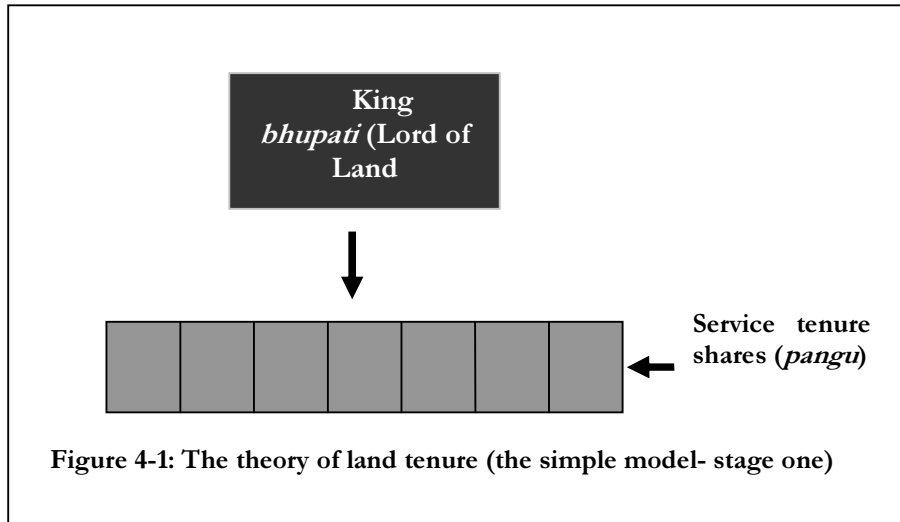
The land tenure that the Portuguese and the Dutch inherited from their pre-colonial counterparts was not a uniform system. Remnants of various forms overlapped and evolved over time into one formation of complex relations. Many observers are unanimous in stating that the 'Sinhalese' land tenure was a very complicated system and not so easy for an outsider to disentangle.²⁷⁰ They also argue that the 'service tenure' was the dominant mode of the traditional pre-colonial land tenure under which the tenant held a particular piece of land in a contractual relationship with the 'lord of the land' in return for a specific service for the latter. Nevertheless, by looking at various forms of relationships between tenant-cultivator and the lord of the land more than one mode can be detected.

Figure 4-1 represents the underlying theory of land tenure, where the king dispenses lands for the tenant and receives his shares in various forms as elaborated later. There were number of ways by which this was put into practice.

Based on the studies of Ralph Pieris, T.B.H. Abeyesinghe and C.R. de Silva, figure 4-2 shows the dominant service tenure model as practiced under the kings of Kotte and of Kandy.²⁷¹ Two figures show two stages of the structural evolution of the system. As shown in figure 4-1, in the first stage, each tenant of a land holding maintained a service tenure contract with the king under which the king, as *bhupati*, claimed his share in the form of part of the produce or part of the labour-time of the cultivator. This model is a theoretical representation of the relationship and does not necessarily show how this worked in actual practice. In other words, except for certain occasions which will be described later, the king's relationship with the tenant was not necessarily direct. Figure 4-2 is a more accurate depiction of how this system actually functioned. The king, as ultimate dispenser of lands, would grant a particular estate which was called *gama* to someone. Here, the *gama* was not necessarily defined as a certain geographical space where a group of people had their dwelling places, as discussed in chapter two, but as a certain amount of landed property bound together by means of being subjected to the grant. Thus in a *gama* there were, in principle, one or more cultivators who were obliged to serve the grantee as the latter received the grant from the king. What the grantee of a *gama* received in effect was the right to procure unpaid labour of the tenant of each holding (*panguwa*) of the *gama* to cultivate the *muttettuwa* (demesne).

There were other variations. A basic distinction can be made between villages (for the sake of convenience I use the term village for the *gama*) granted by the king to a third party and those he retained for his own use; the latter were known as *gabadāgam* (villages of the royal store-house). The others can be divided into two categories on the basis of the receiving party. There were *viharagam* or *devalagam*, which were granted respectively to Buddhist monasteries and temples devoted to certain deities, which were, in principle, inalienable. Then there were *nindagam*, granted to certain individuals on account of their service to the king. These could, however, be rescinded. Although the first category was different from the latter three to the extent that in a *gabadāgam* the tenant's relationship with the king was direct, it makes little difference from the point of view of the structural functioning of the system. The only difference was the destination of the produce of the *muttettuwa*.

There were other examples that do not fit the model of figure 4-2. On one hand, there were instances in which the king directly exercised his authority over the tenant as the ultimate dispenser of lands. Two instances could be cited in this connection. First, the king could obtain the labour of the tenant directly through the system of *rājakāriya*, as has already been detailed. Second, there was a system called *kadarajakariya* (which literally means the *rājakāriya* in the form of offering a *pingo* of goods as a tribute offered by the tenant to the king. This 'pingo-full offer' was called *dekumkada*.



The land tenure models known as *ande* and *otu* also do not fit in the model of figure 4-2. In these, a land-holding was subject to either a half (*ande*) or a tenth (*otu*) of the produce for the lord of the land. The payments could be in kind or in money. Codrington defines these two modes of tenure in terms of the relationship between a cultivator and a land owner, who is not necessarily the king. This definition corresponded to the *ande* system as practiced in the known past, and which still prevails, whereby the tenant cultivator pays part of the crop to the landlord. Yet Codrington does not produce sufficient data to support his assumption with regard to the pre-colonial times.²⁷² These two models were widely practiced during the Portuguese and VOC rules.²⁷³

I suggest that these various modes of the exercise of the basic theory of the king's right over land have to be explained by concrete historical developments. Although there is no space here to elaborate on this issue, about which insufficient research has been done, I would like to make two observations. First, the emerging social formations in the southwestern region that emerged following the collapse of the so-called '*rajarata* civilisation' inherited many social and economic institutions even as new ones evolved. Thus, what we experience in the region after the thirteenth century is a complex ensemble of social and economic relations and institutions, which did not necessarily complement each other, but reproduced themselves combined with emerging historical realities. Second, after the fall of the Polonnaruwa kingdom, the southwestern region became 'a battleground' of the various stake holders vying for political control of the region. As shown in the introduction, centrifugal tendencies were stronger. There was a constant effort by the kings, who based themselves in Kotte, to bring various regional factors under their control. The drive to gain a strong grip on the peasant's surplus would have been, no doubt, one of the major concerns of this struggle.

If we observe the various forms of land-tenure relations against this background, we can argue that they were the result of these two factors. While the *rājakāriya* and *kadarajakariya* or *dekum* system was a clear sign of the consolidation of kings, the *muttetuwa*, *ande* and *otu* systems seem to have been more favourable for local chiefs.

Another historical factor that shaped land tenure practice in this period was the falling importance of the grain tax, in the dominant mode of payment during the '*rajarata* civilisation', and the increase in labour service. This change was undoubtedly a direct outcome of the decline of production after the collapse of production processes of '*rajarata* civilisation', which was based on the advanced irrigation system. Even in the last phase of the Polonnaruwa kingdom we hear about the abolishing of taxes.²⁷⁴

4.3 The land tenure system as found in tombos

The basic unit of registering lands in tombos was the single holding, called in Sinhala '*panguwa*' (plural *pangu*). Thus one or more *pangu* or single holdings were registered under the person whom I call 'Principal Land Holder (PLH)'. The amount of *pangu* recorded under one PLH can be called, therefore, his estate. This estate may consist of paddy-fields (*kumburu*, singular *kumbura*). To give some examples, the estate of Doerawe Siman (PLH fifty six of Mapitigama of Hinal Gangaboda) consisted only of one *panguwa*, but that of Heenadiri Pathirannehege Don Pedro (PLH twenty of the same village) consisted of twenty *pangu*.

According to the tombos, the estate of a PLH could be classified in one of two ways. The first was based on the manner in which the holding was cultivated, that is whether it comprised gardens and paddy-fields. There was also a sub-category under paddy-fields for *ōwiti* (meadow lands²⁷⁵). This classification was significant from the point of view of the Company, because the taxation on each category was different. Gardens were taxed at 1/2 or 1/3 of their produce (Sinhala *watubadda*, or Dutch *derde*), whereas paddy lands were 1/2 (*ande*, or *belfde*) and 1/10 (*otu*, or *tiende*) of the produce. Unless the holding was

exempt from taxes altogether, gardens cultivated without permission were taxed 1/2 of the produce and those with permission 1/3. Some paddy-fields, mainly those which were declared as Company lands and which had been cultivated without permission, were subjected to *ande* and others to *otu*. Owing to their infertile nature, the tax on *owti* was always *otu*.²⁷⁶

A second classification might be made in terms of the relationship between the holding and the tenant vis-à-vis the 'Lord of the Land' (Sinhala *bhupati*, or Dutch *heer van de lande*). In tombos, this second classification was made in two stages. First, each holding was described according to the tenant's claim and the counter-claims of tombo commissioners, where the tenant's claims were mostly repudiated by commissioners on account of absence of proper proofs or for having more lands than the tenant was entitled to in a particular manner. In the second stage, paddy-fields were classified in various columns, based on the claims of the tenant and the counter-claims of commissioners, indicating the tax category to which they belonged. Paddy-fields were measured according to the sowing capacity in *amunu* (*amunum*/*amunams* as found in Dutch documents) and *kuruni* (forty *kuruni* = one *amunum*). In the case of gardens, coconut, jak and areca nut trees were counted, as those were the trees which were considered in taxing. Empty gardens were measured on the basis of the number of coconut trees that could be planted there.

The way in which each *panguwa* was defined in relation to the right of the tenant is extremely important. This is the key factor in understanding the nature of the land tenure system, not only in its existing form in the time of tombos but also in its changing forms, compared to the pre-colonial models described above. The right of the tenant was fundamentally determined by the way in which the relationship between the tenant and the 'lord of the land' had been established in the case of each *panguwa*. On that basis, two types of holdings could be identified in tombos, namely, *paravēni* lands and lands that belonged to the 'lord of the land'.

4.3.1 *Paravēni* lands: *paravēni* lands literally mean ancestral lands. Therefore, it signified that the basis of the right of the tenant was the inheritance. According to the information in tombo, a number of *paravēni* types could be identified: namely, service *paravēni* (Sinhala *sevaparavēni*, or Dutch *dienstbaar paravēni*), gift *paravēni* (*tēgiparavēni*, or *geschonkene paravēni*), purchased *paravēni* (*mudalparavēni*, or *gekogt paravēni*²⁷⁷), mother's *paravēni* (*mayparavēni*, or *moeders paravēni*) and father's *paravēni* (*piyaparavēni*, or *vaders paravēni*). The adjective may refer to the way the *panguwa* was inherited by the incumbent tenant. Mother's *paravēni* and father's *paravēni* do not give as clear an idea about the basis of the holding as do the first three types of *paravēni*. For instance, the basis of the holding of service *paravēni* was the obligation of the holder to render a particular service to the 'lord of the land', while the 'gift' and the 'purchased' *paravēni* were, respectively, given to the holder by someone or purchased either by the incumbent holder or his/ her predecessors.

The insufficiency of the nomenclatures of 'father's *paravēni*' and 'mother's *paravēni*' is that it does not give an idea as to what kind of relationship that these two kinds had with the 'lord of the land'. In theory a *sevaparavēni*, for example, also could be a father's *paravēni* or mother's *paravēni*. It is clear that these two nomenclatures follow a different logic from the rest. The defining factor of these nomenclatures is the ways in which the holding was inherited by the incumbent tenant. On the contrary the other types of *paravēni* were defined in terms of the relationship they had to the 'lord of the land'.

It should be mentioned that a logical consistency of the claim by the tenant is sometimes difficult to discern. For example, lands described (in Dutch) as *vaders paravēni majorāl verpligtings*²⁷⁸—father's *paravēni* for the *majoraal* service—are not rare. If we want to find logic, the question could be asked as to why it was not included as service *paravēni*. These inconsistencies however have a significant socio-political meaning. From the point

of view of the peasant, following a standard and systematic way of defining and naming their holdings would have been a highly frustrating exercise. Thus giving one or the other name for the holding may have been highly contingent upon the different circumstances. While one might name them according to the basis of the holding vis-à-vis the 'lord of the land', another might be thinking in terms of the person from whom he inherited the land.

Purchased lands were generally not referred to as *paravēni*, and I found only two occasions when this was done. Most commonly they were referred to as purchased lands (Dutch *gekogt grond*). But the purchased lands can easily be treated as *paravēni* because the tenant enjoyed full right for their use.

4.3.2 Lands that belong to the 'lord of the land': Five types of land belonging to the 'lord of the land' can be distinguished in the tombos: *ratmahera* (literally, lands that belong to the king)²⁷⁹, *malapālu* (lands escheated by the death of their tenants²⁸⁰), *nilapālu* (lands returned to the 'lord of the land' on account of the termination of the service obligation of the tenant²⁸¹), *muttettu* (demesne) and those which have been simply named as 'Company lands' (*'sCompagnies grond*). *Malapālu* and *nilapālu* were usually identified with reference to their previous tenant (for example, *nānāyakkārāyā's nilapālu*, *coolie's nilapālu*, or *nānāyakkārāyā's malapālu*). As mentioned above, under the pre-colonial system, *muttettuwa* (demesne) was the part of a village that could be granted by the king to a person or an institution and could be cultivated by the unpaid labour of the other cultivator-tenants of the village. Effectively, all the lands enumerated above were considered as belonging to the Company, and treated in the same manner in matters of taxation.

Tombo commissioners were not ready to take for granted claims of the tenant to each holding and in many cases they ignored tenants' claims that their holdings were *paravēni* or purchased lands. Out of 479 holdings registered in the village Mapitigama (Hina/ Gangaboda), 216 were claimed as *paravēni* by their tenants, but the claims were accepted in only 116 cases. The commissioners repudiated the tenant claims about the remaining 100 holdings, which were declared to be 'Company lands' and taxed accordingly. In the case of paddy-fields they were subjected to the *otu* tax, while gardens were taxed at 1/ 3 of the produce.

In Mapitigama, the majority of the holdings classified as belonging to the 'lord of the land' were '*sCompagnies grond*'. There were also a number of *malapālu* holdings and three *nilapālu* in the same village. Taxing them took several forms. Some of them were exempted from taxes in return for the tenant's service to the Company. Though the basis of these grants was not always specified, it can be assumed that, as will be discussed later in this chapter, they were *accommodessan* grants. Only in a few cases were they actually specified as such. For example, Imbulange Battan *nainde* (PLH forty-one) was permitted to hold two *malapālu* lands as *accommodessans* free of tax for his service as *lascarin*. Other such holdings were subjected to one or the other tax.

Whether lands were cultivated with or without permission made a significant difference in the taxation. Company lands cultivated as gardens without permission were subject to a tax of 1/ 2, while those cultivated with permission were taxed at 1/ 3 of the produce. The usual practice in the case of paddy-fields was to pay 1/ 2 if they are cultivated without permission, unless they were classified as *ōviti*, in which case only 1/ 10 was imposed as tax on account of their infertile nature. But there were many exceptions. A number of paddy lands cultivated without permission and classified as Company lands were still subject only to 1/ 10 (*otu*), possibly because they were relatively infertile lands.

Several types of lands were not recorded as single holdings in tombos: *puran* (fallow lands, chiefly uncultivated paddy-fields), *chenas* (slashed and burned highlands cultivated with dry grains and vegetables at intervals of several years), *deni* (forest lands) and *wilhadu* (marshy lands). The last mentioned type is not found at all in any of the villages I

reviewed, but they were recorded frequently in southern areas. *Deni* were recorded in seven villages of Gangaboda *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale*. *Puran* and chena lands were recorded for almost all the villages. Since *puran* lands were uncultivated at the time of the tombo compilation, they could not be taxed, which may be the reason for not recording them as single holdings. The reason for not recording chenas as single holdings of each PLH could be the nature of mode of cultivation. As the location of the chena was constantly shifting it could not be calculated effectively.

There is also some confusion among scholars over the taxation of chenas. With regard to the early nineteenth century, Colvin R. de Silva has stated that although dry grains cultivated in chenas were not taxed, a tax of ten percent was imposed for paddy.²⁸² Codrington also provides some useful information on this subject, which shows that the matter of taxing chenas was a complex one.²⁸³ The most important piece of information in this connection is found in Van Imhoff's *Memoir*, where he refers to chenas in relation to grants of *accommodessans*, which implies that they should have been subjected to some kind of a tax.²⁸⁴ The picture the tombos provide in this connection is interesting. In some areas, the amount of tax on chenas, which is usually 1/10, is explicitly mentioned, while in other areas there is no specific mention about it. In the villages of Udugaha *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale*, the amount of tax for all the chenas but one (in the village Nagoda) is given. There is an interesting situation with regard to the Māda *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale*. Beginning from one particular village, a tax of 1/10 has been recorded, whereas no mention is made of any tax in the case of others. The logic behind this anomaly is not quite clear. It is possible however to propose that there were some forms of taxing on them. A *disāve* of Colombo reported an interesting case where some *mudaliyārs* collected half of the produce from the chenas that were cultivated without permission,²⁸⁵ which suggests that they would have been taxed had they been cultivated with permission.

4.3.3 Principal Land Holder

The role of the 'Principal Land Holder' (PLH) is vital to understanding the land tenure system represented in the tombos. In contrast to the role of *pangukārayā* in the pre-colonial system, who was by definition was a cultivator, the PLH's position was fundamentally a legal one. In other words, a PLH might not necessarily be a cultivator. When the PLH was not the cultivator of a particular holding of an estate, the distinction between the cultivator and the legal tenant of the estate took at least three forms. First, there were PLHs who probably were not cultivators at all. This was obviously the case, for instance, when the PLH was a top ranking indigenous chief. For example, Don Alexander Abekoon (PLH two of Mapitigama) owned an estate consisting of gardens and paddy-fields. As he probably did not take part in cultivation at least in his formal occupation as *Mudaliyār* of Hina *kōrale*, those lands would have been cultivated by others. Second, even when the PLH was probably cultivator, there might have been more than one cultivator for the whole estate. There are many cases in which this distinction has been specifically recorded. Out of the villages where data were collected for each holding, non-PLH-cultivators are frequently found in Kalubowila of Salpity *kōrale*. Third, the PLH and the actual cultivator might be two different people when there was a significant distance between the location of the holding and the residence of the PLH. For instance, Johan Lataatjege don Manuel Perera (PLH eleven of Mapitigama), a *wibadde vidāne*, a minor chief at the village level, and therefore a possible cultivator,²⁸⁶ held property in a number of villages: Payagala, Kalemulla, Weralugampola, Mahaloluwa, Parape and Wielgama. As the PLH resided in Mapitigama, he would not have had day-to-day access to the lands in these villages because the distance between Mapitigama and the villages where the lands were located was simply too great.²⁸⁷ As will be discussed later, this

distinction between the legal tenure and the cultivation of the lands marked an extremely important departure from the pre-colonial system of land tenure.

Head tombos (*hoofd tombo*) listed all those who shared an estate or resided on lands that belonged to the said estate apart from the PLH. I call this group which consisted of the PLH and those who share and/or resided in the estate a 'PLH group' when referring to matters of land tenure. (In matters relating to the production process, particularly the labour organisation, and other social relations the same group is considered a 'family unit'.) The size of the group may significantly vary. At one extreme it might consist only of the PLH. For example Demetagodage Kirihonda, PLH number two of Radaliyagoda (Hina/ Mäda), was the sole member of the PLH group. At the other extreme were extremely large PLH groups. PLH group number one of Kandumulla had 57 members in 1760 and fifty-one in 1771; PLH group number one of Ambagaspitiya had forty-two members in 1760 and forty-six in 1771; and PLH group number one of Heendeniya had twenty-seven in 1760 and twenty-six in 1771, all in Hina/ Mäda.

4.3.4 Absentee PLHs

Tombos also record land holdings whose tenants lived in villages other than that where their holding was located. For this type of tenants I use the term 'absentee PLH'. This was a quite widespread phenomenon according to the tombos. A total of 3540 PLHs were registered in the 231 villages situated in Hina and Salpity Korales and Gampaha *vidāne* division; 1125 of these—nearly a third—were absentee holders.

I have identified three type of absentee PLHs. First, there were land holdings, whose tenants lived not far away from the location of the holding. For example, three absentee PLHs of *padu* caste in Ogodapola (Hina/ Mäda, PLHs numbers nine, ten and eleven), held several paddy-fields and gardens in this village but lived in the nearby village of Paranagama (Hina/ Udugaha). This geographic proximity was significant so far as the relationship between the labour and ownership is concerned. When the owner lived in an area distant from the location of the land, which precluded him from attending to the day-to-day needs of the cultivation process of the holding, an essential division occurred between the labour and the ownership.²⁸⁸ Nevertheless, if the distance was close enough for him to attend to the land on a daily basis, the relationship between the land and labour was not separated. Another remark on this mode of absentee holdings is needed. Some apparent anomalies were caused by the technicalities of tombo compilation. The basic administrative-geographic unit of the tombo compilation was the village (*dorp*). There were sometimes cases, particularly in terms of paddy-fields, where locating the holding precisely would have been difficult.²⁸⁹ When paddy-fields were large stretches bordering several villages it was not easy to locate a particular holding of paddy land in terms of a particular village. For instance, paddy-fields connected with the villages of Ogodapola, Kahambilihena and Gorakadeniya were part of one large stretch of fields.²⁹⁰ In such a situation, it is likely that the tombos registered the tenant and his paddy-field holdings under different villages. I have argued in chapter two that there was a structural difference between the residential and production spaces of the peasant, where *gama* is indeed applicable in its geographic sense only to the residential space. In this context, absentee owners as registered in tombos should not be considered absentee PLHs *per se*.

A second type of absentee holding is found in Gorakadeniya. All three PLHs in the village held each paddy-field in the village Beraunna (Hina/ Udugaha). As has been shown in chapter two, these three PLHs were probably related and it is probable that all they inherited these paddy-fields from one ancestral estate.²⁹¹ In general this type of holdings was quite small.

A third of absentee ownership is seen in the case of *Mudaliyār* Alexander Abekoon, an absentee PLH of Kahambilihene (Hina/ Mäda). A resident of Mapitigama

(Hina/ Gangaboda), he owned a paddy-field of one ammunam in Kahambilihena. He lived in a place rather distant from the land he owned. His position also had a bearing on the relationship between the land and the owner. Being a *mudaliyār*, he was definitely not a cultivator. It is also clear from the tombo of Mapitigama that he owned many lands outside his resident village.²⁹² This third type of absentee ownership was extremely important in the changing scenario of land ownership. This phenomenon is explored more fully in chapter five.

4.4 Changes in the land tenure

The foregoing discussion of land tenure as found in the tombos gives us a background to understand the changes in the structure of pre-colonial land tenure elaborated at the beginning of this chapter.

Table 4-1: Comparison of pre-colonial and colonial land tenure

<i>Pre-colonial</i>		<i>Colonial (as in Tombos)</i>	
<i>Unit</i>	<i>Agent</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Agent</i>
<i>Gama</i> (village as an estate)	<i>gamladdā</i> (grantee of a village)	Estate of the PLH	Principal Land Holder
<i>pāṅukārayā</i> (share holder)	<i>pāṅuwa</i> (share)	Single holding of a PLH	Cultivator PLH/ non-PLH cultivator

As given in table 4-1, there is a clear difference between the pre-colonial model and the tombo model in terms of the units and the agents of the land tenure. It is useful to give a detailed outline of the difference between each element of the two models.

First and foremost, there is a fundamental difference between the *gama* and the estate of the PLH in terms of their relationship to the respective social agents. The *gamladdā* was not the owner of the *gama* in either the modern legal sense or the structural logic of the model. What the *gamladdā* actually received by way of a village grant was access to a part of the labour of those who worked the land within the area of the grant, chiefly to cultivate the *muttettuwa* (demesne). He probably had control over the process of production of the *muttettuwa* as long as he enjoyed the grant. But that should not have been the case with regard to the other shares or *pāṅu*. The only structural relationship between the *gamladdā* and the *pāṅukārayā* (shareholder) was the extraction of unpaid labour used in the *muttettuwa*. The *pāṅukārayā* controlled the *pāṅuwa* as far as the actual cultivation process was concerned. Even in the case of the *muttettuwa*, the *gamladdā* did not, at least in theory, have a permanent control. The king had the right to withdraw the *gama* from its incumbent *gamladdā*.

The basis on which the PLH in tombos held his estate was different from both *gamladdā-gama* and *pāṅukārayā-pāṅuwa* relationships. Unlike the *gama* of *gamladdā*, the PLH had full authority over his estate. Moreover, the relationship between the PLH and his estate had a more permanent basis than that which the *gamladdā* had with his *gama*. There were of course some exceptions. The 'lord of the land' could withdraw a holding from the estate of the PLH when the latter could not give sufficient proof for the holding. As shown, earlier tombos record many such withdrawals. But this could not be compared with the mode of withdrawing a village grant executed by the king, or his colonial successor for that matter. Withdrawal of a holding from the incumbent PLH as recorded in tombos would be done on the basis of the legality of the holding. In other words, the withdrawal could be executed only if a legal claim could not be proven. This is

not the case with regard to the withdrawal of a village grant, where the issue of legality did not arise.

A comparison between the *pangukārayā* and the cultivator of holdings of a PLH is also important. There could be three scenarios with regard to the relationship between the PLH and the cultivator of the holding of a PLH. First and most important, the PLH would be the cultivator. Second, as mentioned above, there were some cases where a non-PLH cultivator had been specifically mentioned. In such cases the non-PLH cultivator was usually a member of the same PLH group, which was at the same time a family unit.²⁹³ Third, in some cases PLH would definitely not be the cultivator. This may have been caused, at least, by one of three situations. First, when a PLH belonged to a social group which did not labour in the cultivation of the soil, there could be a separation between PLH and cultivator. Top-rank indigenous chiefs comprised by far the most important group of PLHs in this category. Second, separation was inevitable when there was a significant physical distance between the PLH and the holding. This was the case with regard to most of absentee ownerships. And third, when a PLH owned more land than his family unit could tend, a separation between the PLH and the cultivator was probable, unless the surplus lands remained fallow. An additional remark would be useful in regard to the second scenario where the cultivator was specified as a non-PLH member. This separation could possibly have been caused by the existence of more than one household or nuclear family unit within one PLH group. Usually this type of separation occurred only in the cases of gardens. All such cases found in the reviewed villages are connected with gardens. This is quite understandable since the unity of the estate of the PLH was mainly determined by the paddy-fields, which were commonly cultivated by all the members of the PLH/ family group, while members of the group who formed separate households or nuclear family units may have cultivated gardens separately.

Based on the above discussion, it is possible to argue that the colonial mode of land tenure as found in tombos brought about a relationship network that was of a different nature than that of the pre-colonial set up. The pre-colonial system based on the *bhupatiyā-gamladdā-pangukārayā* relationship was replaced by a colonial system and a 'Lord of the Land-Principal Land Holder' relationship. The most significant innovation in the colonial system was that it embodied the actions of pre-colonial *gamladdā* and *pangukārayā* in a single agent, namely, the Principal Land Holder.

4.5 A historical explanation of the change

An understanding of the historical process through which these changes were brought about is important for two reasons. On the one hand these changes were not the result of a single administrative decision but of a series of measures taken over relatively a long time period. On the other hand the colonial powers did not appear to intentionally foster these changes because they, particularly the Dutch, were quite keen on protecting the traditional system. Tikiri Abeyesinghe's meticulous investigation into the land policy in the early years of the Portuguese rule shows that the basic pre-colonial system of land tenure remained unchanged under the Portuguese. He makes this quite clear in the following words:

It is time to consider whether these changes taking place, as it were, above their heads, had any effect on the tillers of the soil. They, after all, provided the basis of the whole edifice, for the dues of the landholder as well as the revenues of the state depended in the last resort, on their labour. The royal instructions were very explicit on the subject—the tilling of the soil was to be left to those already engaged in it. Surprisingly enough, these orders seem to have been obeyed to the

letter and there is not a shred of evidence that even a single cultivator was displaced by the changes in landholding.²⁹⁴

C.R. de Silva, who studied the later period of the Portuguese rule and endorsed Abeysinghe's explanation nonetheless provides information on a somewhat different development, namely, the buying and selling of *pangu*.²⁹⁵

As long as the unit bought was a village, the peasant or the *pangukārayā* was not directly affected. By the late 1620s however buying and selling of *pangus* themselves registered a sharp increase. [...] Portuguese *casados* now found it profitable to buy *pangus* from existing holders and convert them into *ande* or *otu* lands".²⁹⁶

However, de Silva himself asserts that the Portuguese administration did not encourage this trend but rather discouraged it.²⁹⁷ As we discuss later in this chapter and in chapter six, these developments had a strong bearing on the changes that occurred in the land tenure system. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the basic structure of the *bhupatiyā* - *gamladdā* - *pangukārayā* relationship remained unchanged at the administrative level. What basically happened under the Portuguese was that the existing *gamladdā* class was replaced by a new one, namely, Portuguese officers and *casados*. The main consequence of this replacement was however only a change in the destination of the cultivator's surplus.²⁹⁸

The 'buying and selling of *pangu*' was however an interesting development by itself as Portuguese *casados*, who bought them, probably were not cultivators. This is clear even from De Silva's remark that those who bought *pangu* converted them into *ande* or *otu* lands, which means they were given to others for cultivation in return for part of the produce. This relationship between the non-cultivating land holders, Portuguese *casados* in this case, and cultivators is however unexplainable in terms of the basic pre-colonial land tenure model elaborated at the beginning of this chapter. It is noticeable however that even in this relationship between the non-cultivating land owner and the cultivator, two pre-colonial structural practices, namely, *ande* and *otu*, were in operation. The specificity of the *ande* and *otu* systems was that, as already discussed, even in the typical pre-colonial context these two tenure types could not be explained in terms of a basic pre-colonial model. A detailed discussion about these two modes is important because they were in wider use during the Dutch rule.

Ande and *otu* had three distinctive features. First, unlike the basic model (see figures 4-1 and 4-2 in page 77), based on rent-in-labour, these two types of tenures were based on rent-in-kind. In other words, those who cultivated *ande* or *otu* lands rendered the lord of the land his due not with labour, but by delivering portion of the produce of the particular land. Second, in this model the relationship between the cultivator (*pangukārayā*) and the lord of the land was direct, whereas in the basic pre-colonial model the relationship was not direct in the sense that it was the unit of *gama*, which comprised one or more *pangu*, that was linked to the *bhupatiyā*. Third, these two modes of tenure were quite flexible in that they could be used not only by kings who claimed part of the produce of the cultivated lands but also by any two parties in a landowner/tenant-cultivator relationship. This is why the *ande* system prevails even today. The basic pre-colonial model based on a village grant did not have that flexibility and it could not be used without the operation of traditional authority.

C.R. de Silva quite confidently states that both *gam* and *pangu* were subjected to king's land grants,²⁹⁹ but he does not provide specific evidence on that or the background against which he came to this conclusion. If *pangu* were also subject to land grants like *gam*, the king may have granted lands directly to cultivators. If that was the case, it presents several questions. First, what was the relationship between the king and a *pangukārayā*, who received a *panguwa* directly from the king? Second, what was the

relationship between those who received such direct land grants from the king in the form of *pangu* and the other *pangukārayō* (*pangukārayō* is the plural of *pangukārayā*) who did not receive such direct grants? These questions are relevant because we know for sure that all the cultivators did not receive the lands they cultivated as direct grants from the king. Moreover, as far as the ideological claim of the right of *bhupatiyā* is concerned, whether or not the king directly granted lands to cultivators, in principle all the lands cultivated had to be treated as grants from the king. It was a basic norm of the ruling ideology. If the king granted lands to cultivators outside this basic framework, this should be considered as a special situation. Then the problem arises of how and where to locate these 'special' grants of lands in the network of structural relations consisting of the king, *gamladdā* and (other) *pangukarayo*. In particular, what was his relationship with the *gamladdā*?

If those direct grants did indeed exist, the question poses itself why a cultivator depended on a grant of the king for lands needed for cultivation, when it was not the fundamental mode of acquiring lands for the cultivation. In particular, why was that the case in relation to the other cultivators? We can think of three situations. First, there may have been situations in which the ability of some cultivators to acquire land was weaker than for others. The weaker elements would have needed the support of the ruler to procure cultivable lands. Second, there may have been for more lands from more enterprising cultivators who could have received land grants directly from the king. If such a social class existed it should have emerged as a group that exploited the other peasants. Third, if there was a scarcity of cultivable lands, competition may have occurred amongst cultivators for better lands. It is likely that all three situations may have existed in the pre-colonial period under indigenous kings, although we do not have evidence to that effect. But it is clearly evident that such direct grants were structurally impossible in the basic structure of *bhupatiyā* - *gamladdā* - *pangukārayā*, which does not necessarily imply they did not exist. Unfortunately we are not in a position to get a clear idea of the period immediately preceding the colonial intervention. Moreover, C.R. de Silva does not offer any evidence in this respect, although he states that the grant of *pangu* did take place. For the moment the question remains open for further research.

Some contributions from Codrington and W.I. Siriweera help us to take our discussion further. In an essay critical of the conventional interpretation of what he describes as "the king's ownership of lands", Siriweera, shows the existence of what he calls 'private lands'.³⁰⁰ One wonders how these 'private lands' were integrated in the pre-colonial land tenure system. According to the information that Siriweera produces it appears that these 'private lands' were owned not by cultivators but by non-cultivating members of the upper class. Two problems arise as to the tenure relations of these 'private lands'. First, how was the relationship between the owner and the cultivator of these lands structured? Second, what kind of relationship did the king have with these 'private lands'? It is clear even from Siriweera's explanation of the land tenure that the king had a right to extract tax even from these 'private lands'.

Codrington's explanation of *ande* and *otu* is also relevant to this discussion. According to him these two tenure types related to the land belonging to land owners. In other words, according to him, *ande* and *otu* were modes of payments made by the cultivator to the owner of the land he cultivated. C.R. de Silva also defines these lands as lease-holds given by *gamladdā* to cultivators.³⁰¹ Though this definition tallies quite well with his remark cited above on Portuguese *casados* who acquired lands and leased them to cultivators on *ande* or *otu* basis, it is extremely difficult to get a precise idea as to how these tenures functioned in the pre-colonial context.

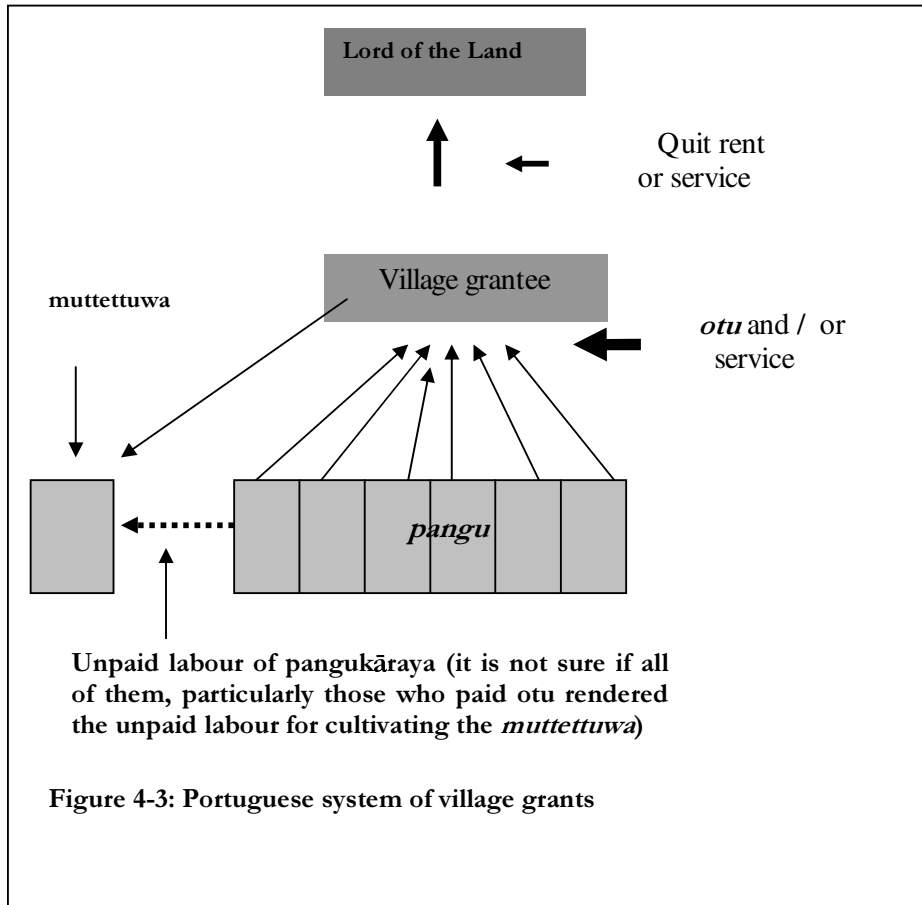
Information that P.E. Pieris provides from Portuguese tombos shows that the *otu* system was widespread.³⁰² What can be seen here is that the *otu* system had been

integrated into the village grant system as a mode of payment for the grantee side-by-side with the *muttettuwa* system. For example, the village of Madampe had paddy-fields of 100 *amunams* of which five *pelas* each were *muttettu* of the village grantee (Senhorio-lord) and village *vidane*. Moreover, there were sixty-five *amunams* cultivated in *otu* yielding the village grantee one to one of sowing capacity.³⁰³ Apparently, in those cases *otu* had replaced the *muttettuwa* system as the mode of surplus extraction. This situation points to an important development that occurred under the Portuguese because it supplemented the rent-in-labour type surplus extraction model embodied in the *muttettuwa* system with the rent-in-kind mode of extraction connected with the *otu* system. The latter had indeed become the dominant mode because sixty-five *amunams* of paddy-fields in Madampe were subject to the *otu* as against ten *pelas* (or 2.5 *amunams*) of *muttettu* lands. It was probably both more practical and more effective for those who received village grants under the Portuguese, mostly Portuguese officials, to collect tax-in-kind in the form of the *otu* rather than mobilizing the labour for cultivating the *muttettuwa*. This innovation is of much significance as it became one of the dominant modes of surplus extraction under the Dutch as well.

There is a tendency among historians to attribute the characteristics of these later developments to the working mode of the pre-colonial land tenure system. Referring to pre-colonial times, C.R. de Silva writes that “[t]he income of the village holder was often supplemented by dues from land given out on lease” and “*otu* and *ande* were two forms of such lease holds”. Nonetheless, the evidence he puts forward to support this argument is also pertinent to the Portuguese period.³⁰⁴ The information that Codrington provides in relation to the Kandyan areas is important for our understanding of the pre-colonial situation. He says that *otu* were paid for ‘fields which are barren, or difficult of protection from wild animals, particularly in the Seven Korales, Saffragam, Hewahete and some chenas in Harispattu’. Moreover, ‘[i]n many royal villages in Seven Korales are lands paying *otu* to the Crown’.³⁰⁵

We are not in a position to come to a firm conclusion as to the actual modes of functioning of *ande* or *otu* in the pre-colonial period, although their existence is undeniable. It is obvious however that there existed more than one mode of tenure system. At least three explanations could be given for the existence of these various tenure systems. One is the decline of production which brought about new modes of surplus extraction while the old ones had not totally disappeared. *Ande* and *otu* systems are in general more compatible with relatively high-production situations and the *muttettuwa* system with low-production situations. So long as there was a sufficient labour supply and the ability to mobilize it effectively, the *muttettuwa* system was a more appropriate mode of surplus extraction in low-production scenarios. Hence the dominance of this system under the Kotte and Kandyan kings.

The second explanation can be given in terms of the level of the class struggle. On one hand there was a conflict of interest between the peasant-cultivator and the ruling class that extracted the surplus of the former. On the other hand, there was a competition between various groups of the ruling class itself for a better share of the surplus. The most obvious manifestation in this regard was the struggle between provincial chiefs and royal families who were keen on bringing the former under their control. When the latter were in a dominant position, the former had to find ways to increase their share. The best way to achieve this end was to squeeze out the peasant-cultivator. The *muttettuwa* system was apparently more appropriate for royal families exercising their power over the other chiefs as it was based on the royal grant of villages. Under these circumstances the *ande* and *otu* systems could possibly be used by the chiefs to wield power over the peasant-cultivator to increase the surplus extraction.



The third explanation is associated with the demographic movement known as the 'drift to the southwest'.³⁰⁶ Several aspects of this movement have a significant bearing on our topic. First, it was a movement from one socio-economic formation to another. Second, this demographic movement probably led to an encounter between various social groups as the area was not uninhabited when the migrants arrived.³⁰⁷ Third, the migration process itself may have provided a space for restructuring the existing social, economic and political relations among the migrant social groups. If the various tenure systems, which would not form one harmonious system, are assessed against the backdrop of these factors, new avenues for understanding the problem would be opened up.³⁰⁸ We are not in a position to come to any firm conclusions for lack of information and the absence of comprehensive research.

Although the Portuguese did not change the basic form of the dominant model of land tenure, as Abeysinghe has shown, there is a combination of two models in their articulation of the system. By integrating *otu* payment with the village grant system they set the stage for the fundamental change that would take place under Dutch rule.

Two factors should be considered when explaining the innovation brought about under the Dutch. One is the new function of *pangu* as a mode of surplus extraction. As evident from tombos, each *panguwa* or single holding was defined separately in terms of its association with the 'lord of the land'. Thus there was a mode of payment for each holding either in kind, in labour or in money. This could be compared with the Portuguese system. In the Portuguese system, too, each holding was assigned a tax, mostly *otu*. But this was different from the Dutch system. As discussed earlier and shown

in figure 4-3, in the Portuguese system the (*otu*) tax were collected by the village holder. The village holder in turn was obliged to pay a 'quit rent' or perform service to the government.³⁰⁹

There seems to have been a transitional stage between this 'Portuguese system' and the one found in Dutch tombos. The Dutch way of executing village grants was basically similar to the Portuguese system. In the first half of the Dutch period, the method used for remunerating Company's local servants by land grants was similar to the Portuguese redistribution of villages. There was however a difference in the way in which village grants were executed. The quit rent system apparently disappeared and the grants were used not only to remunerate Company servants but also to win over the indigenous chiefs. In his *Memoirs*, Van Imhoff was highly critical of this system, which he deemed detrimental to VOC interests. He showed how chiefs managed to carve out the best villages from VOC territory at the Company's expense. Apart from the villages granted (*geaccommodeert*) to the Company servants, there were villages retained for the use of the governor and other high officials such as the *disāve*, which were called '*dispense dorpen*'. In the other villages the land income was collected directly through village headmen or farmed out.³¹⁰

As will be discussed below under *accommodessan* grants, transferring entire villages to chiefs in lieu of payment for their service virtually disappeared at the time of the tombos, with some exceptions which will be discussed below. This new scheme was drawn up by Van Imhoff, who proposed granting specific amounts of land revenue for each of the Company's service providers, instead of a giving away a whole village.³¹¹ The case of the village Hisselle (Hina/ Weke division) provides interesting insight on the execution of Van Imhoff's scheme. There is an additional note in the relevant tomo noting that the village had previously been granted as an *accommodessan* for Don Constantinu, the *muhandiram* of Hina *kōrale*, but was subsequently withdrawn in 1758 under the new scheme of Governor Jan Schreuder.³¹² "The new scheme of Schreuder" was indeed that of Van Imhoff's because the former was keen on putting it into practice.

It seems that this process of withdrawal of *accommodessan* villages from the chiefs was neither peaceful nor smooth. Kotelawele has documented a dramatic event in Weke of Hina *kōrale*, where a group of indigenous headmen and *lascarins* who were sent by the governor to retrieve some *accommodessan* lands held by indigenous chiefs were harassed and driven away.³¹³

There were however some remnants of the old system even in the tombos. Revenue from some villages had been given to groups of Company employees. What is important even in these cases is that the defining unit was not the village but the amount of land revenue to which each servant was entitled. The following discussion of *accommodessan* grants will be helpful in order to understand the next phase of evolution of the land tenure system that came into being under Dutch rule.

4.6 Accommodessan grants

Accommodessans were grants executed by the VOC for its local servants in return for the service they rendered. There seems to be a great confusion about the nature of *accommodessan* grants even among some historians of the period. As this subject holds the key to our understanding of the land tenure system in this period, disentangling the confusion is essential. Most researchers agree that the Company faced considerable difficulty in distinguishing this type of land from others, particularly from those known as service *paravēni* (Dutch *dienstbaar paravēni*). Kotelawele articulates this school of thought very well: "The Company officers found it difficult to distinguish between two types of service tenure lands, the *paravēnies* and *accommodessans*".³¹⁴ To clarify the distinction, he proposes the following description.

Service *paravēnis* held by inhabitants in return for service rendered to the state, (while these were difficult to distinguish from *accommodessans* which were also granted for service to the state, the essential difference was that whereas the latter were given to individuals for service in higher ranks and were subjected to withdrawal at the death of the grantee, the former were given to and could be held in families and were heritable in families so long as state services continued to be performed).³¹⁵

Governor Jan Schreuder gives a rather detailed account of service *paravēni*, as understood by the Dutch at the time, which is worth quoting here:

Service Paravenis are those (garden) which the inhabitants possess, as already stated in the chapter dealing with the Company's land and subject, according to their castes and ranks for the service which they under obligation to perform, such as Saparamadus, Appuhamies, *lascarins*, *majorāls*, Nindes, those performing extraordinary services, Coolies, Chandos or Toddy-tappers of the Company's gardens, Village Smiths, Carpenters, Washermen, Barbers, Potters, Grain-measures, Drummers, Pipers, Flutists and Dancers, whose children and heirs are under obligation at the death of their parents to follow them each in his turn and to perform the Company's statutory services *de facto* without being specially ordered to do so, which is an absolute law among them and is imposed upon them by birth. They accordingly at the same time also succeed to their Service Paravenis, and it also follows thereby that those of them who are subject to the said services but rise to higher status such as Mudliars, Mohandirams, Korales, Mahavidanas, *Arachchis*, *kankānams*, Vidanas of Districts, Atukoralas, Village Vidanas, Writers, Wibaddas and Vidanas of the Gold and Silversmiths, Potters, Barbers, Washermen, item the Pedias, may no longer possess their former Service Paravenis but must pay so much for them or render such dues as the Mala and Nilapalus now pay, unless they see that their statutory services which are attached to these Paravenis are duly performed, as has been done hitherto and is still in force in the King's territory, indeed even among the ministers of his court.³¹⁶

This gives a clear overview of what the service *paravēni* land meant for the VOC. First, they were land holdings which were attached by a particular service for the 'lord of the land', second, they could be heritable as long as the heir performed the same service, and third, those who held these service *paravēni* lands were also responsible for their cultivation. In that sense, Schreuder's description matches Kotalewele's. Before this definition is further discussed let us see what the *accommodessan* really meant. Unlike Kotalewele, who used the term 'lands' for *accommodessans*—for example, "two types of service tenure lands, the *paravēnis* and *accommodessans*"³¹⁷—I propose the term '*accommodessan* grants' for a reason which will be clarified later.

At least in two respects *accommodessan* grants were different from service *paravēni*. First, a receiver of an *accommodessan* grant was not necessarily a cultivator, nor did he necessarily bear responsibility for its cultivation. Second, these grants were not heritable, at least in principle. As soon as the service provider stopped providing the service attached to the grant, the grant reverted to the 'lord of the land'. Another important characteristic is extremely important, namely that *accommodessans* indeed meant part of the produce of cultivated land to be intended for the sovereign on account of his position as the 'lord of the land'. In other words, the *accommodessan* grantee did not become a 'land owner' or tenant in terms of its practical use, namely its cultivation, because at least in principle, the *accommodessan* grantee and the cultivator were two persons. In addition the *accommodessan* grant was not *land* per se, only a part of the value it generated, which is why the term '*accommodessan* lands' is conceptually inaccurate. This is why I propose the term *accommodessan* 'grant' in place of 'land'.

We find three types of *accommodessan* grants referred to in the tombos. The first was a grant of a whole village to one or more persons. Wereha (modern Werehera- Salpity *kōrale*) was granted to Egodage Hendrik Alvis, an *ārachchi*. There were other villages granted for more than one person. For example, Gangodawila of the same *kōrale* was granted to two *kankānams* and twenty-four *lascarins*, while Deltara was granted to two *kevu* fishers³¹⁸. In some instances, the amount of revenue that the grantee received was specified. Nimungama (modern Niwungama of Salpity *kōrale*) was granted to five *lascarins* who served under a *mudaliyār* and thereby grantees were entitled to the *otu* tax (1/ 10 of the produce) due from the cultivators to the Company. In the same way the *otu* of Papiliyana of the same *kōrale* was granted to two *kankānams* and twenty-four *lascarins*. The same was the case in Gangodavila. The description of Wereha was more detailed. The grantee, Egodage Hendrik Alvis, received *ande* (1/ 2 of the produce) of four *amunu* and 37.5 *kuruni* and *otu* of five *amunu* and 12.5 *kuruni*. (This amount seems to match the amount of *accommodessans* reserved for an *ārachchi* according to Schreuder's list. See the Appendix I)

The second type meant granting the income of a single holding. A paddy land of one *amunum* and ten *kuruni*, held by Don Pauluge Philippu of Mapitigama had been classified as Company land subject to *ande* which was granted to the *Mudaliyār* of Hewagam *kōrale* Don Louis (...) ³¹⁹. This type of grant was not structurally different from the first because effectively in both cases the share of the income of a holding of a tenant-cultivator was transferred to the grantee.

