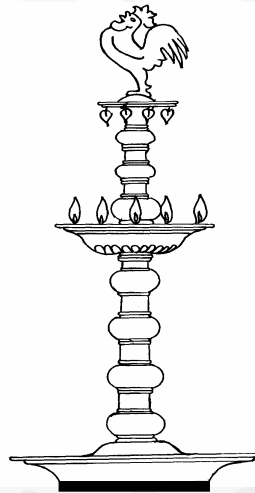


# THE CEYLANKAN



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## EDITORIAL



I forget who said “water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink” - probably some one on a tossing craft on the high seas. Since my recent change in vocation—from Engineer to Orchardist, water is on my mind all the time. For without this precious drop my orchard will

not produce those lovely plums. Fortunately I do not have to depend on it for my livelihood but all my neighbours do. Out there we greet each other by first inquiring how the dam is doing, or is the bore pump bringing up more salinity.? And so on. With water restrictions in Sydney where our lawns are brown and heading for extinction we must stop and reflect at how our ancestors managed back in the old country.

On page 18 of this issue we carry the answer. Sena Athukorala who recently delivered a lecture to the Sydney branch on the subject of Irrigation works in Sri Lanka has put pen to paper to share his knowledge with our readers who did not have the pleasure of listening to him. Sena was formerly the Director of the Head Works at Mahaweli Authority hence talks with authority on the subject.

In the lead article we bring the first of a three part series: a true story of a remarkable man. He has the distinction of being the first Black author to emerge out of South Africa. His connection with Sri Lanka, Ceylon to him, will unfold in the ensuing parts. We are fortunate to have Hedwig van Collier translate the original Dutch version specially for The Ceylankan readers.

## 19th Century Images



THE CLIENT.

[From a Sketch by John K.L. Vandort.]

# Remarkable story concerning the life and experiences of Michiel Christiaan Vos [1759 – 1825] Part 1

*Translated from the Dutch  
By Hedwig van Coller*

## The first Black writer in South Africa

Michiel Christiaan Vos was born in Cape Town, South Africa, then still under Dutch control, on 31 December 1759. He qualified as a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Utrecht, Holland. After preaching in Holland for several years at, Woudenberg, Pijnacker and Woerden, he was at last given the chance he was hoping for; to return to the Cape, his main interest being missionary work among the slaves.

He was appointed to the parish of Tulbagh, and immediately started working not only amongst his parishioners, but also among their slaves and servants. At that time it was not possible to baptise a slave – only persons of European descent could be baptised. If a slave became a Christian, his owner could not sell him and was held responsible for his upkeep for the rest of his life. Teaching slaves about religion was therefore not looked upon favourably by either their owners or the authorities. Vos refused to bow to the rules and became very unpopular as a result of his missionary activities.

In 1802 he resigned and departed for London where he worked with the London Missionary Society. For this he had to learn English, as he spoke only Dutch. Plagued by health problems in the damp, cold climate, he at last allowed himself to be persuaded to lead a group of missionaries to Ceylon for the London Missionary Society.

He tells his story in the form of a number of "letters" written to a friend. I have translated only the parts, which may interest Ceylankan readers. In doing so I have taken the liberty of making a précis of certain paragraphs for clarity & brevity and added brief comments to move the subject on. These are in Italics and interspersed within the "letters".

## First letter

Dear Friend!

I was born on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1759 in the capital of this southern corner of Africa, currently known as Cape Town, of Christian parents descended from European and Asian forefathers; of the five children my parents had, all boys, I was the youngest....

*[He goes on to tell of his childhood, his conversion, being apprenticed to his brother as silversmith and his subsequent efforts to obtain his inheritance (his father had died when he was five) - he went so far as to marry in order to attain his majority and be given the money he needed to travel to Holland to study theology. Eventually he finds himself in London ....]*

## Fourteenth Letter

The requests of the Directors [*of the London Missionary Society*] that I should accompany a number of missionaries to parts of Asia formerly Dutch, but now English, did not cease, but became more urgent every week. They used the strongest arguments to try and persuade me. None of my counter arguments made any impression until in desperation I said that I could not go for my wife's sake. Because of her nervous condition, which had made it impossible for her to work with "heathen" servants, I had left the Cape. To take her to Asia where she would meet more such people would be unwise: so I requested them very earnestly not to ask me again.

They were silent and I was glad and thought that was the end of the matter. But I was wrong. Not long after, I was again asked to take on this commission, even if only for two or three years. I could leave my wife behind and they would look after her. She could even go to Holland during this time if she wanted. Soon I received a written request. My wife, having heard how much trouble

was being taken to get me to Asia, specifically to Ceylon, said: "It seems as if the Lord has work for you in Ceylon; I will remain here until you return so that you may be free to go."

Now I felt compelled to reconsider the matter even if I was reluctant to undertake another long sea voyage, because of my poor health, but eventually out of sympathy for the wretched state of the church in Ceylon, I felt myself driven to accept the call; for I had received a printed article which said that in Ceylon there were three times 142,000 Protestant Christians and only nine ministers, and of these, most neglected their duties. Most of these [Christians] would soon return to their heathen religion or to the Roman Religion if Protestant workers were not sent quickly from Europe.

After everything had been made ready for my journey, and great expense had been undertaken by the Society, and when I was ready to leave, my wife's weakness again came to the fore. She decided she could not let me go alone and wanted to accompany me. If there had not been so many expenses already, I would have abandoned the whole thing. Again I was in despair; but the Directors were not concerned because they thought that I might stay longer than 2 or 3 years if my wife accompanied me.

Meanwhile the time for our departure was nearing; about which, and about our journey to Colombo, capital of Ceylon, I will write in my next letter.

### **Fifteenth Letter**

*Departure and journey from London to the Cape, then to Tranquebar, where his wife died, and then to Colombo, capital of Ceylon. Three missionaries remain in Tranquebar to work on that coast*

Because there was a war on it was arranged that the missionaries would travel with a neutral ship to Tranquebar – a Danish town on the Coromandel Coast in Asia. So first we had to travel to Copenhagen in Denmark.

*[They left London on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1804 and eventually arrived in Copenhagen on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, leaving that city on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 1804]*

After an uncomfortable journey of 3 ½ months, we anchored in Simons Bay, [near Cape Town] on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1804.

In Cape Town I visited my family and friends and they did their best to try and persuade my wife to remain there until my return, which I would have supported wholeheartedly. But no one could persuade her. In truth, no one knew that God had planned a grave for her in Asia.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> August we weighed anchor and sailed on. Although we were neutral we were not far from the Line and we were harried by a French man-of-war, which insisted that we should take sixteen prisoners of war along with us and put them ashore in India, anywhere the Captain thought suitable.

As a result our water supply became depleted and we tried to make for Achim, but because of contrary winds this was not possible; so we were forced to make for one of the Nicobar Islands.

The inhabitants here were deeply ignorant heathens for whom I had great compassion. Because they could understand some Portuguese I could communicate with them – to my and apparently also their great happiness – and I could have a few conversations with them in their own homes about religion. I trust that God blessed these talks.

Their houses were built mostly of wood, eight feet above the ground on poles, so that it was necessary to ascend a ladder and enter the house through a trapdoor.

After having taken on board the necessary provisions, we set sail once more and by God's good grace we arrived safely in the harbour at Tranquebar on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 1804.

My wife had already been ill for two months, so bad that at times I expected her to die at sea. I prayed for this not to happen and my prayer was answered. She arrived in Tranquebar alive, but very weak. By God's good grace the devout Father John, an English missionary (of whom I subsequently often read in the Journals of the Mission Society and also in those of the Bible Society), took my wife and me into their home and got a good doctor for her.

*[His wife's health improved and Father John helped them find a house and the necessary servants. Vos travelled to Negapatnam, preaching along the way to remnants of the Dutch communities as well as to the English and Portuguese. He baptised several children and officiated at Communion, as well as confirming a few into the church after hearing their confessions of faith. On returning home, however, he found his wife very ill and she died on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1805]*

During our forced stay in Tranquebar we received much friendliness from the Danish missionaries (especially John). We could not understand much of their sermons because they had to preach in Malabar and Portuguese; my fellow missionaries tried to practise the former while I tried to become proficient in the latter.

Here I met a military commander who had lived many years in Ceylon and was still based there. While we became better ac-

quainted, His Excellency asked me what had moved me to go to Ceylon. "Only compassion, from a religious point of view," I answered, and showed him the printed article about the wretched state of the church in Ceylon. When he saw this he started to laugh. I asked him what amused him, whether the number of Christians mentioned by the article (three times 142,000) was perhaps somewhat exaggerated. He answered: "No, but in that article they neglect to mention HOW they make Christians in Ceylon."

I asked him to tell me. He told me that the ministers were obliged to visit the schools in the interior of Ceylon twice a year – once at the very least. They travelled like kings, and were received as such by the guesthouses and schools. Having arrived at the schools, they asked the schoolmaster to bring forth everyone – sometimes up to 300 and more – who had asked to be baptised. The minister then asked the schoolmaster: "What did you teach them? And how far have they progressed?"

Mostly the answer was: "They all know the Lord's Prayer; many also know the twelve articles of faith and some have progressed so far that they can even recite the Ten Commandments."

"Where are they?" the minister would ask.

"Here, your Reverence," the schoolmaster would answer.

"Read them the Order of Baptism!" Because in most cases the minister could not speak Sinhalese, the schoolmaster did so, and in such a way that the half of the aspirant Christians could hardly hear him, let alone understand him. Everyone would then be christened. The Reverend would then travel to the next school where he would do the same, sometimes visiting three, four or even five schools in one day. So a large number of "Christians" would be made in one day. Such trips would

bring in considerable advantages to the minister too, because apart from the gifts he would receive from the schools, he could profit from selling trade goods, which his servants carried after him.

I listened in astonishment and would not have believed him if I had not, soon after arriving in Ceylon, been convinced of the truth of the story, as well as of many other abominations which took place on these school visits.

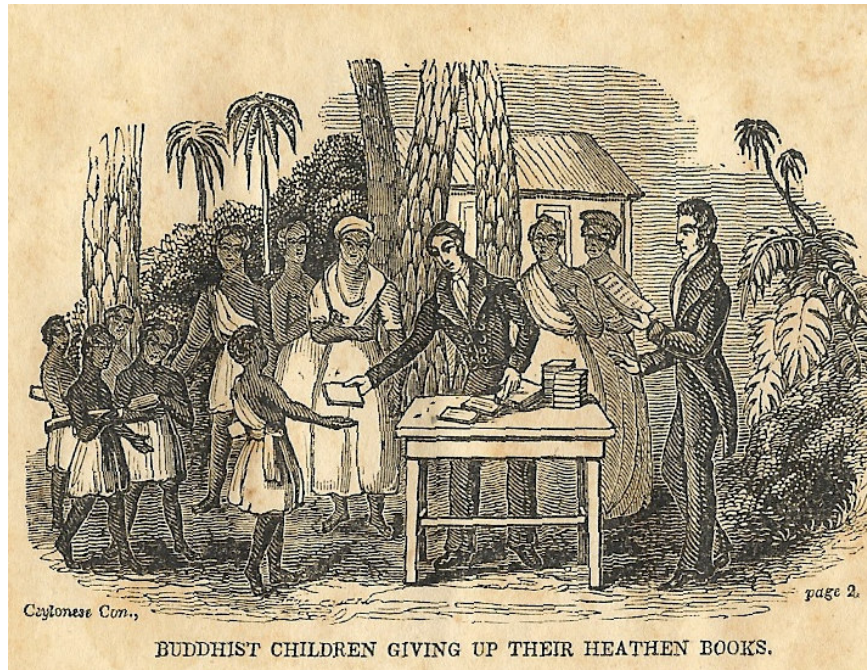
As soon as the season and the weather allowed us to set sail for Ceylon, we took our brotherly leave of the Reverend John and his benevolent family and of the remaining Danish missionaries and good friends; also of three of our travelling companions who would remain behind here to work on the coast.

