

**National integration in Sri Lanka: Capital accumulation, spatial politics,
intermarriages, and religion in nation-building among the Kandyan Sinhalese**

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of the ‘Kandyan’ of Sri Lanka, now considered a subset of the country’s Sinhalese majority, presents an intriguing puzzle that is exemplified by their demand for federal autonomy as recently as 1927 and their current political stance of being strongly aligned with the unitary power arrangement of the state, less than a century after the initial federal demand. What makes this shift of attitude even more interesting is the lack of a visible political or economic incentive for the Kandyan to have become subsumed under the Sinhalese identity, given that colonial favour mostly lay with non-Kandyan Sinhalese (known as low-country Sinhalese) who became immensely rich and powerful under colonial rule, and that consequently, Kandyan elites were more or less excluded from political power in post-colonial Sri Lanka as well. Kandy’s absorption into the mainstream political culture in Sri Lanka is interesting not only because of the strong sentiments of distinction felt and expressed by Kandyan initially, but also because of the entirely opposite trajectory taken by Tamil nationalism, which was also a nationalist movement in Sri Lanka that emerged in the wake of the colonial period.

In order to explore this puzzle, the present study develops along lines of capital accumulation, spatial rearrangement and representation of political power, intermarriages, and religion as a binding factor, which are shown to be constituent – and intertwined – parts of the process of Kandy’s political identity being diluted over time. It employs a research methodology of the post-positivist tradition, relying on archival material, other secondary sources such as books and papers, as well as some field observations.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Kandyans of Sri Lanka are a subset of the country's Sinhalese majority who live in the hills concentrated in the center of the island, with a supposed difference in their 'cultural' disposition as compared to their brethren in the lowlands. They resisted colonial conquest the longest, and enjoyed uninterrupted territorial existence for over three centuries when the maritime provinces were under European powers. These differences, as they were, gradually consolidated into a 'Kandyan' identity during the colonial era, spurred largely by the fact that the British vested a considerable amount of colonial favour upon non-Kandyan Sinhalese known as low-country Sinhalese (Roberts 1977; Wickramasinghe 2006)ⁱ. Consequently, low-country Sinhalese managed to emerge as rich and powerful elites in the country, to whom powers of the colonial rule were mainly transferred at independence (Jayawardena 2000), along with some minority elites, leading the Kandyans to demand federal autonomy immediately prior to independence. It should be noted here that even though the Kandyan nationalist project was one of elite creation and maintenance, all elite and peasant Kandyans were affected by the sudden changes impacting their society due to the policies of the British. Even after independence, political power continued to rest mainly upon the low-country Sinhalese, and has always been somewhat distanced from Kandyan elites (Roberts 1977). These factors led to the construction of a 'Kandyan nationality' during British colonial times, which, according to Governor Manning (who was the Crown Representative in Ceylon from 1918-1925), constituted an entity separate from the low-country Sinhalese not only in a politico-cultural sense, but also in an ethnic sense (Welhengama and Pillai 2014).

Despite these developments, it is puzzling how, over the past century, Kandyan elites and Kandyans in general have shown great willingness to join hands with the greater Sinhala community, especially when compared to the Tamil community that evolved into one with intense political sentiments driven towards a nationhood of their own. As my undergraduate thesis illustrated, the initial federal demand of the Kandyan community was abandoned in the face of these separatist claims of the Tamil ethnic minority. However, the relinquishing of this demand constitutes a specific manifestation of a larger process of integration/ assimilation, the dynamics of which I hope I explore in this thesis.

1.2 Research Problem

Stemming from the above reflections, my research problem is:

Despite having expressed strong nationalistic sentiments towards the end of the colonial era, why have Kandyan Sinhalese of Sri Lanka become integrated to the larger Sinhala polity in the country?