The third type differed from the first two in the sense that both the *accommodessan* grantee and the tenant were the same person. There were thirteen such holdings in Mapitigama (Hina/ Gangaboda). The situation of two holdings of paddy-fields of Imbulange Battan *nainde* (PLH number forty-one) was quite important. These two holdings, classified as *lascarin malapālu*, were held by the tenant, himself a *lascarin*, for his service. In effect, in this type of grant the incumbent tenant was exempted from the tax due the 'lord of the land'. This becomes clear from the details of some other holdings. Six holdings of paddy-fields of Mapitigama Pedia, PLH number sixty-one of the same village, were classified as *dienstbaar paravēni*. There was however more information added to them. This is the full description. 'The service *paravēni*, free of tax for his service.' He owns more thirty-two *kurunis* than he is entitled to as *accommodessan*. Therefore from now on he has to pay *otu* to the Company for the excessive holdings". From Schreuder's list of *accommodessan* rights of each Company servant, it becomes clear that what Mapitigama Pedia held free of tax was his *accommodessan* entitlement. The total amount of the five holdings was one *amunam* and thirty-two *kurunis*. Mapitigama Pedia was seemingly a *vidāne* of Washers, or *wasser pedia*, as is evident from his name itself.³²⁰ According to Schreuder's list, the *vidāne* of washers was entitled to *ande* of one *amunum* of (paddy) lands. Hence Mapitigama Pedia was released from tax for one *amunum* of paddy lands, while taxes were imposed on the remainder of his lands.³²¹

These three types of *accommodessan* grants found in tombos give us the background against which to evaluate the observations made by Kotelawe and others. Kotelawe clearly indicates that service *paravēni* and *accommodessans* were parallel categories. Moreover, he categorically states that *accommodessans* were lands given to individuals of higher ranks. Neither of these observations seems accurate. It is clear both from our discussion above based on the information in tombos and also from Schreuder's list of *accommodessan* entitlements that these grants were received by all local employees of the VOC irrespective of their rank. Kotelawe's definition may be based on the assumption that only the first and second forms of *accommodessan* grants mentioned above can be considered as such. Even so, the definition cannot be justified as we saw clearly that

lascarins, who could not be ranked as ‘high’, received *accommodessans* in the case of the first type.

As for the other aspect of Kotelawele’s definition, a particular holding could be at the same time a *dienstbaar paravēni* and a source of *accommodessan* grant. The *dienstbaar paravēni* as found in the tombo of Mapitigama can be divided into two types. One type was classified as paying *otu* (“*dienstbaar paravēni geeft otu*”). The other was held free of tax in recognition of the tenant’s service (“*dienstbaar paravēni vrij voor zijn dienst*”). Of 116 holdings described as *dienstbaar paravēni* in Mapitigama, ninety-two were further described as being held by tenants free for their service, while twenty-two already paid *otu* or were ordered to do so in the future. As the service *paravēnis* recorded as being held free of tax for the service of the tenant have not been classified as *accommodessans* and others were subject to the *otu*, it would appear that they formed a different category from *accommodessans per se*. If we observe Mapitigama Pedia’s case closely it would appear that they were not indeed two categories.

Table 4-2: Villages given away as accommodessans

Village	Grantees
Halpita	1 <i>kankānam</i> 22 <i>lascarins</i>
Makandana	1 <i>kankānam</i> 24 <i>lascarins</i>
Nimungama	5 <i>lascarins</i>
Honnantara Moratuwa	Not Given
Maampe	1 <i>kankānam</i> 22 <i>lascarins</i>
Batagettara	2 <i>kankānams</i> 22 <i>lascarins</i>
Deltara	8 <i>kevil</i> Fishers
Kolamunna	2 <i>kankānams</i> 22 <i>lascarins</i>
Wereha	1 <i>ārachchi</i>
Pepiliyana	2 <i>kankānams</i> 22 <i>lascarins</i>
Gangodavila	2 <i>kankānams</i> 24 <i>lascarins</i>

It has already been shown that out of one *amunum* and thirty-two *kurunis* held by Mapitigama Pedia, one *amunum* was held free of tax, and that was his *accommodessan* entitlement. If the *accommodessan* entitlement, which was in effect part of the produce, is left aside, it would make no sense to describe this particular holding as ‘*dienstbaar paravēni*’. Hence it is clear that the holdings of Mapitigama Pedia were so-called by virtue of the attachment of *accommodessan* entitlement to them. There is no reason not to apply the same reasoning to the other ninety-two holdings described as “*dienstbaar paravēni vrij voor zijn dienst*”. The problem then remains of why the other twenty-two holdings also described as *dienstbaar paravēni* were at the same time subject to taxes. This, I suggest, is to be considered separately. In any case these instances cannot be used in support of the

view that *accommodessans* and service *paravēni* were two types because taxing them was not compatible with that view as well. What does this situation suggest? The answer is clear: there was no fundamental difference between *dienstbaar paravēni* and *accommodessans*.

Then how can we account for the prevalence of two terms? Based on information in the tombos a simple distinction can be made. When an *accommodessan* grant was made for a tenant of a land holding in the form of exempting him from the tax attached to the said holding it was considered as a *dienstbaar paravēni*. When the tax of a holding of a tenant due to the 'lord of the land' was transferred to a third party as a part of his remuneration for the service rendered to the Company, that grant was simply called *accommodessans*. While the term *dienstbaar paravēni* refers to the holding as a whole, the term *accommodessan* refers, at least in theory, only to the part of the produce associated with the grant. When, for example, *mabamudaliyār* was entitled to twenty *amunums* of *ande* (see Appendix I) it meant, in effect, that he was given the right to receive half of the produce of twenty *ammunams* of paddy lands, which was the due for the 'lord of the land'.³²²

It is already clear that the difference in the social-group-composition between the holders of service *paravēni* lands and the receivers of *accommodessan* grants cannot be seen as a distinction between 'low' and 'high', as proposed by Kotelawele. I suggest as an alternative explanation that the distinction is to be understood in terms of the relative engagement in cultivation of land by each grantee. If we go back to the earlier discussion on the granting of the revenue of a whole village, the majority of the receivers of those grants were *lascarins*. The case of Deltara, granted for eight *keulo* or fishers, is also noteworthy (see also table 4-2). Some of the *lascarins* who received those grants served the governor (*lasarin van de guarde*). They usually resided within the fortified city of Colombo, which suggests that their service was full time. In such circumstances it is easy to assume that they did not take part in cultivation. That fishers did not till the soil is quite understandable.

When the grantee of the *accommodessan* was a cultivator or when his service was not full-time, the situation would be different. A number of holdings classified as "*dienstbaar paravēni vrij voor zijn dienst*" were held by *lascarins*. Seventeen *lascarins* and two *kankānams* of *lascarins* were recorded under Mapitigama. Out of these nineteen two *kankānams* and nine *lascarins* enjoyed *dienstbaar paravēni* free of tax for their service.³²³ Thus, while some *lascarins* and their *kankānams* received *accommodessans* in the form of income from certain lands, others received them, in effect, in the form of tax immunity. At least one explanation for the difference would be their relative engagement in tilling the soil. As those *lascarins* who served the governor would have resided in the vicinity of his residence, and therefore might not have been cultivators, they received a direct income from the lands that others cultivated. But other *lascarins* and their *kankānams*, who had a hand in the plough, received tax exemptions for the lands they cultivated. This may however be only one explanation; there may have been other reasons, too.

Thus in view of the foregoing discussion, what we see in the nomenclature of *accommodessans* and *dienstbaar paravēni* was not two types of land, but two forms of *accommodessan* grant.

It is useful to look at another element of Kotelawele's definition of the difference between *accommodessans* and service *paravēni*: that the latter was heritable and the former was not. Ostensibly, this seems to have been the case not only in terms of our data from tombos but also in terms of Schreuder's definition of service *paravēni* cited at the beginning of this section. A closer look at the situation, however, would show that this difference was not of much significance for the functioning of the system. In effect, what happened in both forms of *accommodessan* grants was the transfer of the 'lord of the land's' share of a cultivated holding to a Company servant. When the tenant-cultivator was the grantee at the same time, he was allowed to retain the share of the 'lord of the land' as his

accommodessan entitlement. What was heritable in fact was not the *accommodessan* grant attached to the particular holding but the holding itself. The *accommodessan* right was heritable subject only to the continuation of the service that was associated with it by the heir. For example, when Mapitigama Pedia (PLH number sixty-one of Mapitigama) held five *pangu* consisting of one *amunum* and thirty-two *kuruni*, he was given tax immunity for the one *amunum* on account of his *accommodessan* entitlement, whereas for the other thirty-two *kuruni* he had to pay *otu*. When it came to the inheritance, his heirs could inherit the one *amunum* and thirty-two *kuruni*, provided they performed the service attached to the one *amunum*. This is not different from a hypothetical situation in which, for example, a *mudaliyār*'s *accommodessan* right would be retained in the same family if one of his heirs replaced the post on the latter's death, which was often the case. It is therefore evident that in terms of the structural logic of the system of *accommodessan* grant there was no fundamental difference between the two in terms of the heritable character of grants. The confusion was caused only by technicalities in the system, particularly when the tenant-cultivator and the *accommodessan* grantee happened to be the same person.

From the practical point of view of the VOC, there was an important reason to distinguish the two forms of grants. Company officials were extremely suspicious of indigenous chiefs who, in their view, misused grants. Van Imhoff clearly articulated this attitude towards the chiefs: "Besides it is not so much of these poor people that I am speaking, but rather of the large number of chiefs who have possessed themselves in various cunning ways of so much of the revenue that they receive more than the Company itself, and I think that if they would share equally with the Company which would be only fair, the latter would still be in a good position".³²⁴

In contrast to the importance that Kotalawele and others attribute to the dichotomy of *accommodessan/paravēni*, I would like to propose an alternative dichotomy: *paravēni* lands/ Company lands. It was indeed this distinction that the Company officials were keen to make. The fundamental problem that tombo commissioners wanted to solve in respect of each land holding was whether it was legitimately and provably inherited by the incumbent holder or whether it belonged to the category "*sCompagnie grond*" (the Company land). If tombo commissioners were not satisfied with a tenant's claim that a particular holding was a *paravēni*, they would declare it Company land.³²⁵ A large number of holdings were declared 'Company lands' in this manner. This was a very important issue because the distinction made a big difference in terms of how the VOC taxed the holding. I propose that the roots of this problem have to be found in the manner in which the Company employed its right as sovereign of the lands, a right based on the concept of the *bhupati*.

4.7 The theory and practice of the concept of *bhupati*

The concept of 'the lord of the land', which held that the sovereign power was overlord for all the lands of the country, was pivotal in the land policy of the VOC administration. The Company maintained that this theory was in agreement with the age-old tradition of the country. Hence, the Company's land policy and the way in which it was implemented were largely dependent on how it interpreted this theory. There is however significant controversy in the modern historiography over how this concept was practiced under pre-colonial kings. Thus, before going to look at the way in which the concept was put into practice by the Company, it would be useful to review the controversy and try to disentangle certain problematic issues.

The concept of *bhupati* is pivotal to understanding the land tenure system not only in Sri Lanka but throughout pre-colonial South Asia. There are a number of issues involved in coming to terms with the way in which this theory functioned as a decisive factor in the land tenure system. To begin, we must clarify certain linguistic issues. The usual way

of translating *bhupati* is 'the lord of the land'. The term used in VOC documents was '*heer van den lande*'.³²⁶ Referring to the land ownership in mediaeval India, R.S. Sharma translates the term '*bhumidab*', a title used for the king, as 'giver of land'.³²⁷ The term '*bhupati*' also signifies that the king is the possessor of the earth, which is somewhat broader in meaning than the land. It includes, indeed, not just possession but authority over the land, which was, in practice, the main ideological justification for claiming part of the produce of the cultivated lands.

The conceptual issue at stake has to do with the difference between the meanings of the term derived from its etymological and semantic evolution and perhaps by some metaphysical origins linked with it, and the meanings applicable when the term was converted into a set of specific concrete practices, particularly in a context where various interpretations for the term prevailed. It is possible therefore to see a gap between terms such as '*bhupati*' or '*bhupala*' as found in the 'classical Pan-Indian' tradition, particularly in classical texts, and the way in which they were employed by individual kings vis-à-vis his subjects. The problems concerning these terms in modern scholarly discourses are partly due to the insufficient attention paid to the fundamental difference between the 'theory' and the 'practice', so to speak. The following formulation by M.U. de Silva can be cited as a fine example of the failure to put the issue in proper perspective: "However, it is evident that there was no concept of exclusive right over land. What existed were limited rights over certain lands and a network of obligation based on land".³²⁸ It is fairly clear that no distinction is made in this formulation between the 'concept' itself and its actual practice. In fact, it tends to define the content of the term which was impregnated with certain metaphysical origins and semantic evolutions in terms of *some of its* concrete manifestations. Some uses are therefore privileged over others. In other words, by implication it suggests that the colonial usage of the term was a deviation, while the pre-colonial usage coincided with its 'proper' and, therefore, 'original' meaning. In my view, this is not the correct way to understand an ideological claim enveloped in a mythical notion.

The problem indeed emerged from the colonial usage of the notion.³²⁹ The most important issue raised in the Sri Lankan discourse of the problem was whether or not this claim of pre-colonial kings represented reality. According to conventional wisdom, the title of '*bupathi*' preferred by indigenous kings, suggests nothing less than that the king possessed the 'supreme disposal of land'.³³⁰ Codrington is a strong exponent of this view. He gives a remarkable account as to the historical evolution of the concept.³³¹ This has indeed been taken for granted by many scholars.³³² Tikiri Abeysinghe, writing about the land tenure under Portuguese rule, remarks:

The central fact was that the king was the *bhupati*, the lord of the land. He had absolute control over the manner of its disposal. He reserved a portion of it for his own use, the villages so reserved being known as *gabada gam* i.e. village of royal storehouse. He also set apart some villages for the maintenance of temples or other places of worship: these were called *vihara* or *devala gam*. Yet other cultivable lands were allotted to royal officials in return for service to the state.³³³

It is absolutely undeniable that this notion existed and played a major role at the time of the indigenous kings. It is also clear that that this was popularly known, which is arguably why Knox had no hesitation in claiming "The Country being wholly His, the King farms out his Land, not for Money, but Service".³³⁴ However, this conventional wisdom about the notion of the 'Overlordship' of the king over land has been subject to strong criticism, the most articulate being that of W.I. Siriweera.

He does not deny the existence of the notion, but argues that it did not preclude individuals from owning lands, while the king could claim a share of its produce in the form of a tax or other means. Indeed, Siriweera has given a substantial explanation of the

way in which the notion functioned under the indigenous kings, which, as he himself stated clearly, hitherto remained unexplained or rather misinterpreted.

Following a detailed consideration of various terms and, particularly, titles used by kings³³⁵ in the sources which had readily been evoked by many authorities prior to him to justify their case, he comes to the following conclusion:

Hence, it would appear that these phrases too do not imply the king's ownership of lands or his economic rights to land in his kingdom but indicate only that the legal basis of the authority of the king and his political rights rested on the belief of his regular descent from the line of previous lawful kings. In other words, these stereotyped phrases were used in the context of a king's ascending the throne by right of succession; they have little to do with the king's ownership of lands.³³⁶

The problem however with Siriweera's definition is that he is trying to resolve the issue of whether the notion of 'the lord of the land' prevented 'individuals' and/or other elements outside the monarchy from owning lands with the full right of alienating them, for which he gives a very clear answer: private ownership prevailed with full right to alienate. Siriweera's explanation has two weaknesses. On the one hand he does not attempt to define the 'notion of private ownership' as it existed in the pre-colonial context in order to show that the existence of private lands ran against the possible implications of the concept of the 'king's overlordship' over lands as held by authorities such as Codrington, Ariyapala and Abeysinghe. On the other hand he does not provide evidence about where the notion of '*bhupati*' has been in conflict with the existence of 'private lands'. He has indeed shown that kings bought lands from private owners in order to grant them for someone else. What may have happened here is that the king took for granted the existence of those 'private lands' and found that they were *not* incompatible with his claim for the status of *bhupati*. It is highly unlikely that any of the authorities whom Siriweera exposes to thorough scrutiny would have denied the existence of 'private lands'. Indeed, what they have shown is exactly what Siriweera ultimately proved.

I suggest here that the concept of *bhupati* and comparable terms represented some aspects of the ruling ideology by which the legitimacy of the ruler was established vis-à-vis the ruled. When a particular concrete reality, in this case land tenure in pre-colonial times, is assessed against a particular ideological claim of a group, in this case the ideology of *bhupati* by the pre-colonial ruling elite headed by kings, it is impossible to conceive the concrete reality as a one-to-one embodiment of the ideological claim itself, because the reality involves the conflicting interests of many groups. Hence, the way in which the ideology functioned has to be seen as a mode of compromise brought about by the articulation of various claims. The instance that Siriweera cites, by which the king bought lands from 'private owners' to grant them to others is a clear example of such a compromise. Thus, a set of ideological claims could be used in a number of ways, depending on the situation. What is important therefore is to look at how the colonial powers, or the VOC in particular, put this ideological claim into practice.

I propose that the VOC put the ideology of *bhupati* (or *heer van de lande*) into practice in three ways. In the first place, it claimed a share—in-kind, in-money or in-labour—of the peasant production. In the second place, the VOC functioned as sole proprietor of lands which another person could not claim with sufficient proof. It was in this manner that tombo commissioners declared certain holdings which their tenants claimed as their inherited lands. In the third place, the Company claimed certain resources from the land, cinnamon and elephant being two fine examples. In collecting cinnamon, for example, the Company crossed the frontier between legitimate 'private lands' and 'Company lands' for cinnamon, even when grown on 'private lands', was considered the property of the Company.

Out of these three modes the first and the third were apparently in line with pre-colonial practice, though the demand for the surplus was generally higher under the colonial powers. There was however a significant innovation in the case of the second mode. In this case, it seems that the VOC functioned like any other private landowner, although this may not have been an innovation by itself. The case that Siriweera cites, in which the king bought a piece of land from a private owner, would be an example. K.M. de Silva, indeed, used the term 'land owner' to indicate the king's authority over lands. He claims that "the Kotte kings were the biggest 'landowners' in the country" by virtue of their possessing extensive numbers of villages as *gabadāgam*.³³⁷ In my view, this formulation of kings as 'landowners' is conceptually inaccurate, at least if we take a modern concept of land ownership as our point of departure. This formulation becomes specifically problematic when we try to make a distinction between the pre-colonial rulers and a colonial power in using the theory of *bhūpati* in controlling lands.

The fact that the VOC claimed a right to all the lands not legitimately owned by the subjects may not be an innovation, but the way in which this claim was exercised had several innovative features. First, the Company had extremely effective ways of measuring the land, including surveying³³⁸, mapping³³⁹ and registering³⁴⁰ lands. Moreover, strict judicial processes were established to look into the matters pertaining to lands.³⁴¹ By these means, a sort of permanent and strictly observed demarcation was maintained between the Company lands and legitimate private lands. The amount of land that reverted to the Company in the absence of sufficient proof of ownership by anyone else, and consequent tax revisions on them in the process of tombo compilation was significant. The graph 3-1 (in page 63) shows the impact of this practice on the paddy land holders in three villages, namely Ogodapola, Kahambilihena and Gorakadeniya (Hina/ Māda), classified as the Ogodapola formation. It shows that the percentage of the harvest that could be retained by the tenant after paying taxes had dropped drastically in many cases following the tax revisions in the tombo compilation. In Mapitigama, fifty-five holdings out of total of 479 were declared 'Company lands' against the claims of the tenant. Thirty-six of them were claimed by the tenant as *paravēni* lands, but the claims were invalidated by the commissioners. These fifty-five holdings were in addition to the 209 holdings which were declared right away as Company lands. A similar consequence could be seen in the case of chenas. Quite contrary to the probable pre-colonial situation, government permission was required to cut chenas. This practice was legally possible in view of the theory that those lands belonged to the 'lord of the land'.³⁴²

Second, the VOC used these so-called 'Company lands' to start plantations on its own initiative. By this means, it became not only a 'land owner' but also a 'planter'. The case of cinnamon plantations was remarkable. As shown in chapter three, by far the biggest owner of cinnamon plantations was the Company. Apart from cinnamon, the Company had many other plantations with various crops. It is not possible to find a pre-colonial counterpart to this phenomenon, at least on a significant scale. *Gabadāgam* that the king retained for the use of the royal storehouse cannot be seen as a comparable practice. Indeed, the '*dispense dorpen*' retained by the governors and other high officials of the VOC was the colonial counterpart of *gabadāgam*. Thus this practice of putting the so-called Company lands into productive use on its own initiative can be seen as an innovative exercise of the theory of the 'lord of the land'.

Third, the VOC started a land market with the enormous amount of lands it held as 'Company lands'. It seems that this was quite a widespread practice. There were twenty-nine holdings in Mapitigama which were classified as purchased lands.³⁴³ All of them were probably purchased from the Company, the majority in 1713. In some cases, it was especially mentioned that they were bought at an auction (*vendutie*) held that year.

Moreover, a number of files in the Company archives classified as '*gifte boeken*' record numerous cases in which so-called Company lands were sold.

In the context of the foregoing account I would argue that it is not conceptually correct to say that the Company abused the theory of *bhupati* to suit its interests, as M.U. de Silva implicitly suggests. What is more correct to say is that the Company exercised the same theory in a different different than the pre-colonial kings. It took a more aggressive form as the interests of the Company were much wider than those of pre-colonial kings and the means that the VOC had at its disposal were far more effective than those of its pre-colonial counterparts.

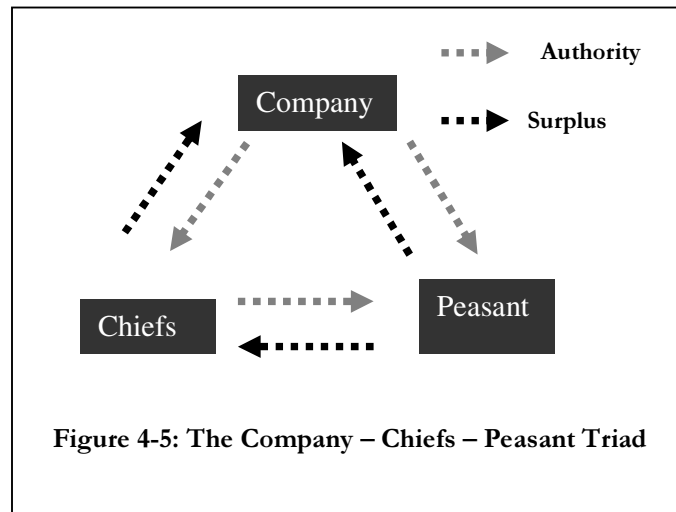
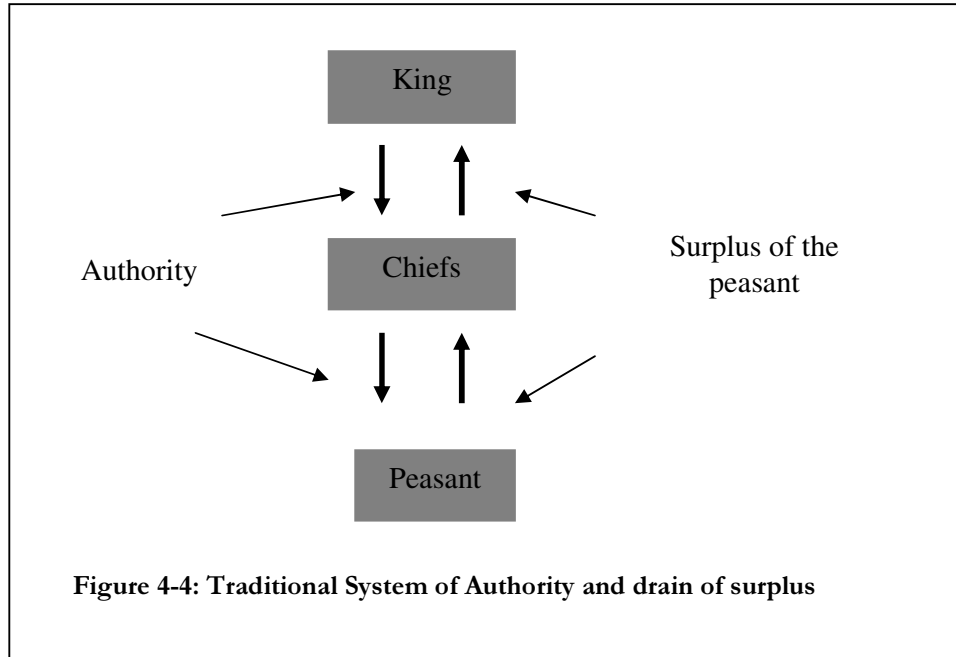
4.8 Summary of structural changes that occurred in traditional land tenure under the Dutch administration

The most far-reaching and structurally significant development during the period under review was the changing position of the single holding and the emergence of the Principal Land Holder. These two elements replaced four elements in the traditional pre-colonial structure of the land tenure. The single holding replaced the *gama* and *panguwa*, while the PLH replaced the *gamladdā* and the *pangukārayā*.

As the *gama* was the main unit of land grants of the king, it had a central function in the extraction of peasant's surplus. This was further enhanced by the pivotal role played by the *gamladdā*. Apart from the importance of the *gamladdā* as a central agent of the structure of the land tenure, he also had socio-political importance. Those who received villages were mostly chiefs and religious institutions, both of whom had great influence over the peasant. Hence, the *gamladdā* could wield much power over the *gama* and its residents. Not only did the *gamladdā* have access to the unpaid labour of the cultivators of *pangu* of the *gama* to get the *muttettuwa* cultivated for his sole consumption, but he could also mobilize the labour of the residents of the *gama*, legitimately or illegitimately, for his other needs by virtue of his socio-political power. Against this background, the function of the *gama* as a mediating unit of the land tenure and the mobilization of peasant's surplus had a great socio-economic significance.

Yet, in tombos, the *gama* (village) was of little more than administrative importance. Even when certain villages were subjected to grants, the method of executing such grants differed from the pre-colonial system of village grant. What happened in those cases was indeed allowing a person or a group of persons to receive the part of the produce from single holdings, which was the right of the 'lord of the land'. Here too, the single holding was more important than the *gama*. Even when a village was granted to a person or a group of persons, the *accommodesan* grantees were different from the pre-colonial *gamladdā* in that they were not necessarily chiefs or socially and politically powerful groups; nor could they claim high social and political status by virtue of these grants. The most far-reaching outcome of this situation was the de-coupling of the land tenure system from the traditional system of authority.

Figure 4-4 shows the structural relationship between the traditional system of authority and the drainage of the peasant's surplus. At the apex of the hierarchical edifice, the king exercised his power over the peasant through the chiefs. Religious institutions such as Buddhist monasteries (*vihāra*) or temples of deities (*devāla*) could also occupy this intermediary position between the peasants and the king. This hierarchical structure of authority in turn facilitated the upward movement of surplus from the peasant to the king, giving those intermediaries *en route* a part of it. This structure of authority was linked to the moving surplus by the dominant model of land tenure based on the *bhupatiyā* - *gamladdā* - *pangukārayā* relationship.



In our period we see a fundamental de-coupling of the system of traditional authority and land tenure, brought about by the emergence of the 'single holding' (*panguwa*) as the basic unit of land tenure. The way in which the *gama* and *gamladdā* functioned under the pre-colonial structure vanished. The disappearance of *muttettuwa* lands, an essential part of a *gama* under the traditional structure, was quite crucial in this development. Even in villages which governors and other high officials of the Company retained for their own needs, a sort of echo of the *gabadāgam* of pre-colonial kings, no *muttettuwa* lands were to be found. The *muttettuwa* was the element of the traditional structure which formally linked the *pangukārayā* to the *gamladdā*. With its disappearance, the formal relationship between the two parties was severed. The position of each single holding was separately and distinctly defined, as a result of which a direct relationship was established between

each holder of a single holding and the 'lord of the land', who could claim a share of the holding's produce or part of the labour of the cultivator of the same.

Unlike the *pangukārayā* of the traditional system, who was functionally the cultivator, the tenant of a single holding was not necessarily a cultivator but a legal owner. The legal bond now was between the tenant of the single holding and the 'lord of the land'--in this case the Company. The right of the 'lord of the land' (the tax or labour rent) could be transferred to a third party as it wishes, with no alteration to the structure. One of the most important outcomes of this situation was that both a chief of the top rank and an ordinary peasant could become legal owners with equal rights, at least in theory, to the land they held. Thus the basic network of relations embodied in the land tenure was detached from the traditional system of authority.

However the traditional system of authority was not broken. It remained unchanged as depicted in figure 4-4. The chiefs remained the main power holders at the local level and it was mainly through them that the Company established its authority over the indigenous people. Moreover, the distribution of traditional authority continued to facilitate the drain of surplus from the peasant to the Company. Although there were attempts to bypass the chiefs' authority, they were not strong enough to completely 'disarm' them. Though the chiefs were formally deprived of the position that they held in the traditional structure of land tenure, as discussed in chapters three and five, they were able to devise a new set of relations which helped them maintain their grip over the land and their cultivators. What was important however is that the role of the chiefs was disassociated from the basic structure of the land tenure.

The new model of land tenure that resulted from the changes discussed above was somewhat similar to the pre-colonial model of the theory of the land tenure represented in figure 4-1. As 'lord of the land' the VOC exercised equal control over all the Principal Land Holders, irrespective of their social or ritual status. But a difference can be seen concerning the process of surplus extraction. This is represented in the triangular model of figure 4-5. This model is triangular for two reasons. On the one hand the conflict of interests between the Company and the chiefs became self-evident in the basic structure of the land tenure. By relegating the chief to a position of ordinary Principal Land Holder with a status comparable to that of any other tenant-cultivator, he was deprived of the exclusive position as the *gamladdā* which he held in the pre-colonial model. Thus, the chief was structurally equal to any other ordinary PLH. On the other hand, there was also a structural difference between a chief as a non-cultivating land holder and other cultivating holders. Chiefs could muster the labour of the peasant, including tenant-cultivator PLHs, to cultivate their holdings. Thus, the whole edifice was built upon the conflicting interests of three agents, namely, the Company, chiefs and the peasants. While this conflict of interests continued to exist, age-old structure of authority and the drain of surplus remained intact. The Company exercised its authority over both the chief and the peasant. But chiefs could also exercise their authority over the peasant. The Company could access the surplus of the peasant both directly and by obtaining the service of the chiefs and part of their income, through taxing their land. The latter, in turn, earned what they have to pay to the Company by extracting the labour of the peasant. The characteristic feature of this triangular relationship therefore was the conflicting nature of the three main agents.

This situation differed sharply from the traditional pre-colonial structure, in which the conflicting interests were structurally solved by combining the land tenure with the traditional authority. Under the new structure the conflicts remained unsolved and other measures had to be taken. Judicial process, of which the *landraad* was the main instrument, was the most important means in this connection, although it was not entirely successful. We see the expression of its failure in various forms: occasional

insurgencies by the peasant, sometimes with the help of chiefs; complaints against the chiefs by the peasants; and administrative measures by the Company to enhance its grip over lands at the expense of other two parties, such as land surveys and issuing *plakkeaten*. The conflict was never resolved, and the consolidation of colonial rule took place hand in hand with it.

Chapter Three: The emergence of a new class formation and the rise of a landowning class

5.1 Introduction

We have already seen that the social and economic situation of the inland region of the southwestern wet-zone region had been affected strongly in a number of ways by the colonial presence. Chapters three and four reviewed new developments in the production process, labour relations and land tenure. These changes were formidable because they brought about a transformation in the existing property relations and class differentiations. This chapter, therefore, will address two different but closely related aspects of class formation in the inland region: the emergence of a new class structure replacing the pre-colonial one, and the consequent rise of a land-owning class. Changes in the class structure are analysed in relation to the remnants of the pre-colonial class structure. It may seem a bit far-fetched to talk about remnants of a pre-colonial structure in a region that had already been under colonial control for nearly two centuries. Yet even in the middle of the eighteenth century the impact of colonial intervention was not uniform in the region. Traces of the pre-colonial structures were still discernible, at least in a dying form. Thus it may be possible to distinguish changing aspects while comparing different areas.

This discussion will compare and analyse the class structures of two socio-economically distinct regional units. The class structure of three villages of the Ogodapola formation represents remnants of the pre-colonial class formation while that of Mapitigama shows the signs of an emerging class formation in response to colonial socio-economic interventions.

5.2 Prelude to the new class differentiation

In the period under review we can identify two fundamental features of class formation. First is the emergence of an inequity of access to lands among the cultivators and the consequent appearance of landlessness among some members of the peasant community as lands were accumulated by others within this same community. The second feature is the rise of a large-scale land-owning class. A number of social groups formed the new land-owning class. Indigenous chiefs of the upper echelons who collaborated with the colonial powers were able to own lands on a large scale and by using the privileges they acquired under the colonial regime they could recruit mostly unpaid peasant labour to bring those lands under cultivation. This land-owning class was also made up of *chettys*, *burghers* and some non-aristocratic elements of the traditional social order who also benefited from new opportunities for the accumulation of wealth and upward social mobility. These two features were distinct from the main features of traditional class structure in the period immediately preceding the colonial intervention.

The main feature of the traditional class differentiation was the hierarchical bifurcation between the peasant cultivator and the ruling class which acquired his surplus in kind, in labour or in money.³⁴⁴ Though the relationship between the ruling class and the peasant-cultivator resembled in some respects the one which came into existence between the large landowners and the peasant cultivator in the colonial period, there was a fundamental difference between the two systems. Pre-colonial kings and the regional overlords who were occasionally conquered by the former were not landowners in the ordinary sense of the term. They exercised their authority over the peasant by virtue of their ritual status among many other special conditions.

Kings legitimized their authority over the peasantry and regional overlords on basis of a traditional ruling ideology which was reproduced by various mechanisms. This ruling

ideology established a feudal relationship between kings and regional overlords as well as between these two upper groups and the peasant. It was indeed not only those who are identified in the dominant historiography as 'kings' who had the ability to articulate this ruling ideology; the overlords who were occasionally brought under control by the 'kings' were also able to do so. It was in fact one of these 'regional overlords' who overpowered others and made himself a king. In such a situation a 'lord-vassal' type of contract was established between the two parties. When the power of the 'king' declined, the contract was weakened and the regional lords became increasingly independent. The relationship between the lord and the peasant was structurally the same as that between the king and the peasant. In other words kings and lords belonged to one social category.

Thus, the feudal relationship between the lord and the peasant created a drain of the peasant's surplus to the lord by non-economic means. There was also an intermediate layer of chiefs and village headmen who facilitated the process of surplus extraction. These intermediaries too were able to enjoy part of the surplus. The basis of the pre-colonial class structure was therefore this network of feudal relations.

We encounter a somewhat different reality in what is known in the dominant historiography as the '*rajarata* civilisation', but which I would like to term '*rajarata* social formation'. This social formation existed several centuries prior to the pre-colonial social formations just described. A comparison between these pre-colonial social formations and the '*rajarata* social formation' is imperative because of the historical connection between the two.

There exists some information about the existence of a social class in the *rajarata* social formation which had the ability to accumulate lands. Siriweera has presented some evidence about well-to-do members of this class who were able to accumulate lands.³⁴⁵ Some researchers have drawn our attention to a group known as '*kulina*'.³⁴⁶ It is probable that those who had the ability to accumulate lands, as shown by Siriweera, were these *kulinas*, a term which literally means 'those who possess high social status'.³⁴⁷

It is possible to argue that the social-production relations that entailed the existence of these social segments were different from the feudal relation between the lords and the peasant in the pre-colonial social formations. The economy of the *rajarata* social formation was based largely on large and centralised irrigation works. The state had a major function in the upkeep of these irrigation networks for which large numbers of functionaries were needed. The economic and political power of the upper classes derived from their ability to control these irrigation works which enabled them to acquire part of the revenue of cultivated lands. The main form of the surplus extraction in *rajarata* was the grain-tax, in contrast to the rent-in-labour (*rajakāriya*) which was dominant in the Kotte and Kandyan kingdoms. There is also evidence that some individuals owned irrigation tanks (*wāw* or singular *wāva*). Thus, contrary to typical feudal lords of the pre-colonial period, the upper class in the *rajarata* social formations controlled a significant part of the forces of production, namely the irrigation network, not to mention land.

Side-by-side with the feudal relationship between lords and peasants, caste distinctions also played a significant role in the pre-colonial class formation. In comparison with the other main agricultural castes such as *padu* and *hakuru*, the dominant *goyigama* caste had the upper hand in accessing better cultivable lands.³⁴⁸ This unequal opportunity apparently caused significant social differentiation at the village level. The dominant ritual status enjoyed by the *goyigama* caste over the other two was a manifestation of this situation and, also, a way of reproducing social differentiation.

Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that the conditions for accumulating significant wealth were limited for the powerful groups at the village level, because the low level of productivity generated low surplus (as was discussed in chapter 3). And because the daily

needs of the ordinary peasant were quite low, there was no enthusiasm for increasing production.

In addition, the ruling ideology imposed restrictions on any attempt at accumulation. There was no ritual sanction for upward social mobility either. Many aspects of people's lives were fixed and violations were not permitted. The notion that everything that the earth gave belonged to the king also discouraged any drive for self improvement. Thus, there was no ideological support for any move towards wealth accumulation.³⁴⁹ In a later stage, when western colonial administrators tried to induce people to accumulate wealth and get rich, they found that that was not an easy task, especially in areas where the traditional peasant production was dominant. In this context we often run across complaints and disparaging remarks about "the laziness of the people."³⁵⁰

The colonial intervention triggered significant economic, social and ideological forces that caused the breakdown of this pre-colonial ideology and the structure it supported. The formidable changes brought about in the western and southern coastal belt, the centre of the colonial activity, have been discussed by a number of historians.³⁵¹ The pace at which these forces of change penetrated the inland region was slower but nonetheless steady, and the process shook the existing social and economic relations.

The colonial rulers' increasing demand for the surplus of the peasant generated considerable tension in existing social and economic relations. As the amount of surplus demanded from the peasant increased, the mechanisms of surplus extraction were also made more effective.

The process of surplus extraction affected the existing class differentiations in two ways. On the one hand the effects of the rising demand for surplus, either in the form of land revenue or in the form of unpaid (or under-paid) labour (*rājakaṛiṇya*), varied between different groups of the peasantry. Groups such as coolies and *naindes*, which mainly consisted of low caste groups such as *padu* and *bakuru*, were subjected to greater exploitation. The amount of *accommodessan* grants they received for the service they rendered was extremely low (see section 4.6 of the chapter four and the Appendix I). Minor village-level headmen such as *majorāls*, who were also primarily ploughmen, were in a more favourable position. They not only received relatively higher *accommodessan* grants but they also had the ability to accumulate extra lands benefiting from their more privileged position. This was also the case with other groups such as *lascarins*, who were also emerging as petty-landowners. This situation widened the class cleavage at the village level.

On the other hand, intensification of the mechanisms of surplus extraction gave indigenous chiefs new opportunities to both acquire lands and exploit peasants' labour by functioning as intermediaries between the colonial regime and the peasant. There was a proliferation of middle- and lower-level chiefs in the eighteenth century. *Korālas*, *ārachchis*, *saparamādu-appubāmys*, *kankānams* and *vidānes* were more important among them. Although the Company wanted to reduce their authority it was practically impossible.

Tax farming expedited the collection of land revenue and also gave some groups an opportunity to retain part of the revenue for themselves. Most tax-farmers were either indigenous chiefs, Muslims or *chettys*. It is interesting to take note especially of the Muslims and *chettys*, in this context, the small-scale peddlers who linked the peasant with the distant market. This may have given them some economic control over the peasant, which would have been a better qualification for a tax-farmer.³⁵²

There seems to have also been a drive to remove ideological and ritual obstructions to accumulation. The Company persuaded people to be more enterprising and make money as long as the ways and means of doing so were not at the VOC's expense.³⁵³ It has been shown how this policy was practiced in a paradoxical way. For example when some sections of the population showed interest in growing cash crops such as pepper and

coffee, the Company discouraged them with strict price regulations and monopolistic measures.³⁵⁴ Nonetheless, as I have discussed in chapter three, there was a growing tendency among peasants to produce for the market. While the impact of this new economic activity varied in different areas and among different groups it may have also facilitated the emergence of new class differentiations.

For a more precise understanding of the changes in class formation, I now turn to the class structures in two regional formations. I suggest that these two regional formations represented two stages of the structural change. While the Ogodapola formation, which was located in the periphery of the colonial economy, was closer to the pre-colonial class structure, Mapitigama, a village where colonial impact was higher, represented the emerging new class structure.

5.3 Class structure of the 'Ogodapola formation'

Seventeen family units living in the villages of Ogodapola, Kahambilihena and Gorakadeniya, will be analysed in this discussion. Although twenty-one Principal Landholders (PLHs) were recorded in the local tombos, four of them (one in Kahambilihena and three in Ogodapola) were absentee-owners not resident in these villages and therefore they are excluded from the analysis. The total number of residents amounted to 162 persons according to the tomo series of 1760, but declined to 124 persons at the time of the revised tombos of 1771. Table 5-1 classifies 17 families according to their caste identity and the nature of *rājakāriya* they performed for the 'lord of the land', because of the importance of the social composition of the population in this discussion.

There were 113 land holdings whose owners were specified in the three villages. Apart from these there were three holdings classified as *puran* (fallow land). There were also forty-five amunams of chenas, with fifteen for each village. Following the usual practice, the chenas were not recorded on an individual basis; only the village totals were given. Three more gardens were recorded without owners; probably no one owned them. One was a *nilapālu* and the other two were *malapālu*, all three containing only a few jak trees. Among the 113 owner-specified holdings, one was listed as empty land (*ledige grond*), which probably meant that no coconut, jak or areca-nut trees were planted. Thus there were at least 115 holdings with an economic value, of which seventy-two were paddy-fields and forty-three were gardens. The total paddy-lands amounted to twenty-eight amunams and thirty-one kurunis. Gardens were planted with 1489 coconut trees, 655 jak trees and 2167 areca nut trees.

Four absentee owners owned seven holdings consisting of one amunum and seventeen kurunis of paddy-fields, eighty-three coconut trees, fifty-eight jak trees and 310 areca nut trees. Three gardens with no owners mentioned had five, six and twelve jak trees, respectively. Thus the property ownership of residents was as follows: 107 holdings of sixty-nine paddy-fields amounting to twenty-seven amunams and fourteen kurunis, and forty gardens with 1406 coconut trees, 632 jak trees and 1857 areca-nut trees.

As paddy cultivation was the most important production activity, it is useful to start the analysis of the above information with this branch of production. Ownership of paddy-lands has been calculated in several steps in table 5-2. Column two represents the total paddy-land owned by each PLH. The entire yield of the paddy-lands was not retained within the PLH group because part of it went to the 'lord of the land' in the form of tax. Moreover, as the number of members in each PLH group varied significantly, the gross sum of property (i.e. without deducting tax) of a family does not give an accurate picture of the real paddy land ownership of each PLH group. The per capita ownership after deducting tax gives a clearer idea of the net ownership. The last three columns represent the changes in ownership brought about by the tax revision

following the tombo compilation and by demographic changes. Last three columns represent three stages of the ownership affected by these two factors. As tax revisions executed by the tombo compilation brought about significant changes in the share due to the 'lord of the land', it altered the holder's share of the yield a great deal. The changes brought about by demographic fluctuation are also noticeable in the tombos, in which we see a sharp drop in population in the two tombo series of 1760 and 1771.

Table 5-1: Social composition of Ogodapola formation

Village and family	Caste	Rajakariya
Ogo 1	<i>goyigama</i>	<i>majorāl</i> (not the PLH)
Ogo 2	<i>goyigama</i>	<i>lascarin</i>
Ogo 3	<i>goyigama</i>	Half <i>majorāl</i>
Ogo 4	<i>goyigama</i>	Half <i>majorāl</i>
Ogo 5	<i>goyigama</i>	No service
Ogo 6	<i>āchāri</i>	<i>timmerman</i> (carpenter)
Ogo 7	<i>āchāri</i>	Gold smith
Ogo 8	<i>berava</i>	Tom-tom beater
Kaha 1	<i>goyigama</i>	<i>lascarin</i>
Kaha 2	<i>goyigama</i>	Half <i>majorāl</i>
Kaha 3	<i>bakuru</i>	Half <i>majorāl</i>
Kaha 4	<i>bakuru</i>	Not given but enjoy <i>accommodessan</i> grants. Therefore may perform some service
Kaha 5	<i>bakuru</i>	Extraordinary service
Kaha 6	<i>bakuru</i>	Not given
Gora 1	<i>āchāri</i>	<i>timmerman</i> (carpenter)
Gora 2	<i>āchāri</i>	<i>timmerman</i> (carpenter)
Gora 3	<i>āchāri</i>	<i>timmerman</i> (carpenter)

The figures in table 5-2, however, do not tell us of possible variations in the fertility of paddy-lands, although this was also an important factor. The mere size of lands possessed by a single owner did not necessarily represent the real productive capacity of his possessions. As described in chapters two and three, there were significant variations in the yield of paddy-lands. As Colvin R. de Silva points out, the variation was in the range of 1:3 to 1:20, which would make a vast difference between the best lands or the most inferior ones. Based on the discussion of the 'Ogodapola formation' in chapter two, we have an indication of the quality of paddy-lands possessed by the PLHs in these three villages. The concentration pattern of the *bakuru* caste of Kahambilihene suggests that their paddy-lands were of lower quality while the holders of Ogodapola possessed the best lands (see the Map no. 7 'Settlement pattern of Ogodapola formation'). This assumption corresponds remarkably well with the land-owning patterns of the present day.

The second column of table 5-2 shows how easy or difficult it was for individual PLHs to access to their paddy lands. Two extreme situations can be discerned. At one extreme there is the PLH one of Ogodapola while at the other extreme PLHs five, seven and eight have no paddy-lands at all. The PLH six of Kahambilihene possessed very small paddy-lands; the per capita ownership shows a slightly different picture. It shows a somewhat lower degree of disparity. As shown in table 5-3, there was a significant disparity in relation to the per capita ownership. As evident in column four, the drop in the number of members in the PLH group had led to an increase in per capita ownership.

Table 5-2: Ownership of paddy lands in Ogodapola formation (in Kuruni)

Village and family/ PLH unit	Total family ownership	Per capita ownership (1760)	Number of persons in the family (1760-1771)	Per capita ownership before tombo (tax deducted)	Per capita ownership after tombo 1760 (tax deducted)	Per capita ownership after tombo 1771 (tax deducted)
Ogo 1	281.5	9.08	31 - 22	8.6	8.47	11.93
Ogo 2	78	5.2	15 - 19	5.2	4.53	8.5
Ogo 3	59	9.83	6 - 4	7.18	7.18	10.775
Ogo 4	71	10.14	7 - 5	5.0	5.0	9.0
Ogo 5	None	None	5 - 1	None	None	None
Ogo 6	68.5	7.61	9 - 9	7.31	7.18	7.183
Ogo 7	None	None	5 - 4	None	None	None
Ogo 8	None	None	3 - 4	None	None	None
Kaha 1	81	10.12	8 - 7	10.125	10.125	11.57
Kaha 2	87	5.11	17 - 16	4.5	2.5	2.65
Kaha 3	42	7	6 - 5	6.75	4.5	5.4
Kaha 4	38	6.33	6 - 3	5.9	5.9	11.8
Kaha 5	29	4.14	7 - 3	4.14	3.9	9.1
Kaha 6	10	0.17	14 - 7	0.64	0.64	1.28
Gora 1	68	6.18	11 - 8	5.86	5.56	7.65
Gora 2	81.5	9.05	9 - 7	9.05	8.48	10.9
Gora 3	99.5	9.95	10 - 11	9.95	9.25	8.41

Source: tombo

Table 5-3: Distribution pattern of per-capita paddy ownership among 17 PLHs in Ogodapola formation

Ownership range (in <i>kuruni</i>)	Pre-tombo	Post-tombo (1760)	Post-tombo (1771)
More than 10	1	1	5
7.5 to 10	3	3	5
5 to 7.5	7	5	2
2.5 to 5	2	4	1
0 to 2.5	4	4	4

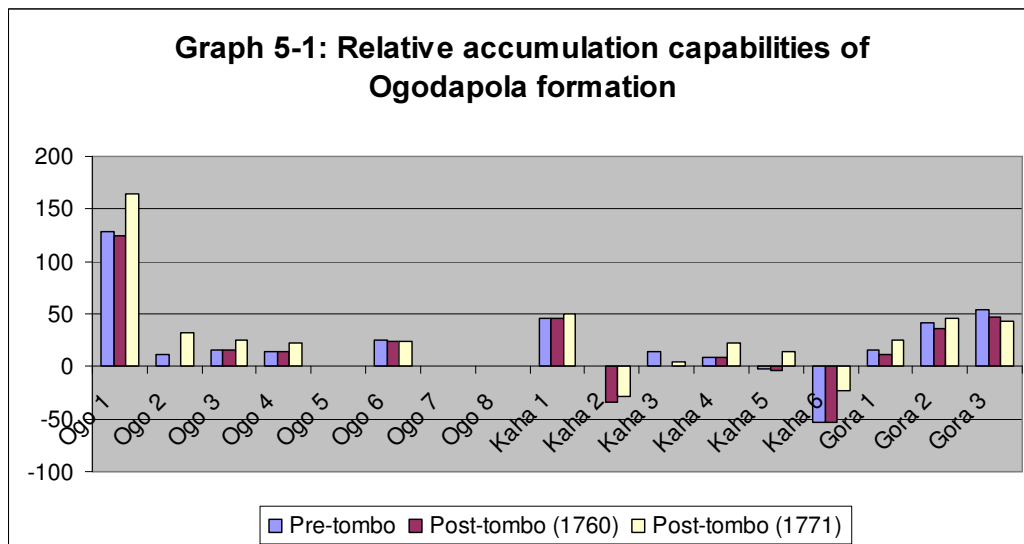
Source: tombo

Evidence of the relative accumulation capability of each landholder is essential if we want to gain a clear picture of class differentiations. We have to go a little further than the per capita ownership in order to account for the relative accumulation capability. If we assume an individual's daily consumption intake to be one measure of paddy (approximately equivalent to a half measure of rice) and estimate that a person needed on average 4.47 kurunis of paddy-lands annually (considering 1:7.5 as the average yield and two cultivating seasons per year), the following observations can be made about the relative accumulation capability.³⁵⁵ Table 5-4 and graph 5-1 show the relative accumulation capability of each PLH. According to the pre-tombo situation, there were five family units living below the subsistence level. Under the post-tombo situation in 1760, this number had risen to six owing to the revision of taxation. It declined again to five by 1771 by virtue of the decrease of population.