We left Tranquebar on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1805 and anchored in Manoa on Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup>. The next day I preached there, in the morning as well as in the evening, to about 50 people of Dutch descent, who had not heard a sermon for nine years. I also baptised six children and felt a great compassion for these poor souls, of whom many had already gone over to the Roman Catholic Church.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February we continued our journey, and I asked our skipper, a Sinhalese, a native of Ceylon, to which religion he belonged. "I am a Buddhist," he answered. I said to my interpreter: "Oh, then he is still a heathen." When my interpreter translated this to him, he said: "No, that I am not. I belong to the church of the

VOC."

Note well, my friend, this man was one of those "made Christians" of Ceylon, a baptised and confirmed member of the Reformed Church, and knew of his religion no more than to say he was a member of the religion of the VOC. In my eyes he was still a complete heathen, as in most



cases of the "made Christians". Most of them, despite being regular communicants, declared that they were Buddhists and intended to stay that way and die that way. I will come back to this matter later.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1805 we arrived safely in Colombo and what we found there I will relate in the next letter...

*Merkwaardig verhaal aangaande het leven en de lotgevallen van Michiel Christiaan Vos (completed in 1819, published in 1824) was the first book to be written by a black author in South Africa. Translated from the Dutch for Ceylankan by Hedwig van Coller, Bloemfontein, South Africa - 2003*

*This article is presented as a three part series..Ed*

**How can the Knower be known?**

*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad ch 2, pt 4, v 14*



## The Trial of John Kotelawala (Snr)

by The Rambler

**J**ohn Kotelawala (Senior) was the father of Sir John Kotelawala, Prime Minister of Ceylon from 1953 to 1956. John Kotelawala was born in 1865 in the village of Banda-ragama. He started life as a third class constable clerk in the Ceylon Police Force in the 1880s. As a policeman he was good in detective work and his general application impressive, and was within a few years promoted to the rank of Inspector. It was then that he married Alice Attygalle, the daughter of Mudaliyar D.C.G. Attygalle of Colamunne. He resigned from the police soon after his marriage.



John Kotelawala (Snr)

Mudaliyar Attygalle was a man of considerable wealth, owning several coconut estates, plumbago mines, and other properties in the Kurunegala and Dodangaslanda areas. He was also a great benefactor to a number of charities. Among his many acts of philanthropy was the donation for public use, of the Kurunegala Rest House which he built entirely at his own expense. The building stands in the main street of Kurunegala to this day. Mudaliyar Attygalle's family consisted of his wife, son, and three daughters. The son, who was born in 1885, was a minor when the Mudaliyar died in 1901. John Kotelawala, the Mudaliyar's only son in law at the time of his death, took over the management of the Mudaliyar's estate which was left to his widow by his will. By 1904, Francis, the Mudaliyar's son realised that his brother-in-law was utilising profits from the estate for his own benefit, and applied

for letters of "*venia aetatis*" by which the Governor of Ceylon had the power to make a major of a minor in the eyes of the law. The letters were accordingly granted to Francis by the Governor, and he took over the management of the family properties. Kotelawala not only resisted this, but openly showed his defiance and there was considerable friction between him and

his brother-in-law. He tried various ruses to gain possession of some of the properties, but failed in all his attempts. He was particularly interested in a property at Maduragoda which he made out to the family as a piece of abandoned plumbago land, whereas it was in fact a lucrative mine later known as the Kahatagaha mines. This turned out to be one of the largest and most lucrative plumbago mines in Sri Lanka. He tried every trick in the book to gain possession of the mine, including fraud, deceit, and threats to the family, but failed;

the main obstacle being his brother in law Francis. He is said to have even threatened to commit suicide in front of his mother in law by cutting his throat with a knife that he produced, to which his mother in law gently informed him that she had not the slightest objection to that, and called off his bluff. Kotelawala was a physical culturist and a pupil of Sandow, (*Eugene Sandow, Hungarian, a pioneer in physical culture and body building*) and projected an image of a tough and bold person who would not tolerate any opposition.

The friction between him and his in-laws included an incident where he attempted to take forcible possession of a family mine, and was chased away by workers loyal to Francis. He had to run away and humiliatingly take refuge in a boutique in which he locked himself up in fear. This incident had hurt his ego more than the damage done to his plans to take over the

property, and being a man of considerable vanity he had been sulking and threatening dire consequences. In October 1906, John Kotelawala sailed for Japan in order to float a company called the Ceylon Trading Co, probably to give him an alibi as unfolding events will reveal.

Francis Attygalle was a most unassuming man with an engaging disposition, and very popular with his employees. He had two sisters other than his older sister who was married to Kotelawala. They were Lena and Ellen. Lena was given in marriage to Colonel T.G. Jayawardene brother of E.W. Jayawardene- father of J.R. Jayawardene later to be President of Sri Lanka. The youngest sister Ellen later married F.R. Senanayake brother of D.S. Senanayake, Ceylon's first Prime Minister. It has been said that the families of the three sisters dominated politics and government in Sri Lanka during most of the 20 th Century. The Attygalle sisters by their marriage to the Kotelawala-Jayewardena-Senanayake triumvirate is said to have shoe horned these "political nobodies" into "somebodies", the upward mobility being provided by the Attygalle family wealth. The Attygalle inheritance was massive, and the three daughters brought with them substantial dowries. By 1927 T.G. Jayewardene owned

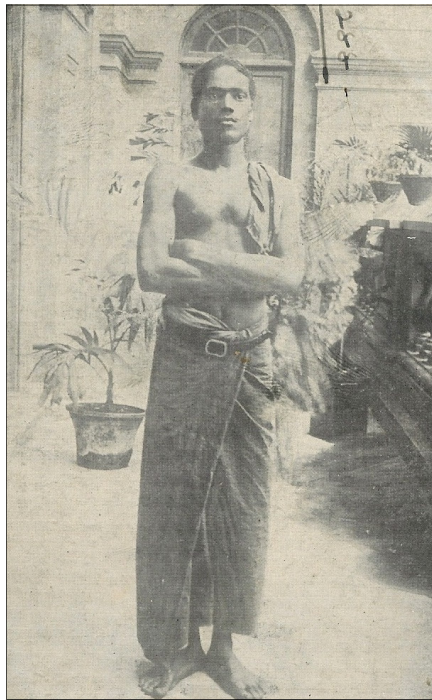
2861 acres of tea, rubber, and coconut, Alice Kotelawala 2058 acres of rubber and coconut, and Ellen Senanayake 3027 acres mainly of coconut.

Francis Attygalle attended school at Wesley College, and was boarded in the home of

Mr C.P. Dias, Headmaster of the school, who lived in the Pettah near Price Park, then a quiet residential area. On leaving school Francis continued to live in Mr Dias's house having made it his Colombo headquarters. On the evening of 5<sup>th</sup> December 1906 he was reclining on a chair in the verandah of Mr Dias' home, when he was called out by a boy who wanted him to meet a man named Baron Singho who was ostensibly seeking assistance to get a job. Having dismissed the man, Francis was returning to the house when he was shot by a gun fired from a few yards away. The 22 year old Francis died two days later in hospital after making a dying deposition.

John Kotelawala returned to Ceylon by ship on the morning of 24 January 1907 and was promptly arrested by a police party headed by Mr Herbert Dowbiggin, Superintendent of Police Colombo, who was in charge of investigations into the murder. Three persons were charged with the murder of Attygalle. They were Baron Singho, Singhone Perera, and John Kotelawala.

It was the case for the prosecution that as a result of family disputes, John Kotelawala had decided to destroy his brother in law Francis Attygalle. He conspired with Singhone Perera, a former police constable who served under him, to kill Attygalle. Singhone had left the Police force at the same time as Kotelawala, and was employed as a rent collector by the latter, who also provided him accommodation in one of his houses. According to the prosecution, Singhone who was a trusted servant of Kotelawala, was paid Rs 500 through a bogus mortgage payment as a consideration for the killing, and having arranged the murder, he left for Japan in October 1906 to create an alibi for himself. Singhone then contacted one Piloris



Piloris Fernando alias Pila

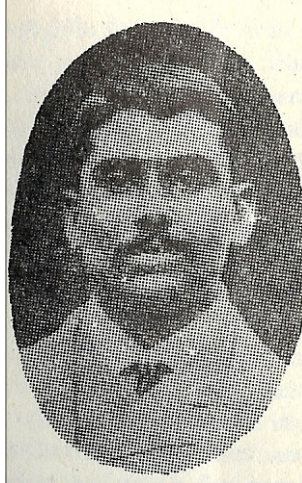


Fernando alias Pila a 23 year old native of Wadduwa, and brought him to Colombo where he resided in Singhone's house for some weeks prior to the murder. On November 16 Singhone arranged with Pila (who was a good marksman) to purchase a gun from Walker and Sons Pettah, under an assumed name. The gun was purchased by Pila and brought to Singhone's house where it was concealed in a wooden box. On the night of 5 December they went across Price Park and approached Mr Dias' garden. According to Pila who turned crown witness in the case, Singhone asked him to wait near the gate while he went into the compound with the gun.

Singhone then had Baron, lure Francis out of the house, whereupon Singhone shot him. He is then said to have left the gun and the bag and hurried back to the gate where he met Pila, gave him Rs 5 and asked him to go back to his village. The more plausible theory is that Pila who was an expert marksman did the shooting, and was asked by Singhone to arrive at a rendezvous near the gate where he was waiting to execute Pila. Unfortunately for Singhone, Pila sensing danger had not returned to him, instead disappeared from the scene walking back to his village in Wadduwa without meeting Singhone. The prosecution alleged however, that Singhone conspired with Kotelawala to murder Francis, and in accordance with Pila's story Singhone did the shooting as well.

The trial in the Supreme Court commenced on 15 April 1907 before an English speaking jury consisting entirely of Europeans. The prosecution was led by Mr C.M. Fernando Senior Crown Counsel assisted by Messrs H.J.C. Pereira, R.H. Morgan, James VanLanzenberg, C. Brooke Elliott, and B.W. Bawa. The accused were defended by Mr C. Hayley, Eardley Norton, Thomas Thornhill, and R.L. Pereira. A significant factor was that the defence expense of Singhone Perera was met by

John Kotelawala, a fact that was readily admitted by defence counsel. While conceding that there was no implication of guilt in such conduct, the prosecution averred that the defence of Singhone Perera had been arranged by Kotelawala even before he arrived in Ceylon from his visit to Japan, a fact which the prosecution thought pointed strongly in favour of its case.



Francis Dixon Attygalle

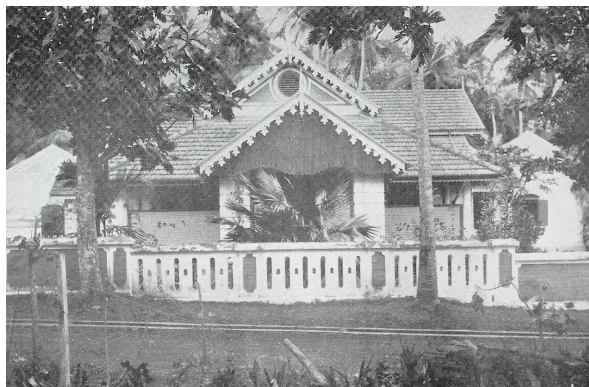
From the evidence that was led at the trial, it was clear, regardless of who did the actual shooting, that Singhone conspired with Pila to murder Francis. Singhone however was loyal to his erstwhile master and did not reveal anything to implicate John Kotelawala, although circumstantial evidence suggested a link between the two, working towards the common objective of destroying Attygalle. It was established by the prosecution that Kotelawala made threats to the deceased, and had a strong motive to eliminate him. It was not possible however for the case for the Crown to be tested by the jury, because Kotelawala committed suicide in the remand prison having consumed arsenic, after Pila's evidence was led. He had apparently concealed the arsenic in the sleeve of his coat for over 2 months in readiness for use when necessary.

