SOCIAL MOBILITY OF THE MARITIME CASTES IN SRI LANKA

by

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ABSTRACT

In contrast to the traditional approach to caste as a closed and stable system of stratification, the present study analyses the social mobility of Maritime Castes in Sri Lanka during the period of Western European rule. The mechanisms of social mobility are conceptualized as Westernization and Buddhistization. This conceptual model illustrates how the rank of an entire caste group was able to change within the apparent inflexible framework of the caste system. It deals with the group mobility of the caste system only by implication through the process of ideological change in the outlook, and customs of the caste groups in question. In Westernization the reference group has been the Western rulers and administrators, while in Buddhistization the reference group has been that of the upper caste Goyigama aristocrats. In other words, the process of Westernization demonstrates Western culture and life styles, while Buddhistization emphasizes the traditional Sinhalese Buddhist culture of the island.

The thesis contains both qualitative and quantitative data in analysing the past and present socio-economic conditions of Sinhalese castes. The historical background of Sinhalese castes, and the Portuguese and Dutch period of Sri Lanka are discussed mainly on the basis of qualitative data gathered from early Sinhalese Chronicles and anthropological monographs. Particularly, in Chapter Three, the discussion on traditional Sinhalese social organization provides insights regarding the socio-economic conditions of Sinhalese castes prior to the European rule.

In Chapters Four and Five a few statistical tables are provided to indicate the proportional representation of Sinhalese castes in various social and economic ventures such as plantation estates, mining and distillery industries, Western education, and the national and local-level politics of Sri Lanka. By comparing the proportional representations of the respective caste groups in the above-noted ventures, we demonstrate the upward mobility of Maritime Castes during that period. Both qualitative and quantitative data enable us to make a comparison between the past and present conditions of Sinhalese castes.

Finally, in Chapter Six, we conclude that the caste system is not absolutely closed and that indeed mobility is possible through many channels. The caste structure itself, in terms of ranking, is subject to changes due to various external and internal forces operating in the social system.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The traditional approach to caste stratification assumed that there was little, if any, individual social mobility because there were no incongruities or discrepancies between an individual's position in the caste hierarchy and his position in other forms of stratification such as class--that is, absolute status equilibrium and consistency was assumed.

However, contrary to this "Vedic" view of caste as a closed and stable system, various sociological and anthropological studies in India and Sri Lanka suggest that the caste system is not absolutely closed and that indeed mobility is possible through many channels. There is substantial evidence to suggest that, even in the past, the caste system itself, in terms of ranking, was subject to structural mobility due to various external and internal forces operating in the social system (Stein, 1968; Srinivas, 1962; Ames, 1963). Although institutionalized social mobility across the various castes was not possible, lower caste groups had some opportunities to improve their social and economic standing over a period of time (Srinivas, 1966).

The tradition-modernity dichotomy in the studies of social mobility has often led to contradictory perspectives. Such a dichotomy has given rise to a conclusion that mobility was absent in the caste society which was perceived as a totally closed system of social stratification. First this view is based upon classical literature and its ideology which over-emphasises the element of continuity. Secondly, for Western scholars,

the most striking feature of the caste system has been the contrast it offered to their own system of stratification-class. Moreover, the historical literature on social mobility in the past not being well developed, sociologists have been handicapped in making objective generalizations. Further, there has, probably, been the ideological bias, a sense of moral superiority felt by the Western intelligentsia over the colonial society where they were preoccupied with a "great tradition" during the early decades of this century. This certainly seems to have been true of Max Weber, who purposely chose India as a case to compare with the West, who wanted to contrast its relative social immobility and its immobilizing religious values and ideologies relative to the West (Weber, 1958).

However, social mobility in the caste system has become more evident in recent times. It has resulted from various external and internal factors that have loosened the principles which traditional caste stratification represented. The congruence of ritual status, economic and political power as in the traditional caste system is withering away under the impact of social legislation, education, democratization and industrialization. These processes have created many alternatives for supplementing one's social status and have broken the exclusiveness of traditional principles of status determination. Many studies analysing this process have shown the divergent functioning of caste, on one hand, and economic and political power on the other hand in the social system. Mobility thus causes status incongruence or inconsistency in the society (Yalman, 1960; Beteille, 1965; Barber, 1968).

Viewed in this light, the present study seeks to examine the nature of social mobility among the Maritime Castes of Sri Lanka. The analysis is mainly confined to the period of Western European rule in the island

(1505-1948). Almost four centuries of colonial rule (the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British) in Sri Lanka was mainly concentrated in the Maritime provinces of the island. Therefore, the social and economic consequences of the European rule in the indigenous society are more evident in the Maritime districts than in other parts of the country. The upward mobility of Maritime Castes (Karava, Salagama and Durava) began in the early Sixteenth Century and continued throughout the colonial period in Sri Lanka.

The standard literature on the caste system has been mainly focused upon the Hindu caste system in India. It has argued that caste as a form of social stratification can exist only within the context of Hindusim (Cox, 1947; Ghurye, 1963). However, very little is known about the caste system in a Theravada Buddhist country like Sri Lanka. By definition, if the caste system is conceptualized as a social organization functioning through hierarchical birth status groups which are communalistic, endogamous, socially distant and functionally with ritual roles, both their structure and functions are subject to infinite variations from the Indian model. Thus indeed the Sinhalese caste system is a variant form of the Indian prototype and as in India it is subject to adjustments always with social and economic changes in the social structure. Therefore, this study will illustrate the caste system can adapt to varying socio-cultural milieu outside India.

It is generally assumed by scholars and Sinhalese themselves that caste plays an important role in the affairs of a society. Yet, as is not the case in India where caste has been the subject of extensive and detailed study, caste in Sri Lanka has largely been confined to case studies by Western anthropologists. The absence of definitive Sinhalese scholarship on the subject is understandable, for caste, like sex in Victorian society, is

a tabooed subject and seldom open to public discourse. The villagers will rarely speak openly to urban people on caste matters, still less if that stranger is thought to have a personal interest in the outcome of his enquiry. This tendency has often resulted in erroneous interpretations of the Sinhalese caste system by some Westerners interested in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study will provide insights of an insider into the caste structure in Sri Lanka and encourage further studies by native scholars.

Social Mobility and the Caste System - Concepts and Theories

Social mobility is defined as the movement of social units from one position in social space to another (Sorokin, 1968:317; Merton and Rossi, 1966:510). The principal types of mobility are horizontal and vertical. In the former, movement occurs at the same level. Vertical mobility has two directions--up (i.e., social climbing) and down (i.e., social sinking). The degree and type of social mobility influence the nature of the stratification system in which it occurs.

One of the striking features of the vast literature on social stratification is that Western societies are often described as "open system" in which a large degree of social mobility can be achieved by individuals. In contrast, non-Western societies are identified as "closed systems" in which an individual's position in the social hierarchy is determined by his/her ascribed status which is fixed for life. These two social systems are usually referred to as fundamental social stratification systems represented in class and caste (Lipset and Smelser, 1966:13-15).

However, it is analytically inaccurate to claim that any society is either completely open and unhampered by social barriers or that it is completely closed (Mayer, 1967:43-51). Although in caste societies socially ascribed traits are important, it has been suggested that during times of rapid

social change and especially when changes are introduced into the economic and education systems, mobility is more probable (Row, 1968; Marriott, 1968). In caste societies mobility often takes place at the level of the group when a caste group improves its economic and social standing over a period of time. In Western societies mobility is often studied at the individual level although interest in the analysis of group mobility is evident (Blau and Duncan, 1967:5). Because even in the Western societies some of the cultural ascriptions such as ethnicity and family background are still important determinants of an individual's eventual occupational attainments (Mayer, 1967): cha: iv; Tumin, 1967:21).

Heightened universalism in the West has profound implications for their stratification system. The achieved status of a person, what he has accomplished in terms of some objective criteria, become more important than his ascribed status. However, this does not mean that family background no longer influences careers. What it does imply is that superior status cannot any more be directly inherited but must be legitimated by higher achievements that are socially acknowledged. Education assumes increasing significance for high social status in general and for the transmission of social standing from fathers to sons in particular. Superior family origins increase a son's chances of attaining superior occupational status in the Western societies, for the most part because they help him to obtain a better education, whereas in less industrialized societies the influence of family origin on status does not seem to be primarily mediated by education (Blau and Duncan, 1967:430).

It is common in Western societies to use socio-economic status variables such as occupation, education, and income not only to measure one's position in the system of stratification but also to measure inter- and

intra-generational mobility. Such clear-cut measures cannot be applied to a caste society for a variety of reasons. For example, since it is an ascriptive system little mobility is expected to occur. If it does, it is so rare as to be sociologically insignificant. Further, the association between caste and other secular variables such as education, occupation and income, especially in modernizing contexts, is yet to be clearly established. For example, lower caste individuals and/or groups tend to succeed in achieving wealth and power in new contexts. There occurs a certain degree of inconsistency in their positions in two systems of stratification but more importantly, their position in one system tends to influence the position in the other. In a preliminary analysis of such a phenomenon, Srinivas focuses on lower caste groups which are economically and politically mobile. Such groups consciously adopt the Brahminic way in an effort to "improve their status" in the caste hierarchy. This process is conceptualized by Srinivas as "Sanskritization" (1962: 42-43).

The term Sanskritization was used by Srinivas in his study of the Coorgs in South India. He described it as follows:

> The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time ....A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over as far as possible the customs, rites and beliefs of Brahmins and the adoption of the Brahminic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called Sanskritization.... (Srinivas, 1962:42-43).

In other words, Sanskritization generally means the emulation of Brahmanical life styles by lower castes who wish to raise their ritual status. There is more than one model of high status emulation. Besides the Brahmin model, Kshatriya and Vaishya models are accepted as alternatives by the lower castes. According to Srinivas, sometimes even

Brahmin residents in villages dominated by non-Brahmin castes may borrow the speech and life styles of the latter. He says that this is more likely to happen in rural areas than in urban centres. He observes that away from the urban centres of the great tradition, the Brahmin way of life tends to approximate the way of life of the dominant caste in the community. The process of Sanskritization is interpreted as a form of mobility within the framework of the caste system. Theoretically, a caste group may improve its ritual rank without economic and political power; however such instances are infrequent. Mandelbaum (1968: 14-16) outlines certain stages through which a caste must pass in the process of social advancement:

(i) It must acquire objective conditions for higher status, primarily wealth.

(ii) It must adopt cultural practices associated with the higher ranks, and

(iii) It must out-maneuver external opposition to new rank, while maintaining internal unity.

Although higher economic status helps to improve social rank, there are limits beyond which the process may not be very influential. Both Mandelbaum and Srinivas assert that the lower castes such as Untouchables may not be able to cross certain barriers. They can improve their social standing by achieving higher position in the secular context, but in the ritual caste stratification they remain in the lower position. The upper caste even during the British period reaped more benefits from education and other opportunities than the lower castes. Therefore the very lowest castes find the process of Sanskritization as a mechanism for improving social status less attractive and practical (Harper, 1968:36-65).

Another important concept in this analysis introduced by Srinivas is Westernization which is an alternative for those who find the process of Sanskritization too slow and uncertain. Westernization is defined as the

changes in technology, institutions, ideology and values which resulted from British influence in Indian society and culture (Srinivas, 1962). It may involve such practices as eating beef or pork, consuming liquor, wearing Western clothes, smoking pipes as opposed to cigarettes, acquiring a Western education, participating in non-traditional occupations, and using Western medicine, and technology such as radios, electricity, etc. Westernization, therefore, involves the adoption of some of the customs and practices that are associated with British India. Many of these customs differed from traditional upper-caste Hindu culture and life styles, but many educated families of the higher castes accepted these new practices.

Related concept in this analysis is the "dominant caste which has been useful in describing the political aspects of caste mobility. According to Srinivas, a caste is dominant when it is capable of exercising economic or political power and occupies a significantly higher position in the caste hierarchy. A caste that is small numerically but strong economically or politically, or that has considerable numerical strength but lacks high economic power or ritual status, may be dominant (Srinivas, 1962:92-93). The former pattern can be called traditional dominance, and the latter contemporary dominance. The latter type has become important and much more influential under various political and social developments in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, it is possible for a lower caste to become dominant in the community where they have greater political and administrative power.

This conceptual discussion clearly illustrates how the rank of an entire caste is amenable to change within the established framework of the caste system. In Sanskritization the reference group has been the upper caste Brahmins, while in the case of Westernization the reference group has been that of Western rulers and administrators. In other words the process

of Sanskritization emphasizes the indigenous culture and life styles while Westernization demonstrates the Western cultural practices, symbols and habits. Both cultural processes are mechanisms of status mobility within the established ritual hierarchy of the caste system.

In this study, the concepts of "Buddhistization" (analogous to Sanskritization) and Westernization are applied to examine the mechanisms of social mobility of the Maritime Caste in Sri Lanka. The concept of Buddhistization is simply defined as an emulation of the Sinhalese Buddhist culture and life style of the Goyigama aristocracy by the mobility-oriented lower castes in Sri Landa. The process of Buddhistization is, therefore, referred to as the resurgence of Buddhism and traditional Sinhalese culture under the influence of the Goyigama aristocracy, as a reaction to the onslaught of Western culture and Christianity during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries in Sri Lanka. Important elements of this process are the manifest rejection of the Western culture, Christianity, acceptance of traditional Sinhalese Buddhist culture, life style, values and ideologies and attempts to live up to them as much as possible.

Buddhistization indicates that mobility-oriented caste groups were involved in the religious reforms or revitalization movements toward systematizing religious action and promoting new religious organizations, including lay piety groups, Buddhist schools, political action groups, monastic fraternities and supra-fraternity councils. Leaders of the movement promoted religious literacy, not only through Buddhist schools, but also by sponsoring various publications and newspapers and translating Buddhist Scriptures into Sinhala; all these activities enabled them to emulate the Goyigama aristocracy and to take an active role in the revitalization movements (See: Ames, 1963, 1973; Malalgoda, 1977; Balakrishna,

1973:30-39; Raghavan, 1961; Arasarathnam, 1977: 164-82; Ryan, 1953; Fernando, 1973: 18-29).

The process of Westernization was identical throughout South Asia mainly due to the advent of Western European power. Yet, indeed, the lengthy period of Western European rule in Sri Lanka resulted in a much more pronounced penetration of Westernization than within most parts of British India (Mendis, 1956: 180). However, our main concern here is with those who participated in the Westernization process in a more immediate sense, who attended the new educational institutions, entered the superior occupations took up jobs in the higher administrative system and engaged in trade, commerce, industry and the plantation economy in the large developing towns and the countryside.

Thus, indeed, while the process of Westernization facilitated the Maritime Castes in improving their social and economic standing under European rule, the process of Buddhistization enabled them to justify their new rank by showing through their new ideas and behaviour that they accept the stable system of which their new rank was a part. This framework provided a convenient ideological basis for the Maritime Castes to maintain high social status in the Sinhalese society. Since Buddhism held a place in Sri Lanka equivalent to that of Hinduism in India, adherence to such models by mobility-oriented lower castes can be regarded as a process of ideological legitimization that was similar to the role fulfilled by Sanskritization in Hindu India.

Method and Sources of the Data

The present study is mainly based on library sources which are available at the National Archives and the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, and the Dafoe Library of the University of Manitoba, Canada. As noted

before, this study proposes to review more than four centuries of European rule in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that most historical accounts are descriptive, and it is nearly impossible to provide perfectly accurate evidence on social mobility. However, the available data (qualitative and quantitative) have been presented in a way which makes it possible to compare the past and present social and economic standing of respective caste groups in the Sinhalese society. The historical data gathered from Sinhalese chronicles and contemporary anthropological monographs describe the traditional social organization of Sri Lanka prior to the advent of Western European powers (chapter 3). Particularly this discussion provides insights into the social and economic condition of Sinhalese castes in medieval times.

The quantitative data describe the social and economic standing of Sinhalese castes in the modern period. Statistical data are used to assess the proportional representation of respective castes in the new economic and social ventures, i.e., ownership of plantation estates, and Western education, and the local and national-level politics of Sri Lanka during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. Capital investment and the plantation estates, mining and distillery industries was particularly important. These new economic ventures were mainly controlled by the indigenous entrepreneurs during that period and represent high status activity.

Another important area of opportunity was the development of Western education during the late Nineteenth Century in Sri Lanka. The pioneeringentrepreneurs who acquired economic prosperity through investment in plantations and commerce spent their wealth not only for higher status symbols such as new-model manor houses, but also for higher education of

their children. Western education was one of the best avenues for the upward mobility during the early period of this century. The second and third generations utilized their education and social contacts to consolidate their elite status. Further, such educational achievements enabled them to mobilize the masses against European rule and to obtain the political power in Sinhalese society.