Table 5-4: Relative accumulation capabilities of Ogodapola formation (in kununi)

Village family/ unit	Pre-tombo	Post-tombo (1760)	Post-tombo (1771)
Ogo 1	128.08	124.08	164.31
Ogo 2	10.95	0.5	32.24
Ogo 3	16.28	16.28	25.22
Ogo 4	13.71	13.71	22.65
Ogo 5	No paddy		
Ogo 6	25.57	24.42	24.42
Ogo 7	No paddy		
Ogo 8	No paddy		
Kaha 1	45.24	45.24	49.71
Kaha 2	0.51	-33.49	-29.02
Kaha 3	13.68	0.18	4.45
Kaha 4	8.58	8.58	21.99
Kaha 5	-2.29	-3.99	13.89
Kaha 6	-53.58	-53.58	-22.29
Gora 1	15.33	12.03	25.44
Gora 2	41.27	36.12	45.38
Gora 3	54.8	47.85	43.38

Source: tombo



Excluding those who did not possess paddy holdings and those who were below the subsistence/ accumulation line, we may divide the accumulation capability into three categories: high, medium and low. PLH one of Ogodapola was far ahead of others. PLH one of Kahambilihene and PLHs two and three of Gorakadeniya should be considered as those with medium-level accumulation capability, while the other PLHs belong to the low-level category. Fluctuations in accumulation capability occurred according to the relative effect of tax revision and demographic change on each PLH group. Nevertheless, these figures do not show variations of the level of accumulation capability due to the relative fertility of the land. Therefore, based on our speculations of the quality of lands

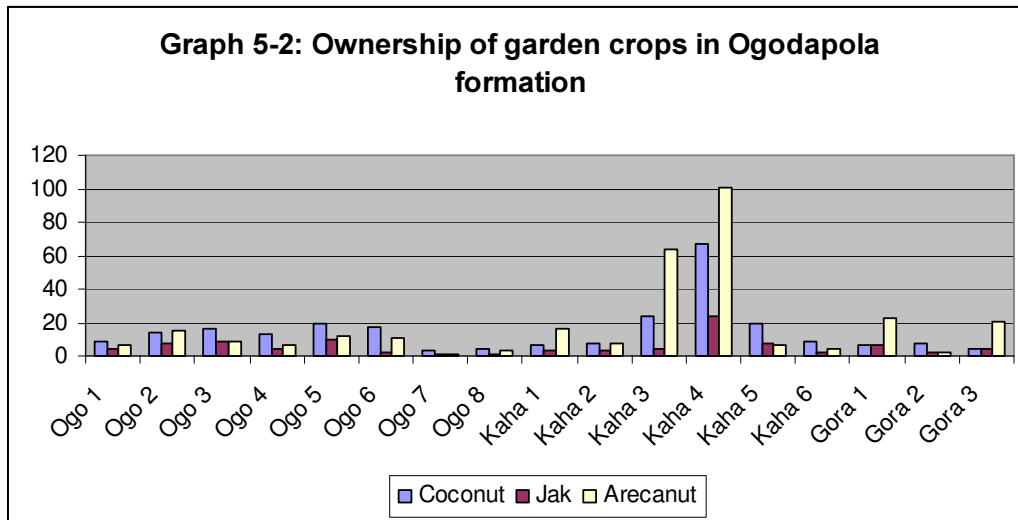
held by each PLH, as I discussed in chapter two, we may put some extra weight to these figures. On that basis, it is possible to suggest that the accumulation capability of the PLH one of Ogodapola must have been higher than the figure given in table 5-4. This may also have applied to the other PLHs in Ogodapola, and, probably to the PLH two of Kahambilihene, whose paddy holdings may have been located in an area of superior fertility.

The following observations can be made on the relationship between the social position of each PLH and his accumulation capability. Caste and the nature of *rājakāriya* were two factors that played a determining role in the relative accumulation capability. The one with the highest accumulation capability was of the *goyigama* caste. The PLH one of Kahambilihene, who had medium-level capability, was of this caste. At the other end, out of the three non-paddy-owning PLHs, two were of non-*goyigama* castes (*āchāri* and *berava* respectively). *Hakuru* PLHs of Kahambilihene also had either a low accumulation capability or remained below the subsistence/ accumulation line. In the case of the non-*goyigama* PLHs with some accumulation capability, their *rājakāriya* positions draw our attention. *Accommodessan* grants helped carpenters of Gorakadeniya and Ogodapola to acquire some accumulation capability. They also helped two of the *hakuru* PLHs in Kahambilihene to remain just above the subsistence/ accumulation line.

Table 5-5: Accumulation capability in garden crops in Ogodapola formation

Village and family/ PLH unit	Coconut trees	Coconut trees/ per capita	Jak trees	Jak trees/ per capita	Arecanut trees	Arecanut trees/ per capita
Ogo 1	195	8.86	92	4.18	140	6.36
Ogo 2	110	13.75	61	7.62	120	15
Ogo 3	64	16	33	8.25	33	8.25
Ogo 4	64	12.8	21	4.2	33	6.6
Ogo 5	20	20	10	10	12	12
Ogo 6	160	17.77	25	2.7	100	11.11
Ogo 7	11	2.75	4	1	4	1
Ogo 8	17	4.25	6	1.5	13	3.25
Kaha 1	47	6.71	20	2.85	110	15.71
Kaha 2	123	7.68	56	3.5	122	7.62
Kaha 3	120	24	23	4.6	320	64
Kaha 4	200	66.66	70	23.33	303	101
Kaha 5	58	19.33	23	7.66	20	6.66
Kaha 6	60	8.57	10	2.14	30	4.28
Gora 1	52	6.5	50	6.25	180	22.5
Gora 2	54	7.71	15	2.14	15	2.14
Gora 3	51	4.63	53	4.81	222	20.18

Source: tombos



When the taxes were revised following tombo compilation, many land holdings which did not hitherto pay taxes were taxed. But the performers of *rājakāriya* were able to free themselves from taxes in view of their *accommodessan* entitlements, allowing them to enjoy the full produce of their lands.

It is useful to look at the accumulation patterns with respect to garden crops, because gardens were emerging as an important branch of production (see table 5-5 and graph 5-2). The highlight of the ownership pattern in the garden crops was the disproportionately high degree of ownership among two *bakuru* PLHs in Kahambilihena. This was a reversal of the paddy-landownership pattern. Tikkuwage Malhonda (PLH four of Kahambilihena) owned a coconut garden of 200 trees, by far the biggest in three villages. The same garden had also 300 areca nut trees and 70 jak trees. Tikkuwage Distia of the same caste (PLH three of Kahambilihena), the brother of Malhonda, owned a garden with 300 areca nut, 50 coconut and 10 jak trees. This contrasts with the relatively small garden crops among the *goyigama* caste. The case of PLH one of Ogodapola is significant. While he owned the most paddy-lands, his share in garden crops was fairly modest.

Based on the above figures, several groups can be identified in terms of their relative economic strength.

Group one includes the PLH one of Ogodapola. This was a large family unit consisting of thirty-one people in 1760 and twenty-two in 1771. This family unit apparently held the highest social and ritual status in the entire Ogodapola formation. It also seems that PLHs three and four of the same village had kin connections with PLH one. The defining characteristic of this group was its high-level of paddy-land ownership. There is an important piece of extra information which points to the social and economic power of the family group of PLH one. It is indicated under PLH nine (an absentee owner of the *padu* caste) that his garden of forty coconut, twenty-six jak and eighty areca nut trees originated as a gift to his great-grandfather by a person named Samaranayaka Rajapaksha Pathirage. It is not clear whether this person is PLH one of Ogodapola, who had the same identical name, because neither the full name of the person nor the date of the grant are mentioned. It is beyond doubt however that the grantor had to have been an ancestor of PLH one unless both are the same person. This information points to two facts pertaining to the kin group of PLH one. First, it had enough access to lands to enable it to give away land as gifts. Second, it may have had access to the labour of the absentee PLH nine. This sort of relationship between higher ranks of the *goyigama* caste

and the *padu* caste was quite natural in the context of the traditional mode of authority, where the former had easy access to the labour of the latter.

Group two included PLH one of Kahambilihena and PLHs two and three of Gorakadeniya, all of whom had significant accumulation capability in paddy-lands but no noticeable accumulation capability in terms of garden crop.

Group three, consisting of Ogodapola PLHs two, three, four and six and Gorakadeniya PLH one had considerable accumulation capability in paddy. Moreover, they had almost equal position in relation to garden crops.

Group four included PLH three and four of the *bakuru* caste of Kahambilihena who were conspicuous for their high degree of ownership in garden crops. PLH four possessed by far the biggest coconut garden in all three villages, with 200 trees. Their access to paddy-lands was not very impressive although they had slight upper-hand over others in the same caste in the village.

Under **Group five** I include several PLHs who do not fit in any of above four categories. There were three PLHs in Ogodapola who had no paddy holdings at all. Paddy holdings of Kahambilihena PLHs two and six were below the subsistence/ accumulation line. The Kahambilihena PLH five could also be included in the same group because his accumulation strength was not so high. Their access to garden crops too was also limited.

The actual economic strength of some PLHs cannot be fully explained on the basis of the information available in tombos, which do not inform us about three possible situations which could have influenced the economic strength of each family. First, the variation in output for different paddy-fields may have been an important factor, and one that probably made a significant difference between PLHs two and six of Kahambilihena in terms of the output of their respective fields. Paddy-fields of PLH one were probably located in areas with rich soil conditions. Second, the economic impact of non-agricultural economic activity that may have been a source of income especially for some caste groups cannot be accounted for. There are five *āchāri* PLHs (one gold-smith and four carpenters) and one *berava* (tom-tom-beater) PLH in Gorakadeniya and Ogodapola. PLH seven of Ogodapola, a gold-smith, and PLH eight of the same village, a tom-tom beater, had no paddy-lands at all. Most probably their sources of income were caste-based occupations. If we also consider that the *bakuru* caste was involved in juggery making, this may have given them also some economic benefit. It is notable in this respect that the paddy-landownership of most of these non-*goyigama* caste PLHs was extremely low.

Third, there was a paddy-field of one amunam in Kahambilihena owned by an absentee-owner. Given the social position of the owner (*Mudaliyār* of Hina *kōrale*) and the distance between Kahambilihena and the village of his residence, Mapitigama (Hina/ Gangaboda), the field should have been cultivated by others. If it was cultivated by the resident of the village there is some possibility that the cultivator retained part of the produce. This may not have been the case if it was cultivated by *rājakāriya* labour, which is a strong possibility.

Based on the above analysis and within the limits of the data available, I conclude the following about the class structure of the Ogodapola formation. There are two main features in the class structure: remnants of a traditional structure and signs of an emerging structure. The traditional structure is characterised by the existence of a local land-owning family with access to better paddy-lands and the ability to accumulate a relatively high proportion of the land, and which also had the ability to extract the labour of other peasants. The rest of the people remained more or less at the subsistence level although significant variations could be seen.

Two main features of the emerging structure can be highlighted. First, there were some groups with growing economic strength. Three PLHs in Gorakadeniya and PLHs

three and four of *bakuru* caste in Kahambilihena could be considered non-traditional social elements with growing accumulation capability. In the case of the latter two, it seems that class differentiation was emerging within the *bakuru* caste itself.

This situation is a sign of a change in the existing class structure resulting from the encounter with colonial intervention. This is indeed an embryonic stage of class formation in the region, which consolidated itself firmly in the late colonial period.

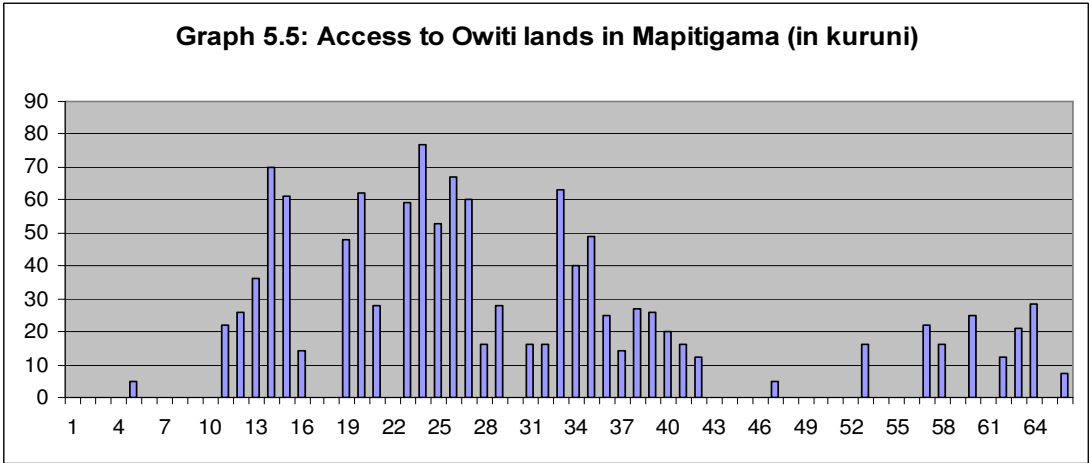
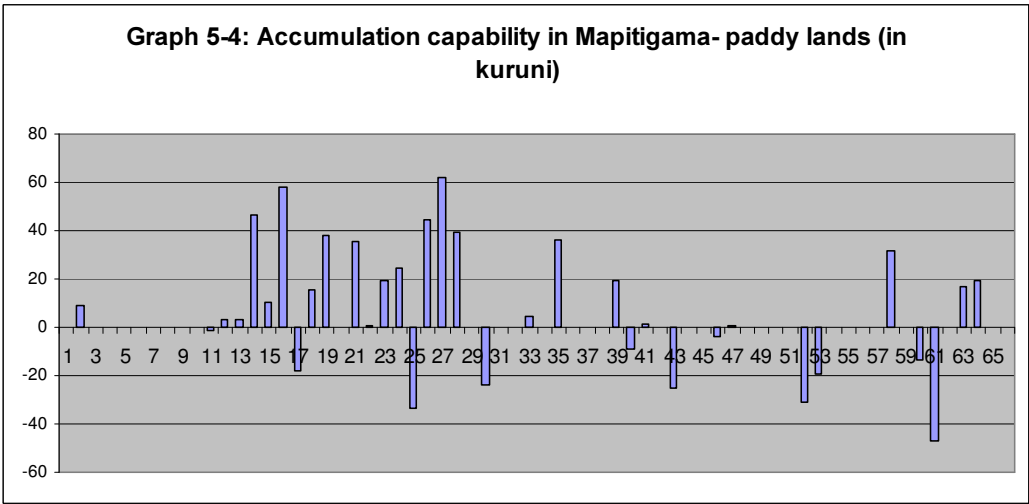
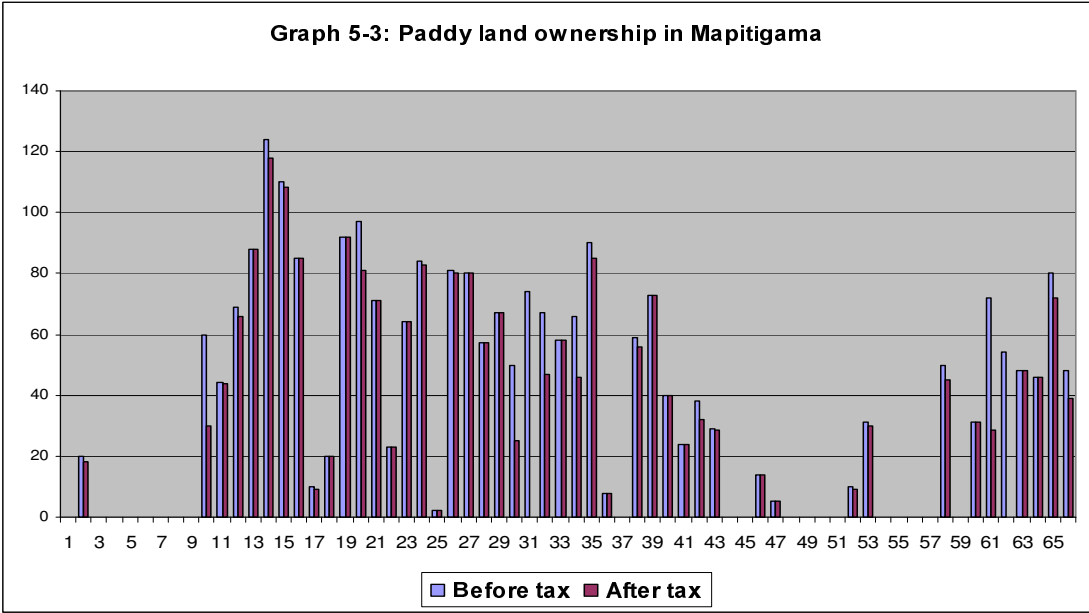
5.4 Class structure of Mapitigama

As is evident from chapter two, Mapitigama was distinct from the villages of Ogodapola formation in a number of ways. It was a large settlement with a fairly big population. The social composition was also quite remarkable, characterised by a number of top and middle rank indigenous chiefs (see table 5-6 see Appendix III). Sixty-six PLHs were recorded under this village, four of whom were absentee owners. Absentee owners are in general not taken into consideration in analysing the class structure.

Access to paddy-lands in this village is more complex when compared with the Ogodapola formation. Graphs 5-3 and 5-5 give an idea of the relative access to wet-paddy-lands and *ōwiti* (meadow)³⁵⁶ lands. From these two graphs, we can clearly identify four separate blocs (1-9; 10-43; 44-59; 60-66). In general, the sequence of recording PLHs in a village represents the hierarchical distribution of social status. This is clearly visible in the record of Mapitigama which begins with high-status groups and ends with low castes. Some exceptional cases may have been caused by technicalities of the registering process. For example, 58 and 65 are of *goyigama* caste.

Two blocs from PLHs 10-43 and 60-66 show relatively better access to both wet-paddy-lands and *ōwiti*. As shown in table 5-6, the bloc of PLHs 11-43 is dominated by low-ranking chiefs, village headmen and *lascarins*.³⁵⁷ The bloc of 60-66 is dominated by lower castes, namely *badabāla*, *radā*, *berava* and *padu*, with two exceptions of the *goyigama* caste (one *kankānam* and one schoolmaster).

Two blocs, 1-9 and 44-59, are in general characterised by low ownership of wet-paddy and *ōwiti* lands. The PLHs in the first bloc were high- and middle-rank indigenous chiefs, while the second bloc consisted exclusively of *naindes*.³⁵⁸ The case of the first bloc is easily explained. Since the top- and middle-level chiefs were not cultivators but those who received part of the surplus, their lack of paddy-lands is understandable. There are however notable exceptions. For example, PLH two (*Kōrāla* of Hina *kōrale*) had paddy-lands. Moreover, many of these chiefs were absentee owners of extensive paddy-lands in many villages. As will be discussed later, these are signs of the metamorphosis of the chiefs into a landowning class. It should also be mentioned that two of these chiefs (PLHs one and seven) were non-residents of Mapitigama.

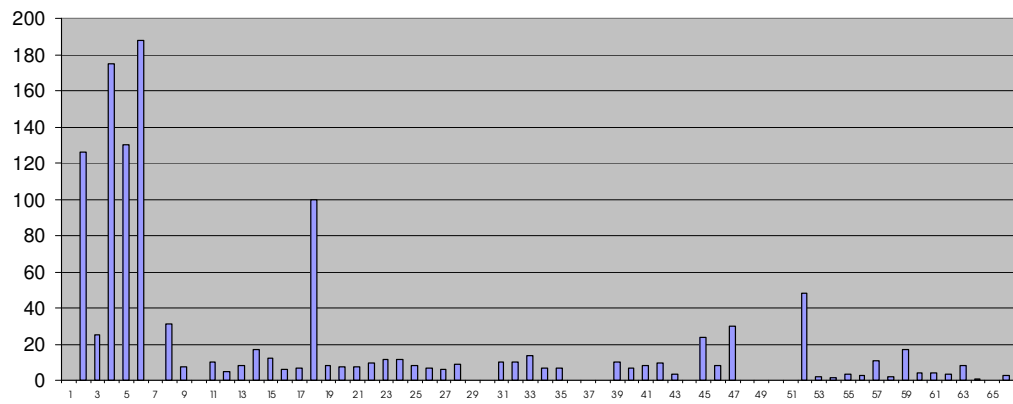


The extremely low level of paddy-land ownership by *naindes* probably indicates a process of dispossession of lands for cultivators. It was shown in chapter three that the *rājakāriya* labour of *naindes* was mostly used for plantations. If we link this situation with the lack of paddy-lands among *naindes* in Mapitigama, it is possible to argue that they were being removed from paddy cultivation and were used in the coconut plantations that were widely found in Mapitigama and other surrounding villages.

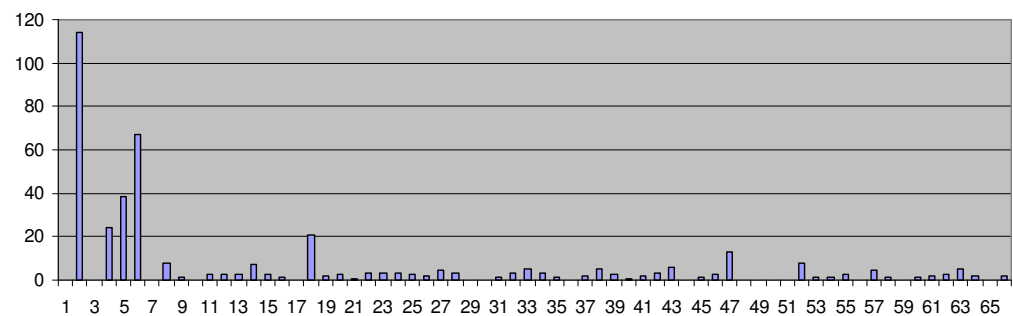
Paddy-land ownership of *āchāri* and *durāva* castes is also worth special attention. Unlike other non-*goyigama* castes in Mapitigama, which had considerable paddy-land ownership, PLHs of these two castes did not possess any paddy-lands.

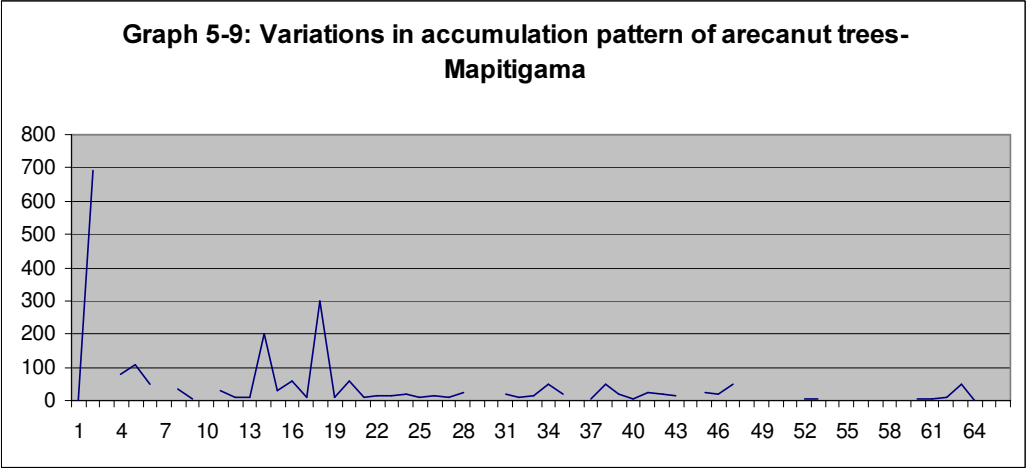
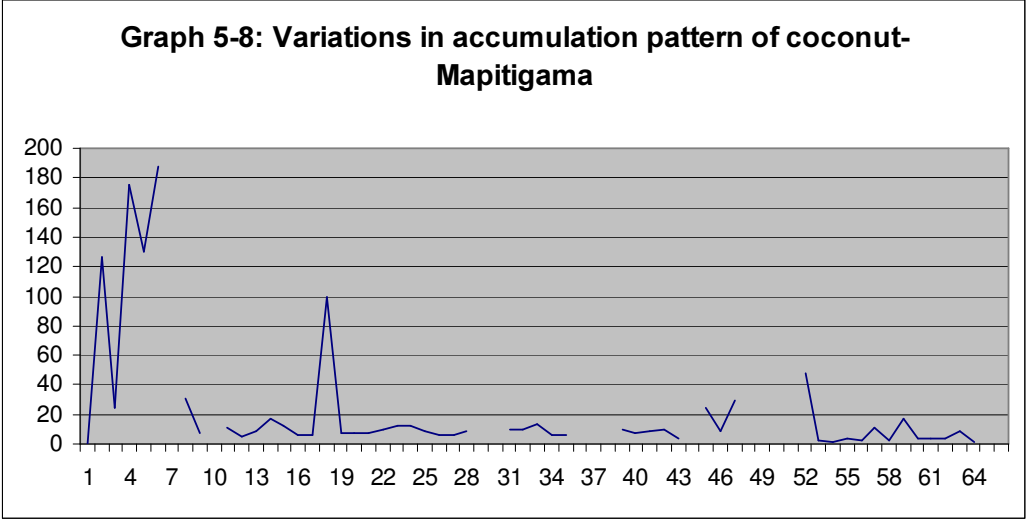
Accumulation capabilities of paddy-landholders also reveal some important features. PLHs with high accumulation capability were such groups as *saparamādu-appubāmys*, *majorāls*, *lascarins* and *kankānams*. It is also important to notice that there was one *padu* and one *berava* PLH who had some accumulation capability. From our general knowledge about the economic position of these two castes we know that they were two of the most marginalised castes even under colonial rule. This is particularly so with regard to the *padu* caste. Thus the relative accumulation capability of these two PLHs cannot be treated in the same way as that of others. This situation also has to be understood against the backdrop of possible variations in the fertility of the land. Since accumulation capability has been calculated on the basis of the average yield of the paddy-lands, if the yield of the lands of the *padu* and *berava* PLHs were below average, the accumulation capability would have been lower.

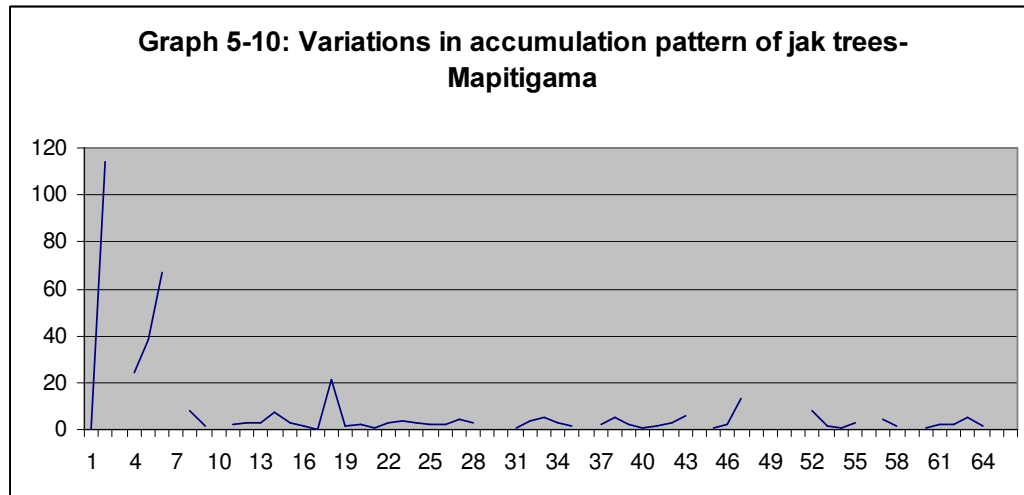
Graph 5-6: Per capita coconut tree ownership -Mapitigama



Graph 5-7: Percapita Jak tree ownership- Mapitigama







As is evident from graph 5-5, access to *ōwiti* lands shows virtually the same pattern as for other wet paddy-lands. Here, too, two blocs can be identified. The group including lower chiefs, village headmen and *lascarins* had the greatest access to this type of lands while lower caste PLHs also had some access. High-ranking chiefs and *naindes* are again conspicuous for their inferior access to *ōwiti*.

A comparison of the above figures of wet paddy-lands and *ōwiti* landownership with the ownership of garden crops yields more useful information on landownership. There is an interesting difference between the ownership pattern of garden crops and that of paddy-lands (compare graphs 5-3, 5-5, 5-6 and 5-7). PLHs with a high degree of garden crop ownership were top- and middle-level chiefs.³⁵⁹ There is also a noticeable difference between accumulation patterns of the three garden crops. As is evident from graphs 5-8, 5-9 and 5-10, per capita ownership of coconut trees varied a lot compared with ownership of areca-nut and jak trees. This can be attributed to the higher economic significance of coconut as compared to the other two crops. Areca nut was the traditional market crop and almost every peasant had some trees in their gardens, but it was not very profitable product. The way in which the company controlled the market of this item may also have had a negative impact on its use as a cash crop. Areca nut trade was into a Company monopoly and the price was kept extremely low, which resulted in the farmer being quite discouraged. This general picture of the fate of areca nut as a cash crop fits very much with the figures of Mapitigama. Of the 127 gardens in Mapitigama with areca nut, only four had more than 500 trees. The other gardens cannot be treated as having considerable accumulation capability.

The case of the jak trees is somewhat similar to the areca-nut in regard to the accumulation capability, although for different reasons. The profitability of jak trees rested on their potential as a source of timber. As discussed in chapter three, the poor transport facilities did not encourage the ordinary peasant to grow jak trees for profit. It is also doubtful whether there was a ready market for jak timber in the inland areas. There was only one garden found in Mapitigama with more than 100 jak trees. It had 160 trees and was owned by *Mudaliyār* Baltazar Dias Bandaranayaka (PLH one- absentee.) (See chapter three for more details on jak as a garden crop). A top-rank chief like him may well have had the ability to organize the labour for transporting timber and would have had some inducement for using this tree as a source of profit making.

Based on the above information about landownership in Mapitigama, the following classification can to express the economic strength of each PLH.

Group one consisted of top- and middle-rank chiefs. The available data on landownership permit us to include three PLHs in this group--two *mudaliyārs* (PLHs one

and two), one *ārachchi* (PLH five), and one appuhamy (PLH six). If the data compiled above are considered side-by-side with some other possible scenarios, several more PLHs could be included in this group. PLH three was a *mubandiram*, a chief below the rank of a *mudaliyār*. The above data do not attribute significant property ownership to him. But the social power of a *mubandiram* and the *accommodessan* grants that he received compel us to include him in this group. The same situation is applicable for PLHs four, the widow of a *mudaliyār*, and PLH seven, an *ārachchi*. PLH four had two gardens with 175 coconut trees, 24 jak trees and 80 areca nut trees. PLH seven was an absentee owner who possessed in this village a paddy-field of two *amunums* which had been classified as *puran* (fallow). He probably lived in Raigam *kōrale* where he held the position of an *ārachchi*.

It is also significant that PLHs two to six probably belonged to one kin group. It is clearly mentioned that PLH three was the brother-in-law of PLH two. PLH four was the daughter of one Philip Abekoon, probably the father or an uncle of PLH two. The fact that PLHs five and six shared the same *vāsagama*³⁶⁰ (part of the name) with PLH two suggests that these three PLHs had kin connections to each other.

An important feature of these PLHs was that their families were not large. There were only nine members in 1760 and eight in 1771 in all four groups: six (1760) and two (1771) of PLH one, one in both years of PLH four, one (1760) and four (1771) of PLH five and one in both years of PLH six. This shows a sort of ‘nuclearization’ of their families. This aspect of these families is significant because they were not cultivators of the soil, and thus a large family with sufficient labour supply was not an economic necessity. This factor also accounts for the nature of their paddy-land ownership. They had no noteworthy paddy-land ownership in Mapitigama, the resident place of some of them. But some of them had paddy-lands as absentee holdings in other areas. These absentee holdings may have been cultivated by others who delivered at least part of the produce to the owner. A detailed discussion of the nature of this group will be given later in this chapter under the discussion of the ‘rise of a land-owning class’.

Group two includes lower-middle rank chiefs, village level headmen, and some other groups such as schoolmasters and *lascarins*. This was a fairly large group. Unlike group one, a majority of this group could be considered part of the class of peasant-cultivators. As evident from figures 5-3 and 5-5, this group shows a strong tendency to acquire paddy-lands, which seems to be the group’s economic mainstay. They also had a significant hand in the garden crops.

Group three mainly comprised those who performed *nainde* service to the Company. Most of them had no paddy-lands at all and only meagre garden crops.

Group four includes PLHs of the lower castes such as *padu*, *berava*, *badabāla* and *radā*. They had sizable paddy-lands but mostly below the subsistence/ accumulation line. Two of them showed some accumulation capacity with regard to their per capita paddy-land ownership. But this group lacks the garden crops with which members of group two supplemented their accumulation capability. Moreover, some weight should be given to the generally poor quality of their paddy-lands.

Besides this classification, the economic strength of some non-*goyigama* PLHs cannot be ascertained accurately. PLH fifty-nine, a goldsmith, owned no paddy-land but he had a garden with 100 coconut trees. Most probably his caste occupation may have been a source of income that we cannot account for owing to the absence of data. The same is applicable to the *badabāla* PLH who may have earned some income from pottery making.

There may have been other economic activities in this village not fully accounted for in our sources. Several such activities can be discerned. First, there were several coconut plantations, one with 1300 trees. Second, there were several lands with sizeable numbers of jak trees. If they were used as a source of timber, which was most likely the case as discussed in chapter three, a significant labour supply would have been needed for

cutting trees and transporting timber. Third, there were several paddy-lands owned by non-cultivating social groups.

It is probable that the owners of many of these lands had access to unpaid peasant labour, by way of either the legitimate or illegitimate use of *rājakāriya*. If we take into account the landlessness among, mainly, *naindes* who were in general used to working on plantations, it is unlikely that their labour was entirely unpaid as they probably had no other significant source of livelihood. Two *durāva* PLHs (fifty-five and fifty-six) are noteworthy. Their landownership was extremely meagre. Each possessed only two gardens with ten coconut trees in each of them. They must probably have worked in the coconut plantations. It is also important to bear in mind that the *durāva* caste constituted mostly of toddy-tappers in the coastal areas, although we do not know whether they engaged in the same occupation in Mapitigama.

There was at least one case in which the use of *rājakāriya* labour must have been unlikely, that is the paddy-field of the absentee PLH ten, a free *burgher*, which amounted to sixty kurunis. Cultivator(s) of this paddy-field may have received part of the produce or another type of payment.

5.5 Some comparative observations on the class structure in Ogodapola formation and Mapitigama

As mentioned above, two formations represent two stages in the evolution of colonial class structure. The intensity of the class differentiation in Mapitigama was much higher than that in the villages of Ogodapola formation. One important feature of Mapitigama was the removal of a large number of peasant-cultivators from the ownership of paddy-lands. This was clearly evident with regard to the paddy-land ownership pattern of *naindes*. As paddy cultivation was the central production activity in traditional peasant agriculture, dispossession of paddy-lands for the peasant-cultivator meant removing him almost completely from the traditional system of production. What is more interesting is the fact that the majority of those who were deprived of paddy-lands in Mapitigama were *goyigama*, a caste whose members had easier access to better paddy-lands than other castes did in the pre-colonial system of landownership. In the Ogodapola formation, out of the three PLHs who did not possess paddy-lands only one was of *goyigama* caste. Incidentally, he also was seemingly a *nainde*, at the time of tombo compilation or previously, as suggested by his name (Madurapitiyage Punchiappu *nainde* -PLH five of Ogodapola). In Mapitigama, many non-*goyigama* PLHs including those of *padu* caste, the most underprivileged of the numerically larger castes, had significant access to paddy-lands (see graphs 5-3 and 5-5), while a number of *goyigama* PLHs did not possess paddy-lands. This is definitely a fundamental deviation from the traditional pattern of access to paddy-lands, and therefore a sign of the emergence of a new class differentiation.

All the landholders in the Ogodapola formation seem to have been cultivators. PLH one of Ogodapola, as evident from the *vāsagama* part of the name, had higher ritual status. It is also certain that he must have been the most socially powerful PLH in the village because in the tombo of the village he was recorded at the top. As already mentioned, PLH one of a village was in general socially the most powerful individual. If we consider any possibility of non-cultivating landownership at the village level we should take note of PLH one of this village, especially in view of his higher ritual status. He had by far the greatest access to paddy-lands. Yet the size of his extended family unit (thirty-one in 1760 and twenty-two in 1771) suggests that they must have certainly been cultivators. It is improbable that the surplus generating ability of the village could sustain such a large non-cultivating population. It is probable, as discussed above, that this family had access to the labour of *padu* absentee PLHs in the village. Yet, this labour supply would not have been sufficient to cultivate the family's relatively extensive paddy-lands.

This situation is a clear indication of the pre-colonial class structure, in which even village level headmen were cultivators.

This situation can be compared to that in Mapitigama, where there were probably a number of possible non-cultivator landholders. *Mudaliyārs*, *muhandīrams* and *ārachchis*, categorised above under **group one**, could be included in this category. The family structure of the members of this group was fundamentally different from that of PLH one of Ogodapola. As shown earlier, they had extremely small families. They resembled nuclear family units and were different from large, extended families that were functionally the central unit of labour mobilization in the traditional system of peasant production. The family of PLH one of Ogodapola was such a typical unit of labour.

The emergence of non-cultivating landholders was a significant phenomenon. It is especially this tendency that gave birth to the formation of a land-owning class, as will be discussed below.

There was also an interesting difference between two formations in relation to the ownership pattern of garden crops. While garden crops, coconut in particular, seem to have been preferred by non-*goyigama* landholders in the Ogodapola formation, especially when they had less access to better paddy-lands, a different pattern can be seen in Mapitigama. Top- and middle-rank indigenous chiefs, village headmen and others with the ambition to amass wealth showed a high interest in garden crops. These contrasting scenarios demonstrate the variety of responses that different social groups had to the emerging new economic opportunities. If the dominant social groups in the Ogodapola formation showed little interest in responding positively to new economic opportunities, less privileged groups did try to grab them. It is understandable that non-*goyigama* castes, who were less privileged, switched to non-traditional ways of production to enhance their economic position. A preference for garden crops can be noticed even among *padu* absentee owners in Ogodapola: PLH nine possessed a garden with forty coconut trees.

This tendency of non-*goyigama* castes in the Ogodapola formation was apparently a way of counter-balancing their unfavourable access to paddy-lands, rather than a drive for accumulation. But this was not the case in Mapitigama. Garden crops, mainly coconut, were becoming an important mode of accumulation in the hands of indigenous chiefs and others with economic ambitions. Thus, the accumulation drive in the Ogodapola formation was not as high as in Mapitigama.

There is another interesting feature in the class differentiation in the Ogodapola formation, which also represents an earlier phase of the evolution of a new class structure. A close scrutiny of land distribution in the Ogodapola formation shows emerging economic differentiation among basic social units, namely family and caste groups. PLHs one, three and four of Ogodapola seemed to have belonged to one kin group. But there is a vast difference between PLH one and the other two with respect to their ownership of paddy-lands. The same pattern can be seen in the *bakuru* community of Kahambilihena, where PLHs three and four had a higher accumulation capability than PLHs five and six of the same caste. As discussed in chapter two, there was a degree of social and economic egalitarianism among geographically concentrated kin and caste groups in traditional pre-colonial society. This was essential for kin groups, which were the main unit of the labour organisation. The egalitarian communal ties were important for caste groups to protect themselves from being oppressed by higher castes. Internal differentiation among these kin and caste groups therefore could be seen as an erosion of communal ties which was an initial phase of changing property relations and the emerging class structure.

Three main classes could be identified in the emerging class structure: large landowners who did not engage themselves in cultivation; middle-level landowners with significant accumulation capability and with an orientation for accumulating more lands;

and a class of peasants who owned little or no land. The most dynamic aspect of this emerging structure was the rise of the landowning class, to which the next section of this chapter is devoted.

5.6 The rise of the landowning class

The emergence of the landowning class was one of the highlights of the social and economic history of the colonial intervention in Sri Lanka. This class became the most powerful class in the inland areas of the western maritime region, where peasant agriculture was the dominant form of production. It accumulated large amounts of cultivable lands at the expense of the peasant-cultivator. When the population was growing and the need for more lands was strongly felt by the peasant the accumulation drive by this landowning class was the biggest obstacle for the expansion of the terrain of peasant production. Not only acted this class as intermediary between the peasantry and the colonial rule, could also use this position to reinforce economic power. Consequently it became the dominant section of the post-colonial ruling class. This political power enabled the landowners to manipulate the measures that late colonial and post-colonial governments were forced to take in order to mitigate the growing pressure of the rural population which began to wield a great influence over the political system following the inauguration of universal franchise in 1931.³⁶¹

I would like to identify two sub-groupings in this category of the landowning class. For this classification the above discussion of the class structure of Mapitigama can be used as a point of departure. In Mapitigama there were two groups which could be considered as belonging to the landowning class. One group was made up of top rank indigenous chiefs who possessed large tracts of lands, planted with garden crops, and absentee owners of paddy-lands. The other group consisted of the lower rank chiefs and village level headmen together with some other groups such as *lascarins* and schoolmasters, who had a significant accumulation capability in their land-ownership. These two groups could be contrasted with other groups which were on or below the subsistence level.

If we compare the social composition of the landowning class in Mapitigama in particular and in the inland areas in general with the situation in the coastal areas, a significant difference can be observed. By social composition I mean here mainly the ethnic and caste constitution of this class. This distinction becomes clearly evident if we take a closer look at the data in the table 5-7 (see the Appendix III for the table 5-7) which provides detail on fifty-three coconut plantations in which more than 500 trees were planted each. In the coastal areas, a greater ethnic and caste diversity among the owners can be discerned. Among ethnic communities which owned coconut plantations were Moors, *chettys*, Dutch including officials of the Company and free Burgers. Among caste communities, *goyigama* held the upper hand. Yet there were a number of non-*goyigama* owners such as *karāva*, *durāva* and *radā*.

The situation in the inland and intermediary³⁶² areas, where indigenous chiefs and the *goyigama* caste had the upper hand, was sharply distinct. Such groups as *mudaliyārs*, *muhandīrams*, *korālas* and *ārachchis* were the main stake holders. Two exceptions could be noticed in Welgama (Hina/ Gangaboda) and Hewagama (Hewagam/ Palle). In Welgama two *chettys* owned a plantation with 1200 coconut, 60 jak and 300 areca-nut trees. A free *burgher* in Hewagama owned a plantation with 1682 coconut trees. It is important to notice that members of these two groups also owned paddy-lands in some inland villages. Balthazar de Melot, a free burger, possessed eighty kurunis of paddy-lands in Mapitigama, while Philip de Mello and Francisco Rodrigo, both *chettys*, held seven amunums of paddy-lands in Welgama. Low-caste owners of coconut plantations in the inland areas were conspicuous in their absence.

This distinction between coastal and inland areas had very important social significance. In the inland areas the social composition of the landowning class mainly consisted of social groups which held a higher ritual status in the traditional social hierarchy. In general they belonged to the *goyigama* caste. Moreover the crest of the class in the inland areas consisted of powerful families of indigenous chiefs. The Kandurugodage *vāsagama* group in Mapitigama was a fine example in this regard.

The interesting feature of the exceptional cases of *chetty* and free *burghers* was that they were not part of the traditional caste hierarchy and distribution network of traditional ritual status. If we compare this situation with the absence of low-caste coconut plantation owners in the inland areas, it is possible to assume that there was a close relationship between the distribution of ritual power and economic power. There was room for those from outside the traditional ritual hierarchy to become part of the landowning class but not for groups with low ritual status.

5.6.1 Numerical strength of the landowning class

Data in table 5-8 (see the Appendix III for table 5-8) provide information on the distribution of population into various *rājakāriya* groups by 1707. Based on the information in this table, we can divide these *rājakāriya* groups into four categories. Top-rank chiefs such as *mudaliyārs*, *mubandirams* and *korālas*, as well as *tolken* (interpreters) could be included in the first group. They did not probably take part in tilling the soil. Middle-rank chiefs such as *arachchis*, *saparamādu-appuhāmys* and *vidānes* together with schoolmasters can be identified as the second group. It is probable that members of this group, at least some of their family members may have tilled the soil. But the main source of their economic power was probably the ability to extract the labour of ordinary peasants. The third group consisted of minor headmen such as *kankānams* and *majorāls* as well as some sections of *lascarins*. Perhaps headmen of artisans and *chaliās* can also be included in this category. It is unlikely that they were able to extract the labour of the peasant within the traditional system of authority. But the fact that they received larger *accommodessan* grants is important. There were occasions where coolies and *naindes* tried to present themselves as *lascarins*.³⁶³ As seen in the case of Mapitigama, it is evident that *majorāls* and *lascarins* had relatively better access to lands. Moreover, there were a number of *majorāls* and *lascarins* who owned coconut plantations with more than 200 trees. At least some sections of this group may have emerged as members of the landowning class.

The fourth group included the other groups of service providers such as, coolies, the majority of *chaliās*, those who classified as servicemen and sections of *lascarins* and artisans could be included in this category. Coolies and those who are classified as servicemen were mostly drawn from lower castes such as *padu* and *bakuru* as well as ordinary peasants of the *goyigama* castes. They formed the majority of the *rājakāriya* labour force, and their bargaining power in the distribution of patronage was extremely low.

The majority of the landowning class was constituted by groups one and two, while it was possible for some sections of group three to be members of this class. If the situation in early years of the eighteenth-century as represented in table 5-8 (see the Appendix III for the table 5-8) is compared with the situation of mid-eighteenth-century an increase of the landowning class can be noticed. According to table 5-8, in 1707 there were only five *mudaliyārs* and two *muhandirams* in the Colombo *disāvany*. A report on cinnamon plantations in 1786 records twenty-six *mudaliyārs* and twenty-four *muhandirams* who owned cinnamon plantations. There is also evidence of an increase in other groups such as the *saparamādu-appubāmys*. Governor Gollennesse advised his successor to take stern action in order to reduce the number of *saparamādu-appubāmys* because, according to him, there were already more of them than really needed.³⁶⁴ Tombos refer to *saparamādu*s who did not have proof of their position.³⁶⁵

5.6.2 Sources of economic power of the landowning class

As is clear from the nomenclature of the landowning class, the source of its economic power was land. It has been shown that in pre-capitalist societies land was not valued as such.³⁶⁶ Whatever the absolute validity of this postulation, it is possible to argue that it is somewhat applicable to the pre-colonial situation in Sri Lanka. What was more important for achieving economic power was the control not of land but of labour. The situation in the mid-eighteenth century under the Dutch administration marked a clear departure from this pre-colonial situation. This new situation has to be understood in the context of the changes in the land tenure which were discussed in chapter four. In this new context the value of land acquired a pivotal position.

A comparison between the economic power of the landowning class in the mid-eighteenth century and pre-colonial local chiefs who were a part of the ruling class is useful at this point. There were significant similarities and differences between these two groups. Both indigenous chiefs who were the main constituents of the landowning class and pre-colonial chiefs had their economic base in the traditional modes of authority through which they were able to control the surplus labour of the peasant-cultivator. The significant difference between the two groups was that pre-colonial local chiefs were not a landowning class in the strict sense of the term. They extracted a part of the peasant's surplus in kind, in money or in labour.