At the conclusion of the trial Singhone Perera was convicted, and paid the supreme penalty. Baron Singho was acquitted.

John Kotelawala was popular with the carters and harbour workers of Colombo whose welfare he had espoused with passion. Rumours that he was poisoned by the authorities spread around the city and large crowds gathered around his home "Fellowsleigh" in Asoka Gardens, and turned violent destroying public property. The home of the Crown prosecutor C.M. Fernando "Netherton" in Union Place was under police protection for several weeks

until calm was restored. John Kotelawala left behind his wife Alice, two sons John Lionel (later Sir John) Justin, and a daughter Freda who later married Dr C.V. S. Corea and whose son Dr Gamani Corea was an internationally renowned economist.

The trial of the accused in this case received considerable publicity in local newspapers which reported proceedings in detail, on a daily basis. In later years however, the



"Fellowsleigh" -John Kotelawala's home

national press in Sri Lanka appears to have thrown a blanket of silence over the case, presumably under the influence of interested persons. Not many in Sri Lanka, especially during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were familiar with this case which is widely regarded as one of the most sensational murder trials conducted in the country. The conspiracy of silence was so effective, that even members of the legal fraternity when referring to this case called it the "K" case, rather than the Kotelawala case. It has also been rumoured that most of the copies of the book by A .L. de Witt and G.E.G. Weerasinghe entitled "The Attygalle Murder Case" published in 1908 (from which most of the material in this article has been extracted) were destroyed by interested persons, and very few copies are said to exist in Sri Lanka

**He who can does, he who cannot, teaches.**

*Shaw*

## Letter to the Editor



Dear Sir,

I was very interested to read the article "Ceylonese in the Big Smoke (Journal 26) by Malcolm Abaykoon as I have often wondered what became of Victor Dhanapala, who made a big splash on the London/Colombo scene in the fifties but then vanished from sight. May be Malcolm can enlighten us?

Dhanapala certainly seemed to know everyone of importance at the time and I met him briefly – I think it was in 1950, when he had arrived in Ceylon with a group of all female "disciples", youngish and all women of some consequence but more importantly of considerable substance. They were, if my memory serves me aright: Kamala Tyabji- a barrister and daughter of an Indian High Court judge, Betty Frame, whose family owned Frames Tours (not quite Thomas Cook but a highly reputable company) Elizabeth Sellars – a minor actress, but well-known - Jean Hardwicke – a niece of Sir Cedric Hardwicke, a cinema mogul of the time, and I think, at least one other whose name escapes me. Dhanapala leased a very modern house in Diyatalawa, it was named "Mountain Rest" and on top of a hill, reached by a very steep road which led nowhere else. I was staying with people in Bandarawela who were friends of T.D. Perera, then Secretary to the Treasury, who was also holidaying in Bandarawela. He knew Dhanapala, who had urged T.D. to call with any friends so I too, then aged 19, tagged along on a visit. The house was well furnished with designer items, that which caught my callow eye being an enormous coffee table in the living room, with a single slab of glass as its top. The room had a fantastic view but the girls were all probably in their thirties. Everybody was very affable and some sort of exotic green cocktail was served to all but me, who had a soft drink. I believe there were no servants, but the women did everything. There were articles in the newspapers about Dhanapala, said to be the guru of his female cohort and Colombo was rife with gossip that he had them in thrall with drugs etc.. The group with who I visited were also full of conjecture but reached no conclusion! I saw Dhanapala and the girls at the "pola" (Sunday fair) in Bandarawela later on, where they created quite a stir, all clad in matching short white rain capes with hoods, red lined, and white boots. They got around in a passenger van driven by one of the girls with Dhanapala in the front seat. Some months later they all turned up at Richard Pieris & Co, where I was then employed, to buy tyres and it turned out they were staying with Sir John Kotelawela at his Ratmalana house.

In the early to mid "50's, there was a lot of money around in Ceylon, one of the fortunate consequences of the Korean war and while Exchange Control existed, the regulations were fairly liberal so many sons of wealthy houses went to England to study accountancy and law,

*(Continued on page 29)*

## A Burgher Odyssey: The Ephraums Family of Colonial Ceylon and Malaya

by Joe Simpson

**C**yril Reginald Ephraums presents an impressive figure in the classic turn-of-the-century Malayan hunting photograph: a Theodore Roosevelt look-alike with his broad Stetson and military-style

moustache, he stares confidently into the camera lens as he rests one puttee-wrapped leg on a sprawled tiger and with his right hand grips the barrel of the rifle that fired the fatal shot. Two Malay companions, one evidently a gun-bearer and the other probably a tracker, gaze

rather more diffidently at the photographer. The Cyril in this sepia image from a distant past seems light years away from the lost boy who arrived in Penang on board ship with his younger brother Wilfred, around the mid-1870s – the orphaned children of Clement Reginald Ephraums and his wife Anna Sophia (née Andrée), Ceylon “Dutch” Burghers who had died within a short time of each other, both victims of a virulent tropical fever.

Cyril and Wilfred Ephraums were born in the later 1860s into one of the most respected Eurasian families in colonial Ceylon, direct descendants of **Coenraad Christiaan Ephraums** (d. 1813), an adventurous native of Amsterdam who sought his fortune with the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in the 1780s, during the final years of the Hollanders’ dominion in Ceylon. Like not a few of the VOC’s multi-ethnic employees who travelled East, Coenraad Christiaan probably had remote Semitic roots; perhaps the Ephraums

(originally “Ephraim”?) family had come long ago from the Hibernian Peninsula among many penniless Jewish refugees fleeing from the terror of the Spanish Inquisition, some of whom had settled and eventually prospered within the more tolerant, cosmopolitan embrace of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Holland. Today, curiously, not a trace of the Dutch Ephraumses can be found in The Netherlands.

At any rate, we know that the young Coenraad Christiaan quickly acquired a local wife after

disembarking in Galle, a major VOC centre in southern Ceylon with an impressive 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch Fort and a busy commercial harbour that proved treacherous for shipping during the monsoon season. Her name was **Cotoewe Arachige Anona Sanche de Silva** – indicating mixed Portuguese and Sinhalese heritage or – equally likely – an up-and-coming Sinhalese family that had adopted

Portuguese nomenclature back in the previous century. (The Ephraums genealogy published in the Journal of the Ceylon Dutch Burgher Union during the early 1930s omits the Sinhalese names, referring to her only as “Sanche de Silva”). Before long Coenraad and his wife had four children, including their only son, a boy born in Galle in 1785: **Cornelius Adrianus Ephraums**, who would later marry into the respectable Dutch Burgher community of that town and die there in 1839.

Cornelius Adrianus and his wife Angenita Clara (née Van Ingen) had four daughters and two sons, one of whom, **Daniel Ephraums** (1811 to 1856) married another Galle Burgher, **Catherina Charlotta Zybrandsz**. Of their ten children, one – **Clement Reginald Ephraums** (1841 to 1875) – would become the father of Cyril and Wilfred who immigrated to Penang as young boys, to live with relatives. It was Clement and his wife, Anna Sophia, who both tragically died of that “virulent fever” in mid-1870s Ceylon. Two daughters, sisters of Cyril



Cyril with his trophy—a man eating tiger





...confident young Cyril, aged about 17—2nd from left

and Wilfred named Florence and Amy, remained behind in Ceylon, married and lived out their lives there. The confusion at that time of these four suddenly-orphaned and then separated young children can only be imagined, as one explores the silent graveyard and deserted interior of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century **Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)** in Galle Fort, with its evocative old memorial wall



...and later as a military man

plaques, where so many of its once-flourishing (and now totally vanished) “Dutch Burgher” community were baptized, married and buried in days gone by. Many “Ceylon Ephraumses” are commemorated in the DRC, Galle

Fort.

Once in Penang, both Ephraums brothers seem to have flourished.

A photograph from the early 1880s (above) shows an already confident young Cyril, aged about 17, standing in a multi-ethnic group of fellow-pupils at the Jesuit College, all dressed up for a school play. A shy-looking young spear-carrier standing beside Cyril may be his younger sibling, Wilfred. Immediately after finishing school in 1885 at age 18, the adventurous outdoorsman Cyril Ephraums joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Perak Sikhs, a military-style police force created (as the “Perak Armed Police”) some 12 years before by a Briton, Capt. Tristram Speedy. By the mid-1880s, the British had long since installed the elderly widower Scotsman Sir Hugh Low, erstwhile friend and admirer of Rajah James Brooke, the famous “White Rajah of Sarawak”, as their “Resident” in Perak State.

When the young Englishwoman **Margaret (“Maggie”) Dimpleby** arrived from Devon as Sir Hugh’s housekeeper in the later 1880s, the handsome Burgher cadet police officer Cyril Ephraums (then only 20) lost no time in

claiming her as his bride! The genial Sir Hugh graciously provided his Residency in Kuala Kangsa as the venue for their wedding ceremony, even “giving away” the bride. Whether Mahmoud and Eblis, the two very spoiled pet apes that Sir Hugh is known to have kept at the Perak Residency some years before, and whom he used to hand-feed at his dinner table, participated in this nuptial feast is not recorded!

Cyril and Maggie Ephraums produced four children in rapid succession: Margaret Annie (known as “Daisy”), born in 1888; Freda May, born in 1889; Hugh Cyril, born in 1891; and Jesse Louisa, born in 1893. Soon after the marriage, Cyril abandoned full-time police work for the far more lucrative world of tin mining in Perak State. The British-owned firm of Osbourne & Chapple, his employers, sent their new recruit first to Ipoh, to work for their Gopeng Tin Mining Company, then back to Gopeng. Cyril did well as a mining executive, but – true to his Ceylon origins – his heart lay in the jungles. Before long he was also a renowned big game hunter, respected for his fearlessness and intuition, a fact well attested to by surviving newspaper clippings and other memorabilia belonging to his descendants. One outstanding photograph, most likely dating from the later 1890s, shows a very “pukka” Cyril and his brother Wilfred, pith-helmeted and armed to the teeth amidst a group of Malay guides and gun-bearers. No wonder one of his younger Ceylon cousins long afterwards wrote down his recollection of Cyril in his prime (during one of his many return visits to Ceylon) as having been “a fine big strong man over 6 ft. in height, and who had a great reputation of being a very fine shot and big game hunter”. And a late 1890s Gopeng District newspaper gleefully recorded that: “Mr. Cyril Ephraums is on the war path, against the ferocious denizens of the forest...such an all round sportsman and crack shot. We do hope that his bag will include one or two of the man-eating brutes [tigers] that are creating such terrible havoc just now.”

Cyril’s two surviving grandsons, retired Major-General Roger Ephraums, Royal Marines, and Mr. Robert Shaw, who both live in the U.K., still possess copies of his privately-

printed journal that their grandfather handwrote while journeying for three exhausting months on foot, horseback and elephant through thick jungle and over mountains from one side of the Malay Peninsula to the other. This epic trek took place in 1900, when Cyril was 33. It is a remarkable document, and one hopes that some day, by courtesy of the present-day Ephraums and Shaw families, it will receive the attention of a wider audience. Of passing interest is that the trek ended at Kota Bahru, where the Japanese Imperial Army first invaded Malaysia in December 1941.