These three avenues of upward mobility improved the social status, economic and political power of the Sinhalese castes during the colonial period. The proportional Representation method facilitates the determination of the social mobility of respective castes during the period of Western European rule. Proportional Representation is defined as: "The proportion of the caste group in the total population to the proportion of caste entrepreneurs in the total number of entrepreneurs" i.e.,

$$\frac{\text{Percent Caste in Industry}}{\text{Percent Caste in Population}} \times 100$$

Accordingly, if the result of this calculation is over a hundred, it means that the particular caste group is over-represented (i.e., more than would be expected by chance), in the particular economic or social venture. Thus if the particular caste group is over-represented in a high level economic or social venture, they have high social status in the society. If it can be shown that the group was not always at a high level, then one may conclude that the group was upwardly mobile. Conversely if a previously high level group can be shown to be under-represented in high level economic and social venture, then such a group may be considered to have move down.

Basically, the sources of data used in this thesis may be classified into three categories:

(i) Public Documents - Plantation directories and property assessments undertaken by the British officials and the leading proprietors among the Sinhalese

(ii) Private Documents - Diaries, letters, autobiographies, and caste pamphlets mainly belonging to the Dutch and the British periods.

(iii) The early Sinhalese chronicles, and contemporary sociological and anthropological monographs.

Of these documents, the plantation directories and property assessments provide important information on capital investments of the Sinhalese in the plantation economy, graphite and distillery industries in Sri Lanka.

The private documents, chronicles and historical monographs are evidence of the status quo - the result of the proportional representation of castes (based on public documents) are evidence of the present. Thus, comparison of the data on the past and present social status provides the basis for our evaluation of the social mobility of respective caste groups. However, these historical records are used with supplementary qualitative data from contemporary sociological and anthropological monographs. And also, my personal experience and knowledge of the subject are helpful in checking the accuracy of some of the data gathered from various sources.

Chapter 2

Sri Lanka: A Social and Demographic Profile

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian Ocean, about 22 miles from the Southern tip of India. This geographical proximity to the Indian sub-continent has determined the ethnic and caste composition and cultural diversity of the island. The size of the island is estimated to be about 25,000 square miles. The South-Central part, called the Up-Country (Kandyan Kingdon), forms a massive ridge rising to 8000 feet. The contrasting Low-Country comprises the South-Western coastal Zone and the Northern parts of the island.

The Sinhalese--the largest ethnic group in the island--are believed to be of Aryan-speaking North Indian ancestors. According to the Mahavamsa, the Sinhalese Chronicle, Prince Vijaya--the progenitor of the Sinhalese--and his warriors arrived on Sri Lanka (from Gujarat in India) on the same day that Buddha attained Nirvana (the passing away of the Buddha) in 543 B.C. The Sinhalese legends explain that when the Prince Vijaya arrived on the island there were some primitave tribes (known as Yakka, Nagha, and Deva) and the relatively powerful new invaders were able to destroy them with the help of Yakka princes. From Vijayan times, and shortly after, Sri Lanka was colonized by successive groups of invaders and settlers who are said to have arrived from the central part of India. These people originally settled along the banks of rivers in the Northern, South-Eastern and Western parts of the island and engaged in pastoral occupations but in the course of centuries they took to agriculture and

spread into the interior and the Southern parts of the island.

According to the 1981 Census, the total population of the country is about 15 million, of which 71% are Sinhalese. The Ceylon Tamilians (11.2%) arrived on the island some 1000 years ago and are concentrated in the Northern part of the island. Indian Tamilians (9.3%) are either recent immigrants from India or descendants of immigrants who arrived on the island since the mid-Nineteenth Century. Ceylon Moors (6.5%), a name given by the Portuguese in the 16th Century, are of mixed Arab and Indian descent. The Burghers (0.4%) are of mixed Sri Lankan and European ancestry. The Malays and other ethnic groups (0.5%) arrived on Sri Lanka from Malaysia and Indonesia.

Table 1

Ethnic Composition of the Total Population of Sri Lanka

Ethnicity		Percentage
Sinhalese		71.1
Ceylon Tamilians		11.2
Indian Tamilians		9.3
Ceylon Moors		6.5
Burghers		0.4
Malays		0.1
All Others		0.4
TOTAL	N = 14,785,000	100.0

Source: Department of Census & Statistics, 1981, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The Sinhalese are mainly Buddhists (95%) and Christians (5%), while Tamilians are mainly Hindus and Christians. Burghers are Christians and all the other ethnic groups are Islamic.

Caste Stratification in Sri Lanka - A Historical Account

In the literature of social stratification caste is often defined as a hereditary, endogamous, ritually hierarchical, occupational and local group with a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. The relationship among caste groups and individuals is determined by the norms of

pollution and ritual purity. Generally maximum commensality is allowed within the caste, and between castes is tabooed.

In such a definition it is assumed that a caste group is always identifiable and that it does not change its social rank or boundaries. However, this is inaccurate and represents an oversimplified textual definition which masks the complexities of the fourfold Varna model. Caste in such instances simply means the division of society into four orders, i.e., Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Indeed this is an ideal type generally applicable to Indian society. The Verna model is usually further segmented into several sub-castes which are referred to as jatis and each jati in turn bears the usual caste features (Srinivas, 1962:7-8; 1956:489-96). The structure of the caste system is, therefore, not the same everywhere.

The fourfold Hindu Varna model seems to have operated in Sri Lanka until 300 B.C. According to Sinhalese chronicles, the pre-Buddhist Sinhalese society had been organized on the basis of the fourfold varna model of India. Brahmins, Kings, Merchants and Cultivators were the four "great people" and the "men of fourth tribes" were service castes and servants of the four major castes. Geiger (1960:27) has pointed out that Prince Vijaya and his warriors who subsequently inhabited the island were members of the fourfold Varnas. Therefore, it is possible that the early period of Sinhalese society may not have been similar to the classical Hindu social organization in India.

According to Mahavamsa, for instance, the Kshatriya caste, as it is known in India, included a great number of sub-castes and they were referred to "kula" or "Gotta." Some of these Kshtriya sub-castes are

mentioned in chronicles by the following names: (i) Lamba Kanna, (ii) Kulinga, (iv) Tharaccha and (v) Balibojaka (Geiger, 1960:27-31). These sub-castes are often described in the chronicles as provincial dynasties, but there is no evidence that they were endogamous.

The Vaishya caste among whom were included both merchants and land owners are described as independent people, though not as politically influential as the Kshatriyas. Most of the higher administrative positions under the King were filled by individuals drawn from the Vaishya caste and they were entitled to a share of the land revenues, and to call upon their subjects to render free public service. According to chronicles and other sources such as Buddhist "Jataka" stories, it is clear that the cultivators were of the Shudra caste in pre-Buddhist Sri Lanka. It is interesting to note, however, that the cultivators' position and the relative superiority of Brahmins and Kshatriyas in the early period of Sri Lanka have some significance in the contemporary status and pretensions, and point as well to a possible influence of early Indian chronicles upon Sinhalese thought (Ryan, 1953:7).

The introduction of Buddhism to the island as early as the Third Century B.C. influenced and moulded every aspect of the social life of the people and re-organized Sinhalese society in terms of a new value system (Silva, 1977). Thus in Buddhist Sri Lanka, the traditional Hindu Varna model was replaced by a new social system which was shaped by Buddhist ethical values. The superseding of Brahmin religious authority by that of Buddhist Bhikkus unquestionably weakened the social position of the Brahmins and compelled them to take up new occupations such as cultivation and administrative positions under the King. The development of agriculture as an independent occupation which was largely encouraged by

Buddhist values was consequently accorded high social status. It is often claimed that the highest status belonged to the cultivators in Buddhist Sri Lanka because they were the least tempted to take life (non-violence) and professed values associated with peaceful co-existence, free of greed and asceticism.

This gradual evolution in Sinhalese society throughout the centuries brought about fundamental changes in the structure of the caste system. The contemporary Sinhalese caste system recognizes no Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and there are no castes corresponding to Vaishya and Shudra. In short, the "classical fourfold Hindu Varna model would appear to be but a memory of the ancient past" (Ryan, 1953:7-8).

Caste Stratification in Contemporary Sri Lanka

Among Sinhalese the term used for caste is Jati. The term is associated with birth. Terms such as Kula, Gedara, Vasagama, Variga and Pelanti are also used to identify the caste (Yalman, 1960:67; Leach, 1961; Obeysekera, 1976). These various terms are references to the Verna model and should not be confused with "Jati" in the Indian sense which is often applied to describe several endogamous sub-castes hierarchically organized within a regional and linguistic territory (Yalman, 1968:87).

In contemporary Sinhalese society, the caste system consists of the following units:

(i) The High Caste - Aristocratic Goyigama and the ordinary Goyigama
(traditionally landlords and cultivators)

(ii) The Maritimes Castes - Karava (fishermen), Salagama (cinnamon peelers), and Durava (toddy tappers)

(iii) The Service Castes - Vahumpura (jaggery makers), Navandanna

(metal workers), and Badahala (potters)

(iv) The Lowest Castes - Kinnara (matweavers) and Rodi (beggers).

Some of these caste groups are distributed throughout the island, while the others are concentrated either in the Low-Country or in the Kandyan districts. The following tables shows the percentage distribution of Sinhalese castes in the population of the island.

Table 2

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF CASTE COMPOSITION OF SINHALESE POPULATION (Thousands)

in 1824, 1846, 1880, 1921, 1963, and 1970

Caste	1824	1846	1880	1921	1963	1970
Sinhalese	N=1658	N=1763	N=2984	N=3994	N=8098	N=1040
Goyigama	55.2	56.3	57.4	58.5	60.0	61.0
Karava	8.1	8.6	9.2	9.7	10.2	10.8
Salagama	4.0	4.5	5.1	5.6	6.5	6.8
Durava	3.0	3.4	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.8
Vahumpura	3.2	3.4	4.1	4.6	5.2	5.6
Navandanna	2.9	2.3	3.3	3.5	2.8	3.0
Washermen	2.6	2.8	3.1	3.5	3.2	2.8
Drummers	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.4	2.5	2.0
Potters	2.4	2.6	2.8	2.9	1.5	1.8
All Others	16.1	13.3	8.0	3.8	3.1	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: *Nicholas Bergman, Returns of the Population of the Island of Ceylon, Colombo, Government Press, 1827, 1847, 1884, 1923 (See also, Ryan, 1953:246)

**P.V.J. Jaysekera (1970:36n) and Ganatha Obeysekers (1974) have estimated these figures according to the informaton provided by the caste leaders.

Note: Non-Sinhalese are excluded from this table.

Purity and pollution are fundamental attributes of the Hindu caste system which also hold true for the Sinhalese caste system, although in a somewhat modified form (Ryan, 1953:7-9; Ames, 1966, 1964:21-52; Yalman, 1961:93-95; Obeysekera, 1966, 1972:58-78; Malalgoda, 1976:46). In the Sinhalese caste system purity and pollution are determined by and expressed in terms of the following:

(i) Traditional occupation

(ii) Traditional caste names

(iii) Communal distance.

Traditional Occupation

Although the origin of traditional caste occupation is not very clear, historically there exists a close association between caste and occupational statuses. The low prestige of certain occupations lies in the traditional beliefs, rituals and sentiments (Yalman, 1960).

According to the traditional occupation scheme, the Goyigama are the land owners and cultivators. The land was the only prerequisite of the officers of the Crown who were drawn from the Goyigama aristocracy. The tenants who occupied these vast lands provided their services to the lord and therefore they were called "workers." They were "low" because they worked for others. The aristocratic Goyigama who are descendants of feudal lords not only have prestige but also are ritually pure because they never worked for others (Yalman, 1967:88); Obeysekera, 1967:211-18). They neither intermarried nor interdined and their high status was evident in their distinctive names.

Traditional Caste Names

In the Sinhalese caste system the family name of "Ge" is itself a part of an elaborate tradition which specifies the high status of high caste.

For example, there are certain family names such as "Pata bandi", "Rajaguru", "Senerath" and "Jayawickrama" are generally recognized as highly aristocratic and honorific, all derived from the names and titles of the feudal aristocracy of the Kaudyan Kingdom. Traditionally these names were firmly guarded against usurpation (Yalman, 1967:142-43; Obeysehera, 1967:224). However, during the period of European rule, such names came to be used by low caste persons who had become wealthy in an attempt to conceal his low caste status.

The naming patterns among the Goyigama aristocracy were patrinominal, but such a practice did not exist among the lower caste groups. However, today, old and distinguished names are taken by those who can conveniently do so, and the issue has become very complex.

Communal Distance

The fact that the castes are distinct endogamous groups made it feasible and understandable for there to be a collective status. The unity of a village is expressed in social and ritual activities. Each caste group, among Sinhalese, maintained a closed community occupying a distinct geographical area. Such a communal character is reinforced by the Caste occupation. Certain occupations such as carpenters and masons do not constitute a residential group because they are a minority and always itinerant. Therefore, they could not form a closed community which could be directly indicated.

In the past, villages have demonstrated closed community spirit despite their multi-caste composition. But that did not minimize their social distance in terms of:

(1) segregated housing

(2) Deference and demeanor in interaction

(3) Commensality. However, in the context of wide social and economic changes, it is impossible to maintain such a closed community spirit. Various social and economic relations between different caste groups have become evident.

Toward South India

As the Sinhalese originally migrated from North India to Sri Lanka, they brought along with them many Indian customs and tradition to the island. Since then, the flow of cultural symbols as well as people has never ceased although the intensity of contacts certainly changed over time. Consequently, it is widely acknowledged that the Sinhalese culture and Social System have been continuously subject to Tamiliam influence through periodic invasions of South Indian Kingdoms and by sustained cultural diffusion. Indeed, until the Sixteenth Century, a large proportion of people migrated from South India to Sri Lanka and they mainly settled along the coastal belt of the South, Western and Northern parts of the island (Roberts, 1982:19; Rayan, 1953). With the expansion of the Sinhalese kingdom in the South-Western region from the Tenth Century A.D., those Tamilian settlers of this region adopted the Sinhala language and Buddhism while the others who lived in the Northern part of the island continued to remain Tamil-speaking Hindus (Raghavan, 1961; Ryan, 1953).

The existence of cultural and political relations between Sri Lanka and the South Indian kingdom throughout history is common knowledge. As numerous studies on this issue demonstrate (e.g., Raghavan, 1961; Ryan, 1953; Pieris, 1956; Hocart, 1938) in the following paragraphs, I will present a brief comparison of the Sinhalese and the Hindu caste system of South India.

Katheleen Gough's studies (1956, and 1960) on Caste in Tanjore

District in South India describe three broad categories of castes:

(i) Brahmans

(ii) Non-Brahmans and

(iii) Adi Dravida (lowest castes).

The Brahman caste itself divided into a number of endogamous small sub-castes, each comprising the local communities of some ten to twenty villages. In this regard, in fact, the Hindu caste system is much more fragmented than that of the Sinhalese. These sub-castes or Jati groups, according to Grough, are not only specialized occupational categories, but perhaps more importantly they belonged to different religious sects within the Hindu religion. The majority of Tamil Brahmans are of Smartha sect, worship both Visnu and Siva, and profess to follow the tenets of Sankara. A smaller group of Brahmans belong to the Vaishnavite sect of Ayyangars, who profess to worship only Visnu and who follow the tenets of Ramanuja (Gough, 1960:16). The complexity of the caste structure due to the religious schism and occupational specialization is further reinforced by the linguistic distinctions within a geographical region.

Similarities to the caste organization in Tanjore may be found in certain parts of Sri Lanka. For example, three major categories of non-Brahmans in Tanjore are counterparts of the aristocratic Goyigama in Sri Lanka. Historically inherited high position and economic power of caste groups are similar phenomena in both societies. As Leach (1960:1-10) correctly points out the occupational specialization of lower castes is partly a result of the feudal system in which a small group of people who occupied the top of the administrative structure required services from the rest of the people, who were in turn given a small piece of land to cultivate their subsistence. The division of labour and the way in which

members of different castes are bound together by the obligations of rituals and economic services are common features of both societies. A large proportion of people below the aristocratic castes are specialized village labourers dependent upon the upper castes.

In terms of purity and ritual pollution, one can argue that the Sinhalese caste system is much more flexible than the Hindu caste system (Yalman, 1960:78-112), because the traditional occupation, caste name and place of residence are the basis of purity and pollution in the Sinhalese system and all can be changed at will. In the Kandyan provinces, as Yalman's (1960) study illustrates, the incongruities are evident between traditional caste position and present class position. Such discrepancies are often evident in the manner in which deference and demeanor are displayed during interaction. For example, the high caste Goyigama labourers treat their blacksmith landlord as if he were of higher caste than themselves. In his presence, they make a place for him and allow him to sit while they stand. This is the reverse of traditional practice. In the village of Galpitiya, the Goyigama were not only reckoned to be "low" in status, they were also exceedingly poor. Nearly all of them worked as labourers in the fields of others. In contrast, it should be noted that some other low castes had become rich and thereby changed their place of residence and successfully assumed aristocratic titles. And there were some high Goyigama who had grown poor. These latter were accorded little respect even though they made great show with their titles and traditional honour (Yalman, 1960:88).