My specific intention here is to understand the process through which Kandy's political identity was diluted in the process of the evolution of the 'Sri Lankan' nation. Kandy's absorption into the mainstream political culture in Sri Lanka is interesting not only because of the strong sentiments of distinction felt and expressed by Kandyans, but also because of the entirely opposite trajectory taken by Tamil nationalism, which was also a nationalist movement that emerged in the wake of the colonial period. However, Tamil nationalism is only used in this study for purposes of comparison, in order to avoid the risk of Kandy's political trajectory being viewed purely in terms of Tamil nationalism, which would defeat the purpose of this study (namely highlighting the other factors that led to this integration). In this connection, I identify four factors related to the following two categories as important in explaining Kandyan integration to Sri Lanka's nation-building process:

1.2.1 Colonial Policies

Under this category, I first look at *capital distribution and economic integration under the British that led first to the heightening of a sense of identity in Kandyans fuelled largely by a sense of deprivation, and the subsequent geographic and political integration of Kandy with the rest of the country*. Kandy was greatly affected by the plantation economy introduced by the British, because most of these cash crops were concentrated in the fertile soil of the hills (Munasinghe 2002). Local capital accumulated in the main by low-country Sinhalese living along the coastal belt through extensive trade with Europeans was naturally attracted to the promising prospects these cash crops offered, leading to an exodus of non-Kandyans settling in Kandyan lands (Uyangoda 2011). I argue that this over time led to a gradual weakening of not only Kandy's economic and geographic separation, but also demographic distinction. Interestingly, these same developments were initially the cause of separatist sentiments, such that Kandy's distinction was highlighted in contrast to the low-country Sinhalese. Later on, however, these processes inevitably led to the Kandyan identity being greatly diluted, as the British had hoped. Secondly, I discuss *the impact of spatial rearrangement of power in the new nation on the political evolution of Kandy*. As Perera (1997) shows, the emergence of Colombo as the island's new capital significantly undermined Kandy's political importance, a development consolidated by the administrative reorganization of Sri Lanka such that Kandyan provinces no longer remained together. This on the one hand was instrumental in fostering feelings of nationhood among previously segregated political communities, and on the other – as a consequence – in paling distinctions between them including, and most importantly, the political distinction maintained by Kandy.

1.2.2 Post-Colonial Politics

In this section, I take into account the trajectory of post-colonial politics in Sri Lanka and its impact on Kandy's political sentiments. To this end, I first look at *how the post-independence state negotiated 'Kandyanness' that was constructed and articulated during the British colonial era*. Previous scholarship attributes the origins of a distinct Kandyan identity to the divisive policies and politics of the British (Wickramasinghe 2006; Roberts 1977; Welhengama and Pillai 2014). Negotiation of these strong sentiments of differentiation in the post-independence era was carried out through informal – and highly effective – means such as intermarriages between Kandyan and low-country elite families (Jiggins 1979) and the subsequent appointment of many in these kinship networks into high posts in the prestigious Ceylon bureaucracy (Roberts 1977). Secondly, *the role played by Buddhism in shaping understandings of the 'nation' in Sri Lanka* is considered. Buddhism has unparalleled symbolic force in Sri Lanka. The country is constitutionally devoted to the protection of Buddhism, reflecting the priority it enjoys in the collective mind of the majority Sinhala community. As previous studies have shown, Buddhism has come to form a binding relationship between members of the Sinhala ethnic fold (Hoole 2001; De Votta 2007). In this study, I argue that this binding function of Buddhism was instrumental in fostering sentiments of fraternity between Kandyan and low-country Sinhalese, in a way that could not have been possible in the Tamil case (due to ethno-religious differences).

1.3 Significance

While research on the trajectory and dynamics of the Tamil nationalist project in Sri Lanka is readily available, not much scholarly attention has been paid to the question of Kandy. The Kandyan issue is important since on the one hand it constitutes one of the few examples of

successful assimilation/ integration in nation-building processes, and on the other provides a useful contrast to its Tamil counterpart. This study, by highlighting the dynamics of nation and nationality that have contributed towards the Kandyan political identity being diluted over time (especially in juxtaposition to the Tamil case), hopefully throws into relief structural shifts that encourage assimilation as well as incentives for resistance to same in post-colonial nation-building processes.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In this endeavor, I draw from the Ethnic Nation Theory (Smith 1988) to explore the decidedly ethnic bases of nation-building in Sri Lanka, in order to partially explain the Kandyan case in relation to Tamil nationalism. The National Identity Theory forwarded by Harris Mylonas (2007) is used to explain the reasons behind some groups being assimilated to nation-building processes, while others are isolated. In addition, I have also forwarded a minor theory to account for the economic factors leading to Kandy's integration to the Sinhala polity, which I have named as the Colonial Economic Integration Theory. I argue here that the imposition of colonial economic structures on local societies in the colonized world acted as a key driver of the nation-building processes of those countries post-independence. I elaborate on these theories below.