Far less information survives about Cyril’s more retiring brother, **Wilfred Clement Ephraums**, although Wilfred – reportedly something of a genius with figures – eventually rose to become Chief Treasurer of the Malay Federation. We know that he sometimes went huntin’ and shootin’ in the jungle with Cyril, but he certainly never acquired his elder sibling’s glamorous reputation as a “sportsman”. The family still has a copy of an undated news clipping (late 1890s?) about the hilarious-sounding “Batu Gajah Concert” held at the Gopeng club of that name, where “Mr. W. Ephraums” played the banjo, as did “Mr. C. Ephraums, of banjo fame”. Unlike Cyril, Wilfred did not make regular visits to his birthplace in Ceylon and no vivid memories of him have been handed down from his Galle cousins. Even Wilfred’s two surviving grandchildren in Australia have no memory of him, so he must have died some time before the late 1920s.

Both Cyril’s and Wilfred’s immediate descendants would lead unusual lives due to circumstances beyond their control as the 20<sup>th</sup> Century unfolded. While in Kuala Lumpur, Cyril died suddenly and unexpectedly of peritonitis in May 1907, aged only 40 and still in his prime. His 16-year-old son Hugh Cyril and his youngest daughter Jessie were at school in England. Soon afterwards, the widowed Maggie Ephraums and her two older daughters left Malaya for England, staying *en route* for some weeks in Galle at the **New Oriental Hotel** (N.O.H.), often visited by Cyril over the years on his return visits to Galle and by then owned by his first cousin **Lionel** (“**Len**”) **Ephraums**, whose own father Albert Richard



(d. 1904) had been a younger brother of Cyril's father. Among the infant children of Len and his wife Elsie at this time was the future **Nesta Brohier**, who in later years became well-known as the long-serving *chate-laine* of the N.O.H. before her death in 1995, aged 90. Maggie and the older girls settled in her home county of Devon, and never returned to Malaya.

In 1910, Cyril's only son, **Hugh Cyril Ephraums**, completed his tin mining studies in England, and returned to Malaya to work for his late father's old employer, at the Gopeng and Kinta Mines. When the Great War broke out in 1914, Hugh Cyril joined up, trained in England, and served as his Battalion's Sniper Officer through the Battle of the Somme, being mentioned in dispatches for gallantry. (Winston Churchill, then Secretary for War, personally signed his military commendation). During Christmas leave, in December 1915, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Hugh Cyril Ephraums of the Devonshire Regiment married **Elsie Caroline Rowden** at the parish church in Exeter. Their first child, a daughter, was born in 1917. A son, Michael, was born in 1920, soon after Hugh Cyril had resumed his mining career in Perak State. Michael grew up to become a Royal Marine Commando officer, and died in action during the Italian campaign, in October 1943. A third child, christened Roderick Jarvis but known as Roger, was born in 1927. Hugh Cyril managed Osbourne & Chappell's Petaling Mine. In 1929, Hugh Cyril and his family left Malaya for good and settled in Kent, southern England, where they ran a small hotel. Roger Ephraums, as mentioned earlier, followed his late brother into the Marines, and retired some 25 years ago as a Major-General, responsible for Britain's amphibious role in NATO's Arctic defences. As a young R.M. officer, incidentally, Roger Ephraums served in South Perak in 1950-52, early on in the Malayan Emergency. He recalls stopping off briefly in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) on his troopship, and enjoying a magnificent curry lunch at the Mt. Lavinia Hotel, just along the coast south of Colombo!

Wilfred's son, **Wilfred Charles Ephraums**, always known as Charles, became the senior rubber planter for Osbourne & Chappell, his

Uncle Cyril's old employers. For many years Charles Ephraums ran their big Narborough Rubber Estate, not far from Sungkai where Cyril had often hunted big game. Charles married **Margaret Jane ("Madge") Munro**, the Edinburgh University graduate teacher daughter of a Scots Presbyterian clergyman based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in the north of England. Both their children, June and Charles (Jnr.), were born there, by caesarean section: a procedure not yet available in late 1920s/early 1930s Malaya. When the Japanese invaded the Malayan Peninsula in late 1941, Charles (a member of the Volunteer Forces) was captured and sent to the notorious POW camp at Changi Jail, later becoming a slave-worker on the Siam-Burma railway. Mercifully, his wife and children barely managed to escape to Australia on one of the last boats out of Singapore. The Australian War Memorial archives in Canberra contains two rolls of historic movie footage shot by Madge during their evacuation; and Charles Ephraums' family in Australia still treasures a miniature portrait of Charles secretly painted in Singapore captivity by his fellow-POW, the famed "Burma Railway" artist, Jack Bridger Chalker.

Charles Ephraums endured truly terrible privations for over three years, but survived. Rescued at the war's end in 1945, he was put on a hospital ship bound for Britain *via* Ceylon, but was left behind in Colombo (maybe they reckoned he was home?!) due to his poor state. Meantime Madge and the two children in Fremantle were desperately trying to find out if he was still alive. Eventually the Red Cross traced Charles to the Colombo hospital, and arranged for him to join his family in Australia. What a tearfully joyous reunion that must have been! After a few months' recuperation, Charles and Madge returned with their daughter June to Malaya, where he resumed his old job running the Narborough Estate. Sadly, he never fully recovered his health after his POW experiences, and died in Perak State of cancer, in 1952. The son, Charles (Jnr.), remained at school in Australia, where he eventually settled and became first, an Air Force Wing Commander (known as "Air Frame", a play on his surname!) and then a successful life assurance company manager. Once, a "Ceylon Burgher" colleague newly introduced to him

ebulliently exclaimed: "Hello, Charles Ephraums! I know a lot about your family in Ceylon. They own the bl\*\*dy place!"

And so, this particular "Burgher Odyssey" continues, one that began with an obscure but no doubt eagerly ambitious young Amsterdammer sailing off to the Dutch East Indies in the 1780s. The saga of the other Ephraums descendants in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) makes for equally fascinating reading. Cyril's direct descendants all live in the U.K., and include a prominent meteorologist and a much-published photography expert (check out their surname in "Google" on the internet); another great-great grandchild with the Ephraums surname was born there quite recently. Wilfred's issue flourish in Australia, like so many other "Dutch Burghers". None of the family remains in Malaysia. From time to time over the years the two branches have reconnected across the globe, such as when an Australian air force officer on secondment in Britain fortuitously put Roger Ephraums in touch with his second cousin Charles (Jnr.) in the 1960s. Robert Shaw, Cyril's grandson by his daughter Freda, has visited Sri Lanka many times over the years, and got to know well his grandfather's cousin Len's daughter, the late Nesta Brohier of the New Oriental Hotel, Galle Fort. Robert alone among the present family has visited Cyril's grave in Kuala Lumpur. Plans are now afoot to include a photograph of Cyril Ephraums in the small museum being created at the N.O.H. by the new owners, Amanresorts of Singapore/Hong Kong, in time for its re-opening as a luxury hotel in late 2004. For Cyril Ephraums, the wheel of history will then have turned full circle.

### Correction

Our attention has been drawn to the article in the last issue of THE CEYLANKAN entitled "THE HENLEY HOUSE BOYS". It would appear that "The Raconteurs" who wrote the article had their facts mixed up when they referred to Mrs A.J.R. De Soysa as someone who was "more than a little mad". This is incorrect as Mrs de Soysa was perfectly sane, as are her many descendants, a fact since confirmed by "The Racconteurs" who apologise to our readers for the error.

## Cricket and other memories...

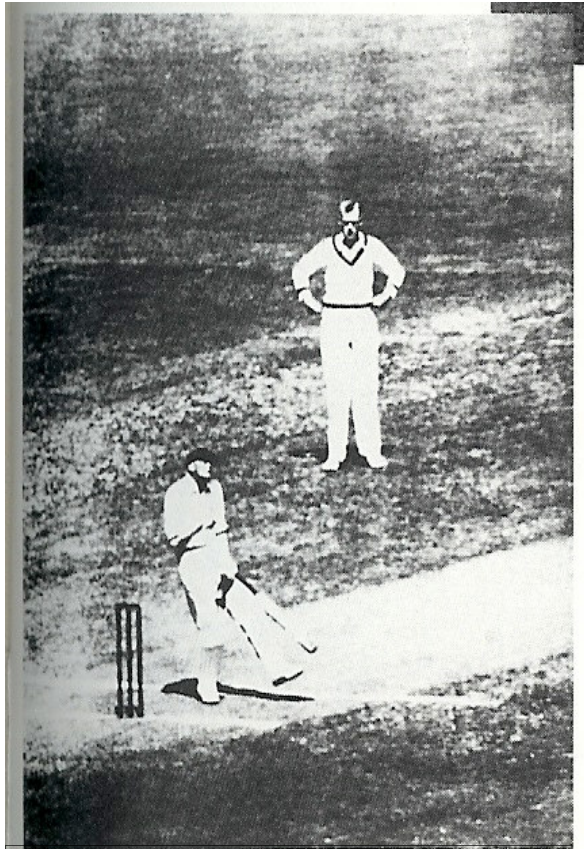
by S Pathiravitana

My childhood was filled with cricket. This was due in part to the fact that my brother, who was senior by ten years, had a pen friend in Australia. His friend used to send him the latest information about Australian cricket. What I liked about the material he sent was that most of it was illustrated.

One thing that clearly remains in my memory is the cricketing almanacs he used to send regularly. These were profusely illustrated with pictures of my cricketing heroes, brief biographies, their performances and achievements, and the cricketing engagements for the current year, so that when I was about nine or ten I could rival the knowledge of old S.P. Foenander, the acknowledged Wisden of the then Ceylon.

The Almanacs were put up in the house alongside the traditional *lithas*, which give the *nekath* times for the Sinhala New Year and the phases of the moon in the current year. My eyes, however, strayed each time I passed the almanacs towards cricket and I gained tremendously from my *en passant* knowledge of the game.

This was the time of the bodyline controversy and Jardine had brought his men to teach the Australians how to win at cricket. There was the picture of Woodfull being struck over his heart by a ball from Larwood and the Australian captain twisting in agony. All this did not go to make the English cricket team very popular with me. Though many of my friends cheered the English, they being Anglophiles, I staunchly remained Australian and thought the Australians were gentlemen and played the game in the way that the



Woodfull hit over the heart in the Australian XI match at Melbourne. This is the picture that did much to form the Australian image of "bodyline". Bowes exhibits a typical Yorkshire degree of sympathy at forward short leg.

Courtesy: "The Bodyline controversy" by Laurence Le Quesne, London 1983

gentlemen demand.

But to get back to my brother's pen friend; he was living in Adelaide at that time and his immediate neighbour was Donald George Bradman. Looking back now I think I missed a good opportunity. But then I was only ten and in any case, journalists' scoops were far far from my mind. My brother spoke of how Bradman trained his eye to see the ball by using a cricket stump to stroke a tennis ball and catching it on the rebound right in the middle of the stump. I don't know whether he got this information from his pen friend or whether he took it from the Onlooker, Foenander's pen name.

Besides cricket, they used to exchange gifts. One such gift the pen friend sent was an egg. It was huge. The only bird I knew who laid such huge eggs was the ostrich. But this, I was told, was the egg of an Emu a much smaller bird than the ostrich but in its own way a sturdy sort. The Emu reminded me of a mythical bird, *Sanda kinduru* which you can come across in the pages of the *Pansiya Panas Jathakaya* (the 550 lives of the Buddha Gotama).

The other striking thing about the Emu's egg was that it had an eye-catching dark green colour with tiny speckles in black. This picture is from my memory and I could be wrong, for memory sometimes is in the habit of adding or subtracting all the time. One thing you couldn't do with it was to hatch it, because the egg, which had the shape of a diminutive rugby ball, was pierced at both its ends. This may have been in keeping with some shipping restrictions or, possibly, just in case the egg decided for some reason or other to hatch in transit.