It should also be mentioned that the idea of 'ownership' was different in the pre-colonial times from that in, say, the Dutch times. Siriweera takes this issue into serious consideration.

The concept of 'ownership of land' as it exists in modern Ceylon, is derived basically from Roman Dutch Law. The provisions regarding landed property or 'ownership of land' embodied in the Roman Dutch law, however, have been modified from time to time by legal enactments. These changes and modifications could very often be of fundamental importance. At the same time this would render the indiscriminate use of comparatively modern legal concepts in relation to ancient conditions an extremely hazardous venture in historical analysis and interpretation.³⁶⁷

He makes this observation after showing the problematical use of the concept of 'ownership of land' by such authorities in the field as H.W. Codrington, L.S. Perera, M.B. Ariyapala, Wilhelm Geiger and T.B.H. Abeyasinghe³⁶⁸. Siriweera's distinction between the modern idea of land ownership and pre-colonial practice is however not convincing. He defines the pre-colonial notion of ownership in terms of 'the right to alienate land'. The problem here is that "the right to alienate" is also a defining part of the modern idea of land ownership. In the case of the meaning that the Dutch gave to the 'ownership of land' the principal of alienability was pivotal. In that sense, a landowner meant someone

who possessed a land holding with full alienable rights, subject to the payment of dues for the 'lord of land'. This was the basis on which land was redistributed by the Dutch administration.³⁶⁹ Thus the right to alienate is not sufficient, in my opinion, to make a reasonable distinction between the pre-colonial land-ownership and that in the Dutch period.

I would like to propose an alternative distinction. This distinction is made however in order to explain *only* one aspect of the problem, that is the contrasting functions of 'lands' in the case of the accumulation drive of the landowning class of the Dutch period, on the one hand, and in the case of the pre-colonial chiefs on the other. The defining point of this distinction is the control over the process of production. The landowning class of the mid-eighteenth century probably had significant control over the production process of the lands that they owned. No such control could be seen in the case of the pre-colonial chief although they had the access to the surplus of the peasant. There were of course exceptions in both cases. In the case of the former, when the lands, particularly paddy-lands, were given away to be cultivated by tenant-cultivator on the basis of *ande* or another arrangement, the tenant cultivator had a greater control over the production process. In the case of the latter, when a chief was a village grantee, he probably exercised a control over the production process of the *muttettuwa* (see chapter 4 for details on this issue.). Even in the case of the *ande* it can be considered the transfer of cultivation right to the tenant-cultivator was a temporary arrangement as the owner has, in theory, the right to withdraw it from the tenant-cultivator.

Subject to these exceptions, however, it should be emphasized that the distinction is important. Acquisition of lands with the full control of the production process was not necessary for pre-colonial chiefs as long as they had direct access to a part of the peasant's surplus. The pre-colonial local chiefs indeed functioned as local rulers with full authority over the people as well as lands. This authority was the basis of their economic power. The situation became somewhat different under the colonial powers, particularly under the Dutch, as they did their best to curb the power of the chiefs. This was particularly so in the mid-eighteenth century, when the VOC administration attempted to reach its subjects bypassing the authority of indigenous chiefs. Chapter four discussed at length how the system of village grants for chiefs was progressively discouraged by Dutch governors in favour of granting particular amounts of land revenue as the remuneration for their service to the Company. This situation had the potential to diminish the surplus extracting capability of chiefs through traditional pre-colonial means. To retain their economic and social position, indigenous chiefs therefore had to resort to new means for accumulating wealth. The emergence of indigenous chiefs as a landowning class has to be understood as a response to the challenge they faced under Dutch rule in securing their economic and social power.

Three factors enabled the metamorphosis of indigenous chiefs into a landowning class: the ability to acquire lands; the availability of sufficient labour supply combined with the ability to mobilize the labour for the production process; and the ability to produce marketable products. What follows is a brief account of each of these factors.

5.6.3 Modes of acquisition of lands by the landowning class

There are two important features in the landownership under the Dutch rule. First, landownership was defined within a particular legal discourse. In other words a tenant had to prove her/his ownership in terms of the requirements prescribed in the legal discourse. Second, the Company itself emerged as the biggest landowner in competition with other groups which also competed for lands. In such a situation, the ability to acquire lands was important for the emergence of a landowning class.

Table 5-9: Purchase of garden lands in Mapitigama

Name	Position	No. of gardens	Coconut	Jak	Areca	Empty (measured by the capacity of coconut trees to be planted)
Don Balthazar Dias Wijayawickrama Bandaranayaka	<i>mudaliyār</i>	1	40	8	50	
Kamburagodage Don Alexander Abekoon	<i>mudaliyār</i>	3	110	208	1301	
Kamburagodage Don Marco Abekoon	<i>Arachchi</i>	2	349	94	347	
Kamburagodage Don Joan Appuhamy	<i>appuhāmy</i>	1	6	17		
Edirisinghe Aarachchige Joan Perera	School master	2	31	14	100	20
Maadan Aarachchige Don Joan	<i>kankānam</i>	2	49	28	125	
Ranatunga Appu	<i>saparamādu</i>	1	70	30	150	
Arachchige Joan Silva	<i>saparamādu</i>	3	139	21	495	
Witanage Don Joan Nainde	<i>Majorāl</i>	1	4	3	30	10
Diyoguge Bastian	<i>Lascarin</i>	1	43	2	50	
Arachchige Don Joan	<i>Lascarin</i>	1	13	30	3	
Amadoruge Simon Perera	<i>Lascarin</i>	1	48	14	48	
Kekiriwattege Don Bastian	<i>Lascarin</i>	1	100	50	100	
Bottantrige Soeseuw Rodrigo	<i>Lascarin</i>	2	72	18	220	
Leevangamag Appu	<i>Lascarin</i>	1	65	4	38	
Wijelatge Don Paulo	<i>Lascarin</i>	1	46	11	150	30
Tikiriappuge Loku Nainde	<i>Nainde</i>	1	32	8	70	10
Kottege Don Domingo	<i>Nainde</i>	1	15	5	20	
Keokiriwattege Jonikoe Nainde	<i>Nainde</i>	1	48	30	60	
Attugode Acharige Nainde	Smith	1	30	4	51	
Jayerupe Hattena	Tom-tom beater	1	16	7	100	20

Source: Tombo

For the most part, landowners could accumulate land in one of two ways: legally, through the Company's land redistribution scheme, or illegally. The Company redistributed a large amount of its lands mainly because it was unable to mobilize the labour to cultivate them. We can identify at least three main modes of land redistribution. First, a significant amount of Company lands were sold. In Mapitigama alone there were thirty holdings classified as purchased lands. As shown in table 5-9, most owners of purchased lands in Mapitigama were chiefs and village level headmen, who were the main elements of the landowning class in the inland areas. Second, as shown in chapter three, there was the so-called *tunhavul* system by which the Company granted lands on the

condition that the recipient cultivate one-third with cinnamon. As Kanapathypillai has shown, this mode was a lucrative way for chiefs to accumulate lands.³⁷⁰ Third, granting land revenue (*accommodessan*) in return for service also could be considered a mode of redistribution of lands when the grantee was a peasant-cultivator. This mode however could have facilitated the accumulation drive of lower sections of the landowning class such as *majorāls* and *lascarins*.

It is possible to identify two modes of illegal acquisition of lands by the landowning class. First, as discussed in chapter four, in tombos there are many cases in which claims of tenants for certain land holdings were turned down by tombo commissioners and such lands were declared 'Company lands'. These 'illegal' holdings took several forms. Many holdings were classified as 'cultivated without permission'. There are a number of cases in Mapitigama in which chiefs acquired many lands in a manner that the Company considered illegitimate. Second, chiefs seem to have manipulated the system of *accommodessan* grants for their advantage. There are constant references to the conversion of *accommodessans* into *paravēnis* or heritable lands. Although we do not have specific evidence about this mode of 'illegal' acquisition of lands, there is no doubt about their existence as is evident from recurrent complaints from Company officials in this connection. The widespread phenomenon of *ande* tenancy of paddy-lands was probably an outcome of this conversion of *accommodessans* into heritable lands by chiefs.³⁷¹

It seems that the main mode by which chiefs could acquire paddy-lands was illegal acquisition. Although we do not have specific evidence to prove this, it is possible to argue that that was the case for two reasons. On the one hand, paddy-lands had apparently lower significance in the land redistribution of the Dutch government than high lands which meant for gardens. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century there seems to have been a process for redistributing paddy-lands that had opened up as a result of the depopulation following incessant warfare in the region. It has been shown in chapter three that slaves were even brought from South India to cultivate paddy-fields. It is unlikely that the Company would have preferred chiefs to peasants in the redistribution of paddy-lands. However, when chiefs received lucrative village grants in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as shown by Van Imhoff in his *Memoir*, they could have probably controlled paddy-lands in those villages. Since those village grants were executed within the pre-colonial model of land-tenure as shown in chapter four, it is unlikely that those chiefs became the legal owners of paddy-fields in those villages.

There was apparently not a large market for paddy-lands. In Mapitigama, out of thirty purchased land holdings, only one was a paddy-field. Even this claim was not upheld by tombo commissioners, allegedly because of the absence of any proofs of the transaction. Without purchasing, there was no legitimate means for non-cultivators to own paddy-lands legally. Nonetheless, as will be shown below, there was a significant tendency among chiefs to own paddy-lands. This probably resulted from the illegal conversion of paddy-fields of granted villages into their own possessions. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, when there was lack of cultivators, chiefs might have been in a position to retain paddy-fields of these granted villages with outright ownership.

5.6.4 Labour mobilization by the landowning class

When there was no free labour market, the ability to mobilize labour played a major role. Chiefs had access to the labour of the ordinary peasant. Even though the Company was unhappy about the exploitation of the peasant by chiefs at its expense, it could do little to prevent the situation. The Company was forced to tolerate it for two reasons. First, taking excessive measures against chiefs could be detrimental for the alliance between chiefs and the Company. Second, so long as chiefs employed labour in such a

way that the production would increase, the Company was ready to tolerate it.³⁷² A number of ways by which chiefs exploited the labour of the peasant can be identified. There were instances where chiefs extracted part of the produce of the peasant even illegitimately.³⁷³ More common, however, was their use of unpaid peasant labour for the cultivation of their lands.³⁷⁴ The growing landlessness among ordinary peasants must have also given chiefs an opportunity to obtain the labour of landless peasants for the cultivation of their lands. It has been shown in chapter three how chiefs obtained the peasants' labour for their coconut plantations by permitting them to grow other items such as yams and vegetables for their own consumption.

As for paddy-lands, the *ande* system would have probably been an effective method for chiefs to bring their lands under cultivation. When there was a lack of paddy-lands for ordinary peasants, those landless peasants can be forced to cultivate lands that belonged to others. We do not have direct information about this but there is sufficient background to argue that this may have been the case. Many chiefs owned paddy-lands as absentee owners in areas far from where they lived. In such cases, the lands may have been tended by ordinary peasants on a share-cropping (*ande*) basis. This was indeed the case in the known past. It has been mentioned elsewhere how the *ande* system became a great burden and mode of excessive exploitation.³⁷⁵ If the the landowning class was so strong to determine the terms of the *ande* system even at a time when the political leverage of the peasant was rather high following the introduction of universal franchise, no further explanation is needed to explain the situation in the mid-eighteenth century when traditional modes of authority were still dominant and chiefs had a great say over the land and the labour of the peasant.

5.6.5 Production process of the lands of the landowning class

By far the most important crop for the landowning class was coconut, which was probably preferred for several reasons. Most important, the market for this crop was a large and growing one. The labour supply needed for it was relatively small, which was very important owing to the lack of a labour market. Another reason may be gleaned from the sources, although no direct information is available to prove it. That is, the Company's had not imposed its monopoly right over this crop as it had in the case of cinnamon and areca-nut.

The chiefs' association with paddy-lands is quite interesting and seems to have taken two forms. First and foremost, they were remunerated by the Company through the grants of revenue from paddy-lands (see chapter four). Although in theory there was no way to turn these revenue-granted-lands into outright possessions, as argued earlier, this did happen at least in some cases. There were also paddy-lands which the chiefs owned outright. Kamburagodage Don Alexander Abekoon, PLH two of Mapitigama and the *Mudaliyār* of Hina *kōrale*, had only twenty kunis of paddy in Mapitigama. Yet he was the absentee owner of large tracts in a number of villages including Attanagalla, Weelgama, Jabaraluwa, Dompe, Kalukandawe, Walgamme, Wereherre, Ogodepolle, Nambadaluwe, and Pittyegedara in the Hina *kōrale*, and Kamburugoda in de Alutkuru *kōrale*. His possession in Ogodapola was a paddy-land of one *amunum*. The case of Don Thomas Rodrigo Wijeratna, PLH six of Attidiya of Salpity *kōrale*, who was the second *Mudaliyār* of the governor's gate, is also interesting. Apart from ten gardens he possessed in this village with 2033 coconut, 173 jak and 877 areca nut trees, he also owned twelve wet paddy holdings and two *ōwiti* lands. Five *amunums* and thirty *kurunis* of them were *otu* fields which paid 1/10 for the lord of the land, while two *amunums* and 22.5 kunis were *ande* lands paying 1/2. Two *amunums* and ten *kurunis* were *ōwiti* lands.

The significant phenomenon of absentee ownership also points to the growing tendency among chiefs to accumulate paddy-lands. More research is needed to get a clear

picture of this, because all the absentee holdings were not paddy-lands and they were not always held by chiefs. Some cases however are worth mentioning. Louis de Saram, *mudaliyār* of the governor's gate had a large absentee paddy holding of five amunums and thirty-four kurunis in Meetirigala of Hina *kōrale* and which was classified as *ninde* (free of tax). Alexander Abekoon, *mudaliyār* of Hina *kōrale* had one amunum of paddy holding in Kahambilihene, which had been declared *ande*.

Chiefs also played a significant role in cinnamon cultivation. The table 3-7 (see Appendix III for table 3-7) represents the ownership of cinnamon plantations in 1784. It shows that *mudaliyārs* had a greater hand in cinnamon plantations. Moreover, *mubandirams*, *mahavidānes*, *vidānes* and *ārachchis* too had a significant share in them. By engaging in cinnamon plantations, the chiefs had another advantage in accumulating more lands. The Company followed a policy of giving lands on the condition that one-third be planted with cinnamon. Kanapathipillai has stated that those who received lands under this scheme used the best part for coconut cultivation and the worst one for cinnamon.

As shown in chapter three, jak and areca-nut were also popular cash crops, and it is possible that other cash crops such as pepper and cinnamon had become sources of income for chiefs although we do not have specific data on that.

5.7 Some concluding remarks

The class structure of a social formation corresponds to the distribution of economic opportunities among various social groups. To put it in another way, the way in which various groups are associated with the process of production and the ability of each group to acquire the surplus determine the nature of the class differentiation in a social formation.

The main component of the class structure of southwestern Sri Lanka in the pre-colonial context was the social bifurcation between the majority peasant community which tilled the soil for its subsistence and the minority which consisted of the royalty and other chiefs who formed the ruling class. There were internal divisions within both groups. There was especially a significant diversity among the tillers in terms of the access to better lands. Caste hierarchy played a major role in this uneven distribution of lands among cultivators. There may also have been internal divisions within the ruling class. The economic power of each sub-group of the ruling class depended on its ability to acquire the peasant's surplus, which was in turn determined by the relative degree of political and ritual power that each group wielded.

Some crucial aspects of the pre-colonial class structure are evident from the discussion of the villages classified as the Ogodapola formation. The characteristic feature of these villages was that their exposure to the colonial economy has not destroyed the pre-colonial economic structures at the time of tombo compilation. While the major part of the surplus of the peasant went into the hands of the ruling class in the forms of grain tax and *rājakāriya* labour, only a meagre sum remained locally. This small internal accumulation was apparently insufficient to intensify class divisions at the local level. Thus apart from one family group with apparently high ritual status and access to better and larger amounts of paddy-lands, the peasants' production capability hardly exceeded the subsistence level.

This situation is very different from that in Mapitigama, where the colonial impact was more intensive and class differentiation was much higher. The higher degree of internal accumulation capability in the village, the growing landlessness among ordinary peasants and the accumulation of lands in the hands of a landowning class, comprised mainly of indigenous chiefs, all contributed to the enduring social stratification of the colonial class structure as exemplified in mid-eighteenth century Mapitigama.

This new class differentiation, which was characterised by the growing landlessness on one hand and the accumulation of lands by non-cultivating landowners on the other, had significant implications for the rate of surplus extraction. One of the major affects of this new class differentiation was the separation of labour from other forces of production, chiefly land. So long as the peasant was master of his production process by virtue of having full control over his land and tools, he had no urge to produce a surplus except for taxes he had to deliver to the sovereign. This was indeed the context of constant references of European observers to the 'laziness' of the indigenous peasant. This 'laziness' was due to the low demand for material necessities, for which relatively less labour time was needed.

When the forces of production began to be controlled by a non-producer who owned them and the production process is subjected to the accumulation drive of the owner of forces of production, it is become difficult for the real-producer (labourer) to regulate his labour time, and consequently the labour time used in the production process would be increased. If the living standards of the producer remained unchanged, the increase in labour time would inherently increase the surplus extraction. It is in this context that the rise of the landowning class was a crucial development. Its ultimate outcome was the control of the most important factor of production, namely land, by a non-producer.

Chapter Six - Caste and social mobility

6.1 Introduction

One of the important aspects of the social history of the western maritime region of Sri Lanka in the early nineteenth century was the growing antagonism between caste groups. The backdrop to this tension was the questioning of the superior ritual status of the *goyigama* caste by some caste groups which had hitherto been assigned lower ritual status. The latter acquired the ability to compete for higher ritual status by virtue of the emergence of certain economically and politically powerful groups within some lower castes. These intra-caste elite groups began to challenge the lower ritual status of their castes at the expense of the *goyigama* caste in order to augment their own economic and political influence.

This early nineteenth century phenomenon has been amply documented.³⁷⁶ In this chapter, I shall attempt to examine the mid- and late-eighteenth century antecedents of these developments. I identify several factors that gave the caste formation its dynamic character. First, the 'hierarchy', perhaps the defining factor of the caste system,³⁷⁷ was not monolithic. Various social agents articulated the hierarchical ordering of castes in different ways. Second, the ways in which each caste group were attached to the production process and to the economy in general were varied. These differences created different opportunities for each group to associate with changing economic and social situations. Third, there were interesting differences in the demographic structure of each caste. These differences were clearly visible in the geographical distribution patterns of castes.

6.2 Caste in a colonial context

A series of instructions issued to the *Disāve* of Colombo *disāvany* in 1707 gave an interesting classification of people. This list identified some twenty-eight groups of people.³⁷⁸ The interesting feature of this classification is that it can by no means be explained in terms of the category 'caste'. Indeed it included groups that we know today as castes, but it also included groups which could be considered ethnic and occupational communities. If we compare this classification with a locally originated classification of people, as found in the *janawamsaya*, an interesting difference can be seen. I will come back to the *janawamsaya* in detail later in this chapter. What is important to notice at the outset is the clear difference in perception between the two classifications, and the fact that certain groups in the Dutch list are not found in *janawamsaya*.

In the eyes of the VOC administration, the main reason to classify people was to facilitate the mobilization of *rājakāriya* labour. This overriding concern was evident in the 1707 classification. The distribution of social honour and political power seems to be the major concern in the *janawamsaya* classification, which classified the entire population starting from the royalty to the lowest strata. The 1707 VOC classification seems mainly interested in the economic functions of each group. It also represented a social fabric significantly different from that reflected in the *janawamsaya*. The role that ethnic and occupational factors played in this classification is quite instructive.

Such groups as Moors, Malabaars, Chettys and Paravars cannot be considered castes, but although these groups had become important elements in the social composition of the western coastal areas, only the Chettys seem to feature in the *janawamsaya*. It is also important to notice that the occupational diversity represented in the 1707 classification was more elaborate than that of the *janawamsaya*. There are, for example, eight occupation groups in the 1707 list that could be classified as belonging to the *ābhāri* caste.

It is possible to argue that the difference between the 1707 list and the *janawamsaya* marked different social realities highlighting some of the pivotal aspects of the emerging

social formation under early colonial rule. Ethnic composition and occupational diversification were two important aspects of this emerging social formation. In this context, one is tempted to suggest that 'caste' could not be considered a proper index of social change, since there was a considerable 'outside' of caste domain which was a part of the existing social formation.

I adopt an approach to caste that helps to overcome this problem. In the first place I make a distinction between 'caste communities and caste hierarchies'. Second, I consider caste hierarchy not as a fixed entity but as something contingent upon the agent who articulates the hierarchy. The following two sections will elaborate upon these two points.

6.3 Caste communities and hierarchies

Communities precede hierarchies. The former may have different histories, different origins and different paths of evolution. Hierarchical ideologies attempt to order these evolving communities in one hierarchical edifice. They aim at fixing the place of each community within the hierarchy, attributing their specific ritual status in relation to that of other groups, and freezing their evolution. This dialectical relationship between evolving communities and hierarchical super-impositions determines the nature of a caste formation in a given time-space context. There are two aspects of the dialectical relationship between communities and caste hierarchies that are essential for the historical understanding of the changing aspects of the caste system. The first is the emergence of non-caste communities not yet integrated into the caste system. The second is the failure to complete the hegemonization of communities as castes by means of imposing hierarchical ideologies.

A community indeed becomes a caste only by way of being integrated into a caste hierarchy. In other words, there were no castes outside the hierarchy. This could be explained by looking at the two above mentioned lists of castes. As already pointed out, the VOC list of 1707 includes a number of non-caste communities not found in the *janawamsaya* list. Hence, groups such as Malabars, Moors, *paravars*, and so on could not be considered castes although they were numerically as well as socio-economically significant communities in the western coastal areas. The way in which *janawamsaya* articulates the caste hierarchy is also important. It tries to name every single social element that it imagined as belonging to the social fabric and fix their place in the caste hierarchy.

This is not to suggest however that communities become static social entities by being integrated into hierarchies. It should be mentioned that a community could not be fully redefined by a hierarchical ideology. There could be a point where the hierarchical ideology failed as a hegemonic project, as a result of which a play occurs between communities and hierarchies. The discussion of this chapter is mainly based on the observations of this play between the hierarchy and the community. I start the discussion with a review of the hierarchy, using various contemporary and near contemporary sources which articulate the ideal hierarchy. Thereafter I will investigate the dynamics of caste formation in the mid-eighteenth century and try to grasp the changing aspects against the backdrop of the colonial encounter.

6.3.1 Revisiting caste hierarchy: some problems in the history and historiography

Hierarchy is the most important feature of a caste system. The order of the hierarchy might vary according to the subject who articulates it, but the hierarchy as such was indispensable.³⁷⁹ What is largely relevant to our discussion here is the fact that there were clear differences in how the order of the hierarchy was perceived amongst both internal agents of the caste formation and outside observers. The following analysis is based

mainly on seven lists which ordered castes in a hierarchy, five provided by Europeans and two indigenous. The European lists are, chronologically, those of Robert Knox³⁸⁰, François Valentijn³⁸¹, Governor Van Golenesse³⁸², Governor Gideon Loten³⁸³, and John Davy,³⁸⁴ a British official of the early nineteenth century. The indigenous lists are from the *janawamsaya*³⁸⁵ and *niti-nighanduwa*³⁸⁶.

It has been widely accepted by many, if not all, reviewers of Sri Lankan caste formation that the *goyigama* caste was at the apex of the caste hierarchy. Nonetheless, we have some valuable information, particularly from *janawamsaya*, that makes this view questionable. In this text, all the groups known today as *kula* (or castes) are classified as '*ksbudra*', the lowest rank of the Pan-Indian *varna* system. Above these *ksbudras* were three groups--*raja*, *bamunu* and *gruhapathi*--which were classified as '*thrividha mahasara kula*'³⁸⁷ (trinity of superior castes). It is interesting to see how the link between these three *kula* and the *goyigama*, described here as *goyamkaranno* (cultivators of paddy), was established. According to the *janawamsaya*:

As the time goes, out of these *gruhapathi* people, those who owned wealth in abundance, without resorting to their own labour, brought the poor people, who were also their kith and kin, to cultivate the fields and gardens of the *raja* and *bamunu*, giving them a half and keeping half for themselves, for which reason they came to be called as *goyikamkaranno* (those who cultivate).³⁸⁸

It is significant that a distinction was made between *goyigama* and *gruhapathi* (and *raja* and *bamunu*) while ranking the *goyigama* below the other three groups. The problem here is to understand what kind of reality this distinction represented. The question can be put in another way. Since there is no ground to believe that this narrative gives a picture of the reality, it can be treated as a mythical representation. What is then the reference point of this mythical representation? A myth does not emerge from a thin air. We can clearly see that the author of the *janawamsaya* was content with placing *goyigama* below *gruhapathi*. In what kind of social and ideological milieu did the author of the work place this mythical representation? Did the author represent the interests of any social group? What kind of influence did the group, or groups, whose interests may have been represented by the author, possess over the ritual order? We cannot overlook these questions while reading the above-mentioned parts from *janawamsaya*.

One who is aware of the social and ideological setting of Sri Lanka would be tempted here to consider how *radala* and *mudali* groups, which were the aristocrats in the Kandyan society, would fit into this picture. The common answer to this question is that these two groups constituted the upper layer of the *goyigama* caste. L.S. Dewaraja, who represents this school of thought, says: 'The *govikula* as we see it in the eighteenth century was not a homogenous group comprised of the lineal descendants of the ancient nobility'.³⁸⁹ Some lists that I mentioned earlier greatly endorse this view. Knox's *Hondreus* was an all-inclusive term which included *radala* and *mudali* as well as the other ordinary *goyigama* people.³⁹⁰ In Dutch records, the term *goyigama* is conspicuously absent and, instead, the term '*bellales*', a derivation of the Tamil *wellala*, the highest caste in the Sri Lankan Tamil society, is used for the same group. Gideon Loten, a Dutch governor, gives the following description of '*bellales*'.

Bellales or persons of the best and oldest classes, who are also employed for various services, viz. *appoehamis*, [*appuhāmy*] which is the name for those of distinguished descent such as *Modliars* [*mudaliyār*] and *Mobandirams* [*mubandiram*] sons and also for those of *Coraals* [*korāla*] and *Arraatjes* [*ārachchī*].³⁹¹

The interesting feature of this statement is that it does not directly say that *mudaliyārs* and *mubandirams* belonged to *bellales*. On the contrary, *appuhāmys* who were characterized as their sons were *bellales*. The logic behind this may perhaps be difficult to grasp, as

making a distinction between fathers and sons in terms of their diverse caste identities is absolutely incomprehensible. Whatever the logic behind the differentiation, this is soundly justified by the information in the tombos. When the caste identity of the landholders was given, the top-rank indigenous chiefs such as *mudaliyārs* were not classified under any caste.³⁹² (This will be discussed later in this chapter.) In his classification of castes, Loten based himself on the caste classification of one of his predecessors, Governor Van Gollennesse, who includes six groups under 'Bellales', namely *appuhāmys*, *saparamādus*, *majorāls*, *lascarins*, *naindes* and *porrewedikarayas* [*porowādakārāyā*].³⁹³ It is significant that there is no mention of *mudaliyārs*, *mubandirams*, *kōrales* and *ārachchis*.

It is relevant here to consider the information provided by the *niti-nighanduwa*. It clearly includes all the groups that constituted the top of the social hierarchy in the category, 'gowiya'. This is the relevant section:

Representatives of Raja, Bamunu (Brahmana) and Welanda castes had from time to time come over to live here. They did not however preserve their castes intact, but intermarried with the gowiya caste, and it is for this reason that the gowiya is considered the chief caste in this kingdom. Now the gowiya caste has many divisions.

The descendants of king by a wife of the gowiya caste are called Bandara Waliya, and with those of pure gowiya caste are comprehended in the term Radalakamperuwa or Mudaliperuwa. The holders of subordinate offices are called Pinda peruwa or Rate Etto; while descendants of king or prime ministers who betake themselves to the forests for fear of their enemies, are called Wedi Wanse (the Veddah caste).³⁹⁴

In addition, ten more groups were classified as 'inferior classes' of the *gowiya* caste.³⁹⁵ There is a conscious effort to include all the topmost groups of the social hierarchy in the *goyigama* rank in this definition. The question to be asked here is whether this description represented the reality or the perception of the ideal order of a certain group whose interests the author represented. Postponing an answer to this question for the time being, it would be interesting to compare this explanation with that of the *janawamsaya*. The latter makes a clear distinction between *grubapathi* and *goyamkaranno* and, further more, implies a totally different matrimonial structure from that of the *niti-nighanduwa*. According to the latter, though *raja*, *bamunu* and *welanda* people came to this land from time to time they associated themselves with the *gowiya* people by way of intermarriages.³⁹⁶ But the *janawamsaya* says otherwise: "thus all those *brahmana mahasara* married to *brahmana* women. *Kshashtriya* princes married to *kshashtriya* virgins. *Grahapathi* princes married to *grahapathi* princesses".³⁹⁷ Thus, while the *niti-nighanduwa* implies an exogamic structure, the *janawamsaya* implies an endogamous structure.

With reference to internal divisions of *bellales* Valentijn remarks that 'those who are one grade higher will not eat with the lesser in their festivals or elsewhere, nor give their daughters in marriage. But the lesser one will take the daughter from a superior one'.³⁹⁸ This description does not comply with the explanation of *niti-nighanduwa* but matches with that of the *janawamsaya*. I suggest however that it is not very useful to treat these diverse readings as representations of actual situations. Rather they have to be construed as different ideological models through with their respective authors and his audiences perceived reality.

Davy gives his classification as follows:

According to the best authorities I could consult, the four great castes by the Singalese are the following- Ekshastria wanse or Royal caste: 2 Brachmina wanse or caste of Brahmins: 3 Wiessia wanse, composed of three subdivisions, viz.

merchants, cultivators of the earth, and shepherds – 4. Kshoodra wanse, subdivided into sixty low castes [*sic*].³⁹⁹

The most important feature in this explanation is that it does not treat the *goyigama* caste as an all-inclusive identity with respect to the upper ranks of the social hierarchy, as is the case in *niti-nighanduva*. However it is not clear from this explanation which social groups were included in *ksbashtriya* and *brahmana* identities. Although three internal divisions have been suggested for the '*wiessia wanse*', such as merchants, cultivators and shepherds, only two, namely cultivators (*goewanse*) and shepherd (*nillemakareya*), have been specified.⁴⁰⁰ It is also unclear who is included, in concrete terms, in the category named '*goewanse*'. The translation 'cultivators' may seem to provide some sort of way out, because it may arguably suggest that the term included those who cultivated the earth. But that does not help much because it was not only those belonging to the *goyigama* caste who cultivated.

However, it appears that in further elaborating the term *goewanse*, Davy tends to use the term in a somewhat all-inclusive manner. In this description, at least some sections of the upper ranks are seemingly included in the '*goewanse*'. But it does not give a precise idea as to whether the *radala* and *mudali* groups were also included in this category. At least it is not as clear as in the case of *niti-nighanduva*. Nevertheless, in the section where the clothing and life styles of *goewanse* are described, it seems as if *radala* and *mudali* groups are also included.

The way in which Davy uses the term '*wanse*'—as in *Eksbashtria wanse* and *Kshoodra wanes*—also draws our attention. This is in sharp distinction to another source. Answering a series of questions posed by Governor Falck in 1769, a Buddhist priest made a distinction between '*jati*' and '*wansha*' and spoke of 'noble *wansha*' and 'low *jati*'.⁴⁰¹

Valentijn's classification of castes is an interesting one. A quite obvious feature of his classification is its inconsistency, which paradoxically enhances its value. This inconsistency should not be understood as a problem of his analysis, which may have perhaps been the case. We should be grateful that he did not attempt to correct those inconsistencies. As a matter of fact, Valentijn never visited the island but used different sources for his account of Sri Lanka, by far the most important of them being VOC records. Knox's work was also at his disposal.⁴⁰² The inconsistencies, therefore, could be a result of the unedited resatement of various, and sometimes contradictory, information. Whatever its impact on the general reader, from the point of view of the historian, this is an invaluable and highly commendable 'weakness'. One important example would be sufficient to show this textual inconsistency.

In one instance he classifies *mantris* as a distinct caste group; they are described as those who 'give counsel in matters of importance and otherwise, being next to the King in administration...'.⁴⁰³ On another occasion, the same group is classified (with a slight different nomenclature, *mantrioenoe*) as an internal group of *goy* or *bellales*.⁴⁰⁴ The description on *mantrioenoe* makes clear that both were the same group: those "who are next to the King as highest counsellors at the court and serve as deputies".⁴⁰⁵

Valentijn says: '...four most important castes must be present, such as *Raja*, *Bronne*, *Welende* and *Goy*' at the occasion of royal coronation.⁴⁰⁶ Arasaratnam reckons that 'this is the Sinhala version of the Brahmanical four *Varnas*: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaissya and Sudra'.⁴⁰⁷ But this explanation is obviously not sufficient. If we equate, for example, *Goy* with Sudra, at least in this case, more questions are to be answered. As courtiers and other top-ranked chiefs have also been included in the *Goy* or *Bellales* group in Valentijn's classification, it is impossible to equate *Goy* with *shudra*. There have indeed been other classifications, for example, that of the *janawamsaya*, which treats *goyamkaranno* as a part of *shudra*. But it is not clear whether this version represented the same tradition. Moreover, we cannot ignore the fact that these four groups allegedly attended the royal coronation

and set the crown on the king's head. This practice was simply unimaginable if the *goy* was considered here as the 'Sinhala counterpart' of *shudra*, because there are no historical grounds for believing that the latter was given the opportunity to perform such an honourable task.

This particular example draws our attention to an important aspect of state formation in Sri Lanka in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There is no room at this point to elaborate on this otherwise absorbing theme. But some passing thoughts may be important. This episode in which the above-mentioned four groups presented themselves at the royal coronation can be viewed, arguably, as a demonstration of how the legitimacy of various social groups was secured in the process of state-building. The presence of *welanda* (merchants) and *goy* (agriculturalists) is especially important. These two groups were the most important elements of the economy of the western maritime region of Sri Lanka in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the space and time of the state-formation process centred on Kotte. It might be somewhat misleading to take the term *goy* in its literal meaning, that is cultivator of the earth. The social significance of the group known as *goy* has to be understood in the context of the demographic movement known in Sri Lankan historiography as 'drifting to the south-west'.⁴⁰⁸ Given the dominance that the *goyigama* caste possessed at the village-level social competition, particularly for better cultivable lands over other agricultural communities, it appears that this group had a much social and political leverage. But this phenomenon has to be situated in a proper historical perspective. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the social configuration had evolved dramatically and the position of *goy* people had undergone many changes since the early stages of the 'drift to the south-west'. In certain ideological representations, however, these past social realities seemed to be still looming. In my opinion, Valentijn's account is a fascinating manifestation of the remnants of these early ideological trends.

The case of *welanda* also deserves an elucidation. The importance of merchant groups in the Kotte kingdom is quite well known. There is scattered information on economically and politically powerful groups of recent Indian origin, but thus far their history has not been reconstructed.⁴⁰⁹ Perhaps the emphasis on these four communities, *welanda* (merchants) being one of them, who presented themselves at the royal coronation is a signal for us to look at them more closely, a task which is, however, beyond the limits of this study.

6.3.2 *Goyigama* caste and the ritual order

If we consider caste hierarchy as the dominant element of the society's ritual order and the *goyigama* caste as occupying the highest position in the caste hierarchy, we are faced with a curious puzzle. The *goyigama* caste constituted the majority of the population, from which we can conclude simply that the top of the caste hierarchy was much larger than the bottom. Bryce Ryan, whose work many consider the most authoritative on Sri Lankan caste formation, addresses this problem in the following manner: 'One would scarcely expect to find the peak of a social pyramid larger than its base, but it is probable that the *goyigama* constitute at least one-half of Sinhala society'.⁴¹⁰ Unfortunately, Ryan takes no effort to elaborate more on this problematical area. But we cannot overlook the problem, which stands at the very centre of our discussion.

If we use Ryan's metaphor of 'social pyramid' what we actually find in a classification of the caste formation placing the *goyigama* on top is an inverted pyramid. The question then is whether this picture of an inverted pyramid in the ritual order is compatible with the social, political and economic reality in general, particularly with regard to the distribution of social, political and economic power. From the discussion later in this

chapter, as well as from our general knowledge on many pre-modern societies (with the possible exception of tribal ones), such a picture seems highly implausible.

The problem is clearly evident in A.M. Hocart's much celebrated concept of 'farmer aristocracy'.⁴¹¹ This formulation identifies the caste system in terms of a model that has been called 'a bifurcation of society'. In this bifurcated model, the 'farmer aristocracy' or *govikula* (or *goyigama*) holds the dominant position and given that the '*govikula*' comprises the overwhelming majority of the population the logical conclusion is that the majority of the society holds an aristocratic position. This undoubtedly is impossible. What is the answer to this paradoxical situation? My suggestion is that we need an alternative explanation.

We have shown earlier in this chapter that the inclusion of the upper echelon of society in the *goyigama* caste seems quite problematical. At this point we have to confront the description of Knox, which has become by far the most authoritative source of the Kandyan caste system. As mentioned above, Knox was quite explicit in declaring that *Hondrews* were the highest caste. We have no reason to doubt that Knox recorded what he indeed observed. How, then, do we resolve this dilemma? First let us see what Knox actually wrote:

The highest, are their *Noblemen*, called *Hondrews*. Which I suppose comes from the word *Homdrewne*, a Title given to the King, signifying *Majesty*: these being honourable People. 'T is out of this sort alone, that the King chooseth his great Officers and whom he employs in his Court, and appoints for Governors over his Countrey. Riches are not here valued, nor make any the more Honourable. For many of the lower sorts do far exceeded these *Hondrews* in Estates. But it is Birth and Parentage that inobleth.⁴¹²

The term *goyigama* or any of its forms is conspicuous by its absence in this description. One may argue, following the common understanding of this phrase, that the term *Hondrews* means nothing but *goyigama*. But I would argue otherwise. The term *Hondrews* may not necessarily mean a caste group in general or *goyigama* in particular. It is true that in the present day usage of *banduru* is definitely equivalent to *goyigama*. But the semantics of the term have to be taken into consideration. In present-day use the term *banduru* does not carry an honorific meaning. On the contrary, it may be derogatory in some contexts.⁴¹³ But in Knox's time the term *Hondrews* undoubtedly carried an honorific signification. If we try to disentangle Knox's pronunciation of the term, several possibilities can be proposed: *bānduruwo*⁴¹⁴ or *bāmuduruwo* may be used when the addressee is absent, whereas in the presence of the same, forms such as *bāmuduruwanē* or *bānduru[w]anē* may be used, all these terms having honorific connotations.

The form without '*m*' is used in fact by the ordinary people of lower ranks. The '*m*' was not pronounced by ordinary peasants. The non-pronunciation of '*m*' implies a more humble and inferior status of the speaker. Even '*w*' and '*r*' may be silent in the pronunciation of such an inferior addresser. Even today one can hear this form among the elderly people in rural areas. But this pronunciation pattern carries extremely significant political meanings. When a person of inferior status addresses a social superior, the ideal way to hold him or herself is to keep all body movements to a minimum. The lower one's status, the stronger the tendency to remain immobile. When speaking, the addresser would move his mouth as little as possible. That is why many syllables, pronunciation of which creates external muscle movements of the mouth, are un-pronounced in these forms of addressing. Thus the humblest form of *bāmuduruwanē* is indeed *bāndunnē*; many syllables are unpronounced, but the external muscle movements are few.

It is also important to examine Knox's knowledge of the working of the social system in order to get a proper grip on his work. It is well-known that Knox lived amongst

ordinary peasants.⁴¹⁵ Thus the world view of the ordinary peasant probably dominated his own view of the society. In the social world of the ordinary peasant at the village level, the dominant position held by the *goyigama* identity is unquestionable, in which case the world view of this caste would be a hegemonic formation. Knox's approach is seemingly a representation of this hegemonic world view. The way in which Knox used the term '*Hondrevs*' makes this quite clear. This was the term with which a non-*goyigama* low caste person would address a *goyigama* person. As mentioned above, all ordinary peasants, irrespective of their caste, addressed those of upper-classes by the same honorific term. Thus *goyigama* and other upper-class groups were included in a single constellation by virtue of the fact that members of lower castes addressed them all with a common honorific. Since it was not imperative for non-*goyigama* low castes to emphasize the distinction between ordinary *goyigama* people and the upper classes, the difference would not have been noticeable at the level of address.

My argument is therefore that the term that Knox used may not have necessarily meant a positive identity of a group, but may have been a form of addressing someone holding a higher ritual position. For example, it was quite possible that an ordinary peasant, who would be ranked *goyigama*, might address a person of higher status as *bānduruwanē* (or *Homdrevne* as Knox put it).

If we reinterpret sources on caste hierarchy, not only Knox but also others, against this alternative reading, it would be extremely difficult to explain the actual ritual order only in terms of the caste hierarchy that places the *goyigama* at the top. Hence Hocart's formulation of 'farmer aristocracy' becomes highly problematical. Any ritual order in a pre-modern social formation has to be understood in relation to the actual distribution of wealth, political power and social honour. The 'bifurcation' model of Hocart⁴¹⁶ does not fit with this actual distribution of wealth, political power and social honour at all. In the socio-economic setting under review, wealth, political power and social honour was accumulated mainly at the hands of those who enjoyed the surplus of the peasant, which formed the ruling class. The exception may be at the village level where the *goyigama* caste enjoyed part of the social honour from subordinate castes. This scenario however was not a 'microcosmic representation' of the larger formation, to use the term of H.L. Seneviratne.⁴¹⁷ The *goyigama* caste was indeed the major part of the peasantry whose surplus was the source of the ruling class's wealth. If there was no distinction between the *goyigama* peasant and the ruling class in the ritual order, the ideological sanction for surplus expropriation would be impossible to establish.

It is beyond the limits of this study to go into detail on other aspects of the ritual order, which established the distinction between the upper echelon of indigenous chiefs who formed a part of the ruling class and the peasantry, including *goyigama* people. Nevertheless, our sources provide ample information on the subject. I have already mentioned that indigenous chiefs of the top ranks were not given any caste identity, let alone *goyigama* identity. This would perhaps imply that the caste identity may not be crucial in their self-identification. Reading Valentijn between the lines gives an interesting picture:

Though these are now divided into so many sorts, they constitute but one caste, Bellales. But the most important and those who are but one grade higher will not eat with the lesser in their festivals or elsewhere, nor give them their daughters in marriage. But a lesser one will take the daughters from a superior one. They sow and mow and all their distinction consists only in the service they have at the court of the king, though they sometimes look to wealth in their marriage.

When a king is crowned, then in all the four most important castes must be present, such as *Raja*, *Bronne*, *Welende*, and *Goy*, by which four persons of different caste the royal crown is taken and set on the King's head.

According to their wealth and qualifications, the two aforementioned castes may enjoy royal honours, except the adorning of white linen, the white sombreiro (or umbrella) called Moetokanda by them and adorned from below and above with white linen, either in a *catepaenel* or otherwise, which honour belongs only to the King, and such others as he will permit on their festivals.⁴¹⁸

There are two points to be emphasised in this account. Firstly, a clear line of distinction has been drawn between lower grades and higher grades of *Bellales*, in terms of the ritual aspects of eating and matrimonial associations. Secondly, *welende* and *goy* have been conspicuously excluded from those who enjoyed 'royal honour'.

The question of *goyigama* prominence can be viewed from another angle. We can ask how the tendency of the *goyigama* to view themselves, or to be viewed by others, as part of the ruling class is to be explained. This view should not be dismissed as baseless, as it is expressed by a number of observers as discussed above. I propose to view this as a mode of social control, or to put in another way, as the main mode of hegemonising the majority of the peasantry for the benefit of the ruling class. The *goyigama* ascendancy, and the caste hierarchy based on it, was therefore an ideological apparatus by which, in a process articulated by Louis Althusser⁴¹⁹, the peasant imagined his real existence of life. It conferred higher ritual status for a part of the peasantry in relation to other peasants.

Such a self-identification would have undoubtedly served to mitigate the latent conflict between the ruling class which extracted part of the peasant's surplus and the exploited peasant. A major part of the peasantry, who were of the *goyigama* caste and indeed exploited by the ruling class but enjoyed high ritual status as a caste subject, could project its antagonistic attitudes not towards the ruling class but towards other peasants of ritually lower status. In other words, the village level caste differentiation gave even the poorest *goyigama* peasant an opportunity to imagine himself as a community with socially, economically and politically powerful elements, in opposition to other lower castes. Following Benedict Anderson we can consider these caste communities as "imagined communities".⁴²⁰

For the perpetuation of such a system there had to be appropriate mechanisms. The following section will look at some of the practices which ensured the continuity of the caste system. It is mainly based on a critical evaluation of Nur Yalman's analysis of the reproduction of caste distinctions in Sri Lanka.

6.3.3 Perpetuation of caste distinctiveness

The perpetuation of a hierarchical formation is fundamentally guaranteed by the readiness of low-status groups to submit to it. Nur Yalman who studied the caste formation in a Kandyan village of the mid-twentieth century observed that there was a 'resigned acceptance' of inferior status.⁴²¹ He implies that there was a mindset even amongst low castes where the status quo was accepted. In regard to the *berava* people in Terutenna, a Kandyan village, he writes that they showed no sign of leaving the village even when they had the opportunity to remove themselves from their lower status by doing so. He describes the situation as follows:

Such resigned acceptance of an inferior status will seem strange to many European readers, but it should be remembered that the basic trend of the religious system entirely support it. In Buddhism as in Hinduism the emphasis is on resignation, on right behaviour, and on the renunciation of worldly ambitions.⁴²²

Although this explanation of the character of the caste subject fits the above analysis of the caste hierarchy as a mode of hegemony, it is not sufficient to explain the actual historical experience. We have a large body of information in tombos to show how

people, particularly those of inferior castes, moved away from their 'original' habitats, a tendency clearly in opposition to a naïve acceptance of the status quo. Yalman is seemingly satisfied with this explanation, as he emphasises endogamy as the chief mode of the reproduction of caste relations. To give Yalman his due, this explanation may suffice in a situation in which no external influence, especially legal and political, plays a role in the perpetuation of caste hierarchy. That was exactly the case in the mid-twentieth century. For there were no systems of 'caste councils' to regulate the endogamic matrimonial structure, as in mainland India, and the perpetuation of endogamy which was, according to Yalman, the chief mode of the reproduction of caste relations, depended on 'individual choice'.⁴²³ He makes this clear when he observe:

It is then clear that, in Terutenne, the caste divisions themselves as well as the gradations within the castes are preserved not because of any law but because of the self-interest of individuals. The caste barriers are not 'categorical imperatives' sanctioned by direct communal force, but are the culminative result of individual decisions.⁴²⁴

Why is it important for our discussion to evaluate this argument? Though Yalman's study based on the mid twentieth century he does not take into consideration the specificity of the post-mid nineteenth century caste system following, particularly, the Colebrook reforms. Therefore one would easily get the impression that it is not logically impossible to apply his analytical framework to the whole history of caste formation in Sri Lanka. But, let alone the fact that its applicability for the mid-twentieth century caste formation has been questioned⁴²⁵ it is certainly not sufficient to understand the situation in the mid-eighteenth century.

Apart from endogamy there were a number of practices that sustained caste distinctions. Valentijn gives us an exhaustive description of the ways and means by which caste distinctions were preserved. Etiquettes, attire and naming were some outward manifestations. Special mention must be made here on the information we have on the naming patterns found in tombos. There was an obvious caste base for naming individuals.⁴²⁶ Certain individual names of low-caste persons may seem extremely derogatory by modern standards. There were certain names which had both polite and impolite forms, the polite form being given to *goyigama* persons while the impolite form was reserved for those of inferior castes such as *padu*, *bakuru*, *radā* and *berava*. In the case of *āchāri* caste the situation was different. They had the suffix of *nainde* (or *nachchire* for female), which made the name somewhat polite.⁴²⁷ The distinction was however conspicuously absent when Christian names were adopted, which was indeed a widespread phenomenon. The pattern gives an interesting insight into the politics of naming. It is obvious that the names of the inferior castes were not chosen voluntarily by themselves, but probably with the intervention of higher-caste indigenous chiefs.⁴²⁸ Or to be more precise, I suggest that these derogatory names of low-caste persons were probably ways in which the high-caste persons addressed them. After all, given the limited amount of exposure to the outside world, personal names hardly mattered. Since calling the other was both determined by and shaped the perceptions and social positions of each member of the society, it was the prerogative of the chiefs to determine what names were used.