Although in the Hindu caste system, the ritual rank was often supported both by wealth and political power, discrepancies did, however exist. As Gough's study illustrates (1960), the Brahman Kurukkal in a non-Brahman

village lacked temporal power over the lower castes and might be less wealthy than the non-Brahman administrators, but nevertheless ranked ritually above them. In modern times, due to the wide expansion of secular opportunities for lower castes to improve their social and economic standing, such discrepancies have become more evident.

However, it is clear that the Sinhalese caste system is loosely structured and always subject to adaptations to changing economic and political conditions (Evers, 1969; Yalman, 1964; Ryan, 1953:38-39). Particularly, the ritual hierarchy is an end product of a voluntary preference for close kin group endogamy (Leach, 1960:3-4). In this regard, the Sinhalese family appears to have been a vital social institution in maintaining the caste norms in the society. The Sinhalese family and marriage customs provide the necessary bulwark for the preservation of the caste structure. The solidarity of the kin as a unit of action and of loyalty, the concept of family honour and "good name," the injunctions and customs of marriage all lead to the maintenance of caste integration, communalism and to some extent hierarchy. Thus, caste in Sri Lanka could not have survived without the family. But among Hindus, the inequalities of the caste system were justified by a race theory and by the doctrine of rebirth (both held by Kumbapettai Brahmans). According to this doctrine, members of different castes were believed born, as a result of racial heredity, with physical, intellectual and spiritual powers suited to the performance of their occupations. The duty (dharma) of each individual was to carry on the occupation and observe the moral laws of his caste. Failure in these respects resulted after death in rebirth of the soul (atma) in a lower caste, or even, in case of extreme guilt, in temporary rebirth as an animal. Excellence in the fulfillment of dharma led to rebirth in a higher

caste. Thus any break away from this normative code meant, particularly for upper castes, a great loss (Gough, 1960:54, 1955:36-52), and all those who did not conform to this tradition were judged accordingly by the Brahmans.

Buddhism and Caste in Sri Lanka

For scholars who attempt at cross-cultural definitions of religion Theravada Buddhism poses many problems. For example, Durkheim refuted Frazer's well-known definition of religion being the belief in a "Spiritual Being" solely on the grounds of the notable exception of Theravada Buddhism (Durkheim, 1961:451). He based his argument on the statement that "the idea of gods is absent, or at least plays only a secondary role in Theravada Buddhism." However, looking at the Theravada Buddhists in Sri Lanka as a whole in their cultural context, it becomes evident that Canonical Buddhism is only one aspect of the religious system of Theravada Buddhist societies. Methodologically, nothing is gained by approaching Buddhism in a scriptural sense which over simplifies existing complex social reality. In a sociological study such as the present one, it is advantageous to examine the practical, if not pragmatic, dimensions of Theravada Buddhism in the context of Sri Lanka's caste system. Such an examination will distinguish between, it is hoped, philosophical dimension of Theravad Buddhism and its practical relevance.

Although scriptural Buddhism does not recognize caste system mostly prevalent in Hindu settings, the Buddhist Sangha (monastic order) in Sri Lanka did in fact become an organization based on a variant of the Hindu caste system (Malalgoda, 1977; Ryan, 1953; Ames, 1964). Caste sectarianism is almost entirely inescapable in the highly localized character of Buddhist organization (monastries). The priestly incumbent of a temple is

named by a local council. It is unlikely that in a temple dominated by lay members of a particular caste an incumbent will be named who is of another caste, and it is especially unlikely to have an incumbent from a lower caste. In the case of succession to incumbency, the chief priest of the temple usually selects the most favoured pupil from his own caste. This is particularly true in the Kandyan provinces. There are many instances in which the caste status of such pupillary successors appeared more important than experience and competence. In some cases, in fact, such discriminatory appointments led ambitious monks of lower castes either to establish their own monastries or leave the priesthood. Such instances, however, illustrate that caste is significant both for the establishment of incumbents and for succession.

These circumstances, however, do not arise entirely out of the demands by Buddhist lay associations. It is hard to presume that the Buddhist monks virtually resist lay demands for such discriminations. It is perhaps true to say that the Buddhist priests' attitude toward caste and their behaviour regarding certain secular circumstances often reflect their social background and the dominant community sentiments wherein they operate. No Bhikku would preach caste hatred but the majority would support maintaining the caste identity within the monastic order, and the community. This of course is no exaggeration in reference to the Kandyan Buddhist temples in which the feudal relations based on caste are still maintained.

Another aspect of the relationship between caste and Buddhism suggests in the ceremonial structure of the Buddhist temple which in the strict theoretical sense are not relevant to Theravada Buddhism. Although the Sinhalese Buddhist have a clearly elaborated supernatural world of deities

and demons, many continue to associate with the Hindu pantheon (Ames, 1964; Yalman, 1964; Evers, 1968; Obeysekera, 1962; Raghavan, 1951). In their ritual ceremonies, Hindu practices are evident, and Buddha himself has been integrated with Hindu deities. Side by side Buddhist temple (Vihara) and a quasi-Hindu temple (Devala) are raised, and throughout the island there are deity shrines dedicated to Buddhist and Hindu gods and goddesses which lie quite apart from the sphere of Theravada Buddhism. In actual ritual practices distinctions remain insignificantly (Evers, 1968, 1969; Yalman, 1964). In regard to this religious system the highest caste of the Sinhalese, the Goyigama, hold some prerogatives comparable to Hindu Brahmins. The controlling functionaries are of the highest caste and some, through hereditary offices, claim supernatural qualities.

In summary, the caste system, especially its ritual hierarchy, in Sri Lanka was not supported by Buddhist scriptures. All Buddhists, regardless of their class or caste status, were eligible to attain the ultimate salvation in life (NIRVANA) by leading a life according to Buddhist precepts. However, in the course of time the Buddhist organization in Sri Lanka became part of the general feudal milieu, and subject to the influence of caste values. Buddhist temples, for the most part, derived their functionaries and economic strengths from the performance of service, allocated on the basis of caste. Even though in recent years there are more and more legal and other problems involved in forcing these obligations, many temples continue to receive service from various caste groups.

Chapter 3

The Traditional Social Organization of Sri Lanka and Its Ideological Basis

In the Sinhalese feudal system, the King, similar to the ruler in Indian and other South East Asian empires, was regarded as a divine person (a god King or Devaraja) and at times as a future Buddha (Bodhisattva). "The King's godhead is much attenuated, but he is very much in touch with the gods" (Hocart, 1927:81). Thus the King, Buddha, and the gods formed a religious community which merged in the person of the King himself to a lesser or greater degree (Ames, 1964, 1962, 1963; Evers, 1972; Pieris, 1956, 1952; Obeysekera, 1967; Geiger, 1960). Thus the King was the chief defender of the Buddhist faith and he was absolute Lord of all the land. He was called "Bhupati"--Lord paramount of the Soil of Lanka. All landed property was conceived as derived from him, and reverted to him on its escheat (Brohier, 1950; D'Oyly, 1929:46; Pieris, 1956:43-45). Robert Knox (1961:168) says "The country being wholly his, the King farms out his lands not for money but for service." Since the King was the supreme land owner and all his subjects were tenants in form of another, they all owed service to him without exception. These services were called "rajakariya" or royal duty. However, not all of their services were of the same kind; they varied in terms of the caste status of individuals or groups performing them; abject ceremonials of obedience and prostration symbolized this social distance (D'Oyly, 1929:4-5; Andrews, 1917).

The King legally owned all land but in fact had direct control of only a part. The estates under the King's direct control were called "royal

villages" or gabadagam, while royal villages granted to individuals were known as "nindagam" (officers' land). These lands were granted to the officers of the Crown, the Goyigama aristocracy, as prerequisites of office (Pieris, 1956:43-45). The dues and services of tenants that were formerly paid to the Crown were now payable to the lord and in turn they had to acknowledge the formal overlordship of the King by paying him their annual respects, generally consisting of a unilateral payment of gifts and the performance of obeisance. The tenants of the nindagam (officers' land) had a double contract, with two landlords requiring two kinds of services--one service to the King, which all citizens had to render, and the other to the lord of the village. This double contract diminished their rights of ownership in the lands, and gave them an inferior status vis-a-vis groups who had only a single contract to the King, namely the royal duty, in fact a privileged right of the Goyigama aristocracy (Pieris, 1956).

The "nindagama" being the only perquisite of an office for which the holder had to pay a fee on appointment and an annual respect to the sovereign, the benefit of the grant was that all the profits which the King had previously received from these villages now accrued to the King's officers. These villages are usually composed of all sorts of trades and service people, including: a Potter, a Smith, a Washer" (Pieris, 1956:60). In other words, the recipient of the nindagama made himself lord paramount over the villagers on the estates. The services due to the lord were clearly classified into two broad categories. First, the cultivation of officers' land, the care and safe delivery to the manor house (Valauva) grainery of the lord's harvest, and honorary attendance on the lord on public occasions were the duties of Goyigama or cultivating people (Pieris, 1956:61). Second, carrying the lord's palanquin and lord's insignia of

office, like flags and banners, on the lord's travels and domestic occasions at the lord's house, and providing the services in the lord's house were mainly confined to the lower castes. They were all collectively called workers, although there were differences of their services. Dikson (1870) presents an ideal picture of these dyadic role relationships located in the landlord as role centre:

> On the estates of the chiefs and large landowners (nindagam) the services... are of the greatest possible variety. Chiefs perform various honorary services. Goyigama tenants cultivate the home farm, accompany their lord on journeys, take turns in duty at the manor house (Valauva). Dure (Durava) tenants carry baggage and the lord's palanquin while the Vahumpura carry the palanquins of the ladies of the family and also provide for the service of the kitchen; and though there is a complete absence of equality and system in the remuneration given for domestic services, all such services are provided for with the utmost care. A chief with several villages will draw his cook or his bath boy for two or three months a year from one village, from another for four months, and a third for one month, etc., carefully arranging to have one throughout the year. There are the potters to make the tiles and supply earthenware; the smith to clean the brass vessels, and repair and make agricultural implements; the cunam weavers (Kinnara) and the outcaste rodi who buries the carcases of animals that die on the estates, and supplies ropes, etc., made of hide and fibers. Others supply pack bullocks for the transport of the produce of the fields and or bringing supplies of salt and cured fish from the towns on the cost. (Quoted in Pieris, 1956:64)

Since the office by virtue of such a village lord held his nindagama might be hereditary, the relationship between the lord and his long-standing tenants was usually strong, and when the connection remained unbroken for several generations, gave rise to a strong feeling of attachment and loyalty on the part of the villagers. The organization of the lord's estate, with its numerous attendants and dependents, required them employment of special officials of the manor house. These officials of the manor house can simply be divided into two categories on the basis of the following statement made by Turnour (1829:2-9) regarding the services of people bound to chiefs by their tenures:

The services are of two kinds, those rendered by them as a retinue

> attached to a chief, in upholding his station, and those of a menial kind. The former class are generally divided into three reliefs, each party serving for twenty days alternately; their services consist in carrying messages, in attendance on the chief himself. On certain occasions the chief will call out the whole of his retinue to attend him. They were mainly drawn from the upper caste. The menial classes are engaged in duties performed by domestics about his house; in carrying burthens and other species of labour. They are usually divided into two reliefs and consist of persons of inferior castes.

There were special occasions when the lord's tenants were formally assembled (Obeysekera, 1967; Pieris, 1956).

(1) Processional Events: On state visits or state duties the lord would be accompanied by his service tenants drawn from the various caste groups. As a whole this procession indicated the social status, power, and prestige of the lord on the one hand, and on the other, it displayed the social distance among various tenants who perform different functions.

(2) Rites of Passage at the lord's house where the tenants will gather and assist in proceedings (See Geraldine Gamburd, 1975; Gunasekera, 1965).

(3) Respects (Dakum) The tenants of the lord all gathered together on certain occasions to pay "dakum" or respects to the lord, consisting of unilateral payments of gifts. One special occasion for respect was during the Sinhalese New Year in April which was (is) a special occasion for paying visits to respected kinsmen and superiors in Sinhalese society (Fernando, 1977). On this day the tenants pay obeisance to the lord by presenting him with a sheaf of betel leaves which is also often perceived to be a symbol of "purity" in a ritual sense, and by worshipping him. All these were occasions for the formal "Cultural performance" of the everyday role relationships between landlord and tenants.

It should be noted, however, that the landlords differed in that some were more powerful than others. Since land given to a lord was a

perquisite of his office, landlords were feudal office holders. This implies that minor office holders were themselves members of the retinue of a major office holder. For example, a Vidane-- who according to the traditional system was a village headman--may have several tenants cultivating his estate, i.e., village. Nevertheless, he had in turn to pay respects to his lord, who was a governor of the territorial division (Korale). Above the Korales there were sub-provincial governors who were known as rateralas and then the provincial governors, who controlled the provinces. Within their provinces they possessed both judicial and executive authority. There were, however, limits to the power of each landlord: each landlord represents a political unit, one greater than the other. Each landlord was a repository in power and authority; the King enjoyed ultimate power of the society. The chiefs pay respects to him and acknowledge him as their overlord (Pieris, 1956; Geiger, 1960). Since he was the owner of all the Soil of Lanka, he was the overlord and all citizens rendered service or royal duty (rajakariya), generally in the form of public works such as the building of tanks, reservoirs, dams and roads, and military service. These services were qualifications for citizenship.

However, there was a limit even to the power of the King. Although he was viewed as a divine person or a future Buddha, he himself was under the overlordship of the Guardian Deities of the island, to whom he had to pay formal obeisance during certain religious rituals. While the King was recognized as overlord of all the human beings, he derived his legitimate power and authority from the Guardian deities (Ames, 1962b, 62c, 62d; Obeysekera, 1962; Evers, 1968a). Figure 1 shows the hierarchy of traditional Sinhalese political organization:

Figure I

Traditional Sinhalese Political Organization:

Categories of Power and Territorial Units

Authority	King
	Provinces (Dissavas)
	Sub-Provinces (Rate Rala)
	Territorial Divisions (Korales)
	Villages
Village headmen or Vidane	Respect

The basic principle of this social organization can be best understood by viewing the structure of the Sinhalese Buddhist pantheon. The Sinhalese Buddhist pantheon is hierarchically structured and is consonant with a social structure based on hierarchy of caste (Obeysekera, 1972). At the head of the pantheon is the Buddha, who occupies a supreme position in the hierarchy. He is viewed as the centre of power and divine authority. The powers of the other supernatural beings ultimately stem from Buddha. Below the Buddha are the Guardian deities of the island, who are gods in a conventional sense, for they grant favours, intercede on behalf of humans and help them in worldly affairs, and cause weal or woe in the human world.

They are both punitive and benevolent. Their punitiveness is, however, a "rational punitiveness." They punish humans mostly for failure to propitiate them, and sometimes for ethical misbehaviour.

Next to the Guardian deities are gods who have power and divine authority over certain areas, e.g., "Devol Deva" has special power and concerns over the Western seaboard; Devata Bandara over the central province and the Pulleyar has special power over the northern part of the island. These local gods have attributes and roles similar to those of chief gods and they also have lesser gods serving them. Then there are a host of very powerful demons who are completely malevolent and irrationally punitive--they punish people with illness without any cause. Below them are spirits of dead relatives, goblins and ghosts, who are all spiteful and mean, causing fear in men's hearts (Obeysekera, 1972; Ames, 1964a; Leach, 1962; Yalman 1964, 65).

The supernatural in the pantheon are structured very much on the lines of feudal order. These lesser deities have Varan or permission to do good or harm the superior deities as the official of the feudal system had varan from their overlords. All varan ultimately emanated from the Buddha in the religious realm, as it emanated from the King in the political sphere. Each deity has his limit of jurisdiction and authority, like feudal governors. The lesser deities are viewed as the retinue of greater deities. The statuses of the deities are further stressed in the ceremony of obeisance, and worship adopted towards the deities and ritual services of the laymen at the religious centres. Both Buddhist temples and those of the deity are always found together, representing a complementary religious system, and they are usually considered as very pure places. The lesser spirits, ghosts and demons are, therefore, completely excluded from the

temples because they are polluting and impure. However, these impure supernatural beings are believed to be concentrated in the outer chambers such as the temple compounds where the ritual services are performed by the lower castes.

The ritual services of temples were provided by the various caste groups which occupied the vast monastic estates (Ames, 1963:47; Pieris, 1952:411). There was, in almost every village, temple land dedicated to the village temple or one of the leading temples in the province. In the Kandyan provinces most of the temple lands were vested in Malvatta or Asgiriya temples or their branches in different villages. Towards the end of the Tenth Century A.D. Buddhist monastries had owned a fair proportion of all irrigated rice lands and highlands in Sri Lanka (Weber, 1958; Rahula, 1956). However, the administration of the temple lands was highly rationalized and bureaucratized during that period. Annual income from lands and the payments of tenants were regularly audited and many officials were paid in cash. The interest from capital endowments was used to maintain monk scholars, Buddhist temple schools and monastic establishments (Rahula, 1956).