In return, the pen friend may have received some packets of tea from the fabled gardens of Lipton. But I know that he sent some gifts that would please the female members of his family. This was some lacework; hand made and home made. My mother would be always doing something or other. One of her favourite pastimes was lace making.

First, she had a *beeralu kottay*. It was a straw filled bag in the shape of a pillow. On this clumsy looking structure, which gave a kind of limited movement for weaving the lace, there arose the most charming of lace patterns from the play of the *beeralu*, the Portuguese name for bobbins. Working at the *beeralu kottay* she soon found her style was cramped. She then decided to design a more spacious working top for her lace making.

What emerged finally was remarkable. A

four-legged structure, tall enough to seat her more comfortably before her numerous bobbins with enough hand and leg-room. A friend working at the Colombo Museum walked in one day and saw this novel *beeralu* worktop and said that the museum may like to display this in their showrooms.

Whether it was acquired or not I don't know, but I haven't seen it at the museum. To get back to the cricket ; I thought my brother was not telling me all that his pen friend wrote about cricket. Big brothers have no time for the very young ones and in any case it would take too much of his time to tell me all. I decided not to trouble him but to find out from the letters his pen friend wrote.

I went through a good part of his collection but could hardly find anything of any significance, except that his family was family friends of the Bradmans and the name Jessie figured quite a bit, which led me to think that this could be Bradman's wife. These domestic matters of my hero did not interest me and I was about to give up my chase when the pen friend wanted to tell my brother of an affair that he had just begun with some woman.

I could see him blushing almost in talking of the experience and excused himself several times about having to pour out his heart. He may have taken my brother into his confidence having read his letters, which, according to him, were written in very good English. My brother had not only mastered the English language but also could speak in excellent classical Tamil. He was equally good in Malay and could easily pass off as a Java, the Sinhala term for Malay. Such linguistic fluency made it easy for him to win hearts and get along with people.

So, it was not surprising to see his pen friend wanting to meet him along with

some other female company accompanying him to England just before the Second World War began. Did they continue that conversation they started years ago when the Australian pen friend, young and innocent, opened his heart? I wouldn't know. All that I can say is that when he revealed his intimacy with that woman he didn't say he had touched her breast but that he had felt her mammary gland. A strange case, I must say, of linguistic periphrasis! In the next letter he wrote, he apologised all over again and hoped that he was not being uncouth.

At that time when I read that letter, I didn't know what the mammary gland was. It struck me very much later that the Victorian Age was still with Australia. In fact, I read somewhere recently that in the Fifties of the last century Australia did not permit American comics to be imported.

And what a decline from those days! Today in the playing fields of cricket the world over, bodyline bowling has been replaced with sledging as the newer art in winning matches. And a country, which once hesitated to call a breast a breast, shows absolutely no reluctance to be sexually explicit before the entire world.

#### MEMBERS WHO JOINED IN 2004

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## **Irrigation works in Sri**

### **Lanka – ancient and modern**

*by D.G.Athukorala*

**S**cientists in USA are spending billions of dollars sending probes to Mars to find out whether Mars has water, NOT oil, coal or gold because water is the most essential need for life. Without water life cannot exist. Sri Lanka has neither coal nor oil but it has the one essential ingredient required by man and that is water.

Sri Lanka being one of the oldest civilisations has a chequered history of water resource management & development for well over 2000 years. The ancient Sri Lankan engineers as instructed by their kings built civil engineering works like viharas, stupas, bridges etc, and built hundreds of major and minor reservoirs to collect and to conserve much needed rain water for agricultural and domestic purposes. Most reservoirs were located in the country's north central, northwest and north eastern dry zone regions, in what was then called the Rajarata.

#### **Ancient irrigation works that are augmented by the Mahaweli Project**

Of the very large number of irrigation schemes which include storage, diversion, drainage, flood control or salt water exclusion schemes dotted throughout the island, this article will deal briefly with only some and also those that were augmented by the Mahaweli Development Project undertaken during the early 1970s to late 1980s

#### **Different Irrigation systems**

There are two different irrigation systems. The first is the fairly straightforward method of constructing a dam across a stream or a river and storing the water below it. From here the water is issued through sluices in the dam to a main canal and through distribution channels and field channels to the fields below. By the second method, part of the water of a flowing river is diverted through long canals, and then conveyed to a more suitable place for storage and irrigation.

#### **Storage schemes**

There are about 10 to 12,000 small tanks dotted all over the country. These have been built by individuals to store water for domestic and livestock use. There are 521 major irrigation schemes in Sri Lanka of which 307 are storage schemes. 104 are diversion schemes and 110 are flood control and salt water exclusion schemes. In addition there are 12 lift irrigation schemes. Medium sized tanks commissioned by kings feed the small tanks whilst still larger tanks were built to feed the medium tanks e.g. Kalawewa

#### **Earthfill dams**

Earthfill dams for the storage of water for irrigation have been used since the early days of civilization. A publication, 'Design of small dams' by H.G. Arthur issued by the US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, mentions that one earthfill dam 11 miles long, 70 feet high and containing 17 million cubic yards of embankment was completed in Ceylon in the year 504 BC. We do have definite historical information that the tank known to us as Basawakkulama is the ancient Abhayawewa, constructed about 430 BC by King Pandukabhaya. The earlier settlements were concentrated in the dry zone of the island, that area which receives a rainfall of 50 to 75 inches per year. The earliest were those to the west of Anuradhapura along the Malwatu Oya. (see map on page 20) Anuradhapura was established as the seat of Government. Along with the surrounding districts the area around Anuradhapura was the king's country called 'Rajarata'. Water was a major problem from the outset, as rainfall from the settlement areas was barely sufficient for paddy cultivation. Hence the proliferation of early reservoirs like Tissa wewa (307 BC), Nuwarawewa (1<sup>st</sup> Century BC), Nachchaduwa (866 – 901 AD) with a network of canals were built in the Anuradhapura region.

#### **Kalawewa**

Kalawewa reservoir was constructed during the period of King Dhatusena (459 – 479 AD) conveying water to these city tanks along a main canal known as Yoda Ela or Jaya Ganga, 52 miles long and with a gradient at times of less than one foot to the mile. It is a great feat



of levelling for that time. There is an interesting historical anecdote in reference to the construction of Kalawewa which bears recounting here:

“During its construction, the workmen engaged in the earthwork of the bund are said to have come across a Buddhist monk entranced in Samadhi meditation. They could not rouse him to get him out of their way, and in their impatience to expedite the great work, they did not wait till the priest recovered from his absorption but heaped earth on him and so buried him alive. Some versions of the historical tale imply that this was done in the King’s presence, others introduce a twist prompting the inference that it must have been done with his tacit consent. The consequences of this most deplorable event in the history of Kalawewa are popularly coupled with the form of brutal ill-treatment accorded to King Dhatusena by his ministers and his eldest son that ended with the tragic coincidence which branded his son a patricide. History records that, on Kasyapa’s orders, Dhatusena was stripped naked bound in chains and fetters in a niche, which was closed up with clay”.

#### **Biso-kotuwa**

As the dams became larger, water issues through the sluices became a problem as the force of water started to erode the canals and the earth embankment thereby necessitating a more advanced design of the sluice. This gave rise to the ‘biso-kotuwa’.

Referring to the system for regulating the flow of water from the tanks, Sir Henry Ward a Governor of Ceylon says “There is no visible outlet at the point from which the stream that supplies the paddy fields, issues. Yet it is perennial; and there can be no doubt that the run of the water is regulated by one of those ancient sluices, placed under the bed of the lake which seem to have answered so admirably the purpose for which they were constructed”.

The works in the upstream slopes of the embankment which fulfil this most important function are termed the ‘biso-kotuwa’. Henry Parker a British engineer who served in Ceylon (1870 – 1901) compares them to the valve towers and valve pits of modern times by which the outward flow of the water in large

reservoirs is regulated or totally stopped. Such being the case, the Sinhalese engineers, by building these ‘biso-kotuwas’ established a claim to be considered as the first inventors of the ‘valve pit’ more than 2100 years ago.

#### **Canal diversion schemes**

##### **Elahera Minneriya Yoda Ela**

An anicut across Amban Ganga was built during the reign of King Vasabha about the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD and resulted in the Elahera canal about 20 miles long crossing several river basins. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century King Mahasen (276-303) built Minneriya and Giritale reservoirs at the tail end of the Elahera canal. This became the Elahera Minneriya Yoda Ela.

##### **Minipe Yoda Ela**

At the southern most point on the Mahaweli River was another ancient irrigation system diverting the water at Minipe by means of another anicut built across the river. This canal

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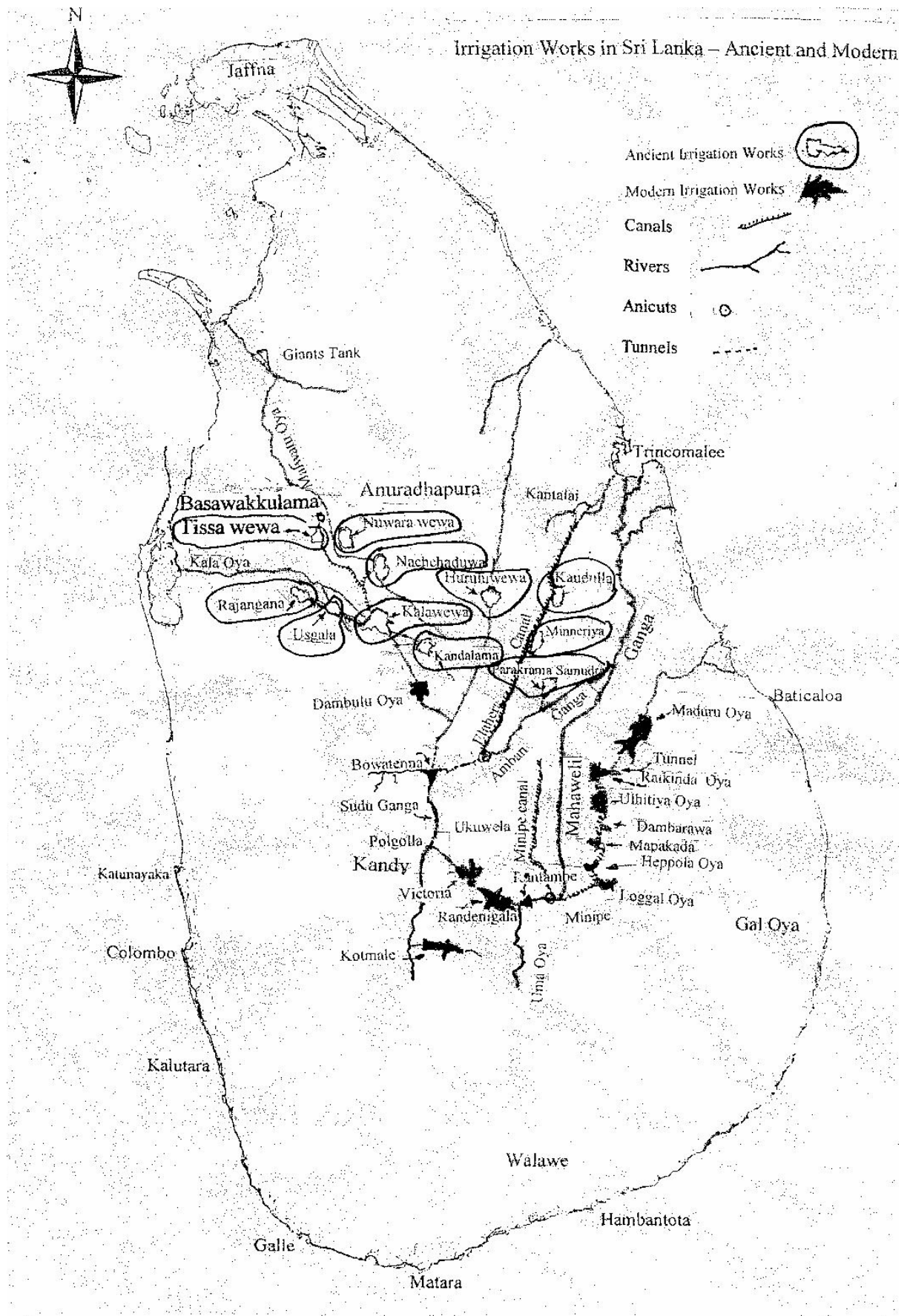
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was extended in later years up to the Central Province and North Central Province although now most of it is not in use. Exactly how this anicut was built across the mighty Mahaweli Ganga is a mystery. This rock masonry dam raised the water in the river to enable the left bank canal to receive much needed irrigation water.