1.4.1 Ethnic Nation Theory

In his *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Anthony D. Smith argues that a dominant aspect of nation-building in eastern societies is how the nation comes to form the state, instead of the state coming to constitute a nation, as happened in the West in most cases. Smith explains that in this view nations are “formed on the basis of pre-existing ... ethnic ties, so that it becomes a question of ‘transforming’ ethnic into national ties and sentiments through processes of

mobilization, territorialization, and politicization” (Smith 1988, p. 137). I use this theory in my analysis of the role played by Buddhism in facilitating Kandy’s integration to the nation building project of Sri Lanka, particularly to illustrate how Buddhism has come to form a binding relationship between members of the Sinhala ethnic fold (Hoole 2001; De Votta 2007), thereby contributing towards the formation of a cohesive ethnicity that has over time been appropriated with the nation (Uyangoda 2011).

1.4.2 National Identity Theory

The National Identity Theory was presented by Harris Mylonas in 2007. It explains how and why, in processes of nation-building across the world, some segments of the community are assimilated into the nationalistic project of the state while some others are left behind. Mylonas argues his case from dual perspectives namely through the Endogenous National Identity Theory (which explains why some groups are easily assimilated into nationalistic projects) and the Exogenous National Identity Theory (which explains why yet other groups are isolated from such projects).

1.4.2.1 Endogenous National Identity Theory

This theory explains why the majority (core) group of a state would choose to assimilate certain non-core groups into the nationalistic project of said state. Mylonas identifies four factors that might encourage the core group to assimilate a non-core into the nation building process:

- Melting Pot Theory – Common economic interests such as development shared by the core and non-core group/s encourage assimilation.

- Cultural division of labour – Makes one non-core group appear more culturally proximate than another and hence encourages assimilation of the more proximate group into the nationalistic project of the core group.
- Absence of an external national homeland – Non-core group is located only within the borders of the state in which the core group is the majority, contributing to feelings of solidarity stemming from the ‘common homeland’ factor.
- High non-core population - The non-core groups together comprise a significant percentage of the country’s population and thus it would be too challenging to not assimilate them.

1.4.2.2 Exogenous National Identity Theory

This theory explains why sometimes the exact opposite of what is explained in the Endogenous National Identity Theory happens. Mylonas again identifies four reasons why a non-core group might be isolated from the nationalistic project of a state:

- Notions of core-group purity – Encourage the core-group to exclude certain noncore groups from the assimilation process to avoid ‘contaminating’ themselves
- Non-core domination – In instances where the non-core group has, at some point in history, dominated (ruled) the core-group, assimilation becomes unlikely
- Non-core advantage –Overrepresentation of a non-core group at the highest levels of the socio-economic hierarchy discourages assimilation
- Irredentist claims - Serious discussion about historical homelands and a revision of state boundaries to accommodate them by a non-core group might make the core group suspicious of their loyalties and hinder prospects of assimilation

These two theories are used in the study in comparative perspective, specifically in the section on post-colonial politics and the gradual appropriation of the nation by the Sinhala ethnicity (aided largely by the integrative force of Buddhism), to illustrate the factors that led Kandyans to integrate and Tamils to be isolated from Sri Lanka's nation-building project.