The organizational structure of the monastic landholders can simply be divided into three categories:

(i) The temple landlord and his staff

(ii) The inner services of the temple (pangu kariya)

(iii) The outer services of the temple (nilakariya)

The office on the upper two levels could only be occupied by members of the Goyigama caste. Those who perform the outer services were members of various lower castes and the services were usually connected with the traditional caste occupations (Pieris, 1956). The obligation to perform

services was attached to the land itself; each parcel of land in turn was

Figure II

The Administrative Structure of the Temple System in Sri Lanka

		Buddhist Temple (Viharaya)	Deity Temple (devalaya)	Main Function
I		Viharadhipati	Basnayakanilame	Trustee, Landlord
		Vidane	Vidane	Temple headman
		Pannikalaya	Vannakurala	Overseer over III
II		Monks	Kapurala	"Priests"
		Mulutanrala	Mulutanrala	Cook of offerings
		Vatarala	Vatarala	Attendant at rituals
III		Nilakarayo	Nilakarayo	Temple servants
	(a)	Attendants at daily offerings	Attendants at bi-weekly offerings	e.g., Musicians and dancers
	(b)	Suppliers of food, flowers, etc. for offerings	Suppliers of food, flowers, etc. for offerings	
	(c)	Attendants at festivals	Attendants at festivals	
	(d)	Workers in gardens, repairs, cleaning, etc.	Workers in gardens reparis, cleaning, etc.	

Glossary for Figure II

Viharadhipati - Chief monk

Basnayakanilame - Temple landlord

Vidane - Temple headman

Vannakurala or Pannikalaya - Overseer of temple servants

Kapurala - Priest of the deity temple

Mulutanrala - Cook of offerings

Vatarala - Attendant at rituals

Nilakarayo - Tenants of the temple lands

generally allotted to the caste group that traditionally performed the services in question. Consequently, washermen, drummers, potters, metal workers and the castes that supplied menials and labourers each held tenancy rights to different parts of the total estate (Ames, 1964a:44).

Temples are usually divided into clearly marked areas of different ritual purity. Of highest ritual purity are the images of the Buddha and the gods, which are not even touched by the priests themselves. Then follow the inner part of the Vihara and the devale, and the kitchens. Somewhat less pure are the outer chambers of the Vihara and the devale. Then follow the two halls and finally the temple compound. (See Figure III)

Figure III

Ritual Space: Areas of Different Ritual Purity

Type of Service	Degree of Purity	Viharaya	Devalaya	Caste of Attendants
Inner Service	Highest	Buddha image and altar	Immages of gods and their shrines	Goyigama
	Higher	Inner part of temple during ritual	Inner part of temple	Goyigama
Outer Service	Medium	Outer chamber and Hall (digge)	Outer chamber and Hall (digge)	Service castes
	Low	Temple Compound	Temple Compound	Lowest castes

The heads of the temple administration are the Viharadhipati or chief monk and the Basnayaka Nilame or temple landlord. Customarily both of these positions in the Kandyan provinces were (are) held by the Goyigama aristocracy and in the low country by the ordinary Goyigama. The Basnayaka Nilame are appointed by a special electorate as prescribed in the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance of 1931. The appointment is for a ten-year term. The major function of both the Viharadhipati and the Basnayaka Nilame is the administration of the extensive temple lands and the organization of the temple festivals.

The role of Kapurala or priest at the deity temple is more or less similar to that of a Hindu Brahman priest in India. He is also a member of the Goyigama caste though he is accorded lesser respect than the Buddhist monks. His power is necessary to survive the dangers encountered in dealing with the gods whose power is considerably greater. Usually the priesthood at the deity temple is inherited from father to son. No formal training is required to become a Kapurala (priest). The necessary knowledge of procedure and chants is acquired through constant participation in one's father's religious activities. Some of the chants used by Kapurala are known even to ordinary villagers.

The state in traditional times, as explained above, and the universal King, were a part of the religious system in the sense that the king was dedicated to upholding the faith and protecting religious institutions (Davy, 1821:142; Pieris, 1956:9-13; Rahula 1956:67-77). Thus the political system provided the protection and economic strength to the religious organization, and monks and priests, in turn, Sanctified the King on ceremonial occasions, and through their religious and educational

activities, served the masses. This interrelated system, however, served to help each half to maintain each other smoothly without any interruption (Gieiger, 1960:30-64).

This social organization in Sri Lanka existed until the advent of European rule. The coming of the European powers as early as the Sixteenth Century disrupted this social organization by introducing a new economic and political system together with a new "government religion." During the Sixteenth Century the Portuguese were dominant in the island, followed by the Dutch and, throughout the Nineteenth Century, the British. The new rulers appropriated the royal villages for their own interest and distributed the temple and other villages among their officials, soldiers, and others in their service. The new holders of royal villages, the government officials, were not restricted to a particular caste group.

In the new economic and political order, the non-traditional occupations provided at the commercial and administrative centres created opportunities for mobility among the natives. Such economic and political advances in the society were facilitated by legal reforms which, in turn emancipated the caste groups from the traditional service tenure attached to the state and temples. In short, the political and administrative integration and economic changes under European rule which continued from the Sixteenth Century to the Twentieth Century in Sri Lanka brought about unprecedented opportunities for social mobility in the caste system.

Chapter 4

The Advent of European Powers: Economic and Social Advances of the Maritime Castes (1505-1948)

In this chapter we will discuss the Portuguese and Dutch periods in Sri Lanka. The advent of European rule as early as the Sixteenth Century modified the traditional occupational structure by introducing new occupations which provided unprecedented opportunities for the Maritime Castes to accumulate wealth and power. The commercial economic system developed in the Low-Country districts provided a whole range of new occupations, while the European administration enabled the Maritime Castes to undermine the traditional hierarchy of authority. These two aspects of the European rule will be discussed in the following section.

Commerce and Opportunities for Economic Advancement

It is widely known that before the advent of Europeans Sri Lanka occupied an important place in inter-Asian trade, particularly in commodity exchange along the coastline of the Indian sub-continent (Silva, 1975; Abeysinghe, 1966; Kotelawela, 1967). The island provided such commodities as cinnamon, coconut, arecanut, pepper, ivory, tobacco and gems. And also, the geographical situation of the island in the Indian Ocean served as a centre of the inter-Asian trade (Boxer, 1958:346-54). At such ports as Mannar, Kalpitiya and Jaffna in the Northern and North-Western provinces, at Kottiyar and Batticaloa on the Eastern coast and Negombo, Colombo, Panadura, Kalutara, Beruwala, Galle, Weligama and Matara along the Southern

coast these commodities were exchanged (Silva, 1975). These products had to circulate within the island and the export products had to reach the above-mentioned ports. The King of Kotte (the Low-Country Kingdom) appears to have maintained a monopoly over the sale of these commodities and there was considerable state intervention in the gathering and export of such items as gems, ivory and cinnamon (Boxer, 1958; Silva, 1975). Within the Low-Country Districts, the Maritime Caste were largely occupied in these activities (Pieris, 1956:181-87; Silva, 1975; Arasaratnam, 1971).

Such an established system provided a congenial setting for the mercantilist and exploitative goals of the colonial Portuguese and Dutch. For their occupation, the Portuguese had two aims in view. One was the exploitation of the extremely valuable cinnamon industry; the other was the conversion of the so-called "heathens" to Catholicism. During their rule these two objectives were at the top of their economic and administrative policies. The state control of economic activities and state monopolies were reinforced by the existing caste-based traditional service duties. The new rulers used their taxation rights and the labour of the inhabitants to meet their needs in commodity trade. The labour was compulsory, sometimes paid for and other times free. The cinnamon industry was so greatly valued that the Salagama caste was given special recognition in the form of manorial grants by both Portuguese and Dutch officials (Arasaratnam, 1958, 71:57-71; Silva, 1975). As an inducement for cinnamon peelers, every "bahar" (600 lb.) of cinnamon above the quota which each peeler was expected to supply was rewarded with additional money by the Dutch officials. These bonus possibilities and the normal payments for their supply quotas provided the Salagama people with the opportunity to accumulate wealth (Silva, 1975:93; Kotelawela, 1967: 6-7). A former Dutch governor once

wrote "Without Chaleas (Salagama) we cannot get the fruits of the lands, and the lands have to be protected and kept in peace by means of the lascorrins (native soldiers) without whom warfare cannot be properly conducted in this island (cited by Singer, 1964:25). These economic opportunities, for the most part, were increased considerably from the 1760s when the Dutch deliberately extended the Salagamas' privileges. However, the most important arena for indigenous enterprise was the supply of needs within the island. In the period extending from the Sixteenth Century to the Eighteenth Century many of the non-traditional economic activities such as commodity production, extractive and gathering operations, transportation and trade provided the Maritime Castes with unprecendented opportunities to accumulate wealth.

An important innovation in the late Eighteenth Century was the Dutch Governor Flack's introduction of land grants for coastal dwellers to cultivate cinnamon, coconut and arecanut, on condition that they turned over one-third of the produce to the Dutch government. This system appears to have provided a remarkable opportunity for the Maritime Castes to improve their social and economic standing. The result was the redistribution of traditional royal villages (nindagam) among the non-Goyigama castes in the Low-Country (Kotelawela, 1967:15-16). "It is reasonably certain that Salagama Mudaliyars and other headmen were the principal landholders in Dutch times" (Kotelawela, 1967:15-16). Kotelawela (1967:16-20) maintains that several Salagama and Durava families were prosperous and able to pay their dues in money. Some of these indigenous rich held "large landed estates, some of which extended to thirty to forty estates cultivated in cinnamon and coconut in the coastal districts".

At the same time, there developed a category of trade which can be

viewed as "rents" or "tax farms" that provided an opportunity for indigenous entrepreneurs to accumulate wealth operating as intermediaries of the local administration. Commissioning others to do its work of revenue collection through these rents was a convenient way for foreign rulers to reduce administrative costs and circumvent any lack of knowledge about local practices. The indigenous representatives of this rent collection system were known as "revenue officers" who had very close contact with the European governors. During the Portuguese and the Dutch periods, the most lucrative of these tax farms seems to have been associated with the fishing industry, ferries, tolls at frontier posts, export-duty collection, the paddy tax, the bazaar tax, and the retailing of arrack (indigenous liquor) in specific areas in the Low-Country provinces (Arasaratnam, 1971:65). The Goyigama Mudaliyars (headmen) of the Low-Country were heavily involved in the paddy tax trade. It is interesting to note that the Sinhalese caste norms exerted a greater impact on the rent-collection trade. In the case of the fishing and arrack (liquor) tax, Karava and Durava entrepreneurs were predominant and owned considerable investments in the European period. Most of the leading plantation owners and miners in the late Nineteenth Century began their commercial ventures as arrack rent collectors in the late Eighteenth Century. Arasarathnam points out (1971:27) that the only competition which Karava and Durava entrepreneurs confronted came from Moor (Muslim) financiers. By the end of the Eighteenth Century Karava investors were involved in the distillery industry in a substantial way. Thus there can be little doubt that these trading ventures generated a considerable amount of capital among the Maritimes Castes at the turn of the Eighteenth Century. Peebles reports (1973:53-55) that arrack and todday distilling was a source of some wealth

for the Maritime inhabitants, and also largely contributed to the revenue of the colonial government.

With the rapid expansion of various trading activities in the Low-Country districts under European rule, a large proportion of the people from the Maritime provinces migrated to the Kandyan areas and initiated various businesses such as retail sales, collection of produce of the country from village to village, and peddling cotton goods and other imported items. They were in an ideal situation to function as intermediaries of the Dutch Company. Their contacts with the boatmen enabled them to dispose of their goods easily as well as to procure imports for sale. Devaraja (1972:183-4) points out that many of these intermediaries in the Dutch trade were in fact bullock cart contractors to the government who transported the commodity between the interior and coastal ports. It should be noted that these bullock cart contractors of the Dutch Company at the turn of the Eighteenth Century were largely Karava who became pioneering entrepreneurs among natives in commercial capitalism (Peebles, 1973:170).

While the bullock carts had been an important means of transportation in the internal trade between the interior and the coastal cities, sea and river transport in the external trade was facilitated by the outrigger boats and canoes of the Karava fishermen during that period. Subsequently, the canals built by the Dutch supplemented these trade links with waterways. In fact, the participation in this trade was one of the privileges held by the Karava castes (Garbelt, 1980:2-3). In their command of outrigger boats and canoes the Karava caste had ready access to the external trade of the Dutch Company, which enabled the Karava to establish their own business lines side by side with the Dutch merchants. Their

skills in wood-work would also have been of benefit in the construction of bullock carts and canoes, which had been an important means of transport during this period (Roberts, 1982:85).

An increasing potential of the island's trade with Malabar, Madura, Coramandel, Golconda and Bngal encouraged the Dutch to organize the trade for their own interest. They took the fateful step of declearing a monopoly of all the major articles involved in the export and import trade of the island. However, in the context of the increasing enthusiasm of Sinhalese and other Asian migrants for participating in the external and internal trade and the political challenges frequently emerging from the Kandyan Kingdom, the monopoly of commerce was shaken and it was seen that trade by its very nature was not something that could be easily monopolised. The commercial activities spread over a vast coastline of the island and took in a wide variety of articles of daily consumption, some of which could not be centrally marketed but had to be effectively distributed even to the interior villages. In these circumstances, the Maritime Castes were aggressively involved in commerce in the Late Eighteenth Century. The trade between the island's ports and ports on the Southern Indian coast was for the most part conducted by the Maritime Castes side by side with the Dutch traders and Moorish merchants (Arasaratnam, 1967:167-80). It was facilitated by ships varying from small one-masted "dhonies" to larger vessels. The Karava documents (pamphlets) maintain that some of their ancestors were involved in the Maritime carrying trade with India from the Portuguese period.

> Among many a business concern that gave employment to your people in an appreciable degree years ago were the government rent of the fishery, the coasting trade and the commercial intercourse with India, and also the distillation and sale of arrack in the island. (Cited by Roberts, 1982:88).

And also in the Karava petition of 1830, the Karavas have mentioned their contemporary occupations such as "Merchandise in Merchant Dhonies or Boats (sailing to the coast with the produce of this country, and returning from thence with the produce of those countries)....Importation and Exportation of Goods" (Karava Petition, 1830 in C.O. 54/131. fol. 473).

As a result of such historical developments, by the end of the Eighteenth Century a number of Karava, Salagama and Durava had become craftsmen, pedlars, arrack distillers and export-import traders, while a few were owners of canoes and outrigger boats employed in sea transport. These trading activities and services in commercial capitalism on the one hand enabled the Maritime Castes to take up new occupations in addition to the traditional caste duties. Moreover, these new economic activities under European rule provided them with an unprecedented opportunity to accumulate capital during the late Eighteenth Cenutry.

> Towards the very last years of Dutch rule those Sinhalese chiefs who had been closely associated with the Dutch for generations became influenced by the economic motive and were prepared to try out new innovations. (Arasaratnam, 1971:67)

These indigenous traders, craftsmen and peddlers who accumulated wealth during the period of Dutch rule invested their capital in cash crop production (plantation capitalism) and the mining industry in the subsequent decades of British rule. "In the new commercial economy caste and kinship were no barriers to amassing wealth, and those Sinhalese who were prepared to adapt themselves to those economic changes were duly rewarded with personal fortunes" (Fernando, 1973:20). Moreover, the highly stratified administrative system of the Dutch provided powerful and prestigious administrative positions for the Maritime Castes who had been deprived of influential role under the Sinhalese King.

Social and Political Consequences of European Rule

Furnival (1956:284) observes that "It was the economic environment and not national political philosophy that dictated the adoption of the system of indirect rule." These remarks refer to the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, when a system of indirect rule was perfected by colonial powers in their far-flung colonies. These remarks also apply with equal force to an earlier period when the pioneering colonial rulers were experimenting with methods of administering alien societies. Between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Centuries these powers found themselves developing systems of administration to suit the economic and social environment of the countries they conquered and colonized. These systems varied in the degree and nature of authority wielded by the alien country and its economic aims, the economic system of the host country and the structure of authority in that country.

The administrative framework was so crucial that the social challenge to the Goyigama aristocracy in the late Eighteenth Century seems to have been more decisive from the Salagama caste than from the Karava or the Durava. Although the Karava and Durava were appointed as regional headmen under European governors, the economic importance of the cinnamon industry for the Dutch had particular advantages for the Salagama during this period. The cinnamon industry was centrally organized as a state department with a Dutch officer at the head and three coastal regional divisions which were supervised by indigenous headmen drawn from the Salagama caste (Abeysinghe, 1966:136-8). The "Dissava," a provincial governor under the traditional system in charge of the largest administrative unit, was a Dutch official responsible to the Dutch governor or commander. Under his was the hierarchic bureaucracy of native officials.