This pattern of irrigation existed for over a thousand years until Mahaweli water was diverted to this region in the late 1970s assuring the farmers of uninterrupted supplies of water, and now, self sufficiency in rice and other subsidiary foods like chili, onion, cow pea, green gram, soya, gherkins etc. The Minipe Right Bank Trans-basin Canal together with several reservoirs culminating in Maduru Oya Dam and reservoir were completed in March 1984.

#### **Ancient farming rituals of Sri Lanka**

According to the old farming traditions in the village, one of the weather beaten and well seasoned elderly farmers conversant with farming traditions will be referred to as the 'Gama Rala' (leader of the farmers). Immediately after the rainy season, the farmers under the leadership of the 'Gama Rala' would meet at the 'ambalama'. (a community hall or refuge) These ambalamas are the meeting places of farmer communities to resolve matters connected with farming. Having met, they decide on a date to commence cultivation, depending on the availability of water. They would decide on an auspicious date and time computed by the nekathirala the astrologer. On the appointed date and time, the farmers commence cleaning the waterways (elaweli) and foot-paths (niyaras). Thereafter the 'Gama rala' would go to the bund of the tank (wewa) and bundle a coin ( popularly called a panama) in a piece of white cloth and tie this to a branch of a nuga tree (banyan) and make a vow to the gods. He would fire a gun once and release water to the fields from the 'sorowwa' (sluice) or 'biso-kotuwa'. This gun shot is to alert the farmers that water has been released so they could commence tilling the fields.

#### **King Parakrama Bahu the Great**

It is recorded that Parakrama Bahu 1 was re-

sponsible for the construction of 163 major tanks, 2376 minor tanks, 165 anicuts, and 3910 canals from tanks and anicuts. History credits him with the following edict:

*“In my kingdom are many paddy fields cultivated by means of rain water, but few indeed are those which are cultivated by means of perennial streams and great tanks. By rocks and by many thick forests, by great marshes is the land covered. In such a country let not even a small quantity of water obtained by rain, go to the sea, without benefiting man. Paddy fields should be formed in every place, excluding those that produce gems, gold, and other precious things. It does not become persons in our situation to live enjoying our own ease, and unmindful of the interests of other people. And ye all, be ye not be discouraged, when a necessary but a difficult work is on hand. Regard it not as a work of difficulty, but follow my advice, accomplish it, without opposing my instructions”.*

Let me quote a western ditty to amplify this;

Said Rip Van Winkle nobly done  
You men of two thousand and one  
Most wondrous inventions sure must be  
From medication to transportation  
From education to communication  
But one thing merits special mention  
There is no substitute for irrigation

#### **Foreign Invasions**

##### **Portuguese & the Dutch:**

With foreign invasions by the Portuguese, Dutch and British these irrigation systems were badly neglected and most of them were beyond repair. The Portuguese (1505 – 1656) were interested only in cinnamon. But the Dutch who took control of the Maritime Provinces in 1656 made their own contribution in development of canals, albeit mainly for their trade transportation needs. A long earth embankment over seven miles in length was constructed along the northern bank of Kelani Ganga known as the Kelani North Flood Protection Bund to prevent the periodic inundation of the paddy fields in the low basins around Kelaniya. Similar action on the Nilwala Ganga resulted in the Urubokka Dam to

cultivate around 8000 acres.

#### **The British:**

British took control of the Maritime areas by 1798 and the entire island in 1815. Whilst the British restored the Giritale tank in 1806, in 1832 they abolished the Rajakariya system which kept the tanks in good repair. It was only in 1856 that Sir Henry Ward; Governor (1855-1860) enacted Irrigation Ordinance of 1856 to reinstate the ancient customs regarding the Irrigation and Cultivation of Paddy Lands. Restoration works of Kalawewa cost Rs 405095 and Jaya Ganga cost Rs 304484 in 1889 along with the city tanks of Anuradhapura. On a spot between Kalawewa and Balaluwewa there is a monument that bears testimony to the accomplishment of an undertaking which is not inaptly referred to as “the most successful restoration yet accomplished in Ceylon”.

#### **Irrigation works after Independence**

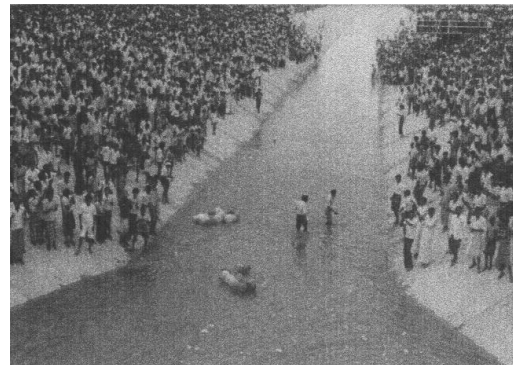
A new irrigation policy was announced by Hon D S Senanayaka Minister of Agriculture and Lands in 1932 to improve village irrigation works, minor flood protection works etc and restoration works were carried out on Parakrama Samudra, Minneriya and Elahera canal in addition to other irrigation works. It was after independence in 1948 that, the then Prime Minister D. S. Senanayaka - fondly remembered as the Father of the Nation- himself a man of the soil, restored more of the irrigation systems that had been neglected from ancient times. This led the nation towards self sufficiency in food, rice in particular.

#### **Mahaweli Development Project**

Studies were carried out since 1958 on the Mahaweli Project by USOM and investigations done by Canadian Hunting Survey Corporation for a complete utilisation of the water resources of Mahaweli Ganga as a multi purpose project for irrigation, flood protection and hydro power. UNDP appointed FAO to carry out the surveys. A final report of the study together with the Master Plan to be implemented over a 30 year period was completed in 1969. This consisted of three phases made up of different projects which in turn had several stages.

The first phase of the first project of the Master Plan commenced with the Polgolla Bowatenna complexes in 1970 and was completed in 1976 diverting 2000 cusecs (cubic feet per second) of water into the Kalawewa reservoir to irrigate fields under the Anuradhapura city tanks and the Elahera, Minneriya, Kantalai irrigation systems and others. 2000 cusecs is about 5 million cubic meters of water per day sufficient to cultivate 80 ha of paddy land per day. The storage capacity of Kalawewa was more than doubled after the diversion. This provided improved irrigation facilities for 28871 ha of existing lands and for 50, 705 ha of new lands.

Further east, the Minipe diversion work had also commenced and was nearing completion enabling water to be diverted along a newly constructed Minipe Right Bank Trans-basin



Inauguration of the Minipe canal

Canal as far north but not including Maduru Oya reservoir, which was completed in 1984.

These projects namely, Polgolla Bowatenna Complexes and the Minipe RB Transbasin Project completed a major portion of the irrigation works that were undertaken during the period up to late 1900s. The remaining irrigation project was the Maduru Oya project.

The balance of the works under the MDP was the construction of Hydro Power Projects. More irrigation and power projects under the Master Plan of the Mahaweli Development are yet to be undertaken.

#### **Accelerated Mahaweli Project**

In 1977 the government under Mrs. Bandaranaike was defeated and J R Jayawardena was elected to power. He appointed Gamini

Dissanayaka as his Minister for Irrigation Power and Highways. They were not fully informed of the Mahaweli Project although they were committed to continue with this enormous project costing several billions in tax payer's money. J R Jayawardena and his team of Ministers therefore decided to visit the Mahaweli Development Board to find out more information on the project. They met the Engineers and Administrators (I was present at this meeting). After about an hour of discussions with the Ministers, Mr Jayawardena posed the vital question. Can't you do this in six years? Officials were silent for a couple of minutes and then there was a response. "If you give us the manpower, money and equipment we have the ability to do this in six years" the officials responded. Prime Minister Jayawardena and Minister Gamini Dissanayaka were delighted. The AMP got a kick start. Appeals were made to US, UK, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Canada and France for assistance. The response was positive and funds and assis-



Ancient sluice at Maduru Oya  
dated to 1st Century BC

tance flowed in.

While constructing the Maduru Oya Project in 1980, the engineers made an extraordinary discovery. They found the remains of an ancient reservoir built almost along the proposed dam axis and the sluice. This sluice is preserved and can be seen today from the Maduru Oya dam site. Accurate carbon dating of the bricks indicate that this structure dates back to about the first century BC. Following this discovery, major re-design of the new irrigation outlet became necessary to preserve this

## BOOKSHOP AND WEB RESOURCES

### BOOKS/MAPS/COLLECTIBLES

This column is a regular feature for the benefit of members who publish works, and others who wish the Society to sell material on their behalf. No charges apply to members but donations will be gratefully received. Others pay a handling charge of 10%. Please e-mail the editor if you wish to take up this offer.

**Through my Asian Eyes**—S Pathiravitana—Godage International Publishers (Pvt) Ltd, 2003 paperback xii + 400 pp, \$ 15.00 + P&H. Contact Sumane Iyer (02) 9456 4737 or email: sumane@cicon.com.au

#### **Armageddon or Brave New World?**

By Christie Weeramantry. Published by Sarvodaya Visva Lekha, 173pp, AU\$ 12.50 + \$ 2.50 f&h. Contact Jay Fernando 03 9841 0192.

**Without Fear or Favour** by F. N. D. (Freddy) Jilla. Memoirs of a retired officer of the Sri Lanka Police Service. Published by Vishva Lekha 2001, 625pp \$25.00 + \$4.00 p&h. Call Homi Jilla (03) 9804 5316

**George Steuart & Co Ltd 1952-1973: A Personal Odyssey** - Tony Peries. \$ 20. Contact Tony on 02 9674 7515 or Treasurer Rienzie.

**Hills of Paradise** - by Dr Shiva Breckenridge 305pp, hard cover \$ 40.00 + \$ 5.00 p&h, contact Treasurer.

**Celebrating Sri Lankan Women's English Writing 1948-2000** - by Yasmine Gooneratne Publisher: Women's Education & Research Centre, 58 Dharmarama Road, Wellawatte, Colombo 6 Paperback, 451 pp, price SL Rs. 850/- Contains bibliographies, documentation, and analyses of the writing of some 70 Sri Lankan women authors.

Please note p&h is within Australia only, overseas postage quoted on request.