By far the most important way to guarantee the perpetuation of the ritual function of caste distinctiveness was political authority. An observation made by Ralph Pieris and Kitsiri Malalgoda is directly relevant to this discussion. Malalgoda observes that 'the consolidation and legitimation of caste in Ceylon...was primarily a secular function mainly in the hands of the political authority, the king'.⁴²⁹ Likewise, Ralph Pieris observes 'in Kandyan times it was considered the lawful function of the king to ordain appropriate functions to various castes: he could also degrade certain villages or families of high caste

to a lower status....⁴³⁰ Though Malalgoda's 'secular function' and Ralph Pieris's 'secularisation of caste' are somewhat problematical conceptualisations,⁴³¹ the reality that they bring into the focus is extremely valid. Constant reference has been made to the flexibility of Sri Lankan caste system⁴³² and the absence of a Brahmin caste in order to uphold the religious sanctity of the caste hierarchy. It is true that the absence of the Brahmin caste as such gave the king unrestricted authority to perform the task of the ultimate dispenser of ritual status for the subject. Though the Order of Buddhist monks (*sangha*) were organized along caste lines, at least from the Kandyan period, they did not function as the Sri Lankan counterpart of Indian Brahmins.⁴³³

Under these circumstances, when the 'political authority' ceased to function as the guardian of the caste hierarchy, its internal unity became vulnerable. This was exactly what happened after the 1830s when a new form of government and civil administration began to evolve, in which the political authority no longer functioned as the dispenser of ritual status and regulator of the caste hierarchy. Various interest groups who were below the superior *goyigama* caste in the traditional system but gained some economic and cultural advancement under colonial rule were successful in breaking the basic norms of the traditional hierarchy. Significantly, there was no authority capable of upholding the traditional order against such challenges to the existing order.⁴³⁴ This is clearly in contrast to what happened in the case of India, where the Brahmin caste survived the breakdown of traditional political authority and even the consolidation of the modern democratic secular political formation. Although the power of caste hierarchy has been greatly weakened by the rise of competing secular ideologies and norms, the internal unity of the caste hierarchy has not been challenged as it was in nineteenth century Sri Lanka. It is obviously this situation that has, arguably, led mid- and late-twentieth century observers to view Sri Lankan caste formation as internally flexible.

6.4 Caste formation in the mid-eighteenth century

Table 6-1 presents three sets of data on the caste composition of some areas of the western maritime region. The first set provides caste based figures of *rājakāriya* performers in 1707.⁴³⁵ The second set is from tombos and based on the PLHs of 465 villages in Hina, Salpity, and Alutkuru *kōrales*. The third set is based on the 1814 census of Colombo district. The third set gives a more comprehensive idea than the first and second because unlike those it is based on the total population. By comparing the relative strength of each caste in each set of data, it is possible to get an idea of the distribution of castes.

The numerical supremacy of the *goyigama* caste is evident in all three columns. There is a discrepancy in the case of the *salāgama* caste. The primary area of concentration of this caste was the present-day Kalutara and Galle districts, which are outside the core region of this study. Moreover, the number of families given in table 6-1 in relation to the toambo period does not reflect the actual number of people of this caste. In general, the number of persons recorded under one PLH is extremely large. For example, the *salāgama* PLH in Wattala (Adhikari/ Hina) has sixty-six members. This corresponds to the size of *salāgama* PLH groups in their main stronghold in present-day Kalutara district.⁴³⁶

Figures for the surrounding areas of Colombo Fort, known as *four gravets* (*vier gravatten*), is given in table 6-2 in order to compare them with those in the inland areas. 'Others' in both tables include numerically insignificant castes as well as non-caste groups. Among the non-caste groups, the Moors, Chettys, Malabars, Europeans and ex-slaves are important. In the figures for the *four gravets*, fifteen families (eighty-five people) are classified as Sinhalese. It is not clear why they are not classified as castes. They are included in table 6-2 under 'others'. In Colombo only twenty-six percent (twenty-four percent families) of the population could be classified as castes, while others are not

considered as such in the dominant caste ideology. It should be mentioned however that the Malabars in Colombo *four gravets* have been classified according to various occupation groups such as washers, barbers, smiths and dancers. Since the caste is an organising principle among the Tamils as well (NB. Tamils were usually called by Europeans as Malabars), this may undoubtedly be referred to caste differences. Even the Sinhala caste groups are given as occupation groups.

Table 6-1: Caste based Population distribution (1707, 1760s and 1814)

Caste (within brackets name as in tombos)	Families in Colombo <i>disāvany</i> 1707	%	PLHs in 465 villages 1760s	%	Population - Colombo District 1814	%
<i>goyigama</i> (Bellales)	12074	58.96	3197	63.08	68837	60.8
<i>Hakuru</i> (Jagereros)	416	2.03	197	3.88	4408	3.8
<i>Padu</i>	922	4.5	283	5.58	4176	3.6
<i>Rada</i> (Wassers)	734	3.58	204	4.02	4269	3.7
<i>āchāri</i> (smits)	748	3.65	175	3.45	3230	2.8
<i>Durava</i> (Chiandos)	697	3.4	201	3.96	6231	5.5
<i>Karava</i> (Visers)	1760	8.49	166	3.27	15649	13.8
<i>Berava</i> (tamblinjeros)	357	1.74	83	1.61	941	0.8
<i>Badahela</i> (pottebakkers)	184	0.89	80	1.57	1207	1.0
<i>Hunu</i> (Kalkbranders)	164	0.8	52	1.02	1191	1.0
<i>salagama</i> (Chalias)	808	3.94	37	0.73	2492	2.2
<i>Ambattayo</i> (Barbers)	64	0.31	14	0.27	349	0.3
<i>Others</i> (including non-castes)			380	7.49		
<i>Total</i>	20476		5068	100	113,144	

Sources: tombo, SLNA/ 1/ 2790 & Roberts, "Caste Conflict and Elite Formation, 298

Table 6-2: Caste based Population (Colombo Four Gravets- 1760s)

Caste	Families	%	Total Population	%
<i>goyigama</i>	44	7.17	230	6.77
Hakuro	2	0.326	15	0.44
Padu	0	0	0	0
Rada	22	3.58	116	3.41
<i>āchāri</i>	24	3.91	126	3.7
Durava	8	1.3	50	1.47
Karava	35	5.7	261	7.68
Berava	3	0.48	24	0.7
Badahela	0	0	0	0
Hunu	0	0	0	0
salagama	2	0.32	7	0.2
Ambattayo	10	1.63	71	2.09
Others	463	75.53	2497	73.5
<i>Total</i>	613	100	3397	100

Source: Raben, R, 'Batavia and Colombo: The Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities, 1600-1800, Unpublished PhD dissertation, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1996, p.107

It is also important to present some information of the tendency of certain castes to admit members from outside. Although basic norms of castes do not permit inclusion of new members, we have some fascinating information of the possible admission of the *chetty* community by two castes, viz. *goyigama* and *karāva*. There were 124 *chetty* families in eighteen villages, which is an extremely significant number. The vast majority of them, seventy-four to be exact, were in one village, viz. Toppuwa (Dunagaha/ Alutkuru). A number of them were dispersed in interior villages, mostly in single family units.

Information regarding the integration of this community with *goyigama* and *karāva* castes is twofold. Firstly, there is direct information on marriage associations with the *goyigama* caste.⁴³⁷ One *chetty* family in Toppuwa (PLH eleven) had two *goyigama* men married to women of the family. This seems also the case in the *chetty* person in Wandurawa (Hina/ Māda), though in the other direction. His wife has a typical *goyigama* name (Punchi Etana). The fact that his daughter too had a similar name (Kuda Etana) suggests that the family was being integrated to the *goyigama* caste.

Secondly, the other set of information probably represents the next stage of the integration. There are a number of *goyigama* families and one *karāva* family which has the term 'hetti' (derivative, or rather Sinhialized form, of *chetty*) suffixed or prefixed to their *vāsagama* part of the name.⁴³⁸ Usually, majority of the *vāsagama* part of *chetty* families were formed in this manner. This suggests that non-*chetty* persons with the same kind of *vāsagama* had some patrimonial links with *chettys*. The PLH seventy-five of Toppuwa, where the majority is *chettys*, has the *vāsagama* of 'Hettige'. This is a quite common *vāsagama* for many *chetty* persons, including the one in Wandurawa that mentioned above. Similar cases are found in Wedamulla (Hina/ Adhikari), Hewagama (Hewagam/ Palle), Bulugahamulla and Udugampola (both Alutkuru/ Dasiya). Moreover, *karāva* PLH six of Moragoda (Hina/ Māda) had the *vāsagama* 'Hettitantrige'. It is important to note that, in the present day, there is a large number of people who were not considered *chetty* but had their *vāsagama* with 'hetti' suffixed or prefixed to it.

6.4.1 Some features of geographical of distribution of castes

There are a number of noticeable features in the geographical distribution patterns of castes. Urban-rural difference is quite obvious. When the figures for the 1760-71 period in the table 6-1 is compared with those of table 6-2, a clear picture could be obtained. Table 6-1 mostly represents the situation in the interior rural areas. The relative strength of each caste in the two geographical spaces is significantly different. The numerical strength of the *goyigama* caste in relation to other castes was somewhat lower in coastal areas when compared with interior areas. Moreover, castes such as *padu*, *badahāla* and *hunu* were conspicuous in their absence in Colombo's *four gravets*. Even *bakuru* and *salāgama* castes are virtually non-existent in Colombo compared to their significance in other areas. On the contrary, *karāva* (fishers), *āchāri* (smiths) and *radā* (washers) have higher numerical strength here. Compared to the overall situation found in table 6-1, their relative numerical strength was disproportionately high in Colombo, in comparison with the other numerically dominant caste in the interior.

Some important features of the geographical distribution of castes are not represented in the tabulated information. The distinction between interior castes and coastal castes is of considerable significance. The chief settlement areas of *karāva*, *durāva* and *salāgama* castes were coastal areas. The figures of major coastal settlements are not included in the column four of the table 6-1. The *salāgama* caste demonstrates another notable characteristic. As already mentioned, it was concentrated mainly in localities adjacent to present-day Kalutara and Galle districts and Negombo area in Colombo district. In the case of the *karāva* and *durāva* castes, their geographical distribution is almost identical. They were found mostly in coastal villages from Negombo to Kalutara. There were also

some interior villages where these castes were found, a phenomenon I will discuss separately as it had special socio-economic implications.

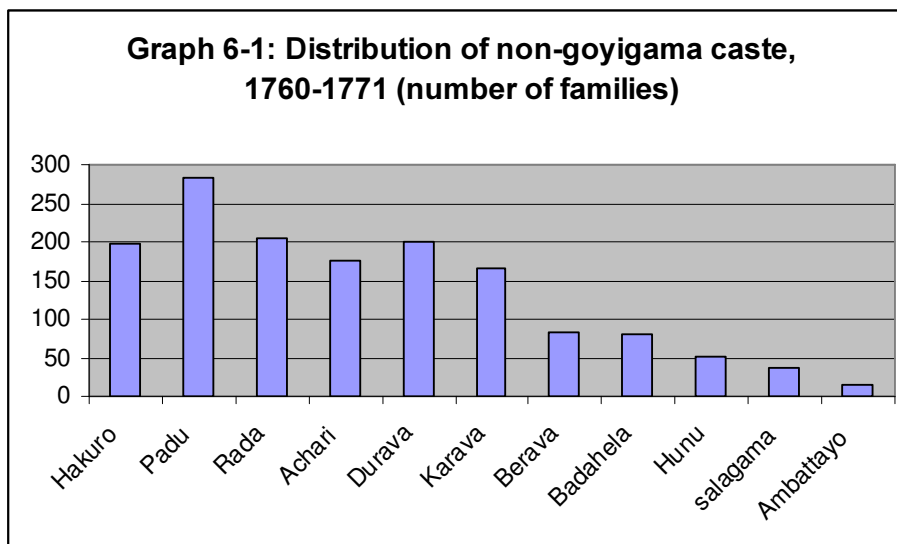
Quite an opposite trend can be identified in the interior regions where there were strongholds of *padu* and *bakuru* castes. Some significant *bakuru* concentrations were found near coastal areas. (See the map no. 10 '*bakuru* settlements in Hina, Alutkuru, Hewagam and Salpity *korales*') This will be discussed separately as this also has very special significance. The *padu* caste was, on the contrary, virtually non-existent in the coastal or, for that matter, in near-coastal areas (see the map no. 11, '*padu* settlements in Hina, Alutkuru, Hewagam and Salpity *korales*').

On the basis of these geographical distribution patterns, I propose three-fold regional sub-formations: interior formation, coastal formation and Colombo four-gravets formation. These sub-formations have significant socio-economic and historical implications. I propose, therefore, to take these regional variations into serious consideration in the course of the analysis.

Table 6-3: Distribution of Castes in 365 interior villages- 1760s

Name of the Group	No. of PLHs	No. of Villages
<i>goyigama</i> (<i>bellales</i>)	1598	216
<i>bakuru</i> (<i>wahumpura</i>)	123	49
<i>Padu</i> (<i>batgama</i>)	139	27
<i>radā</i>	105	76
<i>āchāri</i>	91	43
<i>durva</i>	85	26
<i>karāva</i>	60	18
<i>berava</i>	32	27
<i>badahāla</i>	45	18
<i>hunu</i>	25	3
<i>salagama</i> (<i>chālias</i>)	10	4
<i>āmbāttayo</i> (barbers)	7	6

Sources: Tombos of Hina and Salpity *korales*



Another variation can be seen in the relative density of distribution of each caste. Some castes tended to be concentrated in great numbers in a small number of villages while others were dispersed in small numbers over a wider area. Table 6-3 and graph 6-1 indicates these opposite orientations. The *goyigama* caste has not been analysed in table 6-3 and graph 6-1 because of the specific nature of its distribution. As the numerically and socially dominant caste it was found virtually throughout the region. Out of the 365 interior villages reviewed, only twenty-seven were found to be without members of the *goyigama* caste. In vast majority of the others, *goyigama* was the numerically dominant caste. Some noticeable features in its geographical distribution are worthy of note. It has been mentioned above that the numerical ascendancy of *goyigama* was somewhat weaker in the coastal areas than in the interior. There were 181 exclusively *goyigama* villages, a vast majority of them being in the interior except few. Interestingly, in most interior villages where the *goyigama* caste was less dominant in terms of numerical strength, *padu* caste was numerically strong. Some twelve out of forty-one villages where *goyigama* families were not found were exclusively *padu* villages.

In analysing the data in table 6-3 a special note is needed on *hunu* (lime burners) and *āmbāttayo* (barbers). In both cases, the geographical distribution may not say much about their dynamics because the numbers are insufficient for detecting distinct patterns. Therefore, we cannot make no definitive conclusions about these castes on the basis of the figures in the table. But, certain conclusion can be drawn with the help of other data.

Based on the analysis of the data in the table, 6-3, the *padu* caste could be placed at one end of the axis of the geographical density, with a tendency to live in dense concentrations, while the *radā* and *berava* castes could be placed at the other end of the same axis. Some eighty-seven percent of the *padu* families in the villages under review lived in twenty-four villages, with four or more families per village. Moreover, fifty-four of them lived in nine villages with ten or more families per village. On the contrary, only eighteen families (just above six percent) were dispersed in the same number of villages with one family in each village and eighteen more families in nine villages with two families each. In contrast, fifty-four percent of *radā* families lived in 112 villages with one family each, while another twenty-five of them lived in twenty-six villages with two families each. There were three villages with five families each and one village with four families, while twenty-four families (ten percent) lived in seven villages with three families per village. An almost identical pattern can be seen in the case of *berava* caste. Forty-nine families of this caste, that is fifty-nine percent of the total number of families reviewed, lived in same number of villages with one family each. Another twenty-five families (thirty percent) were found in ten villages with two or three families each.

If the *padu* caste shows a highly 'concentration' tendency in its geographical distribution, while the *radā* and *berava* castes show a tendency to disperse, the *hakuru*, *ābhāri* and *badahāla* castes show a combination of both trends. It would be useful to mention the minor *hunu* and *āmbāttayo* castes. Out of seventy-six *hunu* families in these villages, fifty-two were living in four villages, more than ten in one and five each in two more villages. Out of the other fourteen families, ten lived in as many villages and the other four in two villages with two each. There were fourteen *āmbāttayo* families altogether, dispersed in eleven villages. Six of them were in three villages with two each and the other eight were in as many villages.

6.4.2 Regional specificities of the concentration and dispersal tendencies of the geographical distribution of castes

There were notable regional specificities in the two contrasting geographical distribution patterns. Since every caste showed both tendencies to a greater or lesser extent, a look at regional specificities of each caste in the opposing tendencies is

important. Udugaha *pattuwa* and certain specific regional blocs of Mäda *pattuwa* and Adhikari *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* and Dunagaha *pattuwa* of Alutkuru *kōrale* were the favourite areas of *padu* concentrations. A high concentration of *padu* castes in the so-called '*dispense dorpen*' (maintenance villages) of high Company officials is also notable. Four out of five villages with more than twenty *padu* families were such places. Alutgama (Hina/ Mäda), Radawadunna (Hina) and Miwitike (Hina), with thirty-eight, twenty-two and twenty *padu* families respectively were *dispense* villages of the governor, while Debehera (Hina), with twenty-three *padu* families, was the *dispense* village of the *Disāve* of Colombo *disāwany*. Other villages with major *padu* concentrations were mostly on the periphery of the colonial economy and therefore more backward areas (see the map no. 11, '*padu* settlements in Hina, Alutkuru, Hewagam and Salpity *kōrales*'). Moreover, as mentioned above, the interior areas where *goyigama* dominance was less severe, the *padu* had greater concentration tendency.

Members of the *bakuru* caste had a tendency to concentrate mainly in villages located closer to the colonial centre (see the map no. 10, '*bakuru* settlements in Hina, Alutkuru, Hewagam and Salpity *kōrales*'). All seven villages with five or more *bakuru* families were such cases. Unlike *padu* caste, exclusively *bakuru* villages were not a common occurrence. I found only one such village in the reviewed area, Akarangahagama (Alutkuru/ Dunagaha) with three families. The dispersal tendency was a key feature amongst this caste in the peripheral areas around the colonial centre.

The distribution patterns of the *āchāri* and *badabāla* castes were similar to that of the *bakuru* caste. The main areas where these castes tended to be concentrated were also near the colonial centre. In the periphery the dispersal tendency is dominant. The *radā* and *berava* castes were similar to each other in the concentration/ dispersal axis, with one exception in relation to the latter. Apart from Hunupitiya (Dunagaha/ Alutkuru), a village near the coast with nine families of *berava* caste, no large concentrations of these two castes are found in the reviewed villages. Apart from this, the highest concentration of *berava* caste members was three per village. In the case of the *radā* caste, the highest concentration was a five-in-one-village. In general, those villages with larger concentrations of *radā* caste were densely populated villages. Four example Mahara and Alutgama of Hina *kōrale* with totals of 175 and 119 families respectively had five *radā* families each.

There was a significant numbers of *karāva* and *durāva* families in the interior regions although their major settlement areas were in the coastal belt. In the case of both castes, the dispersal tendency was strong with regard to their interior settlements. There were several interior villages where the concentration tendency could be noticed. There were six and five *karāva* families, respectively, in Weliveriya and Moragoda of Hina *kōrale*. The concentration of *karāva* in Moragoda needs to be explained. Although only five of the eleven families there were *karāvas*, they accounted for 115 people in a total population of 138. The *durāva* caste showed a strong concentration tendency in Alutgama of the same *kōrale* and Doranagoda, Ganemulla and Tammita of Alutkuru *kōrale*, with nine, seven and five each in the latter villages, respectively. The dominant settlement pattern of these castes in the interior areas is however the dispersal tendency.

6.5 Long term dynamics of the caste formation

In this section, the patterns identified in the preceding discussion will be situated within a wider context of the evolution of caste communities. To this end a sort of deconstruction of the caste system is needed. Based on the preceding discussion I try to divide the caste system into a number of sub-formations. Three determinants are employed for this purpose: regional, functional and historical. But in certain situations one of these factors may be of overriding importance in the evolution of each caste.

An easy distinction can be made between coastal and interior caste formations. Based on the earlier discussion of caste hierarchy, it is possible to argue that the interior formation was the dominant one in the ritual edifice of caste hierarchy. This ritual edifice was based on the *goyigama* ascendancy, which gave this caste the ritual sanction to procure the service of other castes. There was a process of integrating coastal castes in the ritual order, but this was incomplete at the start of the colonial encounter. As historical communities, castes of the coastal formation followed a distinct path particularly vis-à-vis the colonial reality.⁴³⁹ There were also fundamental differences in the economic activities of the interior and coastal formations. While the interior formation formed around peasant agriculture, the coastal was revolved around economic activities different from traditional peasant agriculture, such as fishing, toddy-tapping, carpentry, etc.

As the two formations expanded outward from a core area to the periphery they penetrated the sphere of the other formation. In so doing, they began to absorb some of each other's economic activities. For example, integration of groups of coastal castes in peasant agriculture could be seen as they expanded into the interior. Although members of the interior peasant castes who found themselves in the coastal areas did not take part in the traditional economic activities of coastal castes, they were integrated into new economic activities in the same manner as coastal castes.

Observing the interior formation closely, I suggest that this too was not a single formation. Although all the castes were enveloped in a single ritual edifice, internal differences are visible both historically and functionally. With regard to the occupational expertise of castes, three groupings can be distinguished: agricultural castes (*goyigama*, *padu* and *bakuru*), manufacturing castes (*āchāri* and *badahāla*) and service castes (*radā* and *berava*).⁴⁴⁰ This classification needs some clarifications. The criterion of classification here is the occupational expertise of each group, which could be a considerable source of their livelihood.⁴⁴¹ As everyone engaged in tilling the soil, there were no non-agricultural castes dependent exclusively on caste-based occupations for their livelihood.

However, manufacturing and service castes could earn at least part of their living by rendering their services to members of other castes. Probably the non-agricultural component of the manufacturing castes was higher than that of service castes because the labour needs of the manufacturing castes for their caste-specific occupations were higher. Paddy land ownership among *badahāla* and *āchāri* castes gives us a useful picture in this respect. The paddy-land ownership of *badahāla* caste in villages Wirangula, Alutgama (Hina/ Māda), and Mapitigama (Hina/ Gangaboda) was extremely low and below the subsistence level except in one case. The table 3-18 (see the Appendix III) also gives a clearer picture about their paddy-land ownership. Moreover, *āchāris*, especially goldsmiths seem less engaged in cultivation of the soil. Both in Ogodapola (PLH seven, Hina/ Māda) and Mapitigama (PLH 59, Hina/ Gangaboda), goldsmiths possessed no paddy lands. The labour needs of *radā* and *berava* castes for their caste-specific functions were lower than that of the manufacturing castes. The relative disengagement from the peasant agriculture is, therefore, different in each caste group.

If the *bakuru* caste is classified as one of jaggery makers, as the name suggests, it should have definitely classified as a manufacturing caste. I have not done that for several reasons. There is no doubt that jaggery-making is associated with this caste, and it has been noted quite often that in Kandy the *bakuru* people were obliged to deliver a quantity of jaggery to the king. The question however is to what extent their production process was determined by this occupation. The vast gap between the numerical strength of this caste and the likely demand for sugar does not justify a significant dependency on this production activity among this caste group. Making jaggery is also not a caste-exclusive occupation, at least in the known past⁴⁴² and therefore, it is not imperative for people to depend on this specialist caste for their sugar needs. Moreover, the pattern of spatial

mobility of this caste, which is characterised mainly by a shift towards the colonial-centre, where jaggery making from the kitul palm (*caryota urens*) was less common, does not imply a firm association of this caste with this occupation. Furthermore, there was another source of sugar, the coconut palm, which is not associated with this caste at all. I suggest, therefore, that the nomenclature '*bakuru*' is an anachronism based on the early history of this caste particularly in the Kandyan areas.⁴⁴³

Sources permit us to identify three historical processes which would have determined the existing nature of the caste formation. 1) Migrations from South India and the consequent formation of coastal caste communities.⁴⁴⁴ 2) Bringing artisans from South India by Kandyan Kings, which accounts for the early history of the *āchāri* caste.⁴⁴⁵ 3) The so-called 'drift to the southwest' where people moved to the Kandyan highlands and the southern and western wet zones following the decline of the so-called '*rajarata* civilisation'⁴⁴⁶. Although the impact of the first and second processes on the evolution of caste formation has sufficiently been explained, no such attention was given for the third process. I argue that the historical evolution of the *goyigama*, *padu* and *bakuru* castes has to be attributed to this demographic movement and to the encounter between migrants and those who were already living there.

It is, in my view, reasonable to argue that the core of the *goyigama* caste was formed from dominant groups of migrants, while the *bakuru* caste was comprised at least in part of those who were already in these areas and who, being less advanced than the newcomers, were subordinated to them.⁴⁴⁷ I base this assumption on several factors. First, as those who migrated from the northern plains did not come to a virgin land,⁴⁴⁸ the encounter between newcomers and old groups cannot be overlooked. Second, the information on the structure of the demographic distribution of *bakuru* caste, their economically backward character and the lower ritual status seem compatible with a scenario in which they were subjugated by a dominant group and in some cases were forced off their traditional lands. Third, the term '*kandeyo*',⁴⁴⁹ a derogatory expression which literally means mountain people, was used in the Kandyan lands for this group, probably by *goyigama* people. This suggests a scenario in which the *goyigama* chased or otherwise forced the *bakuru* people into the mountains. Such a scenario also fits with the caste's occupation of jaggery-making from the kitul palm, which is generally found in highland jungles. Fourth, some of their origin myths and certain aspects of their collectivity psychology show quite interesting structural resistance. One myth gives them a royal origin⁴⁵⁰ which is a form of demonstration of the dissatisfaction of their existing condition.⁴⁵¹ Moreover, this caste seems less submissive in character compared to some other castes such as *padu*, which is an interesting aspect of their collective psychology.⁴⁵² Its members definitely show stronger orientation of mobility as evident from the information given above. It is also meaningful to compare two maps (maps no. 10 and 11) indicating distribution patterns of *bakuru* and *padu* castes, where the former shows a tendency of moving to the centre while the latter tended to retreat to the periphery.

We are in no better position with regard to explaining the historical origins of *padu* caste. Some structural features are identical to that of the *bakuru* caste, especially being forced from the centre of their traditional homeland. But they seem more submissive than the *bakuru* caste and have a tendency to live in peripheral areas where the *goyigama* ascendancy was not so strong.

Different historical, regional and occupational aspects of each caste community determined the way in which they coped with colonial intervention. Based on the above information, I propose the following explanation of the relative strengths of various castes in coping with the colonial intervention.

Coastal castes (*karāva*, *durāva* and *salāgama*): The regional factor was dominant in their encounter with the colonial intervention. Less attached to peasant agriculture and

thereby to the interior formation, they were able to adapt more readily to the demands of the colonial economy. The case of *salāgama* may be somewhat exceptional in that they had a major role to play in the early colonial economy as cinnamon peelers.

Manufacturing and service castes: their specific occupational orientations determined their encounter with the colonial economy. There was a high demand for the labour of *ābhāri*, *radā* and *badahāla* castes in the colonial centre. The *berava* caste seems less privileged in this respect. Though there was a demand for their labour for the Company's administrative functions as tom-tom beaters, this demand did not pull them significantly to the colonial centre. The *radā* caste was in a much better position. Their expertise of washing clothes, a largely ritual function in the traditional system, was in high demand in the colonial centre.

Agricultural castes: The high ritual status that the *goyigama* caste possessed enabled them to function as intermediaries in the colonial administration and to transform this privileged position into economic gains. Although the *bakuru* caste showed a tendency to concentrate around the colonial centre, they remained socially inferior probably because they had no ability to provide specialized labour as was the case with the manufacturing and service castes. Yet their concentration around the colonial centre helped them in the long run to acquire some economic advantages. The extremely subordinate and submissive character of the *padu* caste kept its members quite far away from the colonial economy both structurally and physically. Though the Company required their labour as coolies, among other things, their backwardness, strong ties to the traditional hierarchy and, probably, the colonial administration's restrictions on their mobility kept them at the mercy of the traditional authority.

6.6 Caste and the Company

In the colonial context, hierarchical ideology became much weaker. As colonial rulers were not part of the ritual edifice that was guarded, *inter alia*, by the norms of the caste hierarchy, they had less interest in upholding it, apart for some pragmatic concerns, derived from two factors. Because colonial powers, particularly the Dutch, relied heavily on indigenous chiefs for the consolidation of their power, particularly in interior regions where traditional authority was stronger, they were compelled to function as guardians of the existing institutions, including caste hierarchy, in the same way that pre-colonial Kings had.⁴⁵³ As the caste system was a pivotal institution in the traditional order, they were obliged to protect it.⁴⁵⁴ Moreover, since caste played a major role in the social division of labour, particularly in the organisation of *rājakāriya*, in practical terms it was essential for colonial powers to protect the institution. For this reason, the Company sometimes imposed severe measures over certain facets of the life of caste communities.⁴⁵⁵

In spite of the declared policy of safeguarding the traditional order, colonial rulers significantly violated basic norms of the caste ideology, wittingly or unwittingly. This violation was not indeed a one-way process but was, to a certain degree, necessitated by some significant changes that were under way. The end result of this violation could be seen clearly in the reality of the caste formation in the nineteenth century and thereafter, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Colonial intervention brought about new modes of spatial mobility among communities. While some of them were encouraged, directly or indirectly, to move out of their traditional strongholds, the mobility of others was restricted by severe administrative measures. What is interesting is that both these trends caused imbalances in the traditional caste hierarchy. In the following section, the changing economic destiny of interior non-*goyigama* castes will be discussed in order to understand the way in which interior castes dealt with the colonial intervention.

6.6.1 Changing economic power of non-*goyigama* interior castes

The accumulation potential of non-*goyigama* castes depended largely on the increasing demand for the specialized labour of those castes in the emerging colonial economy. It has been already documented how *karāva*, *durāva* and *salāgama* castes benefited from these new opportunities.⁴⁵⁶ This is not however the entire story. *Āchāri* and *radā* castes, in particular, seem to have gained economic benefits at the colonial centre, while *hunu* and *badahāla* castes were also brought closer to the colonial centre by their special labour skills.

Table 6-4: Ownership of coconut plantations by non-*goyigama* interior castes (gardens with more than 200 trees)

Caste	Village	Area	No. of trees
<i>radā</i>	Kalubovila	Coastal	8850
<i>radā</i>	Wellawatta	Coastal	1145
<i>radā</i>	Kalubovila	Coastal	945
<i>hunu</i>	Pallidore	Coastal	436
<i>radā</i>	Kalubovila	Coastal	283
<i>āchāri</i>	Karagampitiya	Coastal	273
<i>āchāri</i>	Kalubovila	Coastal	258
<i>panikēki</i> (Barber)	Nedimala	Coastal	253
<i>radā</i>	Wellawatta	Coastal	252
<i>radā</i>	Kalalpitiya	Interior	210
<i>āchāri</i>	Kalubovila	Coastal	202
Barber	Dornadiwela	Interior	202
<i>padu</i>	Eluwapitiya	Interior	201
<i>bakuru</i>	Kahambilihena	Interior	200

Source: Tombos

I use two types of data concerning the relative accumulation capability of castes. Table 6-4 shows some figures on the ownership of coconut plantations by non-coastal, non-*goyigama* persons. The case of *radā* caste is outstanding. Out of the fourteen gardens, *radā* persons owned six gardens. The first two gardens in the table show the extremely high accumulation ability in this caste. *Āchāri* caste too showed some degree of accumulation ability. The place of *padu* and *bakuru* castes, numerically the largest of the non-*goyigama* interior castes, is noticeable. These two castes possessed only two gardens. The other important feature was that the accumulation ability of these non-*goyigama* interior castes was higher in coastal areas near the colonial centre.

The other set of data concerns *accommodessan* grants. The list of *accommodessan* grants (see **Appendix I**) shows that headmen of smiths were granted large amounts of land income as *accommodessan* for their service to the Company. A *mahavidāne* of gold and silversmiths and a foreman (*baas*) of the goldsmith at Colombo received the revenue from six *amunams* of paddy lands, equalling the amount received by an *arachchi*. The amounts received by foremen of stone-cutters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths and carpenters are also significant. With the possible exception of carpenters, all these service providers belonged to the *āchāri* caste. There were carpenters from other castes, especially from the *karāva* caste. The *accommodessan* grants of the other interior non-*goyigama* castes were not significant however. Moreover, I noticed that there is a high level of absentee ownership among *āchāri* and *radā* castes. As I have not systematically collected data on this subject it is difficult to draw firm conclusion.

The foregoing information could be supplemented by certain demographic data concerning interior non-*goyigama* castes. As shown earlier, *āchāri*, *badahāla*, *hakuru*, *radā* and *hunu* castes showed a clear tendency to concentrate in and around the colonial centre. As shown in table 6-2, *āchāri* and *radā* castes tended to move into the colonial centre, which is an indication of the high demand for their labour. The absence of the *badahāla* and *hunu* castes within the colonial centre is understandable owing to the nature of their production activity, but the high demand for their labour is undeniable. Hence, their concentration in the outer ring of the colonial centre.

The case of the *hakuru* caste needs some explanation. If this caste is considered as, primarily, a Kandyan caste, as discussed above, its concentration in the outer ring of the colonial centre may suggest a general tendency to move towards the colonial centre. However, the available demographic data are not conclusive because they do not say when this movement started. Since this area was the core region of the Kotte kingdom, it is possible that this began in the pre-colonial period. Their extremely low presence in the Colombo four gravet area, however, is quite significant (see table 6-2 in page 140). They were also rarely found in coastal belt. This absence could be explained in terms of their stronger association with peasant agriculture. More research is needed however to account for the social significance of their probable movement towards the colonial centre. Although this caste may not have gained much economic benefit from being closer to the colonial centre during the time of our study, this definitely helped them in the long run. As the villages they settled in around the colonial centre became extremely busy areas in the colonial economy in the coming centuries, they were in a better position to be a part of that process.⁴⁵⁷ This state of affairs can be compared with the economic backwardness of the *padu* caste.

The *padu* caste was seemingly the least fortunate in terms of acquiring new opportunities opened up under the colonial rule. Contrary to their extremely low ritual and economic status, demand for their labour by the Company was quite high, perhaps second only to that of the cinnamon-peeling *salāgama* caste. They were mostly used as coolies, transporting goods, carrying heavy loads, and bearing palanquins. There were the functions with which they were most commonly identified.⁴⁵⁸ They were also used for cultivating *dispense* villages of high Company officials.⁴⁵⁹ It seems that the spatial mobility of this caste was regulated by the Company, as was that of the *salāgama* caste. The *padu* were concentrated in great numbers, mainly in the *dispense* villages. Since their labour was frequently mobilized, the restriction on spatial mobility would have been vital. This factor indeed had a long-lasting impact on their subsequent development as a community. Unlike the *salāgama* caste, which had many opportunities to benefit from the growing colonial economy, regulation of the spatial mobility of *padu* caste combined with other unfavourable factors, peripheralized them in the colonial economy, both geographically and structurally.

When a minority of certain castes had relatively high economic gains it did not change the fortunes of the entire caste community but it had the potential to affect the ritual status of the caste, because the next step of economically powerful but low ritual-status groups was to compete for higher ritual status. The significance of the emergence of parallel hierarchies within the castes has to be understood in this context.

6.6.2 Emergence of internal hierarchies in castes

Following the growth of the economic power of various castes, there began a process which undermined the prerequisites for a single hierarchical order. In the traditional pre-colonial system, the ritual status of each caste was fixed and everyone had to acknowledge its ritual status and position within the hierarchy, upon which the continuity of the system depended. With the emergence of economically powerful elite groups

within ritually lower castes, this situation began to change, because elite groups of former low castes began to claim higher ritual status for their castes, thereby reinterpreting the hierarchy. Although the trend became visible in the nineteenth century, it had a much earlier origin.

This new phenomenon was reinforced, if not initiated, by the appointment of higher indigenous chiefs for various castes. In the mid-eighteenth century, this type of system had been developed for several castes. It was not new to have caste headmen even in the traditional system. But headmen of a lower caste could not claim higher ritual status in front of an ordinary member of a higher caste, thus it was not a parallel hierarchy. Under the new system a different system came into being. This was visible very early in the case of *salāgama* and *karāva*. The following discussion on the *salāgama* case provides a useful background for understanding the new process.

Table 6-5: Hierarchical formation of Chalias (salagama caste)

Category	Number
<i>mudaliyār</i>	5
<i>mubandīram</i>	7
<i>ārachchis</i>	25
<i>kankānams</i>	50
<i>lascarins</i>	1754
Cinnamon peelers	2749
<i>dekaṁkārayās</i>	2077
<i>bulavāliyas</i>	12
<i>pannayās</i>	105
Total	6784

Source: Schreuder Memoir, p.75

The way in which the Company controlled the destiny of the *salāgama* caste was important in two respects. Controlling their spatial mobility and over-employment of them as a source of labour for cinnamon, their major item of overseas trade, took them away from the traditional peasant agriculture and precluded them from intermingling with the rest of society. As shown earlier, this caste was concentrated in villages in specific areas and their spatial movement was strictly regulated. This resulted in a community that was in essence organized outside the rest of the society of which it was traditionally a part. This followed the emergence of a separate internal hierarchical organization of the caste as shown in table 6-5. This internal hierarchical formation was consolidated by the late-eighteenth century. A long story about the investigation of an alleged intrigue by a group of *salāgama* chiefs to instigate cinnamon peelers to stage an uprising in the last decade of the eighteenth century reveals interesting information on the chiefs' influence over ordinary members. The main actor of this saga was one *Mubandīram* Mirando, who allegedly attempted to get a higher position by making ordinary peelers riot against other chiefs. He was apparently supported by some other chiefs as well. This episode represented a much developed stage of the internal hierarchical formation, which was characterised by competing interests among the elite of the same caste and the mobilization of the lower ranks to secure the interests of the upper rank.⁴⁶⁰

Kotalawe describes an incident which could be considered as an earlier phase of the evolution of this intra-caste hierarchical formation.

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 Durawes but was resisted by the other castes serving in the same department. The latter refused to serve under the Durawe Mudaliyar. The result was that the Governor dismissed the Durawe Mudaliyar and once again appointed a Goyigama for the post. This displeased the Durawas who refused to serve under the Goyigama headmen. 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.⁴⁶¹

This situation demonstrates two points. On the one hand, certain castes which were lower in the traditional caste hierarchy, the *durāva* in this case, refused to work under headmen of higher castes, which was a challenge to the traditional caste norms. On the other hand, the Company administration did not hesitate to break traditional caste norms by taking measures to establish parallel intra-caste hierarchies. At the end of the Company rule, the *karāva* caste was also organised on the basis of an intra-caste hierarchy. By 1802 they had two *mudaliyārs*, two *muhandirams* and four *mahavidānes*.⁴⁶²

What might have been the implications of such a phenomenon? According to the traditional caste norms, it was mandatory, at least in theory, for even the highest-ranking member of a lower caste to recognise the higher ritual status of even the lowest-ranking member of a higher caste. This type of distribution of social honour was absolutely impossible when there were, for example, *mudaliyārs* (the highest rank of the indigenous chiefs), from a lower caste, while there were coolies in the highest caste.⁴⁶³ A *mudaliyār* of the *karāva* caste, for example, would not acknowledge the higher ritual status of a coolie from the *goyigama* caste.

The continuity of a single caste hierarchy was enabled, among other things, by the close relationship between the distribution of economic and political power and ritual status. In situations in which sections of lower castes achieved economic advancement and wielded significant political power, it became difficult to maintain the traditional modes of distribution of ritual status. This was what happened in the case of *karāva*, *salāgama* and *durāva* castes.

It is perhaps more important to see how this new development affected the interior castes. While *goyigama* people, particularly chiefs, may not have been happy about this development, they would have been relieved as long as the traditional ritual order of the interior castes remained in tact. This is mainly because it was against the interior lower caste that the *goyigama* caste defined its higher ritual status.⁴⁶⁴

There were minor headmen even for lower caste service providers such as *padu*. There was a hierarchical relationship between these minor headmen and ordinary service providers. In 1707, twelve coolies requested that the *Disāve* of Colombo replace their *duraya*, a minor headman who had a group of *rājakāriya* providers under him, for maltreatment.⁴⁶⁵ The nomenclature 'duraya' had a derogatory connotation. Usually this term was used for minor headmen of low castes.⁴⁶⁶ There were also village headmen of lower castes such as *majorāls* among the interior low castes. For example, Tikkuwage Distia of *bakuru* caste in Kahambilihena (Hina/ Māda) was a 'half *majorāls*'.⁴⁶⁷ This situation cannot be considered as reflecting the emergence of a parallel hierarchy, as these minor headmen did not hold high ritual status, or economic and/ or political power to claim high ritual status.

But a different phenomenon could be seen regarding some other castes. As evident from the list of *accommodessan* grants (see the Appendix I) washers (*radā* caste)⁴⁶⁸ and barbers (*āmbāttayo*) had *vidānes*⁴⁶⁹ while smiths (*āchāri* caste) had *mahavidānes* and foremen (*baas*). Possibly they were higher in status compared to a low-profile *duraya* or *majorāls*.

Their position also has to be judged against their higher economic power. It has already been mentioned that they received comparatively higher *accommodessan* grants.

It is definitely unlikely that these castes claimed high ritual status in the mid-eighteenth century. The important factor however is that the emergence of headmen among these castes with growing economic opportunities set a trend in motion which kept the *goyigama* ascendancy over these castes at bay. Though these developments should not be overstated, putting them in proper perspective brings us to the conclusion that the single-hierarchy caste system was being undermined.

6.7 Communities vs. hierarchy: some concluding remarks

There was a structural tension between caste hierarchy and the caste communities that were absorbed into this hierarchy by hegemonic groups. This tension may not have been visible as long as the hegemonic forces were dominant, although some manifestations would spring up in various forms. Demographic movements and, in particular, the tendency of low-caste communities to cluster in relatively dense geographical areas with a high degree of communal ties in the pre-colonial times may be considered such manifestations. The imposition of the hegemonic hierarchy also was not a linear process. As discussed earlier, there were tensions even within groups with high ritual status for the ideal hierarchy, particularly over the modes of inclusion and exclusion among the dominant groups. Those tensions however had no significant bearing over the fate of low ritual status groups.

However, wider avenues were opened up following the colonial intervention where the tension between the hegemonic hierarchy and caste communities with low ritual status became visible. This was due to a number of reasons. First and foremost, the consolidation of colonial hegemony broadened the sphere of economic activity. It enabled some groups of caste communities to cross over boundaries set up by the traditional ritual order and acquire some economic power. This was supplemented by the wider distribution of political power too. If low castes were structurally omitted from the distribution network of political power, contours of the distribution of political power were expanded under the colonial rule. Higher demand for peasant surplus demanded effective control over *rajakariya* performing communities. The delegation of political power to higher echelons of the caste communities was one of the most effective methods employed by colonial rulers in this connection. This gave dominant groups within some castes an opportunity to acquire significant political power which had hitherto been limited only to groups with high ritual status.

The rise of Christianity was also an important factor. As an ideological construction, Christianity lay outside the dominant ideological universe of which caste hierarchy was a dominant element. It is true that Buddhism, the dominant religious formation in this region, did not uphold caste norms strictly.⁴⁷⁰ Nonetheless, it appears that Buddhism had adapted very well to the existing situation, although subtle tensions are visible in some texts such as *janawamsaya*. The case of Christianity is somewhat similar to the case of Buddhism, in that the former also had the tendency to tolerate caste norms. But the most important factor is that the majority of converts to Christianity were non-*goyigama* communities and therefore the *goyigama* ascendancy was weakened among Christian converts.

The spread of Christian names too is an important phenomenon. This is significant because 'naming' was a dominant mode of the reproduction of caste distinctiveness. Perhaps more research is needed to make sure whether the adoption of Christian names, particularly, by members of lower caste was seen as a means of crossing the caste boundaries. It was, however, a widespread phenomenon. It would also be important to see whether the adoption of Christian names coincided with conversion or whether

conversion was an independent phenomenon. There are some interesting cases in which attempts were probably made to counterbalance the caste-neutral nature of Christian names, at least by probable *goyigama* tombo commissioners with definite caste prejudices. There are some Christian names such as *Pilippuwa*, the 'wa' ending of which was used with derogatory connotation to imply the low ritual status of the name holder (Pilippu is the Sinhalized form of Philip when it is used for a person of high caste).

Spatial distribution played an important role in the ability of caste communities to bypass the impact of hierarchy, at least to some degree. Moving out of areas where high castes were powerful and dominant may have been a strategy of the weak to avoid, or at least to ease, repression. Some spatial mobility patterns may have been determined by the colonial factor while the others may be traced back to pre-colonial times. Coinciding with the colonial intervention, these spatial mobility patterns affected various groups in different ways. Those who moved towards the colonial centre had a relatively good chance of achieving emancipation from the repression of the traditional hierarchy. But those who remained in the interior suffered the opposite fate. The *bakuru* caste may be cited as an example for the former instance while the *padu* caste may be for the latter.

The ways in which colonial rulers played the caste system was also a significant factor. Their pragmatic concerns led to different forms of treatments for different castes. While certain castes were brought to the core areas of the colonial hegemony, others were driven away towards the periphery.

All in all the colonial intervention did not break the traditional caste hierarchy, but it did result in changes to its *modus operandi*. In the colonial centre, opportunities opened up for new economically and politically powerful groups to compete for high ritual status, while in the periphery, where the authority of *goyigama* castes and particularly *goyigama* chiefs were entrenched, the traditional hierarchy remained intact.

Chapter Seven: The discussion

7.1 Introduction

The objective of this study was not only to investigate the structural changes in the peasant social formation in the chosen time and space, but also to locate those changes in wider historical as well as historiographical context. This chapter, therefore, will try to meet two objectives. The first is to give a general outline of the study's findings and to situate them in the context of general historical developments in the early colonial times. The second is to discuss the findings of the study against the backdrop of some important discourses on the changes in peasant societies that took place in the last several centuries, particularly in the context of European expansion and industrialisation. By doing so, I will try to shed a new light in understanding of the social transformation that occurred in the context of the colonial encounter in early-colonial period.

7.2 Land and labour

Chapters from three to six identified a number of changes to the peasant's economic and social life in the western maritime regions of Sri Lanka in the mid- and late-eighteenth century. Chapter three noted shifts in the structure of the production process, including the declining significance of chena cultivation, the rise of garden crops and plantations, the relative stagnation of paddy cultivation and realignments in the social division of labour. Fundamental to these changes was the emergence of new relationships between the peasant and the two main forces of production: land and labour. The character of an agrarian system of production, which by definition depends on the cultivation of land, is determined in large part by the ways in which labour is organised. Other factors such as a region's ecological character could significantly affect an agrarian system of production, but even this ultimately manifests itself in the network of relations between land and labour.

The pre-colonial system of peasant agrarian production was based primarily on the distribution of peasant labour amongst three production spaces: paddy field, chena and household garden. The equilibrium was maintained by the relative distribution of labour for each production space according to its relative importance in the production process. Thus paddy cultivation had the highest priority, followed by chenas. The labour that went for household garden was meagre. During the time under review, gardens were becoming more important, and a fundamental change was taking place in the nature of the garden itself. Under the pre-colonial system, the garden was most important as the place where the peasant's house was built rather than as a space of production. In the period under review the relationship between the peasant dwelling and the garden was changing. Thus, in most cases they could no longer be called *gewatta*, the Sinhala term for the household garden, but rather *watta* (plural *watu*), which is not necessarily a household garden. These *watu* were found in varying sizes some of which I have identified as plantations and were meant for cultivating one or more particular crops most probably intended for the market.

This rise of gardens and/ or plantations had major implications for the organization of labour, which had to be radically redistributed. In the long run, this redistribution was effected by the progressive disengagement of peasants from chena cultivation, which VOC policies certainly discouraged. Apart from this, the rise of large-scale plantations, particularly for cinnamon and coconut, were becoming a major consumer of land, reducing the availability of land for chenas. As the labour consumption for chena cultivation fell, the redistribution of labour became necessary.

Apart from this internal redistribution of labour within the space of peasant production, there was an overall decrease in the labour available for peasant production,

mainly as a result of the increasing demand for *rājakāriya* labour. The demand for labour under the colonial rulers, particularly in the time of VOC, was much higher compared to the situation under the pre-colonial kings. This high demand disturbed the pre-colonial equilibrium of labour distribution between *rājakāriya* and the basic production activity of the peasant. The change that this new situation caused could be seen mainly in the fact that the *rājakāriya* system was transforming into a sort of quasi-wage-labour system in contrast to the un-paid character of the pre-colonial system, although because the compulsory nature of the *rājakāriya* was retained it was still not a typical capitalist free wage-labour system.

Labour was draining away from the traditional peasant production thanks also to the emergence of the large plantations owned by chiefs and other non-traditional land owners such as *chettys* and free *burghers*. As Colvin R. de Silva has discussed, early nineteenth century sources show that this gave birth to the contract system whereby labourers were allowed to grow secondary crops on the plantations in return for working and looking after those plantations, which were owned chiefly by absentee landowners.

These changes created a dualistic character in the region's economic system. On the one hand, there were sectors of subsistence farming, such as paddy and chena cultivation, although the latter was decreasing its significance. On the other hand, gardens were increasingly and plantations exclusively oriented towards the market.