A Sinhalese Adiger, the highest officer, was appointed as advisor to the highest Dutch officer in the district. A number of Mudaliyars drawn from the Maritime Castes were appointed as advisors to the governor, the commanders, and the district governors, while they also perform administrative functions in the provinces and districts (Arasaratnam, 1971:59). Admittedly, they had to be Christianized in the process, but this was a price they were prepared to pay for the maintenance of their status. At baptism they had been required to take on Christian surnames, which symbolized their loyalty to the new rulers (Arasaratnam, 1971).

All that the Dutch were required to do was impose on this institution a superstructure of their own just as the Portuguese had done. Thus, the administrative structure of the Low-Country districts was for the most part filled by members drawn from the Maritime Castes. Next to the Mudaliyars were the Koralas who were in administrative charge of a Korala or sub-division, Attapattus and Saparamadus who were officers of the lascarine force, and Vidanes in charge of villages. All these officials formed a substantial establishment which enabled them to maintain levers of authority in the community (Abeysinghe, 1966:138).

The Mudaliyar who was appointed to advise the Governor, and those who functioned in a similar capacity in the two large administrative divisions of Galle and Jaffna as well as in the provinces, exercised the dominant influence on the society. Under Portuguese and Dutch rule a Mudaliyar was in control of a band of lascarines or native militia. Such bands were composed of able-bodied men from various castes who were recruited for military service for which they were given land as reward. The lascarine force played an important role under both the Portuguese and the Dutch because of the impossibility of the Europeans deploying their own soldiers

in sufficient numbers throughout the country. The Maritime Castes received considerable wealth and honourary titles as military leaders under the Portuguese and Dutch rule in the continuous war with the Sinhalese King in the Kandy (Silva, 1975:130; Arasaratnam, 1971:59). The Mudaliyars were expected to keep lists of people eligible for such service, conscript them when required and keep a force in readiness for the defence of forts and outposts. Without the knowledge of the Mudaliyars as to the obligations of families who held land it would have been impossible to know whom to recruit.

Although there were some Goyigama Mudaliyars in the Low-Country districts, they were obliged to prove their loyalty, which was important in view of the hostility of the Sinhalese King to conversion to the new government religion. An inescapable political fact which these colonial rulers had constantly to keep in mind was the presence of an independent Sinhalese Kingdom in the central parts of the island which successfully withstood all encroachments on its sovereignty. Effective Portuguese and Dutch influence, in fact, rarely extended beyond twenty miles inland; and a major problem, therefore, which they both had to confront was the preservation of the loyalty of subjects in the territories under their control. The prestige of the King of Kandy depended to a large extent on his traditional role as the protector of Buddhism; hence converting the coastal subjects to Christianity was deemed an effective means of weaning them from their potential source of loyalty to the King. In particular, the conversion of members of the local nobility was considered vitally important, in view of the prestige that they enjoyed in society as well as the indispensability of their loyal service for carrying out of administrative tasks. The profession of Christianity, therefore, was made a necessary condition

for admission into office (Malalgoda, 1976:30).

As one would expect, all of the Mudaliyars appointed were Christians. One of them was appointed Maha Mudaliyar or Chief Mudaliyar. He was the highest native officer. He functioned as Mudaliyar of the Governor's Gate, was in constant attendance on the Governor, lived in Colombo and became his confident. The first such official was Don Juan de Costa--a Karava who was very much in the confidence of the Dutch Governor Rijkloff Van Goens (1660-1663, 1664-1675) and used to advise him on local affairs. Many of them had undergone the necessary conversion from CAtholicism to Protestantism, would attend church and became part of the establishment. The aim was declared to be one of creating a Christian body of obedient Sinhalese chiefs from whom these appointments might be made. The requirement of loyalty and conversion to Christianity brought considerable economic and social privilege to the Maritime Castes. There were more Christians among the Karava, Salagama and Durava than in any other caste group in the island. Particularly, the upper caste Goyigama families were suspect and thought to be more loyal to the King and the Buddhist religion and culture of which the King was the guardian. There were instances of treasonable conduct even among Christian chiefs. Great care had, therefore, to be exercised in these appointments. The Karava caste was believed to be least loyal to the King of Kandy and so a number of officials were chosen from them (Arasaratnam, 1971:60). "The Karava to a greater extent than any other Sinhalese caste became Roman Catholics in the Portuguese time and subsequently many of them embraced Portestantism under the Dutch and maintained their official positions" (Farmer, 1963:26). Thus in fact the social ascendance of the Maritime Castes was assured by conversion to the new "government religion" and the continuity of the leadership position of

these families. There is considerable evidence that the families which most readily converted to Christianity were not the high caste Goyigama (Singer, 1964:23-24), but rather were the ambitious families who welcomed the European rulers as allies in their struggle for increased social status (Farmer, 1963:27).

Apart from the Mudaliyar, the Korala was the other important native official. In each Korala there was a Mudaliyar and a Korala. They were the two officers of authority dominating the affairs of the district, which was quite a large territory comprising many villages. While the Mudaliyar commanded the lascarine force and was responsible to see that all persons obliged to state service fulfilled their obligations, the Korale was responsible for the collection of the taxes based on agricultural produce such as paddy, cinnamon, and arecanuts. He was also responsible for the cultivation of the Crown land with the assistance of wage or service labour. Arasaratnam points out (1971:61) that many of the Maritime Caste families who acquired these honourary positions became leading opponents of the Sinhalese King and they were the most important advisors to the Dutch officials. The Mudaliyars and the Korales were the twin pillars of local authority and the entire history of Dutch rule in Sri Lanka shows how much the Dutch were dependent on these two officers for the attainment of their objectives. It has been argued by historians (Arasaratnam, 1955) that the ignorance of the European rulers about local practices worked to the advantage of the Maritime Caste in acquiring leading positions in the local administration and accumulating wealth and power in many ways.

An important function performed by these native chiefs was in respect to the administration of justice. The Landraad was the most important civil court in the country, which decided on cases concerning the ownership

of land, taxation and obligatory service. This court of necessity had to be composed in part of native officials. In the time of Imhoff (1736-1740) its native members were the Mahamudaliyar of the Governor's Gate, the Mudaliyar and interpreters of Dissawa, Second Mudaliyar of the Gate and Mudaliyars and Korales of two Korales were able to jettison the pejorative title of "Duraya" which had been attached to their offices in the days of the Sinhalese Kings and in the middle decades of the Seventeenth Century (Silva, 1972:191). By the early Nineteenth Century they had also assumed such public symbols of prestige as travelling in palanquins (D'Oyly, 1917:240). Several European observers in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries described the Salagama as "'arrogant', 'presumptuous', 'turbulent to rule', 'ambitious', and vain and prone to insult the castes which are superior to them'" (Roberts, 1982:90-91). For example, a letter addressed to a British official named Sir Alexander Johnston by Salagama Adrian de Abrew Rajapakse in 1816 provides some important insights regarding the social and economic standing of the Salagama caste by the end of the Eighteenth Century. He states that the Salagama caste had been "always submissive" to the successive Western powers, and had in consequence been more powerful and useful, with the highest rank in the country which could hold various honourary titles and privileges above many other castes. In what must be viewed as a statement of goals rather than a de facto situation, the letter proclaimed the cultural autonomy of the Salagama and their refusal to kowtow to any other caste:

> The Whole Class of the Salagama are solely occupied in performing Government Service, and in their own agricultural views; as they will serve no other caste however poor they may be....There is one leading principle among them, which is, that (they) will hold no intercourse or have any intimacy with any but those of their own class, in order that they may preserve their manners, customs, and usages, unaltered. (Cited by Kotelawela, 1968:142; Mendis, 1956:90)

Presumably, this newly achieved status "evoked the chagrin and envy" of other castes (Kanapathypillai, 1969), especially the Goyigama aristocracy. Many of the caste pamphlets published in the late Eighteenth and the early Nineteenth Centuries illustrate the social discontent of the Maritime Castes and the fact that they had always been rivals of the Goyigama Caste in the Low-Country. However, the Maritime Castes were not alone in their success during this period. There is evidence of changes in the structure of caste relations. The most important development was that many of the non-Goyigama castes such as Washermen and Navandanna are reported to have their own caste headmen or Mudaliyar, once certain caste disabilities were removed by the Dutch government (Roberts, 1982:93).

Such instances, however, point to a more general tendency. The administrative structure created by the Portuguese and Dutch, the changes they introduced in land tenure, in the fiscal system and rajakariya or royal duty, the occupational diversification and the slow growth of the commercial and agricultural opportunities which permitted some families to accumulate capital, all these were partial solvents of the status quo. Within the Low-Country districts, in other words, the European economic and administrative policies provided considerable opportunities for social mobility of the Maritime Castes who had ready access to the new economic and administrative system under European rule. They were drawn into the European economic pattern and gradually learned to take advantage of it. They now put their land to more economic use and profited from the increasing demand for goods and cash crops. This resulted in a greater degree of affluence for some of these families, which in turn was reflected in a richer way of life (Kotelawela, 1967:15-16). For example, stone houses replaced mud huts, and were better furnished in the European style. Some

Sinhalese families even took to European dress. This affluence affected not only those who held land but also the chiefs of artisan and smith castes. Thus the Mudaliyars of fishermen, Arachchi of carpenters, smiths, headmen of cinnamon peelers and toddy tappers were all affected by the new affluence (Arasaratnam, 1971:70). Their wealth confirmed the social position they acquired by being heads of their respective castes, a position the Dutch had recognized and strengthened in order to make use of traditional methods to mobilize labour.

However, although neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch made any attempt to disrupt the traditional pattern of caste service, they modified it by introducing whole range of non-traditional occupations. The development of commerce and trade within the Low-Country provinces under the European rule provided new investment opportunities for the indigenous entrepreneurs. Moreover, the European administrative system which facilitated the exploitative colonial goals created a new indigenous ruling class in the Maritime provinces. Such social and economic changes introduced by the Western rule, however, were uneven in their diffusion. The policy of recruitment to the government positions was selective; only Christians were qualified to hold the government positions and at baptism they had to take on Christian surnames which symbolized their loyalty to the new rulers. All these strategies arranged by the Portuguese and Dutch not only created the Christian body of obedient Sinhalese in the Maritime provinces but also facilitated the group mobility of Maritime Castes who did not go along with the Sinhalese King in the traditional system. Their ready acceptance of Western rule and Christianity enabled the Maritime Castes to overtake the Goyigama aristocracy in economic and social power. Their growing importance in the Maritime provinces set the stage for

interesting developments in the late Eighteenth Century, and they were involved aggressively in the new economic and social ventures in subsequent years.

Entrepreneurship of the Maritime Castes in the Capitalist Economy (The British Period).

One of the most significant accomplishments of British rule in Sri Lanka was the unification of the entire island under one administrative system--a situation that had not existed since early medieval times. After their conquest of the maritime provinces in 1796, the British eventually conquered the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815. At the time of the British conquest, the administrative system of the island was for the most part in the hands of the Sinhalese Mudaliyars. While continuing to rely on indigenous headmen for district and village administration, the tendency was to bring these functionaries under increasing centralized control and setting up specialized departments. Further, the separation of the judicial and executive branches of administration promoted the evolution of a network of judicial posts and services. This process of political and administrative unification was completed by the extension of transportation and communication systems during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Silva, 1967:31-85; Wickremeratne, 1973:303). The most important part of such a network was the Colombo-Kandy road, completed in 1832.

It was different from any previous period in the island's history as the British brought with them a new economic system, new institutions, political organization, knowledge, beliefs and values. The legal reform introduced by the British disrupted the traditional social institutions and enabled the British to integrate the country under one political

organization. The Colebrooke-Cameron Report of 1832 recommended the abolition of Rajakariya or the ancient system of compulsory labour based on caste. The significance of these reforms was that the caste system was no longer legally recognized (Mendis, 1956: Vol. I, II and III).

As adherents of laissez-faire and free trade, the Colebrook Cameron Commissioners were opposed to mercantilism, state monopoly, discriminatory administrative regulations, and, in general, to any interference by the state in the economy. Thus, they recommended the abolition of the cinnamon monopoly and the royal villages. The Crown lands were sold to the Sinhalese and European coffee planters at nominal prices. This was the first and the most important step in the establishment of plantation capitalism. Property rights, property transactions and the law of contract supported development of freehold rights in land without ceiling on individual holdings (Silva, 1977:64-65). In brief, following the inroads of capitalism during the British regime, the structure of opportunity expanded. This growth must not be viewed only in the form of legal reform. To a large extent, the plantation, the roads, the market and the other economic activities encouraged land development which, in turn, opened up new areas for colonization, especially in the central part of the country. Indeed, such an extension of opportunities cleared the path away from the traditional village organization.

Such profitable opportunities were seized upon not only by European capitalists and Asian migrants but also by indigenous entrepreneurs. However, uneven in its diffusion, the economic and social transformation provided the Sinhalese with many opportunities for upward mobility. One broad range of opportunities was that of capital investment in new fields. These included the import-export houses dealing with a variety of

commodities, government contracts and toll rents, the arrack trade, cash crop production on smallholdings or in plantations, investments in urban property, the gem trade and graphite mining (Roberts, 1974a: 564-74). This cannot, however, be identified as large-scale "industrial capitalism," though graphite and gem mining and a few factories producing consumer items or processing exports might be placed within that category. The avenues of economic development might be described as "commercial capitalism and "plantation capitalism." The indigenous participation in these capitalist ventures presents a relatively novel feature in the history of colonial Asia and stands in contrast to the history of the indigenous bourgeoisie in such countries as Dutch Indonesia and British India. The plantation was to the Sinhalese bourgeoisie what the cotton mill was to the Indian bourgeoisie in British colonial times (Weerawardene, 1956; Roberts, 1982; Silva, 1977: 31-85). Yet, indeed, in contrast to India, in Sri Lanka this national bourgeois class was largely composed of the formerly lower castes.

It has been argued by many historians that the opening of a plantation economy in the Kandyan districts by the British provided remarkable investment opportunities for the Sinhalese and other Asian migrants who had accumulated wealth during Dutch rule (Silva, 1977:63-85; Roberts, 1967, 70a; Singer, 1964:32-34; Mendis, 1944:7; Farmer, 1965:431-440). The Low-Country Sinhalese state particularly flourished in virtually all spheres. The Karava, Salagama and Durava castes improved their social and economic standing through a substantial and disproportionate share of the plantation estates. For the most part, these castes had largely accumulated wealth during the pre-British period and the introduction of a plantation economy enabled them to become the leading cash crop producers and exporters in Sinhalese society (Singer, 1964:32-34).

The data gathered from the Registers of Crown Land Sales and Ferguson's Ceylon Directories on Sinhalese entrepreneurship in the plantation economy from the late Nineteenth Century illustrate that among the pioneering cash crop producers (coffee, tea, rubber and coconut) in Sri Lanka, the Maritime Castes were over-represented in these new economic ventures, when compared with their proportion in the Sinhalese population. It is particularly interesting to note that the Goyigama caste, who were traditionally land owners and cultivators of the country, seem to have been under-represented in the plantation economy during that period. Table 3 shows the percentage distribution of some Sinhalese castes in the island and their representation in the plantation investments:

Table 3

THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF SINHALESE CASTE IN THE PLANTATION ECONOMY, 1881, 1917 and 1927

Caste	Year	% Sinhalese Population*	% Proprietorships**	Proportional Representation	% Over/Under-representation
Goyigama	1881	57.4	9.2	16.0	-84.0
	1917	58.5	15.3	26.2	-73.8
	1927	58.5	19.1	32.6	-67.4
Karava	1881	9.2	44.3	481.5	+381.5
	1917	9.7	51.2	527.8	+427.8
	1927	9.7	56.4	581.4	+481.4
Salagama	1881	5.1	5.4	105.8	+ 5.8
	1917	5.6	8.7	155.4	+ 55.4
	1927	5.6	10.1	180.3	+ 80.3
Durava	1881	4.0	3.8	95.0	- 5.0
	1917	4.5	6.8	151.1	+51.1
	1927	4.5	7.2	160.0	+60.0
Others	1881	24.3	37.3	153.5	+53.5
	1917	21.7	18.0	83.0	-17.0
	1927	21.7	7.2	33.2	-66.8

Note: PR. = Percentage of Proprietorships held by Castes x 100 Percentage of Sinhalese population by Castes.

Over/under-representation = Proportional Representation - 100

Sources: *Nicholas Bergman, Returns of the Population of the Island of Ceylon: Government Press Colombo, 1884 and 1924.

In the 1917 and 1927 tables, the percentages of population represent 1921 Census figures. There is no data for 1917 and 1927.