### WEB SITES WORTH VISITING

[www.lib.mq.edu.au/all/journeys/menu.html](http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/all/journeys/menu.html)  
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archaeologically important structure. (above)

Let me quote Henry Parker, the British engineer who served in Ceylon from 1870 to 1901:

*“If we rashly think, after a mere glance at the site (in comparison, on the other hand, with the actual practical experience of the Sinhalese for nearly 1000 years), that we can change all that, and effect untold improvements on the general designs of the ancient works we may find, when too late, that they were right and we were wrong. Experience constantly impressed me that if there was one subject which these wonderful old engineers understood better than another, it certainly was the irrigation of paddy fields, and the designing, at least on outline, of the great structures which were needed for the purpose”.*

#### **Negative aspects:**

Some negative aspects of the Mahaweli Development Project have been identified:

The environmental, socio-economic aspects revolve round the lives of people who were displaced by these projects, then there is the foreign debt situation. The projects undertaken prior to the AMP were considered reasonable by way of costs. There is a strong feeling that the cost of projects after the AMP is far too excessive.

#### **Drainage and Seismic Activity**

##### **Drainage**

Considering the serious damage done to some large irrigation projects due to water stagnation in certain other countries, the downstream irrigation areas under the Mahaweli Project must have an organised program to maintain proper drainage away from the paddy lands to prevent water stagnation. Water stagnation can lead to salts from deep under ground to surface, creating salty conditions which can render the land unsuitable for cultivation.

##### **Seismic Activity**

Due to the extra water load from the newly constructed reservoirs, the earth's crust immediately underneath has to take an additional load which can cause disturbances leading to

earthquakes. Soon after construction of all these reservoirs seismic activity was monitored for several years and thankfully there were no serious earthquake activity recorded. Hopefully there will not be any in the future. A fault zone below Rantambe reservoir and in the Mahiyangana – Minipe area needs to be carefully monitored.



#### **RECIPE CORNER AVOCADO ICE CREAM**

3 Large Ripe Avocados (or 4 Small)  
2 Tablespoons of Lemon Juice  
1 Litre Vanilla Ice Cream

½ Can Condensed Milk, Castor Sugar (Optional if you need it sweeter), Vanilla, Green Colouring

##### **Method:**

- Scoop the avocados and add lemon juice and mix with an electric mixer or Bamix.
- Add in condensed milk, litre of softened vanilla ice cream, vanilla, colouring and sugar to taste and set in a Tupperware jelly mould or any container and freeze overnight. Quickly dip the container in hot water before you turn over so that it comes off easily. Enjoy!!

#### **A CORDIAL WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**



**Prof. Raja & Chandrani Bandaranayake**

*Rosebay NSW*

**Bishrul & Sufana Amjadeen**

*Millpark VIC*

**Ronald & Rosemarie Fernando**

*Romsey VIC*

**Rex & Navaranjini Olegasegarem**

*East Ryde NSW*

**Earle & Rosemarie Forbes**

*Georges Hall NSW*

**Jayantha & Christine Jayawardene**

*Rajagiriya Sri Lanka*

**Errol & Deanna Graham**

*Galston NSW*

**Maurice & Carol Raymond**

*Denistone East NSW*

...who have joined since publication of  
Journal 26

## SYNOPSIS OF MEETINGS

**Sydney 6th June 2004**

The President introduced the first speaker of the evening Mr Jayantha Jayawardene, Managing Trustee of the Biodiversity and Elephant Conservation Trust of Sri Lanka and author of the book “The Elephant in Sri Lanka”.



Jayantha Jayawardene

Mr Jayewardene first transported the audience through numerous fascinating biodiversity issues in the Sri Lankan context, leaving specific discussion of Elephants in Sri Lanka to the latter part of his address.

Explaining that there was biodiversity *between* species – for example, numerous reptiles, corals, mammals etc– as well as biodiversity *within* species – e.g., the African and the Asian elephant, Mr Jayewardene asserted that Sri Lanka was a biodiversity “hot spot”, in that the country supported a very high level of biodiversity. Did one know, for example, that Sri Lanka supported four thousand species of flowering plants? The country also displayed high *ecosystem* diversity, its different ecosystems supporting different types of life, together with a high level of *endemism* (endemic meaning found only in certain areas – for instance, 41% of fish and 28% of flowering plants are endemic to Sri Lanka).

He explained that it followed from this, that if a particular ecosystem were to be destroyed for instance, by forest fire, reclaiming land for construction, settlement, irrigation, etc, the species endemic to that ecosystem were destroyed for ever, since they could not be re-

placed from elsewhere. Thus the problems caused by ad hoc “development” were legion, and often resulted in habitat degradation, for example, elephants getting trapped in small pockets of jungle, leading inevitably to human / elephant conflicts. The pollution of air and water, the side-effects of tourism, mining, and the widespread use of pesticides and fertilizers, were also cited as instruments of habitat degradation. There was also the phenomenon of over-exploitation, such as when there were more jeeps than elephants at Minneriya!

The answer to these problems had to be the utilization of natural resources in a *biodiversity-sustainable* manner. *Conservation* needed to be practised, i.e., the planning of national resource allocation in such a way as to conserve the habitat. This could be done either “in-situ”, as with ordinances and conventions within a framework to protect, and the establishment of sanctuaries; or, “ex-situ”, by the use of zoological and/or botanical gardens etc. Sometimes conservation of an “umbrella” species (e.g., the elephant), would result in the conservation of numerous other species within the elephant habitat.

Going on to *The Elephant in Sri Lanka*, Mr Jayewardene asserted that unlike its African counterpart, which was poached aggressively for its tusks, the Asian elephant was not sought after for ivory, the tusks being less malleable and thus difficult to carve, as well as being far less numerous. Instead, it was prone to domestication, being easy to tame. Diversion to domestic use did dent the elephant population; however, as there was little or no practice of domestic breeding – although tame elephants tended to live longer than in the wild because of reduced stress, and better digestion of food. Dwindling forest cover coupled with a steep increase in human population was also taking its toll of the elephant population which, according to Mr Jayewardene, was estimated at between 4,000 and 4,500 – although he cautioned that this was only an extrapolation from the figures of earlier researchers.

Here again, in order to conserve the species, a National Policy with a short-term and a long-term framework was required – but alas, this was not high on any political agenda at the present time!

The President introduced the second speaker of the evening Mr Tony Peries who had been the first Sri Lankan Chairman and C.E.O. of the oldest Colombo firm George Steuart & Company before his migration to Australia in 1973.

He had joined the firm in 1952 at a time when the vast majority of staff were British expatriates. Mr Peries described the commercial milieu prevailing in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as one of pervasive British influence, upon which the Ceylonese community had little impact. However, there were exceptional pockets of endeavour, such as the firm run by Richard Pieris (no relation!), which introduced tyre retreading and enjoyed prosperity after the Korean War and subsequent boom. He described the role of the British Banks in commerce, operating as they did in virtual isolation from the Ceylonese traders and business people; their objective was to support the so-called Sterling Companies, and what little dialogue they had with Ceylonese entrepreneurs was through the medium of the “Shroff”, an individual who served as the bridge between the lower management echelons in the Banks and the Ceylonese would-be borrowers. Often these positions were dynastic, being passed from father to son, and they wielded enormous clout in the world of the Ceylonese businessman.

In similar fashion, the British community in Colombo lived largely isolated from the Ceylonese community, this isolation being most obvious in the stringent policy of some Social Clubs to keep their memberships exclusively British – a policy which died away only in the 1960’s or so.

There was a well-defined “pecking order” in the Colombo society of the day: at the top of the tree were the Civil Servants, then the Importers, Wholesalers and Distributors, and finally the Shop-Owners (those who interfaced directly with the Ceylonese public). Even blue-blooded British firms like Hunter & Co, which by virtue of their location on the fringes

of Pettah sold hardware directly to the Ceylonese public (among others), were considered to belong to the lower category!

Mr Peries went on to describe plantation life in those days, the gigantic role the Tea Trade played in late- and post-Colonial Ceylon, and the hard work of plucking tea – something the



Tony Peries

Sinhalese peasantry would not subscribe to, and which therefore had to be fulfilled through South Indian plantation workers expressly imported for the purpose. Once again the phenomenon of the “go-between” was seen: the “Head Kangan” was an individual entrusted by the Plantation Managers to bring in gangs of labourers from South India. Like the Shroffs, these Kanganis

became in some cases powerful and well to do individuals in the estates milieu. Once the Indian labour could no longer move freely between South India and Ceylon due to Government restrictions, the issue became increasingly problematical, and the seeds of subsequent discontent and the “stateless” people began to be sown. He traced also, the emergence of the railways as the principal transporter of tea from the estates to the City, and the other transport companies which grew up around this activity.

Mr Peries spent some time describing the Colombo Tea Auctions – the activities of the Colombo Tea Traders’ Association, the “colour bar” they early on exercised against Ceylonese traders like himself, the emergence of the Borah community in Tea Exporting, especially to the then economically upsurging Middle East, and the huge volumes of paperwork which all of this trading entailed (before the age of the electronic calculator!), using small armies of “Clerks”.

But through it all, he said, it was obvious that the organization and administration of the Tea Trade in its totality was a true marvel of efficiency, and this was largely the initiative of the British.

*Chris Piachaud*

## Melbourne – May 2004

Spirit Possession in Sri Lanka – Lecture by Dr Channa Wijesinghe

Dr Srilal Fernando presided at the meeting.

Dr Wijesinghe's lecture was very well attended perhaps because of his academic reputation as Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Ceylon and his reputation in Australia. Perhaps some people were attracted by the contradiction between his western mental health scientific education and practice and his interest in what is now the diminishing belief in spirit possession in the modern world. It must be pointed out that the results of his survey show that at the time Spirit Possession was a fairly common phenomenon among rural and semi rural people in Sri Lanka.

Dr Wijesinghe defined the concept of Spirit Possession "as the incorporation of a foreign spirit into a human being which is characterised by a change in appearance, behaviour and feeling. The afflicted person claims to be possessed and/or is recognised as such by the community". This recognition conforms to cultural patterns. There could be possession accompanied by trance or without trance. On the other hand if the behaviour was idiosyncratic then it was due to illness or fraud.

When Dr Wijesinghe was working at the Mental Hospital the medical staff decided that it was worthwhile that there should be a scientific survey in Etul Kotte of the phenomenon of Spirit Possession in a locality of half a square mile. Of 1342 households, 2 refused to participate and 98 were screened. The characteristic of PT (Possession & Trance) are Altered Consciousness, Loss of Control, Brief Episodes, a Cultural Pattern, Amnesia. The types of PT were: spontaneous individual reactions, induced reaction by ceremonial participation, sorcery, conditioning, voluntary through a medium.

The reactions (syndromes) could be; *Acute Fear Reactions*; which could result in a dissociative state precipitated by fright which in a setting where the subject fears attack by a Spirit. Dissociation is the sudden disruption of

the usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory, identity or perception of the environment eg. A 19 year old man instructed to dispose of a charmed lime was found at night in a bush in a stupor. He became lucid the next morning. *Projections of aggression*: utilising socially structured mode of exhibiting aggression towards people in authority. Common in females. *Manipulation of Environment*: No manifestation of aggression, eg a 40 year old widow with 4 children 11 years after her husband died the family business was in crisis. She was possessed by the husband's spirit who implored the relatives to help his widow. *Catharsis* eg explosive release of pent up emotions devoid of any aggressive intent- public expiation of guilt, eg a man first possessed at the age of 37, 3 months after the death of his mother because he had failed to bring his dying mother her favourite food.

Cedric Forster

## Have a Giggle!!

Announcement at my local rail station:  
Customers are reminded that **SMIRKING** is not permitted on City Rail.....



Two antennae meet on a roof, fall in love and get married. The ceremony wasn't much, but the reception was great.

A pair of jump leads walk into a bar. The bar tender is quick on the draw, he says "I'll serve you, but don't start anything".

When you rearrange the letters in MOTHER-IN-LAW you get WOMAN HITLER

A man woke up in hospital after a bad accident and shouted "Doctor, Doctor I can't feel my legs"! The doctor replied, "I know you can't— I have cut off your hands".