The developments discussed in chapter four affected the peasant's relationship to the land. It discussed how the ways in which colonial powers dealt with the pre-colonial structures of land tenure and ownership brought about fundamental changes in these structures. The most far-reaching development was the detachment of land tenure from the system of traditional authority. This was caused by two parallel changes to the pre-colonial modes of land tenure. The first was the diminished importance of the *gama* (village) as a unit of land tenure, paving the way for the single holding (*panguwa*). This happened not by design but by default as a consequence of the measures that the VOC administration took to reinforce its hold on the lands and their revenue. The second was the way in which the VOC articulated the customary principle of 'lord of the land' (*bhupati*). In contrast to the dominant pre-colonial mode of articulation of the principle, where the whole country was considered the domain of the king, who thereby had a legitimate right to claim part of the produce and labour of the cultivators of lands of this domain and to claim also the free and exclusive use of some of its natural resources, the Company used this principle to function as a typical land owner, as well as enjoying all the benefits of a pre-colonial ruler.

These developments caused dramatic structural changes in the land tenure. First and foremost, they made the land a commodity which could be bought and sold. As Siriweera has shown,⁴⁷¹ this commodity aspect of land was not totally unknown in pre-colonial times, but it had never been the dominant form of land tenure that it became in the colonial period. No customary law or institution could prevent the tenant of a land holding from selling his plot to another party, with the proviso that due taxes were paid and service obligations performed by the new owner. In the pre-colonial system this was more difficult because the tenant was bound by a number of institutions and structures of authority.

The traditional authority of indigenous chiefs was also severely reduced by these developments. When the *gama* was the main mode of land grants, chiefs, as the receivers of these grants wielded considerable power over the land and its tenant-cultivators. When the single holding became the basic unit and its legal position was clearly defined, the rights of the tenant of the single holding was enhanced, which effectively eliminated the role of the chief in the structural relations of land tenure. Changes in the way in which the chiefs were remunerated for their service to the sovereign also reduced their authority

over land and tenants. When the chiefs were remunerated in the form of revenue from single holdings rather than from village grants, their grip over the tenant was formally terminated. Under the traditional system of village grants, the grantee was able to use the unpaid labour of the tenant cultivator with virtually no restrictions. Under the new system, the amount of surplus that could be extracted from the tenant was minutely defined. No excesses were possible, at least theoretically. Moreover, the lands subject to these revenue grants were not necessarily in one location but dispersed across a wider geographical area than a village, the former unit of grant. This also would have reduced the chief's authority over the tenant-cultivator because geographical proximity had played a crucial role in his exercise of authority.

These changes by no means suggest the end of chief's authority. Although the relationship between traditional authority and land tenure was severed, the system of the traditional authority was not abolished and it remained an indispensable part of the administration. Other avenues for the exercise of authority opened up to compensate for the loss of the chief's traditional power over lands and tenants. The political and ritual privilege of the chiefs by and large remained in tact. The Company indeed wanted to maintain the traditional relationship between the chiefs and inhabitants as long as it did not harm the Company's interests. Therefore, the VOC did not hesitate to curb the unrestricted power of the chiefs whenever the latter stood in the way of consolidating the VOC's position over the peasants. But it could not go too far in this direction because collaboration between the Company and the chiefs was crucial for the continuation of the Company's administration in the region. A perfect balance between the conflicting interests of the two parties, however, was never achieved. The consolidation of colonial rule took place indeed side by side this conflict, which manifested itself overtly or covertly, depending on the circumstances.

7.3 Class and caste

The discussion in chapters three and four provides us with the background against which to evaluate the changing social and economic relations that are the focus of chapters five and six. Changes in class and caste formations were largely determined by developments noted in chapters three and four.

The nature of class formation in a particular society is determined by the economic opportunities available. No society provides equal economic opportunities for all its members, and this in turn creates classes. The determinant of the pre-colonial class formation was the subsistence nature of peasant production and the ability of the ruling class, including royalty and the chiefs, to extract part of the surplus of the peasant. The unequal distribution of ritual status among various castes also played some role in this respect. The high ritual status groups such as the *goyigama* caste had better access to rich lands than did the lower castes, which created class distinctions at the local level. While these two factors of the determination of class differentiation remained unchanged in the mid-eighteenth century, other factors also came to play decisive roles. Diversification of economic activities, the emergence of new social groups benefiting from the new modes of organisation of *rājakāriya* labour by the Company and growing landlessness among some sections of the peasantry added new dimensions to class formation.

The changing place of the garden as a production space was a formidable development that gave some groups the capacity to amass wealth. The role of coconut cultivation was quite important in this respect. The emergence of coconut plantations which were not only quantitatively but also qualitatively different from ordinary gardens was a clear indication that certain sections were benefiting from this avenue for the accumulation of wealth. Some signs of accumulation from paddy farming can also be observed. Certain social groups such as low-ranking chiefs, village headmen and newly

emerging groups such as *lascarins* who wielded some authority owing to their collaboration with the colonial rule accumulated significant tracts of paddy lands the produce of which exceeded their subsistence needs. So were the high- and middle-rank chiefs, some of whom were becoming absentee-landowners for whom paddy lands played a significant role.

Parallel to this tendency of accumulating lands, growing landlessness and low access to lands was becoming a grim reality. It is impossible to gauge the immediate effects of these diverging tendencies at this stage of research, but some general observations can be made. The tombos record large numbers of migrants to Kandyan lands. As mentioned in the introduction, to a certain degree these figures probably reflect the upheaval of the Kandy-Dutch War of early 1760s, but not all migration in this period can be explained by the war. It appears that migration was strong amongst the groups with low economic and social power, particularly of low castes. Population pressure, which could create scarcity of lands, was probably not a major factor in migration at this time. Nevertheless, access to better cultivable lands was not necessarily determined by the overall availability of virgin lands. In the time-space context of this study, at least two factors were decisive in this respect. On the one hand, making new paddy lands was an extremely labour intensive and complicated process, and lands conducive to paddy farming were limited. Thus when the landlessness was caused by the concentration of land in the hands of a small group, it was not easy for the landless peasants to move to new lands in the same area.

On the other hand, the Company policy of claiming outright ownership of uncultivated lands probably restricted the landless peasants' ability to resettle in new lands. The redistribution of these '*Compagnies gronden* (Company lands) was a complicated bureaucratic process and geared to the benefit of the more affluent members of society. The Company's aim was also to redistribute these lands in such a way that they received maximum benefits. Thus it was quite understandable that it preferred to dispense lands for well-to-do sections that had a higher accumulation power, by making it easier to acquire economic benefits. In fact Company officials openly encouraged chiefs to acquire more and more land and put it under cultivation, although they discouraged the illegitimate acquisition of land, which would deprive the Company of its share of the revenue.

This scenario shows how difficult it was for impoverished members of society to access cultivable lands. For a structural understanding of this situation one has to turn to the ways in which landlessness came about. It was not simply a result of forceful evictions from the land; at least such a process cannot be detected in our sources.⁴⁷² Rather the reduction of number of a family unit was objectively demanded by the fall of sustainability. Chapter two has shown that there was a high level of population eviction in some areas. The case of PLH six of Kahambilihene (Hina/ Māda) is a vivid example of this situation (see chapter six). Evictions had drastically reduced the number of members of the family during the time between two tombo series. One explanation for the low population growth, in addition to natural causes, may be the low level of sustainability. Figures cited in chapter two showed significant demographic fluctuations in different sub-regions, and I showed that measures such as manipulating modes of marriage and, perhaps, infanticide were employed to maintain demographic balances at a sustainable level.

If the growing number of members in the family was to be retained in the same family, more land was necessary, unless there were other sources of income, which was unlikely for most families. When there was an accumulation tendency among the well-to-do and socially and politically powerful groups, less powerful groups found it difficult to enlarge their estates enough to feed their growing families. This was quite obvious in the following centuries when population grew at a rapid rate. Parliamentary debate over the

Paddy-lands Act of 1958 brought to the fore information on the scale of the division of paddy holdings over generations, which made making a living from them simply impossible.⁴⁷³ This was a major cause of the aggravating rural poverty of the twentieth century, which led to two massive insurgencies in 1971 and the late 1980s.

Access to land was not the sole determinant of class differentiation. Myrdal and Béteille attach considerable importance to landownership with respect to class formation in the agrarian systems in the South Asia.⁴⁷⁴ While this is applicable to our case, they tend to leave unexplained another and perhaps more important factor, namely labour. In the pre-colonial period, the ability to control labour was more significant than access to land. The pre-colonial ruling class was not a landowning class. Rather, the chief source of its economic power was its ability to control the labour of the peasant. Ability to control or possess lands did not guarantee the accumulation of wealth, particularly when labour was not a marketable commodity and productivity hardly exceeded the subsistence level. Sections of the peasantry who had higher access to better lands, like the case of *goyigama* caste in our case, might have relatively more economic power at the local level than other peasants, as is clear from the discussion of class differentiation in the Ogodapola formation in chapter six. Such groups however could not increase their accumulation capability beyond a certain level that could be achieved by using their family labour, unless they could benefit from the labour from the rest of the peasantry. As I have discussed in chapter six, the PLH number one of Ogodapola (Hina/Māda) could, probably, have been able to control the labour of some absentee *padu* PLHs of the same village. This was, however, not applicable to all *goyigama* peasants, although many of them might have had access to better lands than the peasants of lower castes. Higher accumulation of wealth occurred in the hands of those who controlled labour, the upper and, probably, middle ranks of the ruling class.

If we compare this pre-colonial situation with that of the mid-eighteenth century an interesting reality can be observed. We have seen that the chiefs showed a growing tendency to accumulate lands. This was a means of compensating for their diminishing grip over the relatively unrestricted acquisition of peasant's surplus. This was unrestricted under the pre-colonial system in the sense that there were no competing power structures to control peasant labour, whereas the colonial administration functioned as a competing power structure insofar as the control of peasant's labour was concerned. It was *relatively* unrestricted in the sense that it was subject to the level of the class struggle, or, in other words, to the bargaining power of the peasant, which was not very high. Moreover, as has been discussed elsewhere in this study, relatively low demand for surplus meant that violent conflicts between the ruling class and the peasantry were infrequent. This situation could be the main reason for the absence of violent peasant uprisings in Sri Lanka in pre-colonial times.

Although the chiefs were deprived of most of the traditional modes of control over peasant labour, especially under the Company rule, they found ways and means to regain some control, without which their increasing acquisition of lands would have become less profitable. This could be done owing to the loose colonial rule in the interior areas. Although the Company's reach into these interior areas peaked by the mid-eighteenth century, it could not completely break the chiefs' control over peasant labour. We hear again and again that Company officials lamented the illegitimate use of peasant's labour by the chiefs.

There were a number of ways in which the chiefs controlled peasant labour. At one end there were customary and 'legitimate' means that colonial rule tolerated, under which the peasants had been made to believe that they were obliged to render service to the chiefs owing to the hegemonic character of traditional authority. At the other end there were 'excesses' that the Company found irritating. Apart from these modes there were a

number of innovations including the 'contract system' discussed by Colvin R. de Silva and the *ande* system.

Newton Gunasinghe employs the 'concept of the reactivation of archaic relations within the structure of peripheral capitalism' to explain this type of labour relations.⁴⁷⁵ This formulation is extremely problematic because it was not a 'reactivation'; it was enabled solely by the perpetuation of traditional or, in Gunasinghe's words 'archaic', relations. By focusing on the problem of continuities and discontinuities in structural relations, we can cast new light on this issue. Gunasinghe suggests that these relations 'are not remnants left in the sense of the vestigial limbs of the whale, but are torn away from the previous social formation and reactivated'⁴⁷⁶. He further argues that 'the peripheral capitalist structure...reactivates archaic relations and is likely to remain a peripheral capitalist formation, unless it breaks totally from the capitalist mode of production itself'⁴⁷⁷.

Without serious research, it would be undesirable to make a judgement on the sustainability of these 'archaic' relations in the face of the increasing exposure of those relations to the more intense inroads of capitalist relations into the rural areas in the three decades since Gunasinghe's study. Nonetheless, in contrast to Gunasinghe, I argue that these relations are neither 'reactivations', nor 'remnants (like the 'vestigial limbs of the whale'), nor 'torn away from the previous social formation'. On the contrary, these practices have to be understood as continuities of certain structural relations.

As I have discussed in the introduction, structures are social relations that reproduce themselves by recurring practices by actions of social agents. I also mentioned that the regularity of the recurrence may vary. The reproduction of the structures however is not an autonomous process. They need certain conditions. In other words the social agent has to be persuaded to engage in *one* structural practice instead of *another*. If that is the case, what were the conditions that led to the reproduction of 'traditional' labour relations in the case of the relationship between the chiefs and peasant? My answer is the continuity of traditional authority. Confronting Gunasinghe's formulation again, if we consider that capitalism is the ultimate form of accumulation, it does not possess an inherent mode of accumulation. The ways in which capitalist accumulation occurs are historically specific for various time-space contexts.⁴⁷⁸ There are indeed ultimate and 'pure' forms as Marx explains in '*Das Kapital*'. But they exist only at the conceptual level and are most useful in their own right as conceptual benchmarks. (Judging by his analytical method, it is obvious that Gunasinghe would have accepted this.) Thus the accumulation takes place within the existing structural practices.

If existing practices had obstructed the intensification of accumulation, there would have been a need to replace them. But need alone would not have guaranteed their actual replacement. In the early years of British rule, there was an attempt to replace *rājakāriya* labour with wage labour. Apart from economic considerations, these attempts were heavily influenced by ideological consideration in line with the growing popularity of Smithian ideas on free trade in Britain.⁴⁷⁹ But those measures caused heavy popular resistance.

Colonial rulers, both Dutch and English, had political reasons for letting these pre-colonial forms of labour relations continue in order to win the support of the indigenous chiefs. Even though the *rājakāriya* system, the basic means by which the pre-colonial ruling class secured peasant labour, was finally abolished in 1833, this did not affect the whole range of social institutions which embodied this mode of labour relations. As M.U. de Silva remarks in relation to the pre-colonial land tenure, these labour relations, in their concrete forms as various types of social relations, had become 'second nature'.⁴⁸⁰ Thus certain forms of pre-colonial labour relations, embodied in the *rājakāriya* system, became autonomous social relations. A most obvious form, still in existence to a greater or lesser

degree, is found in the case of Buddhist temples⁴⁸¹ where these modes are reproduced under the ideological pretensions of religious obligations rather than economic relations. In a less severe form, the same applies to certain forms of relations between impoverished sections of rural society and the large landowners who possess high ritual status owing to their ancestral links with the high and middle rank chiefs of the colonial era. The latter are able to use the labour of the former not just in wage-labour form but with a certain degree of imposition of traditional authority.

If I go back to the original thesis about the importance of the ability to control labour in understanding class differentiation, it would be clear from the foregoing discussion that the transformation of indigenous chiefs into a landowning class was determined not only by their ability to accumulate lands but also by their ability control and mobilize the labour of the peasant in order to convert lands into areas of agrarian production. This control and mobilization depended on non-economic forms of social relations because labour had not yet achieved a free mobility.

7.4 Dynamics of caste relations

The discussion of the dynamics of caste formation in chapter six helps us understand the more visible forms of the peasants' reactions to the changes elaborated in the previous chapters. Although class differentiation points to the social outcomes of changes in the production system and land tenure, classes, unlike castes, are not concrete, empirically defined communities. This distinction between class and caste needs some clarification because there is a tendency to use the two categories as competing identities.

Referring to the constructed nature of identities, Kumari Jayawardane observes that 'identities are not only constructed but are shifting, whether based on caste, class, ethnicity or religion'⁴⁸². This formulation presupposes that classes are also identity groups like castes or ethnic and religious groups. This is an extremely problematical formulation. On the one hand, classes cannot be treated as group identities such as caste, ethnicity or religion, in which individuals become aware of themselves as people who share certain characteristics with other members of the particular identity group, by way of entering in a particular discursive terrain. On the contrary, class, as an analytical category, is created through an analytical discourse, as Kumari Jayawardane herself shows in her investigation of the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie. There is a distinction between categories created through an analytical discourse and those created through a discourse of identity. Groups created through an analytical discourse, such as class, have to be considered objective entities in the sense that they exist outside the imagination of individual social agents. In other words, individuals do not identify themselves as members of a class, as they do in the case of identity groups.⁴⁸³ In this sense, one cannot speak about class consciousness or awareness of class interests as constantly found in Marxist literature.⁴⁸⁴ On the other hand, classes cannot be described by terminology such as 'shifting', 'fluid', 'transient', and 'flux' used for other identity groups, as Kumari Jayawardane implies.⁴⁸⁵

Thus, if the dynamics of class structure help us understand the objective hierarchical differentiations of social formation in terms of economic power, the dynamics of caste formation help to account for some of the ways in which social agents reacted to the changing circumstances. The dialectical relationship between caste hierarchies and caste communities are pivotal in this discussion. The nature and function of castes cannot be fully understood in terms of their hierarchical ordering, as Louis Dumont suggests in his authoritative work, which no commentator of caste can ignore.⁴⁸⁶ What Dumont analyses is not the caste as such but its hierarchy. Nicholas B. Dirks interprets Dumont's efforts as a representation of 'a particular form of modern Western nostalgia' where 'caste is seen to express a commitment to social values that the modern world has lost'⁴⁸⁷.

Dumont's scheme indeed contributes little to our understanding of castes as specific communities which are not always determined and shaped by hierarchical ideologies.

It is interesting to see what Dumont has to say about caste system in Sri Lanka: 'in a word, Ceylon has all the characteristics of caste, except for its vigour, and for the crucial disjunction on which I have insisted: the king there has remained the centre both of group religion (as opposed to individualistic religion, the discipline of Buddhist salvation) and of political and economic life'⁴⁸⁸. Thus, he leaves out the Sri Lankan system as if it cannot be explained with the same analytical tools that would be used for mainland South Asia. His claim is based on the assumed role of the king as occupying the centre of religious, political and economic life, an assumption that he owes to Ralph Pieris, who proposes the thesis of 'secularisation of caste' due to the king's ability to articulate the distribution of social honour, and Bryce Ryan approach to the caste system of Sri Lanka, which sees caste as a less rigid system.⁴⁸⁹

Pieris's thesis of 'secularisation' is highly questionable because it is based on the conviction that kingship in Sri Lanka is a secular institution. Leaving aside the undesirability of the indiscriminate use of the modern concept of 'secular' for a pre-modern context, Pieris does not properly explain the nature and function of kingship in pre-colonial Sri Lanka, where the institution was highly ritualised and greatly legitimised by the claim for its divine origin and the *bodhisathva* (embryo-Buddha) status.⁴⁹⁰ Therefore, there is no qualitative difference between the articulation of the caste hierarchy by the king in Sri Lanka and by the Brahmins in India, although the absence of a Brahmin priestly group in Sri Lanka was significant because the demise of kingship and the detachment of the modern state from the articulation of caste hierarchy left no systematic institution to guarantee the continuation of the ideal hierarchy of castes. Although the *sangha* (order of Buddhist monks) performed this task, various caste communities became so divided in their allegiance to various hierarchical claims that the articulation of a monolithic hierarchy was impossible. What is more the *sangha* also divided itself along caste lines where different sects of Buddhist monks (*nikāya*) represented various caste groups which competed with each other for higher ritual status.⁴⁹¹

Against this background, the 'loose integration' which Dumont uses to define Sri Lankan caste system, based on Ryan's study, can be explained in two ways. If we evaluate the statement in relation to the situation in the mid-twentieth century (Ryan's chief focus) it could be argued that this 'loose integration' was a result of the absence of *one* centre of articulation of the hierarchy. If one attempts to project the idea of 'loose integration' or 'flexibility of class relations' as proposed by Nur Yalman⁴⁹² into the pre- or early colonial period when colonial rulers were keen on the perpetuation of the 'ideal' caste hierarchy with the help of the power of articulation of indigenous chiefs, I would argue that the situation did not result from a looseness or flexibility inherent in the hierarchical ideology, but rather that it was a manifestation of the complex and conflicting interaction between hierarchical ideologies and caste communities.

Chapter six discusses the dynamics of caste communities and argues that the dynamics were not limited to the colonial situation but that they had their roots in pre-colonial times. Mobility in relation to castes was not indeed limited to Sri Lanka. It was part and parcel of the Indian caste formation too. Srinivas attributes two factors to caste mobility in pre-British India: 'the fluidity of the political system, especially at the lower levels, and the availability of marginal lands which could be brought under the plough...'.⁴⁹³ We may apply these factors to the Sri Lankan case as well, although perhaps in a slightly different way.

The political centres that emerged in Sri Lanka following the fall of the relatively centralised and economically and politically powerful Polonnaruwa kingdom in the

thirteenth century were much weaker. Their control, especially over peripheral areas, was constantly fluctuating, leaving peripheral communities less exposed to their hegemonising efforts. The social implications of this situation cannot be adequately explained owing to the lack of research. I have however identified some demographic tendencies in which it is clear that certain caste communities were moving away from the areas of central political authority. The case of the *bakuru* caste is extremely interesting in this respect. What is more important in the context of the central focus of this study is how the colonial factor affected these dynamics of caste communities.

The role of colonial rule was a sort of dual one. Compared to the pre-colonial political formations that immediately preceded colonial intervention, colonial administration, particularly that of Dutch, was far more systematic and effective. It was also keen on imposing a strict social control over its subjects, primarily to facilitate the optimisation of revenue collection. These strict measures of social control were carried out in the name of preserving tradition. Colonial rulers usually maintained that their foothold in the colonised regions was completely in line with the traditions and customs of those lands. They did not define themselves as outsiders. The classification of 'foreigners' by the VOC administration in Sri Lanka is interesting to note in this respect. Communities such as Muslims were categorised as foreigners while the Dutch were conspicuously excluded from this classification. Moreover, in reference to people who defaulted on their taxes, Governor Loten (1752-57) justified the Company's legitimate claim for revenue collection in following words:

It would have been desirable if these arrears had already been paid, but there is no lack of pretended obstacles to the payment, to which obstacle however we should not yield in view of the *justice of the imposition*, seeing that it was an ancient custom among the natives long before our establishment in this island, and whereby they are not burdened in the least, as they pay now only what they formerly rendered to the Lord of the Land, it being *fully consistent with the conservation of their ancient obligation and usage*.⁴⁹⁴

This was not unique to the Dutch rule. The British followed the same path in the early phase of their administration. Wickremeratne identifies this character as the 'conservative nature of the British colonial rule'⁴⁹⁵. Following this line of thought, early colonial rulers were forced to be custodians of indigenous customs, traditions and institutions, which demanded novel modes of administration. These included, but were not limited to, gathering information on, and the documentation and codification of, indigenous customs, traditions, institutions, land and people, conveying this information to successive officials by means of memoirs, calculating revenue in minute detail, mapping and surveying the geographical space, classifying people, regulating and ordering their movement and behaviour, and reporting everyday events. The ultimate outcome of this effort was the production of an enormous quantity of documents on indigenous societies, from which modern scholars greatly benefit.

Heesterman's has called this process a 'rationalist tendency to control by exhaustive rules and regulations'.⁴⁹⁶ This 'rationalist tendency' was not simply an outcome of a certain ideological mindset, but was necessitated by the above mentioned pragmatic needs. Some scholars argue that this mode of handling the colonized by the colonizer was indeed responsible for the construction of at least some aspects of colonial society. Nicholas B. Dirks' recent *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* is a fine example of this scholarly tradition and is directly related to the theme that I deal with now: the dynamics of caste formation in the early colonial encounter. He deals primarily with the ways in which the Indian 'caste' was constructed by the historical encounter between India and the colonial rule. He argues that

caste, as we know it today, is not in fact some unchanged survival of ancient India, not some single system that reflects a core civilizational value, not a basic expression of Indian tradition. Rather, I will argue that caste (again as we know it today) is a modern phenomenon, that it is, specifically, the product of an historical encounter between India and Western colonial rule.

He goes on to qualify this statement with the following remarks:

by this I do not mean to imply that it was simply invented by the too clever British, now credited with so many imperial patents that what began as colonial critique has turned into another form of imperial adulation. But I *am* suggesting that it was under the British that “caste” became a single term capable of expressing, organising, and above all “systematizing” India’s diverse forms of social identity, community, and organization.⁴⁹⁷

Dirks’s discourse on the role of colonial rule in the construction of caste illuminates my discussion on the dynamics of caste formation in the eighteenth century in the context of the Dutch colonial rule. I suggest that a comparative reading of Dirks with my discussion in chapter six helps us make some general observations about the encounter between colonial powers and indigenous people and its impact on the social relations of the indigenous society.

There are two contrasting facets of the colonial articulation of caste that are equally applicable to many other indigenous institutions and practices that came into contact with colonial rule. On the one hand, early colonial rulers wanted to retain most of the pre-colonial institutions and practices because they found that it is desirable to do so rather than replacing them with new ones. Nevertheless, the ways in which they handled those institutions and practices and the returns that they expected from them resulted in serious changes to them. As we have seen, the VOC administration went to great lengths to maintain the status quo of the caste hierarchy, as it served them well in their efforts to mobilize labour. But the same efforts afforded ample opportunity for the caste communities to manipulate the system and play with its subtleties, thereby creating spaces for social mobility. Other aspects of colonial rule further increased the capability of doing so. The economic policies that promoted new profit-making economic activities, political measures such as reducing the power of indigenous chiefs, and the dissemination of Christianity all created alternative spaces in which caste communities with low ritual status could either achieve more power in order to challenge the power of the dominant hierarchical ideology, or at least protect themselves from the overweening authority of the dominant castes.

After all, any individual or community, however weak it is or however strong its opposition, struggles to protect and improve itself by whatever means available.⁴⁹⁸ For the various caste communities these included exercising spatial mobility, accumulating wealth, converting to Christianity (or at least adopting Christian names), setting up their own intra-caste hierarchies as against inter-caste hierarchies and so on. In the nineteenth century the competition for higher ritual status and the redefining of traditional hierarchies reached new highs. However this state of affairs was not true of all caste communities with low ritual status. We have seen that castes such as the *padu* hardly benefited from the changes of the colonial period. The ability to benefit from new circumstances depended on many factors. Some such as the *āchāri*, *radā* and *salāgama* castes could exploit their special labour skills. Others were affected by the ways in which colonial rulers used them, which had an especially negative effect on the *padu* and *berava* castes. Some were affected by their place in the traditional caste hierarchy; the submissiveness of the *padu* caste to the existing structures was a major obstacle to social mobility. Other factors included the caste’s geographical proximity to the colonial centre

(as in the case of coastal castes) and the degree to which they were associated with the traditional peasant production.

7.5 Problem of 'change' in peasant societies

The problem of the transformation of peasant communities, or in other words their sensitivity (or, rather, insensitivity), to change has become a contentious issue among those who study these communities. David Ludden gives us an important entry point for this issue:

[...] the notion that village societies are by nature inert and change only under the impact of urban initiative remains deeply ingrained in the scholarly imagination. Research routines normally begin with the now classic contrast between urban and rural society. Urban life bustles; open, expansive, and diverse, cities and towns are focal points for social creativity. Village life is boring; closed, inward-looking, and homeostatic, villages left to themselves repeat parochial routines unthinkingly. In light of this stark contrast, towns and cities that housed kings and elite cultural forms throughout preindustrial centuries seem logically to generate and transmit modern social change. Studies of change in rural settings thus frequently proceed in three steps: they first establish a base line by describing initial static condition; second, they identify those exogenous forces that that propel change; and third, they chart the vectors and rates of resulting movements.⁴⁹⁹

I find Ludden's location of village societies in the static/ changing axis somewhat patronising towards village society. Of course, as Ludden implies the static/ changing axis cannot be interpreted in absolute terms. No human society can be seen as absolutely static because the human subject is a 'thinking being'. It always adds its creativity, to a greater or lesser degree, to the 'given' conditions of its being, which is a basic precondition of change. However it is difficult to deny that the pace of 'change' may vary from society to society, depending on a number of factors among them the intensity of the struggle between man and nature, the material needs of society (which by and large are historically determined) and the level of accumulation of, and access to, knowledge. Since the operation of these determinants is different from society to society, the pace and nature of change also differ. The varying degree of change in relation to village societies on the one hand and urban or industrial societies on the other has to be understood in light of varying paces of operation of the above mentioned determinants.

How do we understand the 'internal' dynamics of the peasant society that we investigated in the previous chapters in the context of this general conceptual overview? It is interesting to recollect some of the views expressed by various exponents of the colonial project about peasants in the region. A number of governors and other European observers remarked on the 'laziness', the passivity, and the negative response to any initiative for change and contentedness with the existing conditions of the life. These remarks are quite similar to the stereotypical views about village societies that Ludden attributes to the dominant scholarly imaginations of them. These remarks were far from accurate and our investigation has shown how peasants adapted themselves and responded, sometimes quite actively, to changing circumstances. Nevertheless, we should evaluate those views on the peasant society from a proper perspective. James Cordiner's remarks, cited in chapter two, refer directly to peasant contentedness with existing conditions.⁵⁰⁰ Those remarks were quite justifiable because contentedness was indeed a major characteristic of the society so long as thing went smoothly. But when sustaining the peasant's quality of life as defined by his cultural standards was under threat, he was forced to react and/ or change himself. There was indeed a vast difference between the

changes the colonial rulers anticipated and the ways in which the peasant wanted himself to change.

Changes cannot indeed be isolated from the overall reactions of the peasant, particularly when the factors of change were initiated by outside forces. If the changes anticipated by the outside agent were disturbing to the prevalent modes of life, the initial response was resistance; and very often passivity towards outsiders' demands for innovation could be the most effective form of resistance. Violent insurgencies were of course occasionally resorted to, when passivity did not work. Migration or adjustment was the last step, and one that could bring about structural changes. This sequence of responses could be overshadowed, however, by extraordinary circumstances such as warfare.

It is useful to draw attention to the three-step approach that Ludden attributes, negatively, to those who study change in a rural setting, starting with the establishment of a baseline of an initial static condition, identifying exogenous forces that propel change and lastly charting the vectors and rates of resulting movements. The present study, too, follows a more or less similar process. Chapter two sets the baseline by identifying certain structural features of the pre-colonial, socio-economic life of the peasant. Does establishing a baseline as a point of departure for the investigation really mean that the situation that existed prior to the introduction of factors of change, which become the subject of investigation, was static? I propose that a distinction has to be made here between the methodological mapping of the object of the study and the empirical facts of life. Methodological *freezing* of flux for the sake of investigation, at least, should *not* make the researcher turn a blind eye to the flux.

We have seen a number of occasions in which the already evolving and changing structural situations were linked to the new realities brought about as a result of colonial intervention. In the cases of land tenure and caste formation such situations can clearly be seen. Land tenure models such as *ande* and *otu* were not static even in the period immediately preceding the colonial intervention, and castes were seen as dynamic communities rather than static components of a fixed hierarchical ideology. What is important is the fact that when those pre-colonial dynamics and patterns of evolution were confronted with the colonial intervention, they took new turns.

How do we locate the problem of the transformation of peasant societies in terms of the conceptual framework on structural changes that set out in the first chapter of this work? We were able to identify two factors that triggered off structural changes. First is the increase of the demand for the surplus of the peasant while the second is the challenge faced by the subsistence base of the peasant production. The background of the emergence of a new structural equilibrium replacing the old one was the operation of these two factors.

Nevertheless, the characterisation of the changes as a shift from one structural equilibrium to another may not be a sufficient explanation for the changes occurred. The gap between the pre-change situation and the post-change situation which was created by this shift was immense. It certainly justifies, to a certain extent, the mindset of historians that Ludden criticises where pre-change situation is viewed as static.

The characteristic feature of the relationship between the pre-colonial system of peasant production and exogenous forces (Market and the ruling class that depended on the surplus of the peasant) was that the intervention of the latter on the former did not disrupt subsistence character of the peasant economy. The main reason for this was the relative low level of demand from the ruling class for the surplus of the peasant and limited role of the Market as the needs of the peasant for goods and services came through it were not very high. The immediate outcome of the colonial intervention was the disruption of the subsistence basis of the peasant production. New economic

relations and administrative needs diverted significant amount of the total sum of social labour out of the economic activities of peasant production. This diversion created the conditions for making labour a commodity, which is a basic precondition for a capitalist economy.

The displacement of the traditional ruling class by the colonial intervention certainly facilitated linking the economy of the region with the growing capitalist world economy. This capitalist drive was in operation in two ways. Firstly the sum of labour that was pulled out of the peasant production was absorbed by economic activities that directly linked with the accumulation drive. Secondly, even the production activities that still took place within the basic structure of peasant production were acquiring an increasingly market orientation.

This situation significantly changed the rhythm of peasant life. It shattered the isolation of peasant life in tiny villages. Peasants' links with the market, administrative centres and cities were ever growing. The region was increasingly being integrated into the capitalist world economy at its periphery and the fate of the peasant was begun to determined by its ups and downs.

Epilogue

In a memorial volume devoted to J.C. van Leur, the path-breaking critic on the writing of colonial history, which appeared ten years ago, substantial attention was given to one of Van Leur's hobbyhorses, the 'eighteenth century as a category of Asian History'.⁵⁰¹ The editors and contributors to this volume suggested that the 'long eighteenth century' started in the 1680s and lasted until the 1830s. This 'long eighteenth century' might also be an appropriate period of Sri Lankan history. In 1687 Rajasinghe II, the king of Kandy who counterbalanced the formidable threat of VOC power in Sri Lanka, passed away. This initiated a long period of peace between the Dutch administration in the coastal areas and Kandy, the only surviving indigenous power in Sri Lanka at the time. At the other end of the 'long eighteenth century' in the early 1830s the British colonial government of Ceylon introduced a series of social, political and judicial reforms following the recommendations of the Colebrook-Cameron Commission, thereby formally breaking with the *ancien régime*.

Does it make sense to view this 'long century' as a valid period for Sri Lankan history? Anthony Reid, the editor of another collection of essays on the late eighteenth century in Southeast Asian history, *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies* sees at the end of this long eighteenth century something of a last revival of the traditional polities of the region.⁵⁰² But this demarcation does not fit quite so well in the case of Sri Lanka. During this time VOC rule penetrated the agrarian countryside of the territory under its authority in the same way it did in the Indonesian archipelago as has been shown by Mason Hoadley in his contribution on Cirebon, and more recently by Kwee Hui Kian and Ota Atsushi in their monographs on Java's Northeast Coast and Banten, respectively.

In Sri Lanka this happened following the VOC's efforts to collect and maximize revenue from the land and the measures it took to collect its most important items of overseas trade, cinnamon and, to a lesser degree, elephants. In other words, the Company attempted to maximize the acquisition of peasant's surplus in the same way as it did on Java. These measures created great tension within existing production relationships and other social structures. Starting from a completely different point of approach, Alicia Schrikker's study of the colonial administrations in the last phase of Dutch rule and the early phase of British rule in Sri Lanka reaches the same conclusion that I have in this case study.⁵⁰³

These studies go beyond the scope of the earlier historiography of the European-Asian encounter prior to the nineteenth century, in which the operation of commercial activities predominates. Investigating how the Europeans came into contact with various local rulers, power-holders and socio-economic players, these studies have assumed a broader role for the VOC than that of a simple merchant company, and one that had a dramatic impact on indigenous social structures. This historiography looks at the socio-economic and political changes in by assessing the role of the Dutch East India Company not as a merchant (*koopman*) but as an administrator in the formative period of the Dutch colonial state.

Adding to this new orientation of the historiography on the 'long eighteenth century' of 'Monsoon Asia', this study has attempted to unravel the structural effects of the penetration of Dutch administration into the countryside of south-western Sri Lanka, as Ota and Kwee have done in the Javanese case. Whereas earlier studies started out by looking at the inner workings of the colonial administration and its interaction with the local elites, I have approached this from a slightly different perspective by assuming the vantage point of the peasant.

Looking at things in this way, from a micro level, it was fascinating to observe the magnitude of structural changes taking place in the rural countryside. These changes

indeed force the historian of the colonial encounter in Sri Lanka to revisit the hitherto underrated 'long eighteenth century'.

What I was looking at were the most basic and fundamental human activities, such as production, the exchange of essential goods and services through the market or otherwise and delivering part of the peasants' produce or their unpaid labour to the holders of political power. What can be seen clearly is that the structural relations of these basic human activities were undergoing transformation. Obvious changes can be seen in the peasants' relationship with land and labour. Not only were land consumption patterns changing—the most important consequence of which was the diminishing importance of *chena* cultivation and the rise of market-oriented gardens and plantations⁵⁰⁴--but the basic nature of the peasants' association with the land and the network of relations with the sovereign was also changing. The pre-colonial structure, in which land tenancy was linked to the exercise of authority devolving from the king via local chiefs to the peasant, gave way to a new one in which the tenant became a legal land holder in a recognizably modern sense.

The redistribution of social labour, new ways of exploiting peasants' labour and expanding opportunities for the acquisition of land changed the distribution of wealth in Sri Lankan society and consequently restructured class differentiations. Indigenous chiefs, on the one hand, benefited from their collaboration with the colonial administration to accumulate lands and, on the other hand, extracted the un-paid or under-paid labour of the peasant to cultivate those lands. One of the most important features of the consolidation of colonial rule in the eighteenth century was the rise of the hegemony of indigenous chiefs in the periphery of colonial power. This was a somewhat paradoxical situation because at the same time the colonial administration was trying to curb the power of the former. This eighteenth-century development was extremely important because it gave the indigenous chiefs ample time to prepare themselves to counterbalance the measures that the British would take to diminish their authority. When in the early nineteenth century parallel structures of authority such as the Sri Lankan civil service began to emerge, these land-owners had already evolved into a powerful class with a strong grip on the landless peasantry, giving it the ability to reinforce itself even without the support of the traditional system of authority. This class was actually able to manipulate the new civil service through the economic and social power it possessed.

Some aspects of the impact of new structural changes on the behaviour patterns of ordinary peasants can even be seen in the dynamics of caste formation. Certain lower castes demonstrated clear signs of moving towards the colonial centre, which probably gave them an opportunity to get away from the yoke of the higher castes' traditional authority, while the marginalized character of other castes was further aggravated as they were pushed farther towards the periphery. It is easy to see how the most oppressed castes became easy prey for the powerful *goyigama* castes even as the latter's overall authority was shrinking.

Another important new dynamic in caste formation was the transformation of caste communities into 'power-containers'⁵⁰⁵ where they became hierarchically stratified social entities. Intra-caste elite groups dominated these 'power containers', but at the same time, in competing with rival castes for economic, political and ritual power, the castes' communal ties became pivotal as victory over rivals made every member of the caste community a potential beneficiary of the redistribution of the power acquired by the community. At the end of the eighteenth century we see a severe competition between caste communities which had by then emerged as competing 'power-containers'. This competition would become one of the defining features of Sri Lanka's socio-political dynamic in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It is clear how important the developments in the eighteenth century are for a proper understanding of the society that came out of the colonial encounter in the south-western Sri Lanka. As these changes took place at the micro level of the social setting, they did not immediately become visible and discernible. Our perception of these changes are however indispensable for any comprehensive understanding of either colonial or post-colonial society. Thus it is essential to revisit the eighteenth century from the wider perspective of 'Monsoon Asia' as most of the societies in this vast area not only faced a similar destiny in terms of the European-Asian encounter but also saw the unfolding of comparable historical forces.

Notes to Introduction

- ¹ See Jerry H. Bentley *Old World Encounters: Cross-cultural Contacts and Exchange in Pre-modern Times*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, for a comprehensive account of encounters between various communities, especially in the Middle Ages.
- ² Michael Beaud, *A History of Capitalism: 1500-2000* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001) provides a vivid picture on the relationship between the European expansion and capitalism.
- ³ See the map in B. H. Farmer, *Pioneer Peasant Colonization in Ceylon*. (1957, Reprint Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976) 23.
- ⁴ D. A. Kotelawe, 'The Dutch in Ceylon, 1743-1766' (PhD dissertation, University of London, 1968) 113.
- ⁵ The entire Colombo *disāwani* consisted of Alutkuru, Hewagam, Salpity, Rayigam, Pasdun, Siyane and Hapitigam *kōrales* and a part of the Walallawiti *kōrale*; see M. W. Jurriaanse, *Catalogue of the Archives of the Dutch Government of Coastal Ceylon, 1640-1796* (Colombo: Ceylon Government Press, 1943) 17.
- ⁶ See G. P. V. Somaratna, *Political history of Kotte, circa 1410-1521* (Colombo: 1974) for a general history of Kotte kings.
- ⁷ A. Liyanagamage, "Keralas in Medieval Sri Lanka History", in *Society State and Religion in Premodern Sri Lanka*, (University of Kelaniya, 2001) 83-90.
- ⁸ For details of the literary works of Kotte see K. D. P. Wickramasinghe, *Kottē yugayē Sinhala sāhityaya* [Sinhala literature of the Kotte period] (Colombo: 1964).
- ⁹ S. Arasaratnam, *Ceylon and the Dutch, 1600-1800* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996) part XIII, 37.
- ¹⁰ In the mainland of India, in most of the Indonesian islands and other Southeast Asian and East Asian regions, the VOC had established itself as a merchant. Treaties with the local rulers were the main form of getting access to the commodities of trade. There were however occasions where it became a formidable territorial power such as on Taiwan (Formosa), although this was abandoned in 1662. For a general history of the VOC, see Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (London: 1965); and Femme Gastra, *The Dutch East India Company: Expansion and Decline* (Zutphen: Walburg, 2002).
- ¹¹ For these events, see K. W. Gunawardene, *Foundation of the Dutch Power in Ceylon*, (Amsterdam: 1958) and Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon, 1658-1687* (Amsterdam: 1958).
- ¹² Patrick Peebles, *Social Change in Nineteenth Century Ceylon*, (New Delhi: Navrang 1995) 25-36, has shown that most of the *mudaliars*, the highest group of the native chieftom under the Dutch, had quite a humble origin and rose into higher position benefiting from the opportunities under the colonial rule.
- ¹³ L. J. Wagenaar, *Galle, VOC-vestiging in Ceylon: Beschrijving van een koloniale samenleving aan de vooravond van de Singalese opstand tegen het Nederlandse gezeg, 1760* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1994) 86-89, gives details about auctions where wealthy indigenous families bought many luxurious goods.
- ¹⁴ See Kotelawe, Dutch in Ceylon, and P.E. Pieris, *Ceylon and Hollanders, 1658-1796* (1918. Reprint New Delhi: AES, 1999).
- ¹⁵ See Kotelawe, Dutch in Ceylon, 177-222. For how the chiefs attempted to use their knowledge on the traditional institutions, particularly on land tenure, see Kanapathipillai, 'Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon', PhD dissertation, . University of London, 1969, 222-23.
- ¹⁶ See Gunawardene, *Foundation of the Dutch power in Ceylon*, and Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, for the early decades of the Dutch presence.
- ¹⁷ Paranavitana, *Land for Money: Dutch Land Registration in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: 2001), 47.
- ¹⁸ For Imhoff's governorship, see Arasaratnam, *Ceylon and the Dutch*, 454-68.
- ¹⁹ The Colombo *Landraad* was instituted on his recommendation on 1741; see Jurriaanse, *Catalogue of the Archives*, 17.
- ²⁰ There were, however, fluctuations of policies towards these cash crops. For details, see Kotelawe, Dutch in Ceylon, 109-76.
- ²¹ Baron van Imhoff, *Memoir of Gustaaf Willem Baron Van Imhoff Governor of Ceylon Delivered to His Successor 1740*, Translated by Sophia Pieters (Colombo: Ceylon Government Press, 1910), 30.
- ²² Kotelawe, Dutch in Ceylon, 117.
- ²³ Donald R. Snodgrass, *Ceylon: An Export Economy in Transition* (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, 1966), 1.
- ²⁴ Jayawardene, *Nobodies to Somebodies: The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: SSA, 2000) 1.
- ²⁵ For an account of the process of compilation of the series, see K.M. de Silva's editorial preface to *University of Peradeniya History of Sri Lanka*, vol. II. Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 1995). Arasaratnam (*Ceylon and the Dutch*, 13) makes the same comment on the absence of the second volume until 1995.
- ²⁶ Arasaratnam, *Ceylon and the Dutch*, 3.

- ²⁷ See *Ceylon Today and Yesterday: Main Currents of Ceylon History* (2nd ed. Colombo: Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, 1963).
- ²⁸ Colvin R. de Silva, *Ceylon under the British Occupation, 1795-1833: Its Political, Administrative and Economic Development*, vol. II (Colombo, 1962)
- ²⁹ Ibid. 594
- ³⁰ Pieris, *Ceylon and the Hollanders*.
- ³¹ S.G. Perera's *History of Ceylon for Schools, 1505-1911* (Colombo: 1932) gives major attention to the Portuguese and Dutch administrations.
- ³² T. B. H. Abeyesinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon, 1594-1612* (Colombo: Lake House Investments, 1966)
- ³³ C.R. de Silva, *The Portuguese Rule in Ceylon, 1617-1638* (Colombo: 1972). He made additional contributions to various aspects of the history of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Sri Lanka.
- ³⁴ In M. A. M. Shukri (ed.), *Muslims of Sri Lanka: Avenues to Antiquity*, (Beruwala, Sri Lanka: 1986, 189-210)
- ³⁵ In K. M. de Silva et al. (eds.) *Asian Panorama: Essays in Asian History Past and Present*, (Delhi: 1990), 319-52.
- ³⁶ In C. R. de Silva and Sirima Kiribamune (eds.) *K.W. Goonewardena Felicitation Volume*, (Peradeniya: 1989).
- ³⁷ J. van Goor, *Jan Kompenie as Schoolmaster: Dutch education in Ceylon 1690-1795*, (Utrecht, 1978); Wagenaar, *Galle, VOC-vestiging in Ceylon* [He has also written a number of articles on many aspects of the Dutch presence in Sri Lanka which are cited elsewhere in this study.]; Remco Raben, 'Batavia and Colombo: The Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities, 1600-1800' PhD dissertation, University of Leiden, 1996; G. Knaap, 'Europeans, Mestizos and Slaves: The Population of Colombo at the End of the Seventeenth Century', *Itinerario* vol. 5, no. 2 (1981), 84-101; Alicia Scrikker, *Dutch and British colonial intervention in Sri Lanka, 1780-1815: Expansion and Reform*, (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
- ³⁸ The controversy over the uses and abuses of the Wetervold treaty between the Dutch and the King Rajasinghe II of Kandy is a fine example of this aspect of historiography. See Arasaratnam, *Ceylon and the Dutch*, part I, 10-11.
- ³⁹ M. U. de Silva, 'Land Tenure, Caste System and the Rajakariya, Under Foreign Rule: A Review of Change in Sri Lanka under Western Powers, 1597-1832' in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, n.s., 37 (1992/93), 1-58 and Paravitana, *Land for Money*.
- ⁴⁰ There are of course recent studies that question this dominant paradigm. Ota Atsushi (*Changes of Regime and Social Dynamics in West Java*, [Leiden: Brill, 2006]) and H. K. Kwee (*The Political Economy of Java's Northeast Coast, c.1740-1800: Elite Synergy*, [Leiden: Brill, 2006]) investigate the complex network of relationships in colonial contexts.
- ⁴¹ This was clearly evident in the sixteenth century, when each of the warring parties in Kotte and Kandy sought the help of Portuguese against their rivals; see Abeyesinghe, 'Portuguese Rule in Kotte, 1594-1638' in *UPHS*, vol. II, 123-37.
- ⁴² Arasaratnam's interpretation of Rajasinghe II is exemplary in this respect. He evaluates Rajasinghe II's accomplishment as if the latter represented the will of the general population. He does not hesitate to use such terms as 'nationalities', 'religious tolerance', 'communal harmony' which are quite problematical in that context; see *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, 40-41, 112, 118, 176. This is very significant given the fact that Arasaratnam was one of the prominent modern Sri Lankan historians who was less prejudicial in casting modern ideological prejudices on his historical characters. Despite that, owing to his Tamil ethnic origin, he is less susceptible to Sinhala nationalism, the dominant force behind modern Sri Lankan historiography.
- ⁴³ Witold Kula, *Measures and Men*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 127.
- ⁴⁴ Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 219.
- ⁴⁵ Fernand Braudel's conceptualisation of 'la longue durée' attempts to deal with this problem.
- ⁴⁶ I follow the path of such scholars as Michael Beaud, *A History of Capitalism: 1500-2000* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001) and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization*, (London: Verso, 1995).
- ⁴⁷ Karl Polanyi, for example, has characterized the 'labour theory of value' as 'what was bad' in Marx (cited in Rodney Hilton's introduction to *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978), 9.
- ⁴⁸ For an understanding of how these concepts are found in Marxist theory see John Eatwell et al. (eds.), *The New Palgrave Marxian Economics*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990) especially the articles 'exploitation', 'labour theory of value', and 'surplus value'.
- ⁴⁹ For Weber's conception of 'class situation' and 'status groups' see 'Selections from Economy and Society' in Anthony Giddens and David Held (eds.) *Classes, Power and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates*, (New York: Macmillan, 1982), 60-86.

⁵⁰ Jurriaanse, *Catalogue of the Archives*, 247-49.

⁵¹ Arasaratnam, introduction to *Memoir of Julius Stein van Gollennesse, Governor of Ceylon, 1743-1751*, (Colombo: Department of National Archives, 1974), 20.

⁵² Jurriaanse, *Catalogue of the Archives*, 242.