**Compilation from Ferguson's Ceylon Directory for 1881, 1917 and 1927. Plantations contain coffee, tea, rubber and coconut.

Note: Non-Sinhalese planters are excluded here.

In Table three, the data gathered from various documents are arranged in a way which makes it possible to compare the over/under representation of various Sinhalese castes in the plantation economy. The Martime Castes were largely over-represented throughout the period. The Karava were increasingly over-represented in plantation capitalism, moving from +381.5 in 1881 to +481.4 in 1927. Similarly, the Salagama too were over-represented throughout the period. Although the Durava were under-represented in 1881, they have increased their representation considerably between 1917 and 1927. Conversely, the Goyigama were becoming more under-represented in the plantation economy. As shown in the table, although they have increased their entrepreneurship by 3.8 percent from 1917 to 1927, still they were under-represented because of their overwhelming majority in the Sinhalese population. Thus indeed the Maritime Castes seem to have moved up in the social hierarchy as evidenced by their over-representation in high status positions.

The Sinhalese planters who successfully acquired economic prosperity in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries began their investments with their own primitive accumulation (Singer, 1964:33). Many of them had invested in the pre-capitalist means of production, such as bullock carts, canoes and outrigger boats which were largely employed in the internal and external commodity trade during the Dutch and the early British periods. Some others had earned their capital being toddy and arrack distillers and government contractors while the others, such as carpenters and pedlars, were able to accumulate some capital when the

plantations were introduced in the mid-Nineteenth Century (Mendis, 1944:60; Singer, 1964:31-33; Roberts, 1973:279-89; Peebles, 1973:202-3). Singer maintains (1964:33) that the Sinhalese who did take a share of the coffee

enterprises (later tea, rubber, and coconut) were most often non-Goyigama castes who became planters, merchants, transport agents and contractors. They earned substantial amounts of money and steadily improved their standard of living.

Together with the Moor merchants, the Maritime Castes were involved in the various trading activities; probably the most lucrative and notable are their trading investments in toddy and arrack distillation, and sales in certain areas of the island. The distilling and wholesale trade of these alcoholic beverages was subject to many government regulations. Following the Dutch practices, the British annually auctioned the right of retail sales to private entrepreneurs. These were known as "arrack farms." At the turn of the Nineteenth Century, the distillery industry was monopolized by the Maritime Castes. Both arrack and toddy distillation were risky ventures, and many entrepreneurs were ruined by their investment in these endeavours (Peebles, 1973: cha. 5; Roberts, 1979: cha. 4). The production of arrack and toddy was so problematic because it involved new organizational skills needed for securing supplies, the supervision of sales at the retail outlets (the licensed taverns), and control of illicit sales within the area of the farm. Nevertheless, it created a considerable amount of capital among Maritime entrepreneurs who successfully channelled their profits into other sectors of the economy during that period.

If we follow the previously used procedure of analysing the data on capital investment for various caste groups in the distillery industry, the

Table 4

THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF SINHALESE CASTES IN THE DISTILLERY INDUSTRY, 1880 and 1919

Caste	Year	% Sinhalese Population*	%Enrepreneur-ships**	Proportional Representation	% Over/Under-representation
Goyigama	1880	57.4	9.5	16.6	-83.4
	1919	58.5	10.6	18.1	-81.9
Karava	1880	9.2	40.4	439.1	+439.1
	1919	9.7	39.6	408.2	+308.2
Salagama	1880	5.1	13.0	255.0	+155.0
	1919	5.6	15.3	273.2	+173.2
Durava	1880	4.0	27.3	683.0	+583.0
	1919	4.5	28.4	613.1	+531.1
Others	1880	24.3	9.8	40.3	- 59.7
	1919	21.7	6.1	28.1	- 71.9

Source: *Nicholas Bergman, Returns of the Population of the Island of Ceylon Government Press Colombo, 1921.

**Ceylon Blue Book, 1885 and 1921, Department of National Archives, Sri Lanka.

Note: In 1919 table, the data on Sinhalese Population represent 1921 Census figures.

distillery industry, the difference between the Maritime Castes and others becomes obvious. It is clear, however, that the Sinhalese caste norms have

influenced this industry. The Durava, whose traditional occupation was toddy-tapping, were largely represented in this industry. They have largest representation in the distillery industry throughout the respective period. The Salagama Caste has increased their representation between 1880 and 1919, while the Goyigama and others have continued to be more under-represented in the distillery industry. Peebles (1973: Chap:5), maintains that among the leading entrepreneurs in the plantation and other various trading sectors in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries were initially prominent distillers and traders who were predominantly Protestant Karava and Durava from some coastal cities of the Southern and Western provinces of the island.

While the graphite industry was monopolized by the Low-Country Sinhalese, the role of the Maritime Castes in this sphere was no less significant than that in the distillery industry. Goyigama; Salagama and Durava entrepreneurs had remarkable footholds in this field while the others such as Vahumpura and Navandanna castes also had considerable representation in this industry. However the Karava mine owners and dealers appear to have held the largest stake during the early decades of this century.

As shown in Table 5, the Karava were over-represented in the graphite industry while the Salagama and Durava have improved their representation by 46.7 and 73.3 percent respectively from 1905 to 1915. Although the Goyigama were under-represented in the industry, they have increased their entrepreneurship considerably between 1905 and 1915. Their under-representation has dropped by 1 percent from 1905 to 1915. In 1915 their representation was 35 percent. Among the leading graphite mine owners and merchants in the early 1900s, some Karava seem to have invested

substantial capital in the industry. Many of them entered the industry as mining foremen who rose to be leading mine owners (Roberts, 1974:550-77).

Table 5

THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF SINHALESE IN THE GRAPHITE MINING INDUSTRY

Caste	Year	% Sinhalese Population*	% Entrepreneur-ships**	Proportional Representation	% Over/under-representation
Goyigama	1905	58.5	20.4	35.0	-65.0
	1915	58.5	21.1	36.0	-64.0
Karava	1905	9.7	38.6	398.0	+298.0
	1915	9.7	40.3	415.5	+315.5
Salagama	1905	5.6	15.9	284.0	+184.0
	1915	5.6	18.5	330.3	+230.3
Durava	1905	4.5	11.3	251.1	+151.0
	1915	4.5	14.6	324.4	+224.4
Others	1905	21.7	13.8	64.0	- 36.0
	1915	21.7	5.5	25.3	- 74.7

Sources: *Nicholas Bergman, Returns of the Population of the Island of Ceylon: Government Press, Colombo, 1923.

**Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon, 1907 and Rex Casinader, 1974: 11-16, 18-20

The "Maha Bogala" mine was one of the most consistently productive veins owned by the Karava in Twentieth-Century Sri Lanka. Until it was nationalized in 1974, it provided considerable employment opportunities,

mainly for Karava, in every year. Indeed the graphite industry was one of the most lucrative ventures in early Twentieth-Century Sri Lanka, which was mainly controlled by private entrepreneures. Thus the earlier entrepreneurs of this industry were prominent capitalists of the island who owned several graphite mines in addition to their plantation and other urban property investments (Roberts, 1974:550).

> Among the prominent Ceylonese of the late 19th Century who owned their fortunes to the judicious exploitation of the new economy were many who belonged to the lower castes, especially to the Karava caste....By the late 19th Century low caste entrepreneurs had attained positions of eminence and been granted privileges which were traditionally the preserve of the Goyigama aristocracy. (Fernando, 1973:20-21).

It is obvious that the new economic ventures have been dominated by Maritime Castes during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. Together with the European planters and the Moor merchants, Karava, Salagama and Durava traders, renters and the government contractors were among the earliest entrepreneurs to move into the Kandyan districts in conjunction with commerce, and plantation and mining industries in the wake of the British occupation (Yalman, 1967:87-88). Although it is not possible to provide statistical evidence on their investment in the various sectors during that period, their entrepreneurship had closely intermeshed with a wide range of economic activities. The plantation, mining and distillery industries were a few of the most lucrative sectors of the early stage of the capitalist economic system controlled by the indigenous entrepreneurs. Besides, such commercial activities as export-import trade in the coastal cities, manufacturing of furniture and jewllery and transporting consumer goods from the city to the hinterland areas were more profitable industries, mainly in the hands of the Maritime Caste traders (Roberts, 1982:107-15). In writing on the commercial economic system in

British Ceylon, Burton Stein says:

> The Karava caste....has, since the incursion of the Europeans, dominated the mercantile activities especially around the island's economic hub, Colombo. Members of this minority caste, functionally associated with fishing, were the earliest to make contact with the Europeans and a great many were converted to Christianity. The Karava became the dominant Sinhalese caste in commercial activities as a result of Christian favouritism shown by the successive European rulers, their proximity to the commercial activities of the Europeans, and their remoteness from the Kandyan stronghold of traditional agricultural and social customs. At present, an estimated 90% of the richest families in Colombo are of the Karava caste. The wealth of these people was made in commercial activities and it is in these activities that most of the investment by this group has been made. (1954:87)

Although Stein has emphasized the Karava case in the commercial economy and their economic advancement in the island, the economic prosperity of the Salagama and Durava shows no great distance from the Karava during this period. They all found their path of social advancement in the new economic system in closer contacts with each other, though they did not always act in concert or replicate each other's successes and attributes in every way. On the contrary, they often came into sharp rivalry and in certain localities the enmities between them were virtually endemic, mainly because of their social competition for economic ventures and discontent with the ambiguous position in which they found themselves. The development of Western cultural values and norms in the Low-Country provinces from the Sixteenth Century exerted a greater impact on the maritime people's socio-economic behaviour, which created a sharp cleavage from the Kandyan inhabitants who persistently continued to maintain the traditional cultural ethos of the island. Thus the Kandyans hardly ever showed a willingness to be involved in the new economic ventures and to accord their loyalty to the new rulers. Mendis (1944:43), illustrates this attitude of the Kandyans:

> Every Sinhalese was attached to his village. Both by custom and according to Roman Dutch Law he was entitled to a share of the property of his parents. When rajakariya (royal duty) was

> abolished he tended to his own lands, and did not show any desire to migrate from his village and work in the coffee plantations. Moreover if he was of 'high caste he considered it beneath his dignity to become a paid labourer.

The attempt of the rulers to wean the nobility from their loyalties to Kandy through government office, new economic ventures opened in the Kandyan provinces, Christianity and other elements of European culture did not prove unreservedly successful. One possible solution to this problem, as far as the rulers were concerned, was to look for supplementary sources of loyalty within the maritime provinces, and also to try to establish new relationships to check and balance the power and economic prosperity of the nobility. Apart from fostering internal rivalry within the Goyigama nobility, another expedient move was the appointment of lower castes to important government positions and encouraging them to be involved in profitable enterprises. Thus the avenues for social mobility of the Maritime Castes lay for the most part in their loyalty to the new rulers (Malalgoda, 1976; Farmer, 1963:27; Arasaratnam, 1971:60-80; Singer, 1964:25; Ryan, 1953:105). The resistance of the Kandyan aristocracy to the European rule culminated in the Great Rebellion of 1815-1818 which brought about considerable loss of life to them in the liberation struggle, executions, deportations and confiscation of land. Throughout the British administration in the island the Goyigama aristocracy in Kandy were viewed with considerable suspicion and they were removed almost completely from the social and economic development of this period until the early decades of this century.

Another important source of opportunity was the development of Western education in the island. The educational achievements generally in English, in contrast to the traditional educational system which was mainly confined to the Buddhist monkhood and the upper caste Goyigama, were

utilized as a means of securing prestigious occupations. Although these pioneering entrepreneurs were not all Western-educated, they recognized that an English education was indispensable if their families were to consolidate their newly-achieved economic prosperity. Therefore they invested their money not only in plantation land, new-model manor houses and other status symbols, but also in the education of their children. They sponsored schools in their native villages and towns and provided financial assistance for their talented men and women to go abroad (England and India) for higher education or professional training (Fernando, 1973:18-19; Ames, 1967:19-41; Ryan, 1961:463-476). The second and third generations utilized their education and social contacts to consolidate their elite status. Their educational achievements and land properties were consolidated by judicious marriage alliances. They maintained their caste solidarity and kept their wealth within the caste by strategically arranging matches for sons and daughters (Farmer, 1963:49).

Educational Achievements and the Emergence of A New Elite

The traditional educational structure of the island was dominated by Buddhism. The ultimate aim of education was to develop the moral and spiritual abilities that were, ideally, both the prerequisites to enlightenment and the qualities of good citizenship (Ames, 1967:24). The more advanced the level of education the more restricted the clientele and the more Buddhist in content it became. Sri Lanka actually had achieved considerable recognition as a centre for higher Buddhist learning (Rahula, 1956:301-2; Ruberu, 1962a:9-13). However, only a few people, mostly monks and noblemen, advanced to these higher levels. The masses obtained little

more than the rudiments of reading and writing, and training in crafts and trades.

With the coming of the Western European powers, the traditional educational system was severely disrupted and missionary and government schools were established to propagate Christianity and Western culture. Education was vigorously promoted as a means of proselytization. The system initiated by the Portuguese was taken over and improved by their successors (Arasaratnam, 1964:145; Ames, 1967:26). After the British extended their control over the whole island in 1815, European education began to penetrate the island. Christian, especially Protestant, missionaries dominated formal education during the Nineteenth Century because they were better organized and enthusiastically supported by the government (Mendis, 1948:30; Ruberu, 1962z; 1960:63).

The Colebrooke-Cameron Report of 1832 made explicit the position of English in Sri Lanka. Since English was the language of administration, of the courts, and of export-oriented commerce, it was necessary to establish English-medium schools to qualify Sri Lankans for employment in these modern sectors. Accordingly in 1832 the government established five English schools in major coastal cities such as Colombo, Galle, Chilaw and Jaffna. The number of schools was gradually increased and by 1848 there were sixty of them with an attendance of 2,714 students. Here, then, is the origin of the dichotomy of society into those with an English education and those without, the single most important measure of high social status in the society (Fernando, 1979:33; Ryan, 1961:471; Pieris, 1964:436-54; Ames 1967:19-41). The first British Governor, Lord North, proposed to send two youths from the state schools to Britain every year so that after eight years of study in one of the ancient British universities they could

receive Episcopal ordination. This was begun in 1811 when two sons of Sinhalese Mudaliyars were sent to Oxford and Cambridge Universities (Pieris, 1964:435). The students were sent to Britain between 1812 and 1834 specifically to be ordained as Christian ministers. Thus, indeed one of the major objectives of the system of education established in the early decades of British rule was the creation of an English-speaking Christian class from whose ranks personnel for th public services and positions of authority could be recruited.

The leading Colombo Academy was popularly known as Queen's College when it was affiliated to Calcutta University in 1859. It was renamed Royal College in 1881 and was the first educational institution to introduce some form of modern university education. It became the leading college to prepare students for examinations for external degrees conferred by London University, although few of its early students proceeded beyond the intermediate examinations. The junior and senior secondary school examinations were conducted by Cambridge University from 1880, while London University examinations, which were first held in 1881, enabled ambitious youths to take university degrees without ever entering a university, and they continued to be popular among wealthy Sinhalese. In the course of the Nineteenth Century an increasing proportion of non-Goyigama children attended English schools and by the early decades of this century the "lower" castes came to constitute a substantial proportion of the Western-educated elite (Fernando, 1973; Singer, 1964:33-34; Pieris, 1964:435-454; Ames, 1967:19-41). Western education became an important measure of elite status in Sinhalese society because it was confined to a tiny group of people who were affluent enough to manage the high expenditure. Thus it was one of the best opportunities for wealthy Karava, Salagama and Durava

families to place their children in a higher position in the society in contrast to those who were largely involved in less prestigious vernacular education. (See Table 6).

Table 6

THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF SINHALESE CASTES

IN THE EXTERNAL LONDON EXAMINATIONS FROM 1881 to 1930

Caste	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Goyigama	57.4	22.2	39.0	- 61.0	57.4	21.4	37.3	- 62.7
Karava	9.2	38.2	415.2	+315.2	9.2	37.3	405.4	+305.4
Salagama	5.0	13.5	264.7	+164.7	5.1	13.4	262.7	+162.7
Durava	4.0	8.6	215.0	+115.0	4.0	11.1	277.5	+177.5
Others	24.3	17.5	72.0	- 28.0	24.3	16.8	69.1	- 30.9
Total	100.0	100.0			100.0	100.0		

	1900				1910			
Caste	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Goyigama	57.4	20.2	35.2	- 64.8	58.5	30.8	52.6	- 47.4
Karava	9.2	42.0	456.5	+356.5	9.7	31.1	320.6	+220.6
Salagama	5.1	14.3	280.4	+180.4	5.6	10.3	184.0	+ 84.0
Durava	4.0	10.3	257.5	+157.5	4.5	7.0	155.6	+ 55.6
Others	24.3	13.2	54.3	- 45.7	21.7	20.8	96.0	- 4.0
Total	100.0	100.0			100.0	100.0		

	1920				1930			
Caste	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Goyigama	58.5	33.2	57.0	- 43.0	58.5	30.4	52.0	- 48.0
Karava	9.7	26.1	269.0	+169.0	9.7	38.0	391.7	+291.7
Salagama	5.6	12.3	220.0	+120.0	5.6	14.1	252.0	+106.6
Durava	4.5	10.2	226.6	+126.6	4.5	9.3	206.6	+106.6
Others	21.7	18.2	84.0	- 16.0	21.7	8.2	38.0	- 62.0
Total	100.0	100.0			100.0	100.0		

Note: A - Refers to the percentage distribution of Sinhalese castes in the total population.