A man owes his success to his first wife and his second wife to his success.

The easiest way to make your old car run better, is to check the price of a new one.

**Deja Moo**: the feeling you have heard this bull before



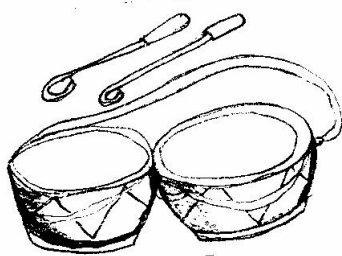
## Some Musical Instruments of the Sinhalese

by Vama Vamadevan

I was fortunate to gain some insight into the musical instruments of the Sinhalese when I served as the Deputy Commandant of the Sri Lanka Police Reserves. I was commissioned to set up a Hewisi Band that would provide oriental martial music for police parades. A grand opportunity came my way, when the Prime Minister of the day, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike gave me orders to augment the police numbers by a reserve body of 6000 to cope with the up-coming Non-Aligned Nations Conference of 1976 in Colombo.

In the course of the massive recruitment task, I got the assistance of Late Capt. Clarence Delwella and Dr Ian Danapala to scout around in the Kurunegala & Ibbagamuwa areas to recruit persons from families versed in the musical traditions of the country. We succeeded in recruiting 32 men and 8 women well versed in the exotic sounds and rhythms of the art. They were kept as one body in one location and given basic police training while they also trained as a body of drummers and musicians under the supervision of Wilson Olabaduwa from the government school of dancing who was recruited as Sgt. Major.

The instrument that impressed me most was the *Tamattam*. This fascinating instrument is made of jak wood in the shape of two large cups. The right hand drum is tensioned to a higher pitch than the left hand drum. The drummer uses sticks made of cane. The cane sticks have a rounded end and these sticks are

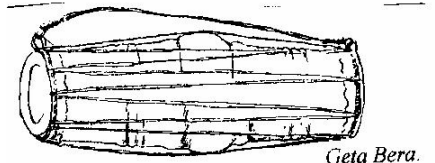


Tamattam.

called *Kaddupus*. The drummer wields these sticks with dexterity, beating the left and right hand drums in fast sequence. The flexi-

bility of the cane stick enhances the speed of drumming. Alternatively, he can use both sticks on the right and left drums with good effect. While drumming, the drummer swings his head and throws the tail of his turban for effect in colourful movements. On occasions two Tammatam players face each other and indulge in competitive drumming which is called a *tharangaya*. The facial expressions of the competitors enhance the challenge and leave the beholder in no doubt as to who is winning. The tamattam is an integral part of Kandyan dancing.

The other drum that draws attention is the *Geta Bera*. So called because of the bulge (called *gata*) in the middle of the drum. It is used often on festive occasions; therefore, it is also referred to as the *magul bera*. This drum too is made of jak and scooped out of one block of jak wood. The two sides of the drum have two different vellums to produce two contrasting tones. The right hand side is made of monkey skin and the left-hand side of ox-skin and therefore is much tougher. The required tension is obtained by driving cylindrical blocks between the leather straps holding the vellum.



Geta Bera.

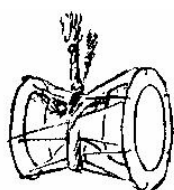
The counterpart of the Geta bera in low country drumming tradition is the *Yak Bera* used mainly in Devil dancing, thovil, bali etc. It is much longer than the Geta Bera and does not have the bulge in the middle. It is absolutely cylindrical. Usually, it is played with the hands. It is turned out of *kitul* wood and the vellum is of deerskin.



YAK BERA

The *Udekki* is an hourglass shaped drum. The drummer holds with one hand and

plays with his other hand providing vibrations that carry far into the countryside. This instrument can also be played by at-

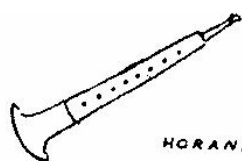


UDEKKI

taching a string with a knot at the end fastened to the waist of the drum. The knotted string strikes the two faces of the drum when rattled. In Sri Lanka the Udekki is made of wood, while in South India it is usually of brass or clay.

The *Davula* is the drum used for tom-tom beating and is also called *Ande-bera* to announce Royal edicts. It is a cylindrical drum and is beaten with a stick which has a curve and is used on the right face. The left face is beaten with the hand. This drum too is made of jak wood or Kitul. The vellum is made of deer or calf skin on both sides. The stick is of wood but in rare cases it is made of ivory. It is usual to paint the drum with lacquer in various artistic designs.

There are many wind instruments, such as, the Horanawa, Kombus, Conch shells, flutes etc. Of the wind instruments the well known one is the Horanawa. This is made of wood or buffalo horns. These are lacquered and ornamented according to the whims of the owner. The mouthpiece is made of a tube with a circular metal disc. The player blows from this end. The sound



HORANAWA

of the horanawa is very audible and pierces the country air.

As captioned, these are only some of the musical instruments of the Sinhalese. The *Thupavamsa* gives a comprehensive list numbering 79 musical instruments. During the times of the Sinhalese Kings *hewisi* formed an important part of the court ritual or at times when they set out for war.

Going back to where we started the hewisi band of the Sri Lanka Police Reserves had the rare distinction of being invited and participating in the Edinburgh Military Tattoo

of 1974. I accompanied the troupe as *chef de mission*. The tour was a resounding success. The sound and throbbing of the soul stirring hewisi drums ringing through the streets of London and Edinburgh, when they did promotional marches through the streets, had to be seen to be believed. On the Edinburgh Castle arena they drew tumultuous cheers from the time they stepped in. The highlight was the performance before Her Majesty the Queen after which she entertained the troupe to tea. Similar performances were given at the Royal Tournament in Earls Court, the Royal Agricultural Show at Coventry and at the Military Tattoo in Colchester.

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(Continued from page 10)

where ability had little to do with getting a place in a firm of Chartered Accountants or the Inns of Court. Some of these young men, aptly if unkindly dubbed "student princes", hung around in London for years, having a wonderful time and acquiring no qualifications whatever. One of the more infamous had a wife, child and ayah in a London flat, the servant looking after the child as well as cooking rice and curry daily. He was still there in the late sixties, spending each morning in the library of the National Liberal Club. Another of these "princes" was known as a willing guide/driver for visiting Ceylonese touring the continent and spent most of the warmer months thus occupied.

Malcolm is quite right about the lack of Ceylonese restaurants in London in the 50's but when I first visited there from June-Dec '56, there were a fair few Indian restaurants mostly around Victoria and Tottenham Court Road. By 1963, the "Sri Lanka" had opened in Earls Court and my recollection is that it was not too good, the Indians providing better taste and value: there was one in Victoria where a couple could have quite a good meal and 2 beers for about 30 shillings. There were several well-established Chinese restaurants, especially around Cambridge Circus, among them *Ley On*'s which I believe is still there. This place had a tenuous connection with Ceylon as the owner in the late '40's was married to the widow ("Dolly" an English lady) of Stanislaus (Stanny) Fernando, son of L.B. Fernando, a well known solicitor who lived at "Guyscliff" in Edinburgh Crescent, next to the old Public Library. Stanley died young and his widow returned to England. The owner of *Ley Ons* also owned a Derby winner in the early 50's and all comers to the restaurant that night were entertained to free dinner and champagne.

Tony Peries  
Sydney

## TUTELAGE

O isle of pearl and palm,  
O sea built plain  
Supporting an unconquered  
mountain heart  
Throughout thy story, lacking not in pain,  
Folk after folk approach, instruct, depart

Ages ago Vijayo came and drove  
The Veddah caveward, and possessed the land  
Leaving a line of kings by Tissa's wave  
Where Ruwanweliseya and Abhayagiri stand

Parakrama Bahu greatest, at whose word  
Arose among the eastern forest trees  
Beyond Minneriya and the mighty herd  
High Polonnaruwa's shrines and palaces

Then caravels of Portugal had power,  
Beneath the blazon of a Cross of Awe:  
Next, Holland's citizens enjoyed their hour,  
Their legacy, the lawyer and the law

Now thou art linked with England, not unwise  
Mother of mighty Daughters, free and far,  
Nor wholly skill-less in perplexities,  
World knots of Truth and Justice, Peace and War

Slow tutelage, how slow! But sure the goal:  
Lanka, have patience, thou shalt win thy soul

(From *Call of Lanka*- W. S Senior-1930)

### A prayer is answered!!

One day this Preacher decided that he would skip church and go hunting. When in the woods he came upon a bear. He started running, and he ran for a while until all of a sudden he tripped over a tree root. At this moment he was almost face to face with the bear. He dropped to his knees and said, "Dear Lord, if there is one wish I would want for you to give me it would be to make this bear a Christian."

And at that instant? the bear halted, dropped to his knees and said, "Dear Lord, thank you for the food I am about to receive!"

## OFFICE BEARERS OF THE CEYLON SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

### President:

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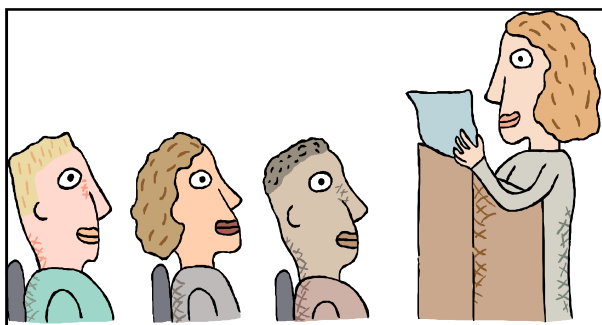
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## **NEXT SYDNEY MEETING**

Sunday 29th August 2004 at 6.30 p.m

1st Speaker

**Capt Elmo Jayewardene**

on

**"The Last Kingdom of Sinhalay"**

2nd Speaker

**Professor Yasmine Gooneratne**

on

**"LONE WOOLF- A centenary tribute to the author of "The Village in the Jungle".**

**Hornsby Bowling Club**

22, Waitara Avenue

access only from Alexandria Parade

Meeting will be followed by a light supper. Volunteers offering plates please contact Social Convenor Chandra on 9872 6826

RSVP Hugh 9980 2494, Chris 9498 2158

## **How to become a member of the Ceylon Society of Australia**

Contact Rienzie Fonseka

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E-mail: [winston@secura.com.au](mailto:winston@secura.com.au)  
and request an application form

### **In search of speakers**

The committee would welcome nominations of knowledgeable and academic persons to speak at our regular meetings, both in Sydney and Melbourne. You may have friends, relations who live in or visit Australia. Our calendar for the year is February/ March - April/May, September/October and November/December. Dates can be arranged to suit availability of eminent speakers. Please contact President Hugh Karunanayake on 02 9980 2494 - fax 02 9980 7630 or  
E-mail: [karu@idx.com.au](mailto:karu@idx.com.au)

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## **NEXT MELBOURNE MEETING**

Sunday 19th September 2004 5.30 p.m

Speaker

**Capt Elmo Jayewardene**

on

**"The Last Kingdom of Sinhalay"**

Venue: Holy Redeemer Church Hall  
Cnr of York Street and Mont Albert Road  
Surrey Hills VIC 3127  
(Melways Ref: 46 H10)

For further information please contact

Shelagh -AH 9808 4962  
Or Srilal -AH 9809 1004

"THE CEYLANKAN" is published quarterly. Every effort is made to print material that is relevant and correct, but we do not take responsibility for errors. The editorial committee would appreciate if inaccuracies are brought to its attention. Original material is sought, preferably of an anecdotal, historical nature, but any material will be considered provided it contributes to the Society's ideals of being non racial, non-political, non-religious, and non-controversial.

Where applicable, contributors are requested to annotate bibliographical references to facilitate further research & study by interested members.

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