Notes to Chapter two

⁵³ The Grama Niladhari (village officer) division is the smallest administrative unit in present Sri Lanka. Sometimes Grama Niladhari division do not follow the traditional boundary of a village. Moreover when a certain village is a larger unit it is divided into several Grama Niladhari divisions. This is why Wilimbula as a village comes under several Grama Niladhari divisions.

⁵⁴ Tombos frequently refer to people 'wonend in't konings land' (living in the king's land). This refers to the mountain kingdom known as Kandy, or *kandaudarata*.

⁵⁵ The following description by Robert Knox, published in 1681, may fit our situation as well: "Their Houses are small, low thatched Cottages, built with sticks, daubed with clay, the walls made very smooth. For they are not permitted to build their houses above one storey high, neither may they cover with tiles, nor whiten their walls with lime, but there is a Clay which is as white, and that they use sometimes. They employ no carpenters, or house-builders, unless some few noble-men, but each one buildeth his own dwelling.... The poorest sort have not above one room in their houses, few above two, unless they be great men. Neither doth the King allow them to build better.... The Furniture is but small. A few earthen pots which hang up in slings made of Canes in the middle of their houses, having no shelves; one or two brass Basons to eat in, a stool or two without backs. ... There are also some baskets to put corn in, some mats to spread upon the ground: which is the bedding both for themselves and friends when they come to their houses. Also some Ebony pestels about four foot long to beat rice out of the husk, and a wooden Morter to beat it in afterwards to make it white, a Hirimony or Grater to grate their Coker-nuts with, a flat stone upon which they grind their Pepper and Turmeric, &c. With another stone which they hold in their hand at the same time. They have also in their houses Axes, Bills, Houghs, Atches, Chissels, and other Tools for their use. Tables they have none, but sit and eat on the ground" [sic]. Knox, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo, 1966 – first published in 1681) 124-25.

The earlier cited example on the household items in Mahara may refer to a somewhat different situation. This may have been the result of the exposure of this area to the colonial impact (February 7, 1750, Council Minutes, NA/ VOC- 2756, fo. 387r). Prishantha Gunawardane provides a good picture of pre-colonial peasant dwellings in *Purana Gama: Manava Puravidya Wimarshanayak* [Ancient village: ethno-archaeological review] (Ja-ela, Sri Lanka: 2004). See also the painting of Jan Brandes titled 'Kandyan soldiers' in *The World of Jan Brandes, 1743-1808* (Amsterdam: n.d.), 313.

⁵⁶ Information in tombos shows that polyandry was quite widespread. For a comprehensive account of the way in which polyandry was practiced in Sri Lanka, see Ralph Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organisation: The Kandyan Period* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasene, 1956) 204-11.

⁵⁷ The Sinhala expression '*Hene kumbure weda*' has a very special meaning in the language universe of the peasant. Though it literally means 'work in the chena and paddy field', it connoted the entire burden of work.

⁵⁸ Three PLHs of Gorakadeniya owned paddy fields in Beraunna situated about two-to-three kilometers away from Gorakadeniya. Three *padu* absentee owners of Obodapola lived in Paranagama about two kilometers away from where property was located. There are many other instances in tombos in which the property of persons is found in nearby villages which made access to them difficult.

⁵⁹ Cordiner, *Description of Ceylon: Containing an Account of the Country, Inhabitants and Natural Productions; with Narratives of a Tour round the Island in 1800, the Campaign in Candy in 1803, and a Journey to Ramisseram in 1804*. (2 vols. 1807, Reprint New Delhi: Navrang Publishers, 1983), 62.

⁶⁰ For more observations on the idleness and apathy towards working for extra earnings, see Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 58, Jan Schreuder, *Memoir of Jan Schreuder Governor of Ceylon Delivered to His Successor Lubbert Jan Baron Van Eck on March 17, 1762* Translated by E. Reimers (Colombo: Ceylon Government Press, 1946), 49, and De Meuron's Report (quoted in De Silva, *Ceylon under British Occupation*, part II, 338). Moreover, Bertolacci observes "how bountiful and lavish Nature is in that country, and how indolent and idle is man" (Bertolacci, *A View of the Agricultural, Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon* (Tisara Prakashakayo, 1983), 93.

⁶¹ "Wright, writing of Renfrewshire, complained of the 'mean, miserable tenantry, satisfied with bare subsistence, and unwilling to do better, for fear of having rents raised on them'". E. J. Hobsbawm,

'Scottish Reformers and Capitalist Agriculture', in *Peasant in History: Essays in Honour of David Thorner*, (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990) 15.

⁶² Karl Marx and Fredrik Engels, extract from *The Communist Manifesto* in *On Colonialism*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976) 14.

⁶³ In the typical pre-colonial setting in our region, the peasants were Buddhists. Though there was a significant Christian population in Company territory, they were mostly concentrated in coastal areas. Christians were not found in the interior in great numbers. There were some schools in some places of the interior, where Christianity had made some inroads. "According to Paulo de Trindade, the Franciscan order had, by 1628, established 54 churches comprising 58,000 believers in the kingdom of Kotte.... In 1664... Jesuits still had eleven churches—with more than 12,500 Catholics—under their control in the region of Colombo", in Van Goor, *Jan Kompenie*, 113.

⁶⁴ Though there is an old temple in Attanagalla, it is not indicated in the map. In the Māda *pattinwa* of Hina *korale* there are several ancient cave temples. We are not in a position to account for their function in the mid-eighteenth century.

⁶⁵ "It is sharp like a Sugar-loaf, and on Top a flat Stone with a print of a foot like a mans on it, but far bigger, being about too foot long. The people of this Land count it meritorious to go and worship this impression; and generally about their New Year, Which is in March, they, Men, Women and children go up this vast and high Mountain to worship", Knox, *Historical Relation of Ceylon*, 4.

⁶⁶ Though this temple was demolished by Portuguese, it seems that it functioned in our period. A Kandyan embassy which arrived Colombo following the establishment of higher ordination for Buddhist monks by Siamese (Thai) monks with the help of the Company, requested the the Company to issue instructions to the headmen of the localities of sacred places of Kelaniya, Galle and Matara to allow Buddhists use those places 'without being molested' (L. J. Wagenaar, 'The arrival of Buddhist monks from Siam in 1753. Mid-eighteenth century religious contacts between Kandy and Siam, as recorded by the Dutch East India Company', Unpublished manuscript of the paper presented at the conference 'Crossroads of Thai and Dutch History, National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden 9-11 Sep. 2004, 19)

⁶⁷ François Valentijn, *Description of Ceylon*. Translated and edited by Sinnappah Arasaratnam (London: Hakluyt Society, 1978), 165; Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon*, 62, is rather more particular on this. He says the woman "carries a [?] portion of the fruits to the market, and there barter[s] [?] them for whatever commodity is required".

⁶⁸ Knox, *Historical Relation of Ceylon*, 155.

⁶⁹ S. B. D. de Silva, *Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), 211.

⁷⁰ See Ibid, 210-35.

⁷¹ Chandra R. De Silva, 'Sri Lanka in the Early Sixteenth Century: Economic and Social Conditions' in *UPHS*, 50.

⁷² Arasaratnam, *Ceylon and the Dutch*, chapter XIII, 49.

⁷³ When the revision of tombos was taken place, the details of original members of each unit were updated. If they were married and left the original residential unit, the place where s/he was married to was indicated.

⁷⁴ Knox, *Historical Relation of Ceylon*, 128.

⁷⁵ See Paranavitana, *Land for Money*, 4; Chandra R. de Silva, 'The First Portuguese Revenue Register' in *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, n.s., 5:1-2 (1975), 1-83.

⁷⁶ This was the case for most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when many battles were fought between indigenous rulers, the Portuguese and the Dutch, and the entire region was ravaged. The Kandy-Dutch war of 1761-65 is particularly important. The aftermath of this war would have had greater significance as to some information found in tombos, since some demographic trends revealed in the 1771 revised series may represent some of the resulting realities. Albert van den Belt, a long-time researcher of the tombos, is of the view that the high death rate and figures on migration to the Kandyan land should be read against the backdrop of the wartime realities (personal communication in February 2006).

⁷⁷ It was commonplace among Sinhalese kings to hire mercenaries from South India. See, Liyanagamage, "Keralas in Medieval Sri Lankan History".

⁷⁸ Apart from European soldiers, the Dutch and Portuguese had other sources for the manpower for their military machinery: the Portuguese employed Kaffir and the Dutch used Malays and Sepoys (Brohier, *Changing Face of Colombo*, (Boralesgamuwa, Sri Lanka: Visidunu Prakashkayo, 2000) 39; Schrikker, *Dutch and British colonial intervention in Sri Lanka*, 39)

⁷⁹ See H. W. Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure and Revenue in Ceylon*, (Colombo: Ceylon Government Press, 1938).

⁸⁰ This ideology had its roots in classical Indian tradition of kingship; see Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, for an introduction on this matter. There was a sanction for this ideology in classical Buddhism too. *Vasetti suttraya* of Diga *Nikaya* narrate the origin of the kingship and legitimises the extraction of part of the

peasant's surplus by the King. For a review of this *Diga Nikaya* episode, see Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, 299-300. Dumont also gives a detailed analysis of the origin myths and theories of kingship in the classical Indian tradition (296-313). The Buddhist sanction of kingship is extremely important in the case of Sri Lanka, because Sri Lankan kings received the main religious sanction for their role in society from Buddhist tradition. They preferred to portray themselves as *bodhisatwa* (Buddha-to-be).

⁸¹ For details of this trade network, see K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁸² Obeyesekere's essay 'Gajabahu and the Gajabahu Synchronism: An Inquiry into the Relationship between Myth and History' (in *Ceylon Journal of Humanities* 1:1 [1970], 25-56) analyses the story of a king named Gajabahu who invaded South India as a mythical representation of the early stage of South Indian migration, which he traced back to thirteenth century. Liyanagamage's essay, "Keralas in Medieval Sri Lankan History", also points to the same phenomenon of South Indian migrants since the thirteenth century. For more detail about this migration movement, see Michael Roberts, *Caste Conflict and Elite Formation: The Rise of a Karava Elite in Sri Lanka, 1500-1931* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁸³ 'For the first three miles [from Colombo], gentlemen's houses make their appearance here and there, on the left hand side of the road, having their fronts expanded for the reception of the sea breeze, the most welcome of all visitors in a tropical climate.' Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon*, 102.

⁸⁴ See chapter 6 for details.

⁸⁵ See the introduction.

⁸⁶ *Ceylon Gazetteer*, (Simon Casie Chitty, first published 1834, reprint New Delhi: Navrang, 1989), 151-52.

⁸⁷ A British record of 30 October 1814 reported that a group of ten traders was harassed and mutilated by Kandyans. Most of these were from Mahara areas and used to trade with the Kandyan country. Their testimonies show that this was a long-standing practice; see Wimalananda, *Sri Wickrema Brownrigg and Ehelepola*, (Colombo: Gunasena, 1984), 355-64.

⁸⁸ NA/ VOC/ 2756, fo. 387.

⁸⁹ Knaap, "Europeans, Mestizos and Slavess", 85.

⁹⁰ De Silva, 'The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Sitavaka'.

⁹¹ Abeyasinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, 114.

⁹² See chapter 4 for 'absentee land ownership'.

⁹³ See the map in Van Goor, *Jan Kompenie as Schoolmaster*, 124.

⁹⁴ An explanation is needed for the sense in which I use the terms 'ritual status', 'ritual function', 'ritual order', etc. Rituals are important element of any society. Any ritual practice represents certain social meanings. It is a practice which represents as well as reproduces basic norms of the social order, the way in which statuses are distributed, the way in which each member of the network of social relations are assigned a specific place in the society etc. Rituals are also media through which members of a community come to terms with its 'cosmic world', and, therefore, they make the world more sensible and 'graspable' to those who take part in ritual practices. It is to give these meanings that I used the above mentioned terms throughout this study. For more about symbolic meanings of rituals see, Bruce Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) see, specially, the introduction, 1-11.

⁹⁵ For the Kandy-Dutch war, see Kotelawe, 'The Dutch in Ceylon', 223-88.

⁹⁶ Governor Gollennesse declared in his *Memoirs* that he withdrew some fertile villages of Weke, an adjacent area, (and Gampaha) from the chiefs (Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 64). The tombo also records that the village Hissella, located nearby, was withdrawn from a Muhandiram of Hina *kōrale* by Governor Jan Schreuder (see chapter four for details).

⁹⁷ The name of this village is appeared in tombo as 'Obodapola'. But in another occasion, referring to the same village in the tombo of Mapitigama it is named as 'Ogodapola'. I use the name 'Ogodapola' because it is the name that is currently used for the village. Ogodapola and Obodapola both carry close literal meanings. The meaning of Ogodapola is 'place above the river' while the meaning of Obodapola is 'the place by the river'.

⁹⁸ This centre-periphery structure is somewhat similar to the demographic structure of Indian villages as suggested by A. Béteille, ('The Indian Village: Past and Present', in E. J. Hobsbawm, et al. [eds.] *Peasant in History: Essays in Honour of David Thorner*, [Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990] 107-20).

⁹⁹ Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, 3, 10-11.

¹⁰⁰ The military expedition to the countryside in April 1665 was mainly carried out with this goal. As a result of this expedition about 12,000 to 15,000 people were brought back and settled in Dutch territory (See Ibid, 35).

¹⁰¹ See Kotelawe, 'The Dutch in Ceylon'.

¹⁰² In this conceptualisation I follow Slavoj Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology and Mapping Ideology*, (London: Verso, 1989).

¹⁰³ The same phenomenon can be seen in the case of an Indian village. Bêteille remarks: 'The point to bear in mind is that the importance of the village within Indian civilisation is to be understood not simply in demographic but also in normative terms. The village was not merely a place where people lived; it had a design in which were reflected the basic values of Indian civilisation'. ('The Indian Village: Past and Present', 107-108).

¹⁰⁴ There have been many studies on this subject with a scientific approach, but they have not escaped from this ideological trap. A recent attempt in an otherwise useful study is that by the archaeologist Gunawardana, '*Purana Gama*'. This work avoids the semantic evolution of the term '*gama*' and historical variations of peasant settlements. In my view, this is the result mainly from the uncritical use of the term '*gama*' as found in the dominant discourse.

¹⁰⁵ Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, 1. Chapter one of this work is an important description of the way *gama* was used in the pre-colonial context.

¹⁰⁶ Obeyesekere, *Land Tenure in Village Ceylon: A Sociological and Historical Study*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 13-14.

¹⁰⁷ For the population increase, see N. K. Sarkar, *Demography of Ceylon* (Ceylon Government Press, 1957).

¹⁰⁸ Obeyesekere, *Land Tenure in Village Ceylon*, 12; here he uses Srinivas's concept of 'structural unity'.

¹⁰⁹ It is important to recall some observations made on the subject in relation to Java. Ota Atsushi draws our attention, with the help of Breman, to how colonial rulers, particularly the Dutch, articulated the notion of 'village' in a manner suited to their political and administrative needs; see *Changes of Regime and Social Dynamics in West Java*, 37-8.

¹¹⁰ The 1794 map gives us an idea of the size of these settlements. Mahara, in particular, covered an extremely large geographical area.

¹¹¹ See below the discussions on Gorakadeniya and Ogodapola, for more detail

¹¹² Cf. Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, 65.

¹¹³ Kanapathypillai, 'Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon', 136.

¹¹⁴ This situation made going away from home an extremely cautious business, which had lot of superstitious aspects: '[a]s most Indians are superstitious, so also are the Cingalese in the utmost degree, and encountering the slightest thing as they go out is enough for them to return home or abandon something they have already begun (Valentijn, *Description of Ceylon*, 160). This observation is to be assessed against the backdrop of the danger involved in crossing of the boundary of the village.

¹¹⁵ 'These Leaches seize upon the Legs of Travellers; who going barefoot according to the custom of the Land, have them hanging upon their Legs in multitudes, which suck their blood till their bellies are full, and then drop off. They come in such quantities, that the people cannot pull them off so fast as they crawl on. The blood runs pouring down their Legs all the way they go, and 'tis no little smart neither, so that they would willingly be without them if they could, especially those that have sores on their Legs; for they all gather to the sore' (Knox, *Historical Relation of Ceylon*, 40).

¹¹⁶ 'Elephants are so numerous here that it is impossible to travel without people and drums. Also there are many cases when they, on meeting this or that person, have done great harm and kill them' (Valentijn, *Description of Ceylon*, 180). Wild elephants were a significant worry for those who were in the Colombo Fort too. It is reported that once a wild elephant broke into the fort, demolishing its strong wall (Brohier, *Changing Face of Colombo*, 26). 'And altho here be both Bears and Tygers in these Woods, yet they are not so fierce, as commonly to assault people; Travellers and Way-faring men go more in fear of Elephants than of any other Beast' (Knox, *Historical Relation of Ceylon*, 36).

¹¹⁷ 'They fear nothing in the world more than the dead, to escape whom they summon the devil because they fear death even more and pray to be delivered from him. [...] They mourn for their dead, the women with hair hanging loose make a dreadful braying, holding their hands like disconsolates above their heads, reciting at the same time the praise of the deceased even though he may have been a great rascal' (Valentijn, *Description of Ceylon*, 171).

¹¹⁸ *Ceylon Gazetteer*, 42. For more details on the condition of these footpaths see Indran Munasinghe, 'Modes of Travel in Sri Lanka at the Beginning of British Rule' in *Sri Lanka National Archives*, 2 (1984), 61-66.

¹¹⁹ See Indrani Munasinghe, *The Colonial Economy on Track: Roads and Railways in Sri Lanka, 1800-1905* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 2003), for details on the road revolution in the nineteenth century.

¹²⁰ When the settlement distribution is compared with the 1794 map series, large numbers of 'blank' areas which do not have access to roads can be seen.

¹²¹ One folk story refers to a daft person who left home early in the morning before sunrise to embark on a journey to a far away village with the intention of coming back before sunset. He was a domestic servant and his lord had instructed him the previous night to go to a certain village and come back, without specifying the reason. The servant got up in the morning before his master and without waiting for further advice embarked on the journey and came back in the evening to the fury of the master who wanted to send something to his relatives in that village.

¹²² Cf. 'In the country where paddy cultivation is carried on by menas of tanks the houses are gathered together in the neighbourhood of the tank bund. Such a village until recent times consisted of a number of families of the same caste and related to one another.... [...] Elsewhere the houses usually are more or less scattered, and villages may be inhabited by one or more castes.' (Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, 1)

¹²³ Tombos mention only coconut, jak and areca nut trees out of them.

¹²⁴ This was however different in the dry zone where chenas were found at a considerable distance from the places of residence.

¹²⁵ Even in the case of gardens, a significant separation took place. As peasant production became increasingly integrated with the colonial economy, gardens grew in importance. This is discussed in detail in the chapter three.

¹²⁶ In its modern form, this stretch of paddy field is a vast formation that runs through many villages. We are not in a position to reconstruct the exact form in the mid eighteenth century.

¹²⁷ 'Villagers would communally slash and burn a portion of the village forest, hoe the ground and broadcast the seeds' (Asoka Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka*, [Colombo: Lake House Investments, 1985] 26). Codrington described how ground was prepared communally for chena cultivation, a system prevalent up to his time in the 1930s (*Ancient Land Tenure*, 4). Together with this information, it is also significant to note that the chenas were not classified according to individual ownership in tombos. Instead a village's chena lands were grouped together as one.

¹²⁸ Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka*, 19.

¹²⁹ Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, 1.

¹³⁰ This division of *ihalagama* and *pahalagama* is quite common in the peasant settlements in the Western lowlands. The same division is found in Obeyesekere's Madagama (see *Land Tenure in Village Ceylon*). There are also many villages which bear these names. Some villages found in tombos are presently known as two villages prefixed with '*ihala*' and '*pahala*'. In the case of Mapitigama, there are two villages, 'Ihala Mapitigama' and 'Pahala Mapitigama'. This is also the case with regard to Pahala Biyanwila and Ihala Biyanwila, which appears in the tombos as one village, Biyanwila (Hina/ Ahikari). What is important is that both these parts were identified as '*gama*'.

¹³¹ The suffix '*kele*' (literally jungle) needs some elaboration. It suggests that this strip of land is a jungle. This area was however not a jungle even in the known past. About twenty years ago there was a rubber plantation and several coconut plantations as well as a few houses. Now the rubber plantation has been removed and more houses have been built. This suggests that the nomenclature points to a reality of the distant past. It is possible to assume that in our period this area would have been covered by jungle for three strong reasons. First, the houses in this strip of land are of recent construction. Most of them are of late arrivals to the village. Second, there is no record of large coconut plantations in tombo as found presently in this strip of lands. Third, rubber plantations are definitely a phenomenon of the nineteenth century and later.

¹³² Presently, this division may not be distinguished by an outsider, unless the latter is well aware of the social composition, because the population explosion has eroded the geographical distance between the two formations. But still there is no inter-penetration of each nucleus, though the situation is somewhat different in the periphery. There is no doubt that this division may have been noticeable in the era of the tombos.

¹³³ *Vāsagama* is discussed in the next section. There are a number of *vasagam* in this kin group presently because of the breaking of the main male line resulting from marriage relations. This happens when female members of the group enter into *binna* (uxorilocal) marriages, where the offspring receives the family name of the father, which is different from that of the line of residence. There is presently a large *āchāri* concentration in '*pahalagama*'. But their oral traditions and information found in some land deeds suggest that they have migrated to the area not earlier than the late nineteenth century. Thus they pose no problem in understanding the demographic reality of *pahalagama* in the era of tombos.

¹³⁴ Presently there are more houses southwards to the *bakuru* concentration. But they do not have any ancestral roots in tombos.

¹³⁵ The family name or *vāsagama* of the main line of this group is Nagesenage. But there is evidence in the grain tax records in the early nineteenth century that the previous *vāsagama* of this group is Nagashenege. Despite the phonetic similarity, the meanings of these two terms are completely different. '*Nāgas-bēne*' literally means a chena with *nā* trees. But '*Nāgasēna*' has a very strong connotation linked with

Buddhist literature and the mythical tradition of Pali chronicles. So it is very likely that the earlier name was replaced by the present one, with only a minor phonetic change. What, then, is the link between 'Nagahenege' and Parusellege? Pulinghamy is seemingly a recent immigrant, who married uxorilocally to a woman in Kahambilihene and settled here. This assumption is proved by the information found in the tombos on the biggest garden that he owned, which is a *paraveni* land of his wife's mother. Another garden registered under his name, which was recorded as *ledige grond* (empty land-- meaning devoid of coconut, areca or jak trees), had been named as nagahawatta, reminding of the *vāsagama* Nagashenege, found in the grain tax record. One of the paddy fields recorded under his name was given the name *nagabakumbura*. As will be discussed later, *vasagam* are liable to change in this period.

¹³⁶ Even in the recent past the social intercourse between these two castes was kept at a minimum in the village, particularly in ritually important social functions such as marriages. Though the caste exclusiveness is not openly practiced nowadays it is a major factor at many levels of the social intercourse. About two decades ago, the *bakuru* community of the village built a new Buddhist temple in their locality, because they found it difficult to fetch Buddhist monks, who are mostly of the *goyigama* caste, for their religious needs.

¹³⁷ There were two derogatory terms used by upper caste people for this type of closely-knit low caste settlement, namely *gubbeyama* (or *kuppeyama*--the colloquial form) and *goda* prefixed with the caste name (for example *bakurugoda*). The first term was generally used for settlements of the out-caste community of *rodiyas*, but it was not uncommon to use it for low-caste settlements in general. The second term literally means, in this case, a 'cluster' which in itself was not derogatory. But when it is suffixed with a caste name it becomes derogatory.

¹³⁸ All three PLH groups in Gorakadeniya (Hina/ Mäda) have Rajasekere as part of their *vāsagama* although spelling has been different in each case. This suggests that all three groups have kin connection to each other.

¹³⁹ There seems to be some confusion among many authorities over this 'ge' suffix. Ryan has translated it as 'House name'. For example he translates 'Locuge' as 'Great House' (*Caste in Modern Ceylon: The Sinhalese System in Transition* [New Delhi: Navrang, 1993] 26). Moreover, Obeyesekere cites Tambiah as seeing the usage of 'gedera' (literally 'house') in the personal names of Kandyan Provinces, as the counterpart of *vāsagama* in the low country (Obeyesekere, *Land Tenure in Village Ceylon*, 17). This seems quite problematic. In my view, the suffix 'ge' in the *vāsagama* has to be considered as a case of possession. Thus it is absolutely incorrect to translate 'Locuge' as the 'Great House'; rather, it should be 'of locu'. It is difficult to translate 'locu' here without knowing the historical evolution of this *vāsagama*. 'Locu' literally means great, big or high. There is also a problem in the way in which Obeyesekere understands the function of the suffix 'ge'. He says "I ask Jinadasa what his full name is and he tells me that it is 'Pahala Madagama Gamage Jinadasa'. His surname or *vāsagama* is 'Pahalamadagama Gamage' and his personal name is Jinadasa. This means he is a member of the Pahala Madagama Gamage *vāsagama*" (Ibid. 15). There is a serious linguistic error in his analysis of this *vāsagama*. As mentioned above, the suffix 'ge' indicates possession or close association. It is therefore incorrect to say 'he is a member of the Pahala Madagama Gamage *vāsagama*', because what Obeyesekere means here is 'the estate of Pahala Madagama Gamage'. The correct translation should be 'he is a member of Pahala Madagama *Gama*, because the function of the suffix 'ge' is to associate Jinadasa with the particular *vāsagama* group. This minor difference is significant, because based on this erroneous reading Obeyesekere comes to the conclusion that Gamage is the sub-caste to which Jinadasa belongs. Alternative translation could be 'Jinadasa is a member of the estate (*gama*) of Pahala Madagama'.

¹⁴⁰ It seems, however, that Obeyesekere gives a more crucial place for the 'ge' suffix in connection with the situation in the mid-twentieth century (Ibid. 14-15). My tentative argument is that compared to Obeyesekere's period, in the mid-eighteenth century, this mode of nomenclature was not yet firmly structured.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 14.

¹⁴² Ibid. 144-64, this will be discussed further in chapters four and six.

¹⁴³ It is interesting to note that Dematagoda was not recorded in the tombos, although such a locality still exists in the area. I met, in 2002, some families of the same caste as Samantuwa, who also bear the *vāsagama* Dematagodage. They however have no memory of any relationship with Radaliyagoda. Presently the locality known as Radaliyagoda is not considered officially a village and no residents are found there with the *vāsagama* 'Dematagodage'.

¹⁴⁴ The actual situation may also have been different, though that was one of the ways of establishing a new estate, as in the case of the mythical ancestor of Obeyesekere's Madagama, who left Mavanana to form a new estate (Ibid. 24). Sometimes traces of the previous place of residence may remain in the *vāsagama* part of the name. This was sometimes the case when the name of a village other than that of residence formed a part of the *vāsagama*. This may happen at least due to two situations. When a founder of an estate left his previous place of residence to form the new one, he might retain the name of the previous place of

residence in the *vāsagama* part of his name. This was encouraged by the people's practice of identifying newcomers by their previous place of residence. When a male person uxori-locally married a woman, the previous resident place of the former might form the *vāsagama*, fully or in part. Sometimes the name of the current place of residence might be found as part of the *vāsagama*. This is the case in 'Pahala Madagama Gamage *vāsagama* group in Obeysekere's Madagama. This can also be the case when the particular *vāsagama* group holds a numerically or socially dominant position in the settlement, which makes the *vāsagama* and the name of the village synonymous. But this is not always the case, as is evident in the instance of Radaliyagoda, where all the inhabitants belong to one *vāsagama* group. In my opinion, however, this would have been contingent upon the way in which the particular PLH was named by a powerful outsider, in this case, probably, the tombo commissioner.

¹⁴⁵ Additional information is useful in understanding this situation too. When the frontier of the estate is a natural boundary, in other words the jungle, a member of an estate might form a new one by simply encroaching on new lands adjacent to the original estate. Such a development might not cause any reallocation of the hamlet of residence. One way to judge this is to look at the nature of holdings of a particular PLH's estate, in order to make sure whether they are newly cultivated lands or ancestral lands. Unfortunately the tombos are not reliable in this respect. Both in the case of Gorakadeniya and PLH number four of Obodapola, claims were made that many of their holdings were *paraveni* (or inherited lands), which was frequently disputed by tombo commissioners.

¹⁴⁶ This last mentioned type could have been the most common situation. Apart from the landholdings that a person inherited from his ancestors, he could acquire new lands. This was possible when uncultivated lands were available in the village.

¹⁴⁷ In one village only absentee PLHs were recorded.

¹⁴⁸ These figures will be discussed in detail in chapter six.

¹⁴⁹ This caste performed a range of service, from beating drums for ceremonial occasions to exorcism; see Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, 124-25.

¹⁵⁰ The distribution of these four service castes in the 455 villages reviewed is as follows: *radā* 154 villages; *āchāri* 84 villages; *berava* 58 villages; *badabāla* 30 villages. The widespread distribution of *radā* is due to the importance of the services they provided for peasants, particularly in all the ceremonial occasions.

¹⁵¹ There were a large number of practices by which this caste distinction was maintained, which will be discussed in the chapter six.

Notes to Chapter three

¹⁵² Vyas, V.S. 'Changes in Land Ownership Pattern: Structural Changes in Indian Agriculture', in E.J. Hobsbawm, et al. (eds.) *Peasant in History: Essays in Honour of David Thorner*, (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1990), 181.

¹⁵³ Baijgam is the corrupted spelling of *Batgam* (rice villages). They were retained by Kotte kings as *gabdagam* (treasury villages) owing to their high productivity.

¹⁵⁴ Report on the paddy income from *baijgam* and Giruwaya pattu from 1759 to 1789 shows that a major part of the paddy income of the Company came from these two regions (ANRI/HR/3850).

¹⁵⁵ See C. R. Panabokke, *Soils and Agro-ecological environment of Sri Lanka, Natural Resources Series, no. 2*, (Natural Resources Energy and Science Authority of Sri Lanka, 1996). especially the 'Soil Map' and the map of 'Agro-Ecological Regions of Sri Lanka' that attached to that book. In the last mentioned map this region has been classified under 'Dry Zone'. It has been further classified under two Agro-Ecological units, namely 'DL1' and 'DL5'. The terrain and dominant soils in the DL1 Agro-Ecological unit, which also includes North-Central areas of the Dry Zone, is given as follows: 'Undulating terrain (Reddish Brown Earths and Low Humic Gley soils). DL5 has 'Undulating and flat terrain (Reddish Brown Earth with high amount of gravel n sub soil and Solodized Solonetz).

¹⁵⁶ Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 64. The following note is found in tombo entry on the village Hisselle in the Weke division "... is volgens de in anno 1758 door den gouverneur Schreuder als de gouverneur van Ceijlon gemaakte nieuwe schikking waarbij aan een Muhandiram van de *Kōrale* niet meer dan 8 amm; ande gezaaij toegelegd, en nademaal den Muhandiram Don Constantine overleden is het geheel voor de 'sComp: in getrocken en hier van weder aan een ander haar accomodessaan ... toegevoegt werden" (SLNA 1/3710, fo. 231). (Translation: 'In accordance with the arrangement made by the Governor Schreuder in 1758, whereby *mudaliyār* of a *kōrale* is not allowed to have more than eight *ammunms* of *ande* lands, and moreover, since *Muhandiram* Don Constantine is passed away, their accomodessan is resumed altogether by the Company.')

¹⁵⁷ See 'Instruction to the Dutch Disawe of Colombo, issued by Governor Cornelis Joan Simons in 1707', in *Ceylon Historical Journal*, no. 19 (1969-70), 34.

¹⁵⁸ List of tanks which were being repaired from 1790 to 1794, SLNA/ 1/ 2814.

¹⁵⁹ See Kanapathypillai, *Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon*, 271-73; Schrikker, *Dutch and British colonial intervention in Sri Lanka*, 40.

¹⁶⁰ The nature of tools of production has already been studied. Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organisation*, and Newton Gunasinghe (*Changing Socio-economic Relations in the Kandyan Countryside*, [Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 1990]) gives useful analyses of the subject. Although Gunasinghe's study covers a period when new tools of production were starting to be used, it is possible to get an idea on the nature of the traditional tools of production. Both these studies are pertaining to Kandyan region. But there was no difference between this region and our region in terms of the tools of production.

¹⁶¹ His calculation is based on Portuguese sources and therefore pertinent to the Portuguese territory, which more or less coincides with our region; see De Silva, 'Sri Lanka in the early sixteenth century: economic and social conditions' in *UPHS*, 39.

¹⁶² De Silva, *Ceylon under the British Occupation*, 359.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* 359.

¹⁶⁴ Farmer, *Pioneer Peasant Colonization in Ceylon*, 46, n. 1.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 45-46.

¹⁶⁶ Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 58; Schreuder, *Memoir*, 80; Colvin R. de Silva states that the first British governor, Fredrik North, also tried to induce the farmer to do the same (De Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation*, 359). As Farmer also mentions, transplanting was widely used in the Kandyan lands (*Pioneer Peasant Colonization in Ceylon*, 82).

¹⁶⁷ De Silva, *Ceylon Under the British Occupation*, 363; for more information on using buffaloes in peasant agriculture in Sri Lanka, see B. M. A. O. Perera, et al. *The Sri Lanka Water Buffalo* (Colombo: Natural Resources and Energy Authority, n.d.)

¹⁶⁸ See chapter six for details of this issue. For the relative numerical strength of castes see table 6-1.

¹⁶⁹ For details on these sundry castes see Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, chapters four to six.

¹⁷⁰ There is an exception in the case of this caste too. As will be discussed in the chapter six, there is a movement into the countryside by some members of this caste. These groups migrated to the countryside had an engagement in peasant agriculture.

¹⁷¹ This variation had very important socio-economic significance. When there was a competition for better lands, social elements with more power were in a position to control the rich paddy lands. One interesting case that exemplifies this situation can be cited. Alexander Abekoon, *kōrāla* of Hina *kōrāle* resident of Mapitigama held one ammunam of paddy lands in Ogodapola of Māda *pattunwa* of the same *kōrāle*, as part of his extensive absentee ownership. This was recorded not in the tombo of Ogodapola but in that of Kahambilihene. This may be because of the paddy-field was being situated somewhere between Ogodapola and Kahambilihene. Ecological features of the Ogodapola system indicate that this is the area where the best paddy-fields were located. It can be argued that when the Company was tightening its grip over the best paddy lands in the region, indigenous chiefs were trying to control the better paddy lands in the peripheral areas in which the Company did not have a strong grip.

¹⁷² An official report in 1934 observed the end result of this situation as follows: 'Chena cultivation, that is, the growing of crops on jungle land newly cleared by burning, is an important feature of peasant agriculture in the sparsely populated areas of dry zone, while, in more favoured districts, and particularly in proximity to towns, market gardening brings in a small but regular income' (*A Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Ceylon* [London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1934], 19). The fact that it ascribes chena cultivation to 'the sparsely populated areas of dry zone' indicates that the latter had disappeared from our region by the time of preparing the report. The remark on 'market gardening' is also crucial because it represents a more advanced stage of what we can see in our period. One would not notice the sign of change from what our sources tell us at first sight, simply because there is no possibility, at this point of comparing the information in table 3-1 with an early period. Moreover, chenas can be found virtually more or less everywhere in our region except in areas where the essential physical conditions were not available. Nevertheless, if we bear in mind that 'time' is hidden in 'space', significant changing aspects can be noticed. In other words, the regional variations in the distribution of chenas could have been caused by ecological differences as well as by different temporal dynamics.

¹⁷³ See Kanapathypillai, 'Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon'; Wagenaar, *Galle, VOC vestiging in Ceylon*; Pieris *Ceylon and Hollanders*.

¹⁷⁴ Pieris, *Ceylon and Hollanders*, 39.

¹⁷⁵ Permanent Orders May 18 1743, SLNA/ 1/ 2408 fo. 1.

¹⁷⁶ Wagenaar gives a detailed account of the insurgency in the Galle region in *Galle, VOC vestiging in Ceylon*, 177-97.

¹⁷⁷ Permanent Orders of 8 May 1743 of the Political Council (SLNA/ 1/ 2408 fo. 1).

- ¹⁷⁸ Plakkaat no. 314, in Hovy, *Ceylonees Plakkaatboek: Plakkaaten en Andere Wetten Uitgevaardigd Door het Nederlands Bestuur op Ceylon, 1638–1796*, (Hilversum: Verloren, 1991) vol.ii, 484-85.
- ¹⁷⁹ See Plakkaats nos. 314, 329, 342, 351, 372, 380, 416, 439 and 452 in *Ceylonees Plakkaatboek*, vol. 2.
- ¹⁸⁰ Loten, *Memoir*, 39.
- ¹⁸¹ Thirteen files numbered from SLNA/ 1/ 3652 to 3664 contain land visits conducted between 1777 and 1793.
- ¹⁸² Kotelawe, 'The Dutch in Ceylon', 177-222; and Wagenaar, *Galle, VOC Vestiging in Ceylon*, 177-97.
- ¹⁸³ P. E. Pieris, 'Ceylon Littoral', in *Selected writings of Paul E. Pieris* (New Delhi: Navrang, 1995), passim.
- ¹⁸⁴ For a detailed account on the garden policy of the Company see Kotelawe, 'The VOC in Sri Lanka, 1658-1796', in *UPHS*, 423-33.
- ¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 423.
- ¹⁸⁶ Kotelawe remarks that 'In 1722 the Company decided to introduce coffee as a garden crop in its territories, and called on the inhabitants to produce it, promising that the new crop would 'provide you both great and small within an year or two with an abundance of money sufficient to make you rich, or at least for the ample maintenance of you and your families'. ('The Dutch in Ceylon', 8).
- ¹⁸⁷ Loten, *Memoir*, 40.
- ¹⁸⁸ Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 76.
- ¹⁸⁹ The small crop may have been due to the delicate nature of the plant, which is vulnerable to climatic fluctuations and insect attacks; see Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 76.
- ¹⁹⁰ A plakkaat issued on 31 March 1740 requested that all inhabitants plant at least three pepper plants in their garden (*Ceylonees Plakkaatboek*, vol.ii, 466-67). Also see the plakkaat of 29 June 1743 (Ibid. 479-80).
- ¹⁹¹ Kotelawe, 'The VOC in Sri Lanka, 1658-1796' 428.
- ¹⁹² Ibid. 428.
- ¹⁹³ Bertolacci, *A View of the Agricultural, Commercial and Financial Interests of Ceylon*, 88. Chandra R. de Silva, on the other hand, states that according to Portuguese revenue records, the annual yield of nuts per tree was fifteen. De Silva himself, however, gives the following explanation as to why this estimate is unreliable: 'Even taking into account very old and young trees this figure seems to underestimate the yield by a large margin, but perhaps this was to be expected. Coconuts were plucked four to six times a year and sometimes more frequently and therefore the yield could not be easily checked by officers of the crown unlike in the case of grain which could be measured at harvest time, once or twice a year' ('Sri Lanka in the Early Sixteenth Century', 41.)
- ¹⁹⁴ Apart from coconut there were several other sources of oil for lighting purpose. For a quite useful illumination of this subject, see Wijitapura Wimalaratana, *Changes in Consumption Pattern and Economic Underdevelopment in British Ceylon*, (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1998), 184-85.
- ¹⁹⁵ For more details on these sub-regions see chapter two.
- ¹⁹⁶ Jak is indeed still one of the most popular sources of timber both for furniture and building construction in Sri Lanka.
- ¹⁹⁷ Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 68.
- ¹⁹⁸ Schreuder, *Memoir*, 77. For a comprehensive analysis of the Company's policy on areca nut and its effects, see Kotelawe, 'The VOC in Sri Lanka 1658-1796', 426-27.
- ¹⁹⁹ Hovy, *Ceylonees Plakkaatboek*, vol.ii. 477-78; also of 14 September 1743 (483-84).
- ²⁰⁰ Ibid. 932-33.
- ²⁰¹ Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, 7.
- ²⁰² In some cases *ōwiti* were classified separately, as in Mapitigama (Hina/ Māda).
- ²⁰³ Imhoff, *Memoir*, 27-8; Schreuder, *Memoir*, 52.
- ²⁰⁴ Mottau, 'Glossary', 145.
- ²⁰⁵ The graph 5-5 of the chapter five, which represents the accessibility to *ōwiti* lands in Mapitigama, there was a strong trend among medium level indigenous chiefs and *lascarines* to accumulate this variety of lands.
- ²⁰⁶ Arasaratnam, *Ceylon and the Dutch*, chapters XII and XIII; Kotelawe, 'The VOC in Sri Lanka', 423-33.
- ²⁰⁷ Knaap, 'Europeans, Mestizos and Slaves', 85.
- ²⁰⁸ *Ceylon Gazetteer*. This has been discussed in more detail in chapter two.
- ²⁰⁹ Later development of this process is evident from the observation of the 'Official report of 1934', which refers to the 'market gardening' in the region; see *A Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Ceylon*.
- ²¹⁰ See Jayawardene, *Nobodies to Somebodies*.
- ²¹¹ Codrington gives the following explanation for the use of the term, 'garden' in the context of traditional structure: 'In modern times garden land may be divided into the ge-vatta, "residing garden", and plantations or vatu, an areca nut grove being aramba. In early mediaeval times we find vatta, "garden", ge-

bim, “house-lands”, gevatu, “house-gardens” and arub, the modern aramba’.[...] ‘Uyan was not the same as vatta; uyana now is the name applied only to royal or temple plantations’ (*Ancient Land Tenure*, 8).

²¹² Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 76.

²¹³ See Kanapathypillai, ‘Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon’, 280-307, for details on the beginning of the cinnamon plantations.

²¹⁴ In 1757 the Company spent f. 10,009.19.8 for gifts to the king. Moreover, further f.2744.8 was spent for gifts to Kandyan mission arrived in Colombo (L. J. Wagenaar, ‘Knielen of Buigen, De gezantschappen van de Compagnie naar Kandy na het verdesverdrag van 1766’, in Davids C.A. et al. (eds.) *Kapitaal, Ondernemerschap en Beleid: Studies over Economie en Politiek in Dederland, Europa en Azië van 1500 Tot Heden*, [Amsterdam: Neha, 1996], 446.)

²¹⁵ In the treaty concluded on 14 February 1766, Article eight and nine guaranteed the free access to the Company for cinnamon grown in the King’s territory. The full text of the treaty is found in Kanapathypillai, ‘Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon’, 380-406, and L. S. Dewaraja, *Kandyan Kingdom of Ceylon 1707-1782* (Colombo: Lake House Investments, 1972).

²¹⁶ This was among the main issues raised during the annual audience given by the governor to chalias before departing for the woods in April. See for example *Translaat Singaleese olas bebelende de conferentie gehouden op den dag der paroissee aan de gesamentlijke chaliassen op saturday 9: meij 1744* (VOC/ 2622: fo. 2460).

²¹⁷ Kanapathypillai, ‘Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon’, 304.

²¹⁸ In the case of two gardens, figures cannot be deciphered.

²¹⁹ De Silva, *Ceylon under the British Occupation*, 417.

²²⁰ Ibid. 421.

²²¹ The area where the main cinnamon plantation was found in what is now the heart of Colombo city. The only trace in this area of late eighteenth century reality is the name ‘Cinnamon Garden’ (*Kurunduwatta*) which is still being used for this area, which, incidentally, happen to be the location of the Sri Lanka National Archives where the archives of the VOC rule are kept.

²²² Colvin R. de Silva frequently refers to the large Kadirana plantation in Negombo which is also found in the 1794 map. But it is not found in the 1786 report on cinnamon plantations (SLNA/ 1/ 3677). This plantation may not have made at that time.

²²³ Probably a minor official of the cinnamon department.

²²⁴ Kanapathypillai, ‘Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon’, 306-307.

²²⁵ This problem became quite acute in the mid- and late-twentieth century. The early solution introduced by the local partners of the British colonial rule was to send excess population to the dry zone, giving them lands in land colonization schemes (for details about these land colonization schemes, see Farmer, *Pioneer Peasant Colonization in Ceylon*.) Quite interestingly, those who promoted these schemes belonged to the social class which gained control over the lands in this region and became big land-owners. Later, especially following the youth insurrection of 1971, to which the land problem had been an enormous contributing factor, certain measures were taken to restrict land ownership among the big land-owners. But these measures did not address the whole problem and also came too late.

²²⁶ Brohier, *Changing Face of Colombo*, 6.

²²⁷ It appears that at least some of the merchants emerged as powerful groups, not only in the economic but also in the political arena. Alekeshwaras of Kerala origin, a powerful ruling group in Raigama and later in Kotte, derived their power from their ability to control sea-borne trade. They were instrumental in restricting the southward expansion of the Aryachakrawartis of Jaffna, who were also interested in controlling these trading activities. For a comprehensive account of the power of Alakeshwaras, see Somaratna, *Political History of Kotte*, and Liyanagamage, ‘Keralas in Medieval Sri Lankan History’.

²²⁸ *Mandarampurapuwata*, Rev. Labugama Lankananda (ed.), (Colombo: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1996) verse 282, p. 36.

²²⁹ This text states there were 250,000 villages in the Maya rata, which included the cities (*pura*) of Dambadeniya, Kotte, Sitawaka, Athugala, Yapahuwa and Gampala cities (*pura*). Probably the term *pura* was used by the poet to designate the seats of indigenous kings. All these places were centres of kings after thirteenth century. The poet then classifies the villages: 1000 Wedagam (village of physicians); 500 kirigam (milk villages); 100 tatupatgam; (...); 300 diyagam (water village); 1000 Mutugam (pearl villages); 300 Kulugam (...); 16 Ridigam (silver villages); 100 Menikgam (gem villages) (Ibid. verse 8, p. 2).

²³⁰ *Janavamsaya*, p. 36.

²³¹ There were two *Durava* families in Mapitigama (Hina/ Gangaboda) who possessed no paddy lands at all. This is a clear indication that they were not part of the traditional peasant production (tombo of Mapitigama).

²³² See chapter four for detail about the working of this system.

²³³ Different views have been expressed regarding this issue. For an illuminating discussion see De Silva, *Political Economy of Underdevelopment*.

²³⁴ This was exactly the case in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries England following the second enclosure movement which evicted the peasantry from their land in large numbers. Those who were evicted were absorbed into the urban industrial centres. See, E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975) and Herbert Heaton, *Economic History of Europe*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936) - see especially chapters XVIII, XXI and XXIII.

²³⁵ It has already been mentioned that the high mortality rate in tombos may have been caused by the Kandy-Dutch war of 1760-66.

²³⁶ Knox, *Historical Relation of Ceylon*, 136.

²³⁷ Raben, 'Batavia and Colombo', 105, 107.

²³⁸ For *uliyam* service, see Ibid. 227-30.

²³⁹ Council minutes of April 23, 1753, (VOC/ 2813, fo. 403) and the *plakkaat* of March 23, 1753, (Hovy *Plakkaatboek, Deel II*, 570)

²⁴⁰ Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 73-74.

²⁴¹ Raben, 'Batavia and Colombo', 225.

²⁴² See Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organisation*, for a vivid description of the series of these court rituals. Dewaraja's description of the Kandyan court in his *Kandyan Kingdom of Ceylon 1707-1782* is also useful in this respect (see especially 108-14).

²⁴³ H. L. Seneviratne's *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) helps us understand the social political and ideological meanings of the 'Kandy Perehera'.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. 108.

²⁴⁵ Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organisation*; see especially section three, which deals with the *rājakāriya*.

²⁴⁶ Abeyesinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, 118.

²⁴⁷ See Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon*, 3, 10-11 and 35, for how the Kandy-Dutch War in the late seventeenth century affected the demographic formation, in the form of depopulation of many areas.

²⁴⁸ When a peasant performed military service the usual production process was carried out by other members of the family. The extended family structure facilitated this arrangement. Even the polyandrous family, where there were more than one husband in a family was helpful to keep the production process unhindered in such situations.

²⁴⁹ *Pybus Report (The Pybus Embassy to Kandy, 1762*, Trans. R. Raven-Hart, Colombo, 1958) says; 'For one man: 7 1/2 Fanams [12 fanam= 1 rix-dollar], one parrah of rice monthly [1 parrah=40 Dutch lbs.] and 2 pieces of ordinary Salampores annually' (p. 15).

²⁵⁰ The already mentioned report on cinnamon plantations, contains various documents on the problems that arose in organising the *rājakāriya* labour for this end (SLNA/ 1/ 3677, no foliated).

²⁵¹ See Kitsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750-1900: A Study of Religious Revival and Change*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 87-104; Roberts, *Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*, 75-97.

²⁵² For the tasks performed by *lascarins*, see Jurriaanse, *Catalogue of archives of the Dutch government of coastal Ceylon*, 256-258.

²⁵³ The figure Jurriaanse gives is 2520. She probably has used the same document which is SLNA/ 1/ 2790. But in the relevant footnote (p. 257, n. 7) it is given as 2709, probably a printing error. There is somehow inconsistency in the calculation in the said document. See the note to table 5-9 in chapter five.

²⁵⁴ For *accommodessans* see chapter four.