B - Refers to the Percentage of Sinhalese students who entered the London External Examinations by caste.
C - Refers to the proportional representation of castes in the various examinations.
D - Refers to over- or under-representation of Sinhalese castes in the Examinations.

The Names of the Examinations

(i) London Matriculation or General Certification of Education (Advanced Level)

(ii) Intermediate in Arts, Science, Law, Commerce and Engineering

(iii) Diploma in Education, Public Administration and Geography.

(iv) B.A., B.Sc., B. Com., L.L. B. and B.A. (Hons.)

(v) M.A., M. Sc., L.L.M.

(vi) Technical

(vii) Professional

Note: Data on population in 1881, 1890 and 1900 tables represent 1880 Census figures, and in 1910, 1920 and 1930 tables represent 1921 Census figures. Statistics are not available for each year.

Source: (1) Department of Education and Public Instruction, Administrative Reports, Government of Ceylon. 1887, 1895, 1914, 1923, 1931. Ceylon National Archives.

(2) Nicholas Bergman, Returns of Population of the island of Ceylon, Government Press, Colombo, 1884, and 1924. National Archives.

The data presented in Table Six show the caste representation of Sinhalese students who entered various London External Examinations held in the island from 1881 to 1930. It is possible to compare the over- and under-representation of Sinhalese castes in higher education during that

period. The Maritime Castes were continuously over-represented in each Census year. In 1881 Karava over-representation was + 315.2, while the Salagama and Durava were over-represented by + 164.7 and by + 115.0 respectively. Conversely, the Goyigama were becoming increasingly more under-represented, dropping from -61.0 in 1881 to -64.8 in 1900. The Others were increasingly under-represented from 1881 to 1900. However, their under-representation has considerably dropped from -45.7 in 1900 to -4.0 in 1910.

In effect, during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries a large proportion of non-Goyigama children received a Western education and the majority of them were from the Maritime Castes who were in a position to manage the higher expenditure. The average attendance at Royal College between 1861 and 1867 was six; the annual expenditure on these students amounted to about £800-900. Until the late Nineteenth Century the number of English-educated Ceylonese remained very small, and as late as 1901 only two percent of the population was literate in English (Pieris, 1964:437). The fact was, then, that English education was highly restricted and those who achieved the Western education had a chance to secure highly prestigious positions in the public and private sectors. Thus indeed, in the late Nineteenth and the early Twentieth Centuries, there was a large number of Western-educated doctors, lawyers, surveyors, Christian ministers, teachers and other professionally qualified males and females among the Maritime Castes. Moreover, among the earliest Sinhalese who received university scholarships in the late Nineteenth Century were mainly those from these three caste groups (Roberts, 1974:549-577; Pieris, 1964; Ames, 1967; Singer, 1964:33).

Although it is not possible to provide more statistical evidence on

educational achievements of the Maritime Castes within the island and even more often abroad, much of the literature focused on the development of Western education and the emergence of a new elite in British Ceylon provides an impressive amount of information about the expansion of Western education among the Maritime Castes. More than any other community in the island, the Maritime Castes placed an emphasis on Western education. A large proportion of their private wealth was invested to develop the educational facilities in their locallities. It is likely that a large number of Karava profited from the schools which were founded by wealthy Karava in localities with Karava concentrations. Visakha College in Colombo, Prince and Princess of Wales Colleges in Moratuwa, Dharmasokha College in Ambalangoda and Mahinda College in Galle were among the private secondary schools established by Karava notables during the second half of the Nineteenth Century. Through substantial donations Salagama and Durava elites also maintained connections with Catholic and Prostestant missionary schools (Roberts, 1977:xiii; Peebles, 1973:290). The British colonial policies and Christian missionary activities reinforced their educational enthusiasm and enabled them to gain immediate results from the Western educational and administrative system, which provided higher positions. At this early and crucial period of the development of Western education in Sri Lanka, these ventures and government policies must have brought wider benefits to their whole community. In keeping with the general island pattern, too, the Maritime Castes, men and women, have been among those who have taken up the employment opportunities associated with secondary education. From the early part of the Nineteenth Century Christianity and the English language were primary routes to higher education and social mobility. Strong Christian communities arose in those regions where the

missionary and government schools were established. Many of the Karava, Salagama and Durava embraced Christianity and secured high positions in the administrative system through superior education (Arasaratnam, 1977:169). Only Christians were eligible for government employment until 1858 (Pieris, 1964:441 ftnt. 21). Initially, English education provided Sri Lanka with employment only as clerks, teachers, technicians and other subordinates. But in the course of time they began to have access to more prestigious positions such as the civil service (higher administration), lawyers, and doctors. In the political sphere they were given considerable executive authority after 1931 with the introduction of the "Donoughmore Constitution" and universal suffrage. Perhaps the most conclusive evidence of the share of Maritime Castes in Western education lay in the creation of a seat in the Legislative Council for "Educated Ceylonese." It was demarcated by higher educational qualification. It should be noted that the Karava were in a position to field a candidate (Dr. H. Marcus Fernando) for the first election in December 1911 (Jayasekera, 1970:180; Ludowyk, 1962: Chap. 13; Singer, 1964:35-36).

The development of Western education as a result of vigorous efforts by the Christian missionaries and colonial government marked a sharp cleavage between the Western-educated Christian community and the vernacular-educated Buddhists in the island. An English education facilitated Westernization; together with the other changes introduced by British rule it led to radical changes in attitudes, values and life style. The characteristics of the Western-educated elites were a crucial feature of Sinhalese society in the late Nineteenth Century. Pieris reports:

> By the middle of the last century Victorian society had its indigenous counterpart in Ceylon and the English-educated, in outlook and style of life, had gone far on the path of Westernization, as demonstrated in the newspapers, the balls given by well-to-do families, the clubs,

> games, race meetings, dog carts, morning coats, evening dress and top hats, the whiskered males and corseted females in Western attire. (Pieris, 1964:438).

In the late Nineteenth Century the most striking feature of the Western-educated elite was their ready acceptance of Western values and style of living. As far as they were concerned, the Western life style was the best medium for exhibiting their newly-achieved social status (Carnell, 1960).

In contrast to the Western-educated elite in the professions and in the public service, the vernacular-educated class was relegated to less prestigious traditional occupations such as native physicians, peons, orderlies, hospital attendants and dispensers, and vernacular school teachers at the village level. More often vernacular education was confined to the interior inhabitants and Kandyans who were little acculturated and consequently had no access to the superior positions in the government (Ryan, 1961:472). This distinction has been clearly described by Roberts:

> A conspicuous feature of the Sinhalese elite in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the predominance, the overwhelming predominance, of the Low-Country Sinhalese. The rest of the Sinhelese, that is Kandyans, had been left behind in the competition for status and power. There were absolutely no Kandyan merchant princes, graphite mine owners or arrack renters of note. The principal Sinhalese plantation owners were virtually all Low-Country Sinhalese. In 1901 there were only 15 Kendyans among five selected occupational categories (doctors, lawyers, surveyors, engineers and auctioneers) or 1.6 percent of the total Ceylonese. (1973c: 285)

The lengthy period of Western European rule in the island resulted in a much more pronounced penetration of Westernization in Sri Lanka (Carnell, 1960; Vittachi, 1962). Yet the form and intensity of the process of Westernization varied between regions of the country. For instance, in the Low-Country districts Westernization exerted a greater impact on every aspect of social life, than in the Kandyan provinces where Western educa-

tion, technology and literature hardly developed after the 1830s, when the British extended their power to the Kandyan regions under one administrative system. The majority of the people of these regions continue to remain relatively free from Westernization. It is clear that such a distinction cannot be a hard and fast one, but one of relative emphasis. It has to be made, however, in order to distinguish different responses of the indigenous society to the process of Westernization.

Westernization was so prevalent among the Sinhalese that it generated its own antithesis in the form of a reaction which attacked Western culture and Christianity, and worked against the Western European rule in the island. This critique was a product of the cultural awakening and the growing nationalistic sentiments which were influenced by the resurgence of Buddhism and the monastic reforms begun in the Kandyan provinces from the second half of the Nineteenth Century (Ames, 1963: 45-53; Malalgoda, 1977:379-399; Balakrishna, 1973:30-39; Arasaratnam, 1977:164-182; Fernado, 1973:18-29). Although as early as the Sixteenth Century the arrival of European powers severely undermined the Buddhist monasteries and resulted in the withdrawal of state patronage from Buddhism in the Low-Country, in Kandy itself, as is well known, there was no immediate interruption of state patronage and layman support of Buddhism and the monastic order. Buddhism survived in the Kandy with the voluntary support of the Goyigama aristocracy, although there was little political backing after 1815. One important step in the Buddhist revival in Kandy was the re-establishment of the higher ordination as a monopoly of the Goyigama aristocracy. By the late Nineteenth Century the Goyigama aristocracy, vernacular school teachers and native medicine men became anxious to win back what they considered to be their traditional rights, which in many ways were closely identified

with religion (Ames, 1963:47).

This awakening of deep interest in the traditional Sinhalese culture and Buddhism in the Kandyan provinces was extended to the Low-Country under the influence of the Goyigama aristocracy at the turn of the Nineteenth Century. This process is described in "Buddhistization" which brought about unprecendented enthusiasm for the traditional Sinhalese Buddhist ethos among the mobility-oriented lower castes in the maritime provinces. In providing an alternative model for lower castes to emulate the Goyigama aristocracy, Buddhistization not only stressed the virtue of the indigenous way of life but also brought out a refurbished Buddhist tradition (Malalgoda, 1977:380-389; Ames, 1963:43-53; Roberts, 1977; Jayawardena, 1983:1-18; Wickremeratne, 1969:123-50).

CHAPTER 5

Buddhistization and Nationalist Politics in Sri Lanka

The resurgence of Buddhism in the Kandyan provinces during the late Nineteenth Century was undoubtedly a reaction to Westernization and the Crhistian British Raj. The four centuries of Western European rule severly undermined Buddhism, and destabilized the monastic organization by secularizing the state. Several important consequences followed from this:

(1) The establishment of British rule in the island resulted in the withdrawal of the state backing of the monastic organization and relegation of monks to a lower position.

(2) The traditional system of tenured service was restricted to the interior and thus it was practically absent along the coast. As a result, monks in many cases lost direct control over the tenants who occupied the vast monastic estates and who performed essential services and rituals for the monks (Evers, 1964: 323-33). In some cases monks lost their estates altogether.

(3) With the spread of government and Christian mission schools following colonial expansion, the monks also lost their absolute control over the educational system. As a result, for the first time in Sinhalese history a new status group of non-monastic-educated elite posed a threat to the Buddhist monks, and to the structural foundation of Buddhism (Ames, 1967:19-41).

Following these and other related developments there was a widespread growth of resentment and dissatisfaction among Buddhists concerning the declining influence of their religion. By the early 1800s there were signs

of organized religious movements which in one form or another have continued unabated until present times (Malalgoda, 1976:213-231; Ames, 1963:45-53; Wickremeratne, 1969:123-50). Initially in the Kandyan region these movements were led by the Kandyan monastic elite and the Goyigama aristocracy who wished to restore or retain Buddhism and certain privileges enjoyed by them in the past. A number of petitions addressed to the government by Buddhists affirmed their deep concern for the welfare of "Buddhism which had prevailed as their and their ancestors' religion" for over two thousand years; they referred to the mental pain felt by Buddhists as a result of what was being written and preached against their religion by Christian missionaries; and urged the government to uphold religious tolerance by ordering the withdrawal of offensive publications which had been issued (Malalgoda, 1976:213-31).

By the 1880s these movements were slowly extended to the Low-Country under the influence of Goyigama headmen in those areas and soon they were followed by headmen of other castes--Karava, Salagama and Durava. In the meantime some remarkable achievements in Buddhist and Pali studies by Westerners such as Colonel H.S. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky--the two founders of the Theosophical Society--provided the Sinhalese with organizational know-how to counter the missionary influence and to restore Buddhism in the island. Olcott had already established contact with Dayananda Saraswati, the leader of the Arya Samaj, and Swami Vivekananda, who were in alliance with the two leading Low-Country monks, Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala and Migettuwatte Gunananda, in the struggle against Westernization and Christian proselytization of their own societies. Thus Olcott had himself been preoccupied with cultural and political discontent in Asia during the late Nineteenth Century, and his arrival on the island

in 1880 was a remarkable advantage for the Buddhist and Theosophical leaders in Sri Lanka in communicating with the British concerning their demands. Olcott meanwhile practically started a Buddhist renaissance on his own; he organized local Buddhists and acted as their representative in dealing with the British (Ames, 1963:48; Wickremeratne, 1969:124).

Among the prominent Theosophists of the island were Anagarika Dharmapala (Goyigama) and Walisinghe Harischandra (Salagama), who were educated in Christian and Buddhist schools on the island. They travelled throughout the country conducting a fiery crusade against Christianity and the Western way of life and urged the Sinhalese to be proud of their religion, language and national customs (Fernando, 1943:23; Balakrishna, 1973:30-39). A number of public meetings, the press, literary associations, debating clubs, temperance organizations, and reform societies were used as a means for their crusade. Their aim was basically to discourage thoughtless imitation of European habits and customs. They took an active interest in social problems, encouraged temperance and vegetarianism, and the abolition of capital punishment. They repeatedly referred to the dangers to Eastern thought from the "glitter and glamour" of Western civilization and its outward show of luxury (Jayawardena, 1972:112).

The most striking feature of the Buddhist revival in the Low-Country was the leadership of the Maritime Castes, who were attempting to secure newly-won privileges. The non-monastic-educated intelligentsia and the merchant class of the coastal regions were aggressively involved in the revitalization movements. Thus indeed the Buddhist movement was, at least in part, the religious expression of the improved economic and social status of the Maritime Castes in the Low-Country. It enabled them to assimilate with the Goyigama aristocracy emulating traditional Sinhalese

Buddhist culture. For these castes religious zealotry was not only a platform for airing economic prosperity, but also, more importantly, a sphere in which they could acquire a new prestige. Western-educated men and women among the Maritime Castes publicly ocnverted to Buddhism and invariably showed their keenness for the traditional faith of the country (Ames, 1963:48; Wickermeratne, 1969:135-36). They established new monastic centres and provided considerable lay patronage. Pious Buddhists among them, Buddhistizing their life style, established household shrines which normally contain Buddha's image surrounded by pictures of other deities (Kapferer, 1976).

The pious Buddhist activists not only emphasized the more fundamentalistic style of their religious life, but also often insisted upon the glory of the past and the virtue of the indigenous way of life. Thus the drinking of liquor was condemned as an imported vice. They simply assumed that during the Sinhalese Kings regime universal absteniousness had prevailed. They complained that Western culture had destroyed their traditional values. They conducted their campaign through the Sinhalese press and Buddhist journals published in English. For example, in 1906 the Mahabodhi wrote:

> Thousands of Buddhist children are sacrificed at the altar of Christian heathenism year after year. Conversion to Christianity means also drunkenness. The legislator tells the Sinhalese that under British rule every man enjoys liberty and the first manifestation of the liberty that the latter displays is to get drunk. Then somebody writes to a local paper that he does not see why a British subject is not given a place to purchase opium, and the next week the free subject gets his opium and the demand for opium increases with freedom under British rule in Ceylon....Opium, liquor, poverty, ignorance are the blessings that the Sinhalese have received from the Christians. (The Mahabodhi, March, 1906)

Basically, all their criticisms were directed against the Western way of life widespread in the maritime provinces. For example, it was directed

against the habit of eating beef, which was abhorred in the past and only the Rodiyas and Paduvas ate beef, resulting in their degradation which was such that not even water was asked from them by the thirsty. Dharamapala's slogans such as "He who drinks liquor is an outcaste" and "beef-eating Pariahs" attracted attention in the coastal villages and towns (Wickermeratne, 1969:140). Reform leaders also attacked the Sinhalese penchant for Western names, which they believed more evident among the Low-Country Sinhalese. They declared that the use of Western given names with Sinhalese surnames was as incongruous " as the yoking together of a buffalo and a bull." Thus Sinhalese Buddhists, according to their view, must take over Sinhalese names, in contrast to the Christian Western names given by the missionaries.