1.4.3 Colonial Economic Integration Theory

What literature can be found on economic integration as a factor of political integration largely focuses either on the European Union (Balassa 2011; Molle 1990; Artis and Lee 1995) or globalization (Alesina et al 2000; Balassa and Stoutjesdijk 1975). Due to the limitations of these theoretical tools in explaining cases of intra-national integration like Kandy, I attempt to construct a theory based on the arguments of Munasinghe (2002) and Uyangoda (2011) in this connection. As is explicated in the literature review that follows, both Munasinghe and Uyangoda present a picture of how the plantation economy of the British times and their support services led to infrastructural and later economic integration of the Kandyan region with the rest of the country, consequently assuring political integration as well. Based on these works (as well as a brief comparison with the greater colonized world), I argue that the imposition of colonial economic structures on local societies in the colonized world acted as a key driver of the nation-building processes of those countries post-independence. In this work, I pay special attention to how this factor played out in the case of Kandy in interestingly paradoxical ways, serving first to heighten differences and fuel separatist sentiments, and later to enable seamless merging with the newly forming nation, a feat that would previously have been very difficult if not impossible.

1.5 Review of Literature

In this section, I review a selected body of literature that tackles various dimensions of the research problem I am interested in. The review has been organized under the two categories (and four sub-categories) of analysis I have specified earlier in the chapter.

1.5.1 Colonial Policies (Economic Integration and Spatial Rearrangement of Power)

Indrani Munasinghe's *The Colonial Economy on Track* (2002) is a book that maps the growth of the plantation economy in the hills of Sri Lanka, and the subsequent and inevitable need for a comprehensive system of transportation to transport the produce of these cash crops. In this connection, Munasinghe pays attention to the building of roads and railways, not just in terms of the actual process of such constructions, but also the socio-economic impact of them. The book touches on issues of political economy, labour issues, society, and polity among other things. Its chief value for my work, however, lies in its analysis of the process of economic integration of the hill country (corresponding to the Kandyan region) with the greater island, for which the building of the roads and railways network was crucial in both economic and geographically symbolic terms. I build up on this analysis to argue that this process undermined Kandy's geographic separation and economic isolation, as well as, by extension, demographic distinction.

Kumari Jayawardena (2000) in her 'Nobodies to Somebodies' examines processes of capital mobilization and their attendant class reconfigurations in colonial Ceylon. Her analysis of how this newly earned wealth of the previously backward classes was instrumental in transforming not just the economic, but also demographic landscape of the Sinhala dominated parts of the island provides fascinating insights into the two seemingly unrelated phenomena of capital accumulation and political integration. In the present work, I draw from this account to

demonstrate that the settlement of these newly emerging comprador capitalists who invested in the plantation economy of the Kandyan areas was a turning point in the story of Kandyan integration, in that it not only roped Kandy into the greater economy of the country, but also spelled the beginning of Kandyans 'mixing' with their low-country counterparts by way of marriage and the resultant demographic alterations.

In his 'Territorial Spaces and National Identities: Representations of Sri Lanka', Nihal Perera (1997) explores the motivations behind, and implications of, the territorial rearrangement of power in Sri Lanka that was carried out by the British with a view to engender sentiments of nationhood in the island's erstwhile segregated political communities. His ultimate aim in this endeavour is to analyse the nature of the particular brand of nationalism such rearrangement has given rise to, and the inclusions and exclusions it has prompted. This work is of direct relevance and value for this study because it sheds light on what these developments meant for the political distinction maintained by Kandy prior to the colonial era, which I consider as directly contributing towards Kandy's later integration to the majoritarian polity of the island.

1.5.2 Post-Colonial Politics (Negotiation of the Kandyan Distinction and Buddhism as a Binding Force)

A History of Sri Lanka written by K.M. De Silva is a book that, as its title suggests, concentrates on the history of colonial and post-colonial Ceylon/Sri Lanka. While the scope of this work does not allow a detailed treatment of the Kandyan issue, it provides a comprehensive account of the forces at play during and after the British rule in the island that, together with other factors, prompted the emergence of various territorial and ethno-nationalistic projects. De Silva also explains the emergence of a forcefully pronounced Kandyan sentiment following the repeal of a constitutional clause that made provisions for only Kandyan Sinhalese to compete for Kandyan electorates. In response, the Kandyan National Assembly was founded in 1923

... and at its inaugural session, held in December that year, the Kandyan demand for separate representation was affirmed. By November 1927 the Kandyan National