²⁵⁵ VOC/ 2796, Council Minutes of Sep. 3 1752, fo. 780v-781

²⁵⁶ High-caste people apparently considered transporting goods a inferior form of labour. The *Disāve* of Colombo once found that the paddy collected as tax could not be transported because of the refusal of the high caste (probably *goyigama*) farmers to do so on the grounds that it was against their caste status (SLNA/ 1/ 2790, 'Extracts of documents regarding the Colombo dessavony' fo. 33).

²⁵⁷ Mottau, 'Glossary', 137. Gollennesse's remark about misusing thirteen *naindes* reserved for a pepper plantation by the *kōrāla* of Hina *kōrale* implies that they were used for the work on the plantations (Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 77).

²⁵⁸ Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 63.

²⁵⁹ Kanapathypillai, 'Helen or Costly Bride', 142.

²⁶⁰ There are number of reports concerning the organisation of labour for cinnamon plantations. They clearly show that clearing lands was done by the *rājakāriya* labour (SLNA/ 1/ 3677 not foliated).

²⁶¹ Names of other gardens cannot be deciphered (SLNA/ 1/ 3677 not foliated).

²⁶² See De Silva, *Ceylon under the British Occupation* vol.ii, 417, for details about the state of cinnamon plantations at the time of British take over.

²⁶³ Imhoff, *Memoir*, 26.

²⁶⁴ Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 77.

²⁶⁵ De Silva, *Ceylon under the British Occupation*, 360.

²⁶⁶ SLNA/ 1/ 2819 'Translation of Sinhalese rolls of inhabitants in the various *kōrales* and pattuwas of the Colombo dessavony and the services performed by them'.

²⁶⁷ Siriweera, 'Agriculture in Mediaeval Sri Lanka', *Ceylon Historical Journal*, 25 (1978), 44-46.

²⁶⁸ Arulpragasam observes that 'The paddy producing sector is one of the most backward parts of our [Sri Lankan] agricultural economy' ('A Consideration of the Problems Arising from the Size and Sub-division of Paddy Holdings in Ceylon', *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, 4:1, p. 59).

Notes to Chapter Four

²⁶⁹ Competing arguments have been put forward in this connection even in a single situation. See Irfan Habib, "*The Agrarian System of Mughal India*", (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 123.

²⁷⁰ This is an observation that many researchers share. See for example, Abeyesinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, 100-34; Kanapathypillai, 'Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon', 217-79; De Silva, 'Land Tenure, Caste System and the Rajakariya'.

²⁷¹ Abeyesinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*; Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organisation*; and De Silva, *The Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*.

²⁷² Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, 9.

²⁷³ For the situation in Portuguese times, see Pieris, 'Ceylon Littoral'. As discussed in a number of places in the present work, *ande* and *otu* were dominant modes of taxing the paddy holdings according to Dutch tombo.

²⁷⁴ Chronicles and inscription provided information about abolishing many taxes by King Nissankamalla, which were imposed by the Parakramabahu I (see *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon vol.1 part II*).

²⁷⁵ 'Subject to periodical cultivation are *ōvitas*, plat meadow land strictly speaking by the side of a stream (*oya*),...' (Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, 7).

²⁷⁶ I drew these conclusions about the taxes on gardens and paddy-fields based on information in the tombo of Mapitigama (Hina/ Gangaboda).

²⁷⁷ The standard Sinhala word for this category is conspicuous by its absence. The explanation that Codrington gives is quite interesting (see *Ibid.* 17). The absence of a word however is quite meaningful in understanding the pre-colonial land tenure. Some have suggested the term *mudal paraveni*.

²⁷⁸ Paddy-field of PLH one of Ogodapola (Hina/ Māda).

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 8.

²⁸⁰ Schreuder, *Memoir*, 65.

²⁸¹ Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, 37.

²⁸² De Silva, *Ceylon under the British Occupation*, 325.

²⁸³ Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, 43-46

²⁸⁴ Imhoff, *Memoir*, 29. Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, also refers to this remark by Imhoff.

²⁸⁵ SLNA/ 1/ 702, fo. 18

²⁸⁶ A *wibadde vidāne* was responsible for collecting paddy revenue from the cultivator on behalf of the Company. He did not receive maintenance or *accommodessan* lands for his service because he drew two *parras* of paddy a month from what the cultivator delivered to him (Schreuder, *Memoir*, 51). This income for his service to the Company would have been inadequate for his sustenance. Therefore the likelihood of a *wibadde vidāne* being a farmer is high, unless he drew income from other non-cultivation activity.

²⁸⁷ Some of these villages were located in areas quite far from Mapitigama, where he lived. For example Payagala was located in Raigam Korale, and so was Parape, which was situated in Hapitigam Korale. The geographical distance between Mapitigama and these two villages are such that it would definitely have made it difficult for the PLH to attend to these holdings as a direct cultivator.

²⁸⁸ There might be some exceptions to this rule. Instances can be found in which the owner and his household members would take part in the production process irrespective of the distance between the residence and the landed property. This was possible because of certain characteristics of the labour needs of paddy-fields and some garden crops. In the case of paddy-fields, a constant and larger supply of labour was needed only at certain stages of the production process, particularly when preparing the ground, sowing and harvesting. Other minor labour needs could be provided by kinsmen of the absentee owner who lived near the property. Sometimes they would be remunerated with a small part of the crop, but given the kinship connections it could also be totally unpaid. In the case of gardens this was even easier. Once coconut or jak was planted, regular labour was virtually unnecessary except during the harvest and to protect the property from trespassers and some animals, mostly cattle. This could also be done by kinsmen.

²⁸⁹ See the discussion about the geography of the village (*gama*) in chapter two. As the map of the Ogodapola formation suggests, it is not easy to divide paddy-fields according to their respective villages. That could only be done on the basis of the residence of owner of a particular field.

²⁹⁰ Sometimes contradictory information is found in tombos, which may have been caused by this complexity. According to the land tomo of Kahambilihena, *Mudaliyār* Don Alexander Abekoon, resident of Mapitigama, owned a paddy-field in this village. But in the Mapitigama tomo, Kahambilihene does not appear as one of the villages in which this person owned property. Instead, it states that he has property in Ogodapola, which does not match with the tombos of that village. The problem would have been caused by the confusion over the exact location of the paddy-field.

²⁹¹ It is interesting to note that in the tomo of Beraunna only two of them are mentioned. This suggests that the division of the estate in Gorakadeniya had taken place recently and that the distinction had not been taken into consideration when the absentee holding was registered in Beraunna.

²⁹² He had property in Attanagalla, Weelgama, Jabaraluwa, Dompe, Kalukandawe, Walgama, Werehera, Ogodapola, Nambadaluwa, Pittijegedere, and Kamboeroegodde in the Alutkuru *kōrale*. However, Kahambilihena is conspicuous by its absence. In my view Ogodapola is mentioned here instead of Kahambilihena. I have already mentioned the reason for the possible confusion. There is one more point about Alexander Abekoon's absentee holdings worth mentioning. The Mapitigama tomo states that all the properties mentioned above were *paraveni*. But his absentee holding in Kahambilihena is given as '*nānāyakkārāyā's nilapālu*' and it states that Abekoon had cultivated it without permission and paid *otu*, but that he was ordered to pay *ande* in the future.

²⁹³ I have seen at least one case in which a slave was registered as a member of a PLH group, in which case the PLH group is not the same as a family group.

²⁹⁴ Abeysinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, 119. See the chapter on "Land Tenure" in his work for more detail.

²⁹⁵ De Silva reaffirms Abeysinghe's explanation in this way: 'The first twenty years of Portuguese rule in Ceylon saw several modifications of the traditional system. Three of these have been highlighted by T. Abeysinghe..., namely the introduction of Portuguese settlers in the village holding class, the supplanting of service tenure at the village holder's level by the payment of quit rents and the gradual alienation of royal villages to both missionaries and the Portuguese *casados*. These developments continued during the period 1617-1638...'. (*The Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, 216-17).

²⁹⁶ Ibid. 224.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 224.

²⁹⁸ This replacement of the class of *gamladdo* had long-term effects on the relationship between the rulers and indigenous chiefs, which will be discussed later.

²⁹⁹ Ibid. 215-16.

³⁰⁰ Siriweera, 'The Theory of the King's Ownership of Land in Ancient Ceylon'.

³⁰¹ De Silva, *The Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, 216.

³⁰² Pieris, 'Ceylon Littoral', *passim*.

³⁰³ Pieris, 'Ceylon Littoral', 11.

³⁰⁴ De Silva, *The Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, 216, especially n. 119.

³⁰⁵ Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*, 9.

³⁰⁶ For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon, see K. Indrapala (ed.), *The Collapse of the Rajarata Civilization in Ceylon and the Drift to the South-West* (Peradeniya: University of Ceylon, Ceylon Studies Seminar, 1971).

³⁰⁷ See Michael Roberts, 'The Ruins of Ancient Ceylon and the Drift to the South-west', in Ibid. 99-109, for an illumination of the theme.

³⁰⁸ M.U. de Silva's observation follows a similar line of argument: '...it is evident that with the fall of the hydraulic civilization and in the course of the drift to the south-west, new lands were opened up for the cultivation by the local chieftains and Kings whose authority was limited to certain localities in which different tenurial pattern have emerged' (De Silva, 'Land Tenure, Caste System and the Rajakariya, Under Foreign Rule', 3).

³⁰⁹ Villages granted to the Church were exempt from such obligations of tax or service; see Abeysinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, 107.

³¹⁰ For tax farming, see Arasaratnam, 'Introduction to his translation of Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 21; Loten, *Memoir*, 24; Plakkaats issued on 24 September 1746 (*Plakkaat* no. 365, in Hovy, *Ceylonees Plakkaatboek*, 532) and the Plakkaat without a date (probably in 1747) where regulations were published for the tax-farmers (*Plakkaat* no. 366, in Hovy, *Ceylonees Plakkaatboek*, 535).

³¹¹ For more details of the Imhoff's scheme see Imhoff, *Memoir*, 28-30) and for the way in which it was executed later, see the Appendix II.

³¹² SLNA/ 1/ 3710, fo. 231

- ³¹³ Kotelawele, 'The Dutch in Ceylon', 180.
- ³¹⁴ Kotelawele, 'The VOC in Sri Lanka', 420.
- ³¹⁵ Ibid. 420.
- ³¹⁶ Schreuder, *Memoir*, 65.
- ³¹⁷ Kotelawele, 'The VOC in Sri Lanka', 420 (italics for 'lands' added).
- ³¹⁸ Fishermen of the *karāva* caste.
- ³¹⁹ The last part of the name cannot be deciphered.
- ³²⁰ He is, however, classified in the tombos only as a *wasser* (washer).
- ³²¹ The situation here is unclear. When the 1 *amunum* was granted as an *accommodessan*, one could reckon these holdings as *ande*, and consequently one would expect the other thirty-two *kurunis* to be subject to *ande* (1/2). But the latter was subject only to *otu* (1/10).
- ³²² Van Imhoff's explanation as to how grants of *accommodessans* are to be executed illuminates the situation very well. 'For instance, if the reward of a *Mudaliyār* be fixed at 12 ammunams as proposed by me, out of a whole village containing 20 ammunams of *ande* fields, and 60 ammunams *chena* or *owitte* fields, which are cultivated once in three years, the former yielding 10 and the latter 8 ammunams yearly as revenue, 8 ammunams of *ande* and *chenas* or *owitte* might be granted to him, while the other 12 ammunams of *ande* fields could be granted to some one else or retained for the Company' (*Memoir*, 29).
- ³²³ There are some important things to consider in these tenants' holdings. First, some of those who enjoyed *dienstbaar paraveni* free of tax did not get the full amount to which they were entitled according to Schreuder's list. Second, there were others who did not hold free *dienstbaar paraveni* at all.
- ³²⁴ Imhoff, *Memoir*, 28.
- ³²⁵ For example '*Vaders Paraveni van Kekiriwattage Don Bastiaan en door hem aan Don Marco vereerd, dog geen bewijs van eigendom hebbende, zo word die gifte almede voor onwettig verklaard en van dien thuijn voor Comp: ingetrokken een derde*' (Translation: Father's *paraveni* of Kekiriwattage Don Bastian and given to Don Marco, but as no proof of ownership the gift was declared illegal and the garden is resumed for the Company subjected to 1/3 tax. Note on the garden of PLH five of Mapitigama).
- ³²⁶ Schreuder, *Memoir*, 149 and passim.
- ³²⁷ R. S. Sharma, 'How Feudal was Indian Feudalism?' in Herman Kulke (ed.) *The State in India: 1000-1700*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 53.
- ³²⁸ De Silva, 'Land Tenure, Caste System and the Rajakariya', 3.
- ³²⁹ This controversy was not indeed limited to Sri Lanka. In fact it has been discussed widely by many scholars on British India, where the notion was heavily used by the British for the revenue collection.
- ³³⁰ Codrington, *Ancient Land tenure*, 5.
- ³³¹ Ibid. 5-7.
- ³³² Tikiri Abeysinghe and M. B. Ariyapala are two more authorities of the subject that take this conviction for granted. For a comprehensive discussion on this subject, see Siriweera, 'The Theory of the King's Ownership of Land in Ancient Ceylon'.
- ³³³ Abeysinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, 101.
- ³³⁴ Knox, *Historical Relation of Ceylon*, 68 (also quoted in Abeysinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, 101).
- ³³⁵ There is a long list of terms and expressions such as *bhupati*, *bhumipala*, *bhumissara*, *mahipala*, *pathavipathi*, *bhupalendran*, etc. (Siriweera, 'The Theory of the King's Ownership of Land in Ancient Ceylon', 51-52). All these terms literally signify the overlord ship over the earth (*bhu* or *patavi*).
- ³³⁶ Ibid. 52.
- ³³⁷ K.M. de Silva, *History of Sri Lanka*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 97.
- ³³⁸ See Kanapathypillai, 'Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon' chapter five. See also the instructions for land surveyors issued on 10 April 1745 (Plakkaat no. 345 in Hovy, *Ceylonees Plakkaatboek, Deel II*, 510-12).
- ³³⁹ Map making was done in a remarkable manner. There are an enormous number of maps made by the Company on our region. For an understanding of the map making by the Dutch in Sri Lanka, see K. D. Paranavitana, *An Inventory of Sri Lanka Maps in the General State Archives in the Netherlands*, (Colombo: Ministry of Plan Implementation, 1984).
- ³⁴⁰ Apart from the tombos there are various documents where lands were registered.
- ³⁴¹ Proceedings of the *Land Raad* show how important were the judicial process for settling matters pertaining to lands.
- ³⁴² See the chapter three for more detail on this matter.
- ³⁴³ All twenty-nine of these are gardens. There is one paddy-field claimed by the tenant as a purchased land, but in the absence of proof it was declared invalid.

Notes to Chapter Five

³⁴⁴ This section on the class formation in the pre-colonial times is based chiefly on the following literature: M. B. Ariyapala, *Society in Mediaeval Ceylon: The state of Society in Ceylon as Depicted in the Saddharma-ratnavaliya and Other Literature of the Thirteenth Century* (Colombo-Kandy: K.V.G. De Silva, 1956); Somaratna, *Political History of Kotte*; Liyanagamage, 'Keralas in Medieval Sri Lankan History: A Study of Two Contrasting Roles'; *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon vol.i part ii*; and *University of Peradeniya History of Sri Lanka vol.ii*.

³⁴⁵ Siriweera, 'The Theory of the King's Ownership of Land in Ancient Ceylon', 48-61.

³⁴⁶ S. Paranawitana, 'The withdrawal of the Sinhalese from the ancient capitals' in Indrapala [ed.] *The Collapse of the Rajarata Civilization*, 49-59

³⁴⁷ The term derives from 'kula' which is now the standard term for caste. It is however impossible to attribute the same meaning to the term in the *rajarata* context.

³⁴⁸ *Hakuru* land-owning patterns in Kahambilihene and the distribution of the *padu* caste shows the unequal access to lands very well. See chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion on this issue.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Max Weber's theory on the relationship between the rise of capitalism and the formation of the Protestant ethic, which emphasizes the need for an ideological drive for the accumulation of wealth (*The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2002).

³⁵⁰ See chapter three.

³⁵¹ Arasaratnam, Kotelawe and Roberts have documented these changes. See the introduction for detailed references to the relevant literature.

³⁵² It was not uncommon even in the recent past that Muslim traders in the rural areas, who had by then started small shops in rural towns, wielded significant economic control over rural people. They were the main source of credit for peasants, who were usually subject to extremely high interest rates, sometimes 10-15 percent per month. This relationship also generated bitter ethnic prejudices against the Muslim community, and Muslims in general were portrayed as the 'blood-suckers' of the Sinhala community.

³⁵³ 'In 1722 when the Company decided to introduce coffee as a garden crop in its territories, it called on the inhabitants to produce it, promising that the new crop would 'provide you, both great and small, within an year or two with an abundance of money sufficient to make you rich, or at least for the ample maintenance of you and your families' (D. A. Kotelawe, 'Agrarian Policies of the Dutch in South-West Ceylon, 1743-1767', in *Bijdragen Afdeeling Agrarische Geschiedenis Landbouwhogeschool Wageningen* 14 (1967), 8, emphasis added).

³⁵⁴ Arasaratnam has given a vivid account of how the Company's policies affected this economic activity of the people (*Ceylon and the Dutch*, chap. XII).

³⁵⁵ In this calculation, I relied on Chandra R. de Silva's suggestion of the yield of paddy-lands, because Colvin R. de Silva's observation probably included the situation in the high-yielding areas of the dry zone. Since Chandra R. de Silva's data are from Portuguese sources they may be matched closely with our region. Moreover, they are more compatible with the information in the Portuguese tombos (see Peiris, *Ceylon Littoral*, passim). See chapter three for a detailed discussion on this issue.

³⁵⁶ See chapter three for details on *ōwiti* lands

³⁵⁷ There were also two *leeglopers* (literally loafers) in this bloc. *Leeglopers* are frequently mentioned in tombos. I propose, however, that they should not be understood in the literal sense. It seems that the term was used for those who did not perform any service and were less attached to the peasant production. In general, they owned very little land.

³⁵⁸ There are two interesting cases in this bloc. PLH fifty-two is listed as *lascarin* but obliged to perform *nainde* service, and PLH three is listed as formerly a *lascarin* currently performing *nainde* service.

³⁵⁹ Apart from the ownerships represented in graphs 5-5, 5-6 and 5-7, there were two gardens owned by Balthazar Dias Bandaranayaka, *Mudaliyār* of the Atapattu of *disāve* (PLH one) and consisting of 1340 coconut, eight jak and fifty areca nut trees. These two holdings are not included in these graphs because the holder is an absentee owner and therefore the per capita ownership cannot be calculated (tombos do not give the full family details of the absentee owners).

³⁶⁰ All had the *vāsagama* 'Kamburugodge'. For details on the *vāsagama* part of the name, see chapter two.

³⁶¹ Two occasions on which this issue came to the fore were dry-zone land colonization schemes started during the last two decades of British rule and the paddy-land act of the late 1950s. On the first occasion, this land-owning class, then collaborators of the colonial regime, diverted the attention of the peasant who needed lands to the dry zone from the region in which they held most of their lands. On the second occasion, when the paddy-land act was enacted by the government, over which the rural small-holding class had enormous influence, this class was able to manipulate the process by virtue of its political power.

³⁶² The areas classified as 'intermediary' were indeed closer to the inland areas in economic setting. Nevertheless, the impact of the colonial economy was quite rapid in these areas because of the geographical proximity to the colonial centre. Therefore I have classified this area as 'intermediary'.

³⁶³ SLNA/ 1/ 2790, fo. 6.

³⁶⁴ Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 64.

³⁶⁵ Out of the five *Saparamādu-Appuhānys* in Mapitigama, two were without proof for their appointments.

³⁶⁶ Bandarage, *Colonialism in Sri Lanka*, 22.

³⁶⁷ Siriweera, 'The Theory of the King's Ownership of Land in Ancient Ceylon', 49.

³⁶⁸ Codrington, *Ancient Land Tenure*; L. S. Perera, 'Proprietary and Tenurial Rights in Ancient Ceylon', *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* 2 (1961); Ariyapala, *Society in Mediaeval Ceylon*; Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in Mediaeval Times*, [edited by Heinz Bechert] (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1960); Abeyasinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*.

³⁶⁹ According to the land transactions recorded in *gifte boeken*, a person own a land holding get the right to lease out (*verhuuren*), to sell (*verkoopen*) to exchange (*verruiljen*) and to alienate (*veralieneren*) such land subjected to the provision that taxes are properly paid. (See, for example, SLNA/ 1/ 2515, *gifte boeken*, fo. 406). A large number of such land grants, where lands were given to individuals by the Company with full legal right to cultivate have been recorded in '*gifte boeken*' (gift books).

³⁷⁰ Kanapathypillai, *Dutch Rule in Maritime Ceylon*, 306-07.

³⁷¹ See chapter four.

³⁷² This attitude was clearly expressed by Governor Van Imhoff. The justification he gave for reducing the *accommodessan* rights of the chiefs and allowing them to receive extra lands and get them cultivated was that he took for granted their ability to secure the unpaid labour of ordinary peasants (Imhoff, *Memoir*, 26).

³⁷³ A group of people once complained to the *disāve* about a *mudaliyār* who illegitimately obtained part of their harvest from chenas. This was done especially from the chenas cultivated without Company permission (SLNA/ 1/ 702, fo. 12, 14 and 18).

³⁷⁴ Governors frequently referred to such occurrences. This issue has been dealt with in chapter 3. A report of the *disāve* of Colombo disavony cites an instance in which a *mudaliyār* was given a false list of coolies in a locality. Although only twelve coolies were allowed for that place, there were in fact forty-two; the other thirty may have been used by the *mudaliyār* for his personal use.

³⁷⁵ Newton Gunasinghe has shown how this system survived even the measures of the paddy-land act of 1958 and subsequent revisions to it, especially to protect the rights of the tenant-cultivator who was bound to the landlord on a share-cropping basis (*Changing Socio-economic Relations in the Kandyan Countryside*, 90-91). Philip Gunawardane, the Minister of Agriculture who was instrumental in bringing about the Paddy-Land act of 1958, disclosed the following information during the debate on the act: 55% of paddy-lands were owned outright by the cultivator, 28% were *ande*, 13.7% were lease holdings and 2.6% were *tattumaru* holdings (Hansard, 1957-58, vol.30 part 1, column 1876). For details on *tattumaru* system, see Obeyesekere, *Land Tenure in Village Ceylon*, 35-36.

Notes to Chapter Six

³⁷⁶ See especially Malalgoda (*Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*,) and Roberts (*Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*).

³⁷⁷ Louis Dumont (*Homo Hierarchicus*) gives a central place for the hierarchy in defining a caste system.

³⁷⁸ SLNA/ 1/ 2790, fo. 27-28.

³⁷⁹ Bryce Ryan seemingly contests this postulate, when he says: 'There is a common fallacy that castes must stand in a specific hierarchy with which each one in a recognized superior or inferior relationship to the other. Such specificity in status is not present either in India or in Ceylon. Castes always have different statuses but not necessarily fixed superior and inferior positions relative to every other one, in spite of the fact that the system as a whole involves gradation in rank, esteem and privilege. The villager may have no ready answer when asked for the comparative prestige of certain castes in his village. As one remarked, "P-- caste is no better than H---, we just look at them in a different way" (*Caste in Modern Ceylon*, 85-6). If we consider the caste as a normative principle according to which a social system is organised this view poses a fundamental problem. In any case, the answer of a mid-twentieth century villager in Sri Lanka cannot be generalised to explain the mid-eighteenth century views of even an ordinary person on the social gradations.

³⁸⁰ Knox, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*.

³⁸¹ See Valentijn's *Description of Ceylon*, 65-86.

³⁸² Gollennesse, *Memoir*.

³⁸³ Gideon Loten, *Memoir*.

³⁸⁴ John Davy, *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and of Its Inhabitants with Travels in that Island* (1821. Reprint Dehiwala: Tisara Prakasakayo, 1969) 84-100.

³⁸⁵ Citations are given to the edition of M. B. Ariyapala and others (*Janawamsaya* [or] *Jatibeda lakshanaya bewat janawamsaya nam loka niti sangrahaya*, Colombo, 2003) unless otherwise stated, though there are serious problems in this edition, as is discussed in this chapter. Apart from this printed edition, I also consulted three manuscript copies of this work kept at the Sri Lanka National Archives (SLNA, 5/ 63/ 94-5; SLNA, 5/ 63/ 99-1; SLNA, 5/ 63/ 119-5).

³⁸⁶ *Niti-nighanduwa, or the Vocabulary of Law as it Existed in the Last Days of the Kandyan Kingdom*, (Ceylon: Government Printer, 1880), 6-7. Perhaps it would seem somewhat problematical to consider the *niti-nighanduwa* as entirely an indigenous source, since it was compiled by a committee directed by Sawers, the judicial commissioner of the British administration. But the committee probably consisted of indigenous chiefs. Moreover, the main intellectual contribution had been made probably by a Buddhist priest of Malwatta monastery of Kandy, for which reason it would be justifiable to consider this text as representing a local view of the Sri Lankan social relations.

³⁸⁷ In some copies as well as in the text edited by Ariyapala, the *karāva* caste has been placed above *kesbudra* (in which *goyigama* caste is also included). As far as the manuscripts are concerned, this version is found in those copies which would most probably have been copied somewhere in the nineteenth century. In two out of the three copies of *janawamsaya*, available in SLNA this pro-*karāva* version is found. The handwriting of these two copies however suggests that they belong to a later period than the third copy. The third copy, which could be the earlier one, placed even *karāva* caste (*masun maranno*—those who kill fish) in the *kesbudra* classification. In the case of Ariyapala's edition, it is quite obvious that he follows, rather prejudicially, the later pro-*karāva* version, even without a reference to copies that is probably older, let alone taking the older version as the most authentic one.

³⁸⁸ *Janawamsaya*, 37.

³⁸⁹ Dewaraja, *Kandyan Kingdom*, 55.

³⁹⁰ Knox, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, 95. The term *Hondrews* (or *banduru*) is derived from the term *hamuduruwo*, a honorific term which used in addressing the higher grade people in pre-colonial times. Presently the term *hamuduruwo* is only used for Buddhist clergy. The old practice may still prevail in some remote backward areas. However, the term *banduru*, also a derivative of *hamuduruwo*, has become less honorific in its present usage and used in a derogatory way to refer to the *goyigama* caste, particularly in their absence and when wanting to express anger on them.

³⁹¹ Loten, *Memoir*, 28.

³⁹² There are however references to *mudaliyārs* of *karāva* and *salāgama* castes. Valentijn says the *karāva* caste had headmen including *mudaliyārs* (*Description of Ceylon*, 70).

³⁹³ Gollennesse, *Memoir*, 113.

³⁹⁴ *Niti-Nighanduwa*, 6.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ *Janawamsaya*, 30.

³⁹⁸ Valentijn, *Description of Ceylon*, 81.

³⁹⁹ Davy, *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon*, 84.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ See Pieris, *Sinhale and the Patriots, 1815-1818*, (1950, Reprint New Delhi: Navrang, 1995), 580. *Wanshaya*, literally lineage, has a superior connotation. In the present usage it is applied for people with superior 'birth'. '*Wanse kabal gānawa*' is a Sinhala expression that is being used for insult mock people who boost their superior birth though they are presently economically inferior. On the contrary *jāti* can be used in a broader way. In the contemporary usage, it uses for castes as well as nationalities and ethnic groups.

⁴⁰² For a comprehensive account of Valentijn's sources, see Arasaratnam's introduction to his translation of Valentijn's, *Description of Ceylon*, 1-60.

⁴⁰³ Valentijn, *Description of Ceylon*, 79.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 80.

⁴⁰⁵ *Mantrioenoe* is probably an erroneous form of *mantriunnānse* or *mantriunnābe*, which is formed by compounding the term *mantri* (counsellor) with the suffix *unnānse* (formal) or *unnābe* (colloquial), an honorific way of addressing.

⁴⁰⁶ Valentijn, *Description of Ceylon*, 82.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 83, n. 2.

⁴⁰⁸ See for details Indrapala, *The Collapse of the Rajarata Civilization in Ceylon and the Drift to the South-West*.

⁴⁰⁹ The case of powerful *Alakeshwaras* is such an episode, which has been reconstructed to a certain extent, by Liyanagamage in his study, 'Keralas in Medieval Sri Lankan History', 73-113. Somaratna's

account on the importance of Alekeshwaras in the fifteenth-century political history of Kotte is also useful in this respect; *A Political History of Kotte*.

⁴¹⁰ Ryan, *Caste in Ceylon*, 95.

⁴¹¹ A comprehensive attempt at applying Hocarts' formulation is found in Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka*, 53-71. Newton Gunasinghe, a sharp Marxist social anthropologist who is also an ardent critic of the traditional sociological explanation of caste formation in Sri Lanka, too, takes this conceptualisation for granted; see Gunasinghe, *Changing Socio-economic Relations in the Kandyan Countryside*, 105.

⁴¹² Knox, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, 66

⁴¹³ I have first-hand experience where *goyigama* people are called by non-*goyigama* elements, in the absence of the former, '*banduruwo*' in a derogatory manner. In the colloquial language there is a derogatory way of addressing for every caste in their absence, *āchāri*, *paddo*, *bakuro*, *radav* are some of them, the derogatory term for *goyigama* caste being *banduruwo*.

⁴¹⁴ This form is different from the present day derogatory form *banduruwo* where the '*a*' is shorter, contrary to other form where long '*ā*' is used.

⁴¹⁵ For Knox's life in the Kandyan land, see Richard Boyle, *Knox's Words*, (Boralesgamuwa: Visidunu Prakashakayo, 2004), 9-14.

⁴¹⁶ See Dewaraja, *Kandyan Kingdom of Ceylon*, 53.

⁴¹⁷ He uses this term in explaining *nuwarāperahāra* (annual street procession in Kandy in honour of 'Tooth Relics of Buddha' held every August full moon day since mid 18th century), where all the social elements were in procession according to their ranks (Seneviratne, *Rituals in the Kandyan State*, 108-14).

⁴¹⁸ Valentijn, *Description of Ceylon*, 82

⁴¹⁹ Louis Althusser (chapter titled 'Ideology and State' in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971) defines the 'ideology' as the individual's imaginary relationship to the real existence of his life.

⁴²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991).

⁴²¹ Yalman, 'The Flexibility of Caste Principles in a Kandyan Community', in E. R. Leach (ed.), *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North-west Pakistan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 103.

⁴²² Ibid. 104.

⁴²³ Ibid. 93.

⁴²⁴ Ibid. 94-95.

⁴²⁵ see Newton Gunasinghe *Udarata Gamaka Panti Pelagesima* (Class alignment in a Kandyan village), (Kandy: Workers Peasant Institute, 1985)

⁴²⁶ This was a phenomenon that was in vogue until recently. Kalinga Tudor Silva (*Kulaya, pantiya hā wenaswana lankā samājaya*, [Caste and class in changing Sri Lankan society], [Kandy: Community Education Centre, 1997]. 50-97) has shown how strong this practice was in the Kandyan region even three decades ago. It was due to the expansion of mass education, new political alignments and administrative modernisation that this practice has lost the ground for its reproduction.

⁴²⁷ They also used sometimes such suffixes as '*appu*', which is commonly used by the *goyigama* caste, for example Anurappu of Gorakadeniya (Hina/ Māda).

⁴²⁸ Kalinga Tudor Silva (Ibid. 79-83) has further shown how influential the village-level government officials were in manipulating the naming preferences of the inferior caste persons even in the mid-twentieth century.

⁴²⁹ Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 46, also quoted in Roberts, *Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*, 39.

⁴³⁰ Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organisation*, 180.

⁴³¹ Conceptualisations of 'secular' and 'secularisation' are rooted in their tendency to view the traditional 'political' authority as a secular function, which is highly questionable. Without going too far, it can easily be established that the function of the Kandyan king itself is far from being 'secular', if the term has any significance in a pre-modern context. That the characterisation of the king as a divine agent or a *bodhisattva* (embryo of a would-be Buddha) is a central feature of the development of kingship in Sri Lanka shows undoubtedly the way in which the king was elevated beyond human existence. The court formation of the Kandyan king and the way the latter was perceived by its subject are two exemplary instances in this case. For details of the kingship in Sri Lanka, see Ralph Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organisation*, 9-22, and Ariyapala, *Society in Mediaeval Ceylon* 43-84. More elaborate picture on the Kandyan court see, Dewaraja, *Kandyan Kingdom of Ceylon*.

⁴³² Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, 215-16; Yalman, 'The Flexibility of Caste Principles in a Kandyan Community', and Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*. Again the conceptualisation of the internal flexibility of the caste 'system' may seem problematical. Indeed Newton Gunasinghe, (*Udarata gamaka panti pelagāsima*), has already questioned this conceptualisation.

⁴³³ *Janawamsaya* clearly shows the ambivalent nature of Buddhist monks towards caste. While giving a mythical sanction to caste hierarchy, the author cannot free himself from the Buddhist orthodoxy which delegitimises the *raison d'être* of caste itself.

⁴³⁴ This process has been well documented by several scholars. Michael Roberts has documented the new economic opportunities opened up under successive colonial rules and the way in which some non-*goyigama* castes benefited from them (*Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*, 75-179). Roberts's analysis has been subjected to heavy criticisms (see Kotalawela, 'Nineteenth-Century Elites and Their Antecedents' *Ceylon Historical Journal* 25:1-4 (1978), 204-12 and Peebles, *Social Change in Nineteenth Century Ceylon*). Malalgoda has shown with great detail how these new social groups achieved higher ritual position by establishing their own sect of Buddhist monks (*nikāya*) in the course of the early nineteenth century (Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, see especially chapters II, III and IV, 73-172).

⁴³⁵ The first set was extracted from the instructions for the *disāve* of Colombo, in 1707.

⁴³⁶ For example, the average size of PLH groups in Kaluwamodara and Moragalla, two exclusive *salāgama* villages in this area, are eighteen and twenty-two people respectively.

⁴³⁷ Roberts also notes that '... *goyigamas* were not unwilling to contract marriages with the 'Malabars and Chetty people' in the early nineteenth century (*Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*, 24-25).

⁴³⁸ See chapter two for detail on the *vāsagama* part of the name.

⁴³⁹ Roberts's treatment of coastal castes as KSD castes, which he describes as those embracing a similar historical trajectory vis-à-vis the colonial economy and culture, justifies our distinction here (*Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*). Though his analysis of the pre-nineteenth century developments of KSD castes has been questioned by Kotelawele Peebles on the basis of weaker empirical validity of some of Roberts's observations, they do not question the validity of treating the coastal castes as separate from the dominant formation. Even Kotelawele, who is well informed about the pre-nineteenth century developments, provides strong empirical evidence that the KSD castes had a distinct position under the VOC rule.

⁴⁴⁰ This classification may perhaps run against the conventional wisdom. Roberts states that 'Service castes, Navandanna[*āchāri*], badahāla, Rajaka [*radā*], berava, etc., were primarily cultivators and only secondarily engaged in their respective trades' (*Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*, 48). I propose that this somewhat understates the actual situation. Paddy-land owning patterns of *āchāri* and *badahāla* castes for which I have provided figures elsewhere in this chapter and in chapter five go against this claim. Some additional remarks may be useful regarding the distinction between manufacturing castes and service castes, because the dominant tendency is to treat both as service castes, as evident from Roberts's foregoing remark. This classification is based on the fact that *goyigama* caste had a right to obtain the service of these castes. My classification, on the contrary, is based on the difference between engaging in a particular production activity and rendering a ritually significant service for higher castes.

⁴⁴¹ A distinction should be made between performing a particular labour task for the ruler in the form of *raja-kāriya* and engaging in a specialised labour task needed for the people in the society at large. Specialised labour in manufacturing and service castes was needed both by the ruler and the rest of the population. In such a situation, these castes could earn their livelihood from these specialised labour tasks since they could obtain part of the agricultural produce from the cultivator in exchange for the goods or services they rendered to the cultivator. When, on the contrary, a certain group performed a particular labour task only for the ruler, it had to rely on other ways for its livelihood. For example, the *padu* caste served rulers as palanquin bearers and menial workers and its members had to till the soil for their livelihood.

⁴⁴² Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, 117.

⁴⁴³ There is a folk tale, probably created by lowland people to insult the Kandyans. The core of the story is about lowlanders going to Kandyan lands to buy jaggery. Although jaggery-making is here attributed generally to Kandyans, it does not specify a particular caste group. It also suggests that the Lowlanders relied on the Kandyan region for their jaggery needs irrespective of significant concentration of *bakuru* people in the lowlands.

⁴⁴⁴ See Roberts, *Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*.

⁴⁴⁵ H. W. Codrington, 'Kandyan Navandanno: Smiths of Kandy', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch* 21 (1909); and Ralph Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organization*, 194.

⁴⁴⁶ For the debate on the drift to the southwest, see Indrapala (ed.), *The Collapse of the Rajarata Civilisation*.

⁴⁴⁷ It is possible to believe that even aboriginal Veddas also faced this encounter, although perhaps in a structurally different way than those who later became *bakuru* caste.

⁴⁴⁸ It is an established fact that these areas were populated before the arrival of these 'northern migrants' (see Indrapala, *ibid*).

⁴⁴⁹ Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, 117.

⁴⁵⁰ This mythical story was found in a petition by certain representatives of this caste submitted to a British commission of inquiry in the early twentieth century (see *Ibid*. 118, 333).

⁴⁵¹ There may be multiple meanings for a myth. Nevertheless, the myths produced by subjugated and inferior groups, which convey a message of a glorious past in which they had a superior position may be considered as a means of showing the dissatisfaction of the prevailing situation. In Sri Lanka, other inferior groups have produced such myths of a glorious past with royal origins. The 'Ratnawalli' myth among *gadi* people is one such interesting case. For an illuminating analysis of this myth see, Sunil Wijesiriwardana, 'Ran telambuwa nam dodamalu ruka', (*Ran telambuwa*: the taking tree), in *Teertha* 1:1 (1995). Sinhala drama, *Ratnawalli*, also written also by Sunil Wijesiriwardana, further enlightens us about this myth (*Ratnawalli* (Nuwara Eliya: Megha Foundation, 2006).

⁴⁵² Though no research has been done on this subject, I came to this conclusion from my acquaintance with these castes. It has also been shown that the participation of *bakuru* caste was quite high in the 1971 April insurrection, organised by left wing Janata Wimukti Peramuna (People's Liberation Front). For 1971 April insurrection, see Robin Blackburn (ed.) *Explosion in a subcontinent*, (London: Penguin, 1975). The caste dimension of the insurrection has been subjected to many debates. Victor Iyon and Nandana Weeraratna, two popular Sinhala writers of the subject has compiled good deal of data to support the argument that the caste oppression has been major factor behind the insurrection.

⁴⁵³ Dom Jeronimo de Azevedo, a Portuguese captain-general seems to have come to an agreement with indigenous chiefs to protect the traditional institutions (see T. B. H. Abeysinghe, 'Myth of Malwana Convention' *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* 7 (1964). It has been noted that he was known among the indigenous people as '*malwane rajjuruwo*' (king of Malwana). He built a palace in Malwana, a locality well outside the fortified city of Colombo, in order to buttress his claim to be an indigenous king. The annual audience that Dutch governors gave to cinnamon peeling *salagama* people was another occasion when the governor posed as a traditional ruler. Although this annual function had clear economic motive, it had strong ritual significance as well. The structure of these meeting is extremely interesting. The way in which they were organised had very important political meanings. The following description extracted from a report of such a meeting describes the atmosphere at the beginning of the meeting: 'On May fifth at noon, the Honourable Governor of this island Julius Valentijn Stein van Gollenesse has according to earlier orders agreed and found it useful to receive the chalias in audience following the old custom. After the Council members had joined his Excellency at his pavilion they all come with flying banners and beating the drums, whereupon, after the usual exchange of niceties the headmen were asked how the chalia nation (*Chaliasse natie*) was doing and whether the inhabitants of their villages were in good health when they left there. Thereupon they thanked for his question and affirmed that all were well' (VOC-2735: fo. 1024).

⁴⁵⁴ The *Disāve* of Colombo *disāvany* was instructed not to criticise 'higher people' in front of 'lower people', and also instructed not to give jobs to lower caste people, which could upset higher caste people (SLNA/ 1/ 2790, fo.17).

⁴⁵⁵ This was particularly the case with the cinnamon peeling *salagama* caste, by far the most important labour force so far as the Company's economic interests were concerned. Regulations had been made to prohibit inter-caste marriage, in order to prevent cinnamon peeling chalias from marrying their children to other lower castes so that their offspring would avoid the burden of peeling cinnamon (VOC/ 2813, Council Minutes of 23 April 1753, fo. 403; also the Plakkaat of 23, March 1753, plakkaat no.397, in Hovy, *Ceylonees Plakkaatboek, Deel II*, 570-71). These measures were sometimes contradicted by Christian marriage norms when they were used by some sections to uphold certain caste prejudices. An interesting incident is recorded in which an indigenous chief resorted to these regulations in order to prevent his brother, who was also a chief, from marrying a lower caste woman. The other party resorted to Christian norms, in terms of which caste norms could not be justified (*Extract uyt de scholargale Resolutie van den 4 november 1737*). I thank Dr. Lodewijk Wagenaar for drawing my attention to this document which he found in the Municipal Archives in Amsterdam).

⁴⁵⁶ Roberts, *Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*; Kotelawele, 'Nineteenth-Century Elites and Their Antecedents'; and Peebles, *Social Change in Nineteenth Century Ceylon*.

⁴⁵⁷ The *bakuru* people in the Adhikari *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale* became a politically important group in the latter half of the twentieth century. A powerful minister of this caste who represented the area became a leading figure as an extreme Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist. Although this minister is not alive any more, presently the area has a high political influence with strong Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism backed up by the powerful business community of the area. As no research has been done on the economic strength of the *bakuru* caste in the area, a serious conclusion is not possible. But this information points to an extremely interesting situation.

⁴⁵⁸ There are constant references to the heavy burden placed on coolies, and their grievances are not uncommon. Sometimes these grievances were made against the Company (see VOC/ 2796, Council Minutes of 9th March 1752, fo. 780), sometimes against their own headmen (see SLNA/ 1/ 2781, fo. 51).

⁴⁵⁹ There were large *padu* concentrations in maintenance villages. Alutgama of Māda *pattuwa* of Hina *kōrale*, villages in the District of Debehera of the same *kōrale* were maintenance villages with large *padu* concentrations (see tombos of Hina *kōrale* Māda and Udugaha Pattu).

⁴⁶⁰ SLNA/ 1/ 2921, Draft Proceedings of an inquiry at the Colombo secretariat by Governors van de Graff and Van Angelbeek regarding the threatened riots by the cinnamon peelers in the village of Āwariwatta in 1794.

⁴⁶¹ Kotalawe, 'Some Aspects of Social Change in the South West of Sri Lanka' 64.

⁴⁶² Ibid. 65

⁴⁶³ Loten refers to coolies among the Bellales (*goyigama* caste) in Matara. He further states that those coolies had no intercourse with other Bellales (Loten, *Memoir*, 29). This situation can be compared with the outright refusal of higher caste paddy farmers (probably of *goyigama* caste) to transport paddy due to the Company as tax, on the basis that transporting paddy is derogatory for their ritual status. This situation was confronted by the *Disāve* of Colombo in 1707 when he was on tour in the *disāvany* (SLNA/ 1/ 2781 fo. 51-52).

⁴⁶⁴ *Goyigama* caste could claim the service of all the other lower castes. This was not simply extracting labour to meet their practical needs. By means of rendering service to the superior caste, the inferior acknowledged the former's superior position and would not question it. According to Louis Althusser, these sorts of material practices are essential for the existence of an ideological formation ('Ideology and state').

⁴⁶⁵ SLNA/ 1/ 2781 fo. 51.

⁴⁶⁶ cf. Mottau, 'Glossary', 64.

⁴⁶⁷ SLNA/ 1/ 3690, fo. 255, the difference between a '*majorāls*' and a '*half-majorāls*' is not quite clear.

⁴⁶⁸ See Roberts, *Caste Conflict and Elite Formation*, 50, on the internal gradation of *radā* caste.

⁴⁶⁹ The Council ordered an investigation on 4 July 1744, on two illegally owned *ande* paddy field by the *vidāne* of Barbers (SLNA/ 1/ 2408, Permanent Orders, fo. 14).

⁴⁷⁰ The theory that classical Buddhism was against the Brahmin caste ideology has to be viewed with some reservations. Though the Buddha was highly critical of Brahmin theory of *varna* distinction and adopted some members of lower ritual groups to his Order (*sangha*), it is difficult to say that he had a fundamental criticism of the way in which society was ordered on *varna* principles.

Notes to Chapter Seven

⁴⁷¹ Siriweera, 'Theory of the Theory of the King's Ownership of Land'.

⁴⁷² In 2003 I talked to a woman of the *padu* caste in the village Wilimbula (Hina/ Māda). When I asked her whether her family possessed paddy lands, she told me that she had heard that her ancestors owned paddy lands but that they had been taken away by high-caste people. Whether this statement had any historical basis, we cannot explain at the moment.

⁴⁷³ The minister of agriculture, in his speech in defending the act, mentioned that in the case of collectively owned paddy holdings, some of the legitimate owners would possess an amount of only the size of the palm of one's hand.

⁴⁷⁴ Gunar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, vol.i, (New York: 1968), 569; and André Bételle, *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974) 38-49.

⁴⁷⁵ Gunasinghe, *Changing Socio-economic Relations in the Kandyan Countryside*, 200.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, 200-201.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid, 216.

⁴⁷⁸ For example, at one extreme we see the practice of slavery as a mode of accumulation, mainly in the Americas. There are number of other modes, such as the 'culture system' in Java, which was neither traditional nor purely 'capitalist'.

⁴⁷⁹ Alicia Schrikker has studied the influence of Adams Smith's ideas on the policy makers and governors in early British times in Sri Lanka. She discusses this issue in chapter ten of the PhD dissertation (*Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka*, 180-196).

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. 'De Silva, 'Land Tenure, Caste System and the Rajakariya', 12

⁴⁸¹ The 'Temple of Tooth' in Kandy is a fine example in this connection.

⁴⁸² Jayawardene, *Nobodies to Somebodies*, 159.

⁴⁸³ Certain clarification is needed here. If we define class as 'status groups' in Weberian sense, then 'class' could be seen in terms of discourse of identity. There is no doubt that Kumari Jayawardana uses the concept, 'class', not in this Weberian sense.

⁴⁸⁴ Problem of class consciousness has been a much debated issue in the Marxist tradition. A good introduction to this issue is found in Tom Bottomore (ed.) *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, (Basil Blackwell, 1983) 79-81, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, 38-39 also provides useful list of references on this issue. See also George Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, (London: Merlin Press, 1971).

⁴⁸⁵ Jayawardene, *Nobodies to Somebodies*, 159

⁴⁸⁶ It has become commonplace that many recent studies on caste system have engaged in a critical dialogue with Louis Dumont. See for example, M. N. Srinivas, *Village, Caste, Gender and Method: Essays in Indian Social Anthropology*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Richard Burghart, *The Conditions of Listening: Essays on Religion, History and Politics in South Asia*; C.J. Fuller and Jonathan Spencer (eds.) (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); , Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Veena Das, *Structure and Cognition: Aspects of Hindu Caste and Ritual*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977); and Ursula Sharma, *Caste*, (New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited, 2002).

⁴⁸⁷ Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 5.

⁴⁸⁸ Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, 216.

⁴⁸⁹ Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organisation*, 180-87; Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, 3-21.

⁴⁹⁰ See footnote 428 for chapter six.

⁴⁹¹ See Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*.

⁴⁹² Yalman, 'The flexibility of caste principles in a Kandyan community'

⁴⁹³ Srinivas, *Village, Caste, Gender and Method*, 73; see also 73-86 for a comprehensive account of these two factors.

⁴⁹⁴ Loten, *Memoir*, 23, emphasis added.

⁴⁹⁵ U. C. Wickremaratne, *The Conservative Nature of the British Rule of Sri Lanka: with Particular Emphasis on the Period 1796-1802*, (New Delhi: Navrang, 1996).

⁴⁹⁶ J. C. Heesterman, 'Warriors and Merchants', in *Itinerario* 15 (1991) 47.

⁴⁹⁷ Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 5.

⁴⁹⁸ See James C. Schott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁴⁹⁹ David Ludden, *Peasant History in South India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3

⁵⁰⁰ Cordiner, *A Description of Ceylon*, 62.

Notes to Epilogue

⁵⁰¹ Leonard Blussé and Femme Gaastra (eds.), *On the Eighteenth Century as Category of Asian History, Van Leur in Retrospect*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

⁵⁰² Reid, Anthony, (ed.) *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies, Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea 1750-1900*, (Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997).

⁵⁰³ Ota, *Changes of Regime and Social Dynamics in West Java*; Kwee, *The Political Economy of Java's Northeast Coast*; Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka*.

⁵⁰⁴ It would be interesting to compare this changing situation with the reference that I have made in the prologue to my grandmother's production activity of growing betel leaves in the household garden for the market in the mid-twentieth century.

⁵⁰⁵ Here I borrow the concept of 'power-container' from Anthony Giddens who uses it for 'nations' (see 'The Nation as Power-Container' by Anthony Giddens [extract six of Part I] in Anthony D. Smith and John Hutchinson (eds.) *Nationalism*, (Oxford University Press, 1994).