The Westernized Sinhalese who became pious Buddhists and Theosophists frequently joined forces with the Low-Country monks. Together they were active in systematizing religious action and promoting new religious organizations, monastic fraternities and supra-fraternity councils. They promoted religious education not only through Buddhist schools, but also by sponsoring various publications, newspapers, and the translating of Pali scriptures into Sinhala. They were also responsible for encouraging, perhaps more than they realized, a reinterpretation of Buddhist doctrine to suit present conditions in the island, and above all their own condition as a modern intelligentsia (Malalgoda, 1977; Ames, 1963:45-53).

Nevertheless, Buddhistization in the Low-Country appears as self-criticism of the mobility-oriented Maritime Castes who found themselves in an ambiguous position. Among the Western-educated intelligentsia were those with political ambitions who, after the 1931 universal franchise was granted to switched from Christianity to Buddhism

for opportunistic reasons. They became known as "political" or Donoughmore" Buddhists. On the whole, it was natural for them to favour a new, revitalized form of Buddhism more suitable to their own status interests. Not having been educated by the literate monks but in Christian schools, they felt less committed to, and knowledgeable about, the traditional system (Ames, 1963:48).

The economic prosperity of the Maritime Castes facilitated their independent action in the revitalization movements. Their headmen and merchants were sufficiently wealthy and enthusiastic to help monks of their own castes to proceed to Burma and return with higher ordination, as the Kandyan monks received the higher ordination from Siam in the late Eighteenth Century. Although initially these three caste groups founded the "Amarapura" fraternity as a non-Goyigama monastic sect, soon it fragmented on caste lines and each group established its own order of monks and further subdivisions occurred over arguments concerning rights of ownership of temples and lands, and succession to titles (Malalgoda, 1976:144-71; Ryan, 1953:39-43).

Another important aspect of the process of Buddhistization was the establishment of public meditation centres in the coastal cities as a result of several movements devoted almost entirely to the promotion and populatization of meditation among both the monks and laity. Ames reports (1963:51) that many wealthy pious laymen constructed secluded retreats where fellow laymen could spend weekends or holidays. This was, however, not an innovation; it was rather a modified form of the ancient practice which prevailed in the island, although Ames (1963) argued that it was a completely new innovation. There were lay hermitages in the past away from the residential locations, usually in the forests. But this new form of

hermitage which was established within the dwelling areas is partly a status symbol of the mobility-oriented lower castes who wanted to show a more fundamentalistic form in their religious life. A number of wealthy families in the coastal cities have constructed secluded meditation rooms even in their own houses, a striking contrast to village houses which have shrine rooms dedicated to the Buddha and to the various Buddhist deities. Ames (1963:51) points out that many of the learned monks and laymen who led the meditation classes at the prominent monastery Vajirarama in a Colombo suburb and the forest hermitage near Kandy were professional men who in their adult years converted from Christianity to Buddhism and joined the monastic order. And almost all the Vajirarama monks, according to Ames, are non-Goyigama castes of the Low-Country.

The process of Buddhistization during the late Nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries resulted in the rise of Sinhalese nationalism against British colonial rule in the island. Sinhalese nationalism inspired by the religious and cultural revival during this period culminated in political agitation led by the Western-educated intelligentisia and the capitalist class of the Low-Country. They organized and led a very effective campaign against the autocratic role and monoploy of power held by the Westerners. During the period between 1900 and 1915, the Western-educated elite had begun to assert themselves on political questions in a forceful manner. The temperance movements and reform league became a political platform for this group of people who were claiming political rights and began to extend this campaign to include constitutional reforms for national government. Their Western education enabled them to demand the elective political system derived from the Western liberal tradition. The combination of wealth and Western educational achievement gave them the necessary

self-confidence to challenge the colonial government.

However, during this period the Sinhalese nationalist movements and political agitation were largely influenced and inspired by South Asian politics, especially the Indian Congress party led by Gandhi, and the British Labour party. These were years of increasing discontent, especially among the educated younger generation. "Ceylonese nationalism was essentially a product of Western education and its ideology was not fundamentally different from that of Nineteenth-Century Europe" (Jennings, 1950:11).

One of the means by which the English-educated expressed their views was through "literary associations" in all parts of the island, associations which were in fact political debating clubs. Whereas the literary associations which had flourished in the Nineteenth Century had debated topics such as the execution of Charles I or the character of Napoleon, by the Twentieth Century the nationalists used the literary associations to discuss controversial political and social issues of the day, including constitutional reforms, the Salaries Scheme, the Waste Lands Ordinance, and the temperance question (Jayawardena, 1972:135; Vittachi, 1962; Farmer, 1965:431-39). Some demands for political reform had been made in the years before 1908 by various associations formed for the promotion of agriculture and regional interests, but the emergence of the moderate reformers as a distinct group occurred after 1908.

Between 1908 and 1909 there was a sudden increase in political agitation in the Low-Country provinces and a spate of memoranda making very moderate demands for constitutional reform was sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by several organizations along the South-Western coast of the island. According to Jayasekera (1970:46), some of these

regional associations that emerged during this period were essentially caste associations formed by the Maritime Castes. The Moratuwa Association was a Karava voice. So too, in Jayasekera's opinion, were the Panadura, Kalutara and Dodanduwa Association. The political role of these associations was particularly important during this period for organizing public meetings along the coastal zone and even in the Kandyan provinces in favor of their candidates during the election times after 1910.

It is important to note that the Western-educated elite did not confine themselves to political agitation within the island. While organizing mass meetings in the major cities of the island on a number of occasions, prominent leaders visited the Colonial Office in England and presented memoranda.

In 1907 Dr. Hilarian Marcus Fernando, a Western-educated Karava, visited the Colonial Office personally and presented an important memorandum. The most influential memorandum in this campaign was that presented on 12 December 1908 by Mr. (later Sir) James Pieris, another Karava, educated at Cambridge University and the leading planter during that period. In 1909 James Pieris and H.J.C. Pereira presented a petition to the Colonial Office on behalf of 760 signatories representing "landed, mercantile and other interests" (Bandaranaike, 1928:7-8). The main demands were the elective principle with a restricted franchise, the abolition of racial representation, and the inclusion of two non-officials on the executive council. These memoranda and various associations, by insisting that there was a divergence between economic and political realities, were voicing the interests of the Sinhalese capitalists and professionals whose economic interests were not reflected in the political superstructure (Jayawardena, 1972:137; Roberts, 1974:549-77). As Sir James Pieris wrote:

> The last quarter of a century has been especially remarkable for the great expansion of the industries and commercial pursuits controlled by the native population...The Legislative Council is completely out of harmony with the present advanced and progressive conditions of the island...There is a general feeling among the educated and thoughtful classes that the time has arrived for a liberal reform of its constitutions. (Bandaranaike, 1928:7-8).

Despite efforts on the part of the British to sidetrack these demands by granting increased communal representation in 1921 and 1922, the Western-educated elite finally achieved a good number of their demands with an elected majority in the Legislative Council of 1924, and almost complete local autonomy in the State Council of 1931 and 1936 (Namasivayam, 1951:17-19). The caste composition of the successive legislatures is presented in table seven and eight:

TABLE 7

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF SINHALESE CASTES IN THE STATE COUNCIL IN 1936

Caste	Percentage of Sinhalese Population*	Percentage of Representatives**	Proportional Representation	Percentage over- or under-representation
Goyigama	58.5	70.3	120.1	+20.1
Karava	9.7	12.9	133.0	+33.0
Salagama	5.6	7.4	132.1	+32.1
Durava	4.5	5.5	122.2	+22.2
All Others	21.7	3.7	17.0	-83.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		

TABLE 8

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF SINHALESE CASTES IN THE FIRST PARLIAMENT IN 1974

Caste	Percentage of Sinhalese Population*	Percentage of Representatives**	Proportional Representation	Percentage over- or under-representation
Goyigama	60.0	64.4	107.3	+ 7.3
Karava	10.2	15.2	149.0	+ 49.0
Salagama	6.5	13.5	207.6	+107.6
Durava	5.0	5.0	100.0	0.0
All Others	18.3	1.6	8.7	- 91.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0		

Sources: *These figures were estimated by P.V.J. Jayasekera (1970:36n) and Gananath Obeysekera (1970) for 1963.
**Marshall R. Singer (1964), The Emerging Elite, M.I.T. Press, and S. Nama Sivayan (1951). The Legislature of Ceylon, 1928-1948, London.

Note: Non-Sinhalese members are excluded here.

It is clear that all of the major caste groups were over-represented in the State Council in 1936. But this pattern has changed by 1947 with constitutional reforms and the development of the elective principle. The Goyigama over-representation has dropped considerably while the Karava and Salagama have increased their over-representation in the first Parliament of 1947. Salagama over-representation was +107.6 in 1947. Karava over-representation has increased from +33.0 in 1936 to +49.0 in 1947.

However, the representation of various caste groups in the first Parliament was largely influenced by the electorate demarcation of 1944, which was based on islandwide population. According to the 1944 delimitation, the Kandyan Sinhalese would have had 51 seats and the Low-Country 76. Thus the Goyigama representation was considerably reduced while the Low-Country Sinhalese were given a large number of seats in the Parliament. Until 1956, the Low-Country Sinhalese were largely over-represented in the Parliament while the Kandyan Sinhalese were increasingly under-represented (Jiggins, 1979:1-41). The Maritime Castes in representation in the Parliament have come to operate recognized and consciously formed caste lobbies. Their political base extended beyond Parliament to the sphere of commerce, the professions and the administration to form closely integrated caste groups. Acting as representatives of their community interests, their alignments on matters of policy have at times cut across nominal party affiliations; at the least they form a point of access to the higher administration and other elite centres in national life for their community members (Jiggins, 1979:42-67). The extent of their membership of the Parliament, the Executive Councils, Local Government Boards and of their share of bureaucratic appointments was proportionately far in excess of their overall numbers.

Buddhist revival and the Sinhalese nationalist movements, therefore, provided a strong national basis for the Western educated intelligentsia to attack the Christian British Raj and to achieve the political power in the Sinhalese society. Religions and cultural reform movements enabled them to display their leadership skills and to assimilate with the Goyigama aristocracy. The political leadership of the Maritime Castes in the independent Sri Lanka, provided their communities with considerable social and economic privileges. They maintained closed integration with their caste groups and promoted the social and economic standing of their communities.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions

By employing a series of historical accounts in the preceding chapters, we discussed the social mobility of Maritime Castes during the Western European rule in Sri Lanka. Contrary to the Vedic view of caste as a closed system, we suggested the prevalence of group mobility in the Sinhalese caste system due to various external and internal forces which were conceptualized in terms of Westernization and Buddhistization. The congruence of ritual status, economic and political power represented in the traditional caste stratification has dissipated under the impact of economic and political changes.

The penetration of Western colonial powers as early as the Sixteenth Century disrupted the prevailing socio-economic structure and established the capitalist economic system which provided new economic activities for many Sinhalese. Such social and economic change referred to as Westernization in this study was, however, uneven in its influence. As stated in Chapter One, our main concern here is with those who participated in the Westernization directly, i.e., those who attended the new educational institutions, entered the professions and engaged in trade, commerce, and industry in the large developing cities. For the most part, these new opportunities were seized of by the Maritime Castes who lived in the coastal cities and the immediate vicinity of the maritime provinces. Therefore in fact, the process of Westernization facilitated the group mobility of the Maritime Castes. They participated in the new economic ventures and adopted Western culture and life styles in order to maintain

high social status in Sinhalese society.

During the Portuguese and Dutch period, the Maritime Castes had ready access to the commerce and trade developed in the Low-Country provinces. The economic importance of these three caste groups for the new rulers invariably resulted in considerable economic and social privileges to the former. Many of them became leading land owners and engaged in innovative capitalist economic endeavours during that period. Such economic and social opportunities improved their standard of living and enabled them to overtake the Goyigama aristocracy in the economic and political spheres. Moreover, the social ascendance of the Maritime Castes during this period was accelerated by their ready acceptance of Christianity and intermarriage with Europeans. As Rajavaliya reports:

> Many low-caste people, unmindful of their low birth, intermarried with the Portuguese and became proselytes. (Gunasekara, 1900:80)

Of the Karava caste, specifically, an Oratorian missionary wrote in 1779: "Many of them are related to the Whites and many of the Mesticos come from them" (Pereira, 1921:121). The conversion of coastal subjects to Christianity symbolized their loyalty to the new rulers who were in constant rivalry with the Sinhalese King. Thus as far as new rulers were concerned, the conversion to Christianity was encouraged by various social and economic privileges at the expense of the Goyigama aristocracy. Therefore, in fact, the loyalty of the Maritime Castes to the new rulers was handsomely rewarded. In 1556 there was a mass conversion of more than 70,000 Karavas. When five Karava headmen were baptized at a public ceremony in 1606, the Portuguese Captain "was pleased to grant the many favours and privileges in order to cause the envy of the other gentiles who might thus be led to follow their examples" (Pereira, 1916:21). Such economic and social privileges resulted in a greater degree of group mobility for the Maritime

Castes.

The upward mobility of the Maritime Castes was reinforced by the successive colonial policies which preceded the economic and political changes. The abolition of the "Rajakariya" system (traditional labour services) emancipated the lower castes from traditional labour services and enabled them to participate in the new economic and political ventures. Many lower caste families which were involved in the new occupations in the urban centres accumulated wealth and became leading entrepreneurs in the plantation and mining industries. For the most part these new economic ventures were dominated by the Maritime Castes during this period. Their economic prosperity was coupled with their participation in the European administrative system. Under European rule, high administrative positions were not restricted to any particular caste group, but those who accorded their loyalty to the new rulers were recruited for all of the positions with considerable social and economic privileges.

Widespread missionary activities in the Low-Country districts not only produced a large Christian community among the Maritime Castes, but also the vigorous effort of missionaries in promulgating their faith resulted in successful Western education in the Low-Country. The resistance of the Kandyan Sinhalese to Western European rule and Christianity was characterized by their vernacular education and less-acculturated life style until the second half of this century. During the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, the Low-Country Sinhalese dominated the higher administrative positions in the public and private sectors while the Kandyans were sparsely represented in the government service. As Ryan (1961:472), correctly points out (1961:472), education in English has been until recently the route to higher social status. The gulf between the

English-educated and the non-English-educated is the same gulf that lies between the Westernized elites and the Kandyan peasants. The crucial features of the Westernized elite in the late Nineteenth Century was their ready acceptance of Western culture and life styles in order to achieve high social status in Sinhalese society. Westernization in the Low-Country provinces, therefore, improved the social and economic status of the Maritime Castes. Their superior education and wealth enabled them to eradicate the traditional caste taboos and to assimilate with the Goyigama aristocracy.

The resurgence of Buddhism as a reaction to Westernization reinforced the upward mobility of the Maritime Castes. The Buddhist revival and the Sinhalese nationalist movements legitimized their newly-achieved social and economic status, providing an alternative model for the Maritime Castes to emulate the Goyigama aristocracy. The process of Buddhistization, therefore, provided a convenient ideological basis for the Maritime Castes to achieve high social status in Sinhalese society. A renewed sense of Buddhist identity could draw together mobility-oriented Maritime Castes and the Goyigama aristocracy of Sinhalese society.

Westernization and Buddhistization, therefore, illustrate how the rank of an entire caste is amenable to change within the established framework of the caste system. It deals with the group mobility of Maritime Castes by implication through the process of ideological change in the outlook and customs of the caste groups. It demonstrates the structural changes of the Sinhalese caste system due to the external and internal forces operating in the social system.

It should be noted that there are some methodological limitations to this study. The study has been focused on almost four centuries of

colonial rule in Sri Lanka. Therefore it is hardly surprising that most of the historical records are entirely descriptive and it is not possible to provide perfectly accurate evidence on social mobility. Particularly the information on property ownership and the local administrative system during the Portuguese and Dutch periods is not very specific, though various historical studies provide more detailed discussion. However, these various sources of historical information have been used with supplementary evidence from contemporary anthropological monographs. And also my personal experience and knowledge of the subject were more helpful as a check on the accuracy of the data obtained from various resources.

As was suggested in this study, the social mobility of the Maritime Castes became more evident during the Western European rule and it continues until the present day. Lower caste groups have succeeded in achieving wealth and power in a new context. Thus there is a certain degree of inconsistency in their positions in the two systems of stratification. However, the association between caste and other secular variables such as education, income and occupation, especially in a modernizing contest, has yet to be clearly examined. Future studies on this subject must examine the existing institutional mechanisms of social mobility and more fundamental conflicts between tradition and modernity that have shaken the entire social order. In this regard, in fact, field studies are more important to determine the recent directions of social stratification. A knowledge of one period of history or a few caste groups would be a necessary preparation for undertaking such a study. Thus this study can be used as the point of departure for detailed empirical studies in the future.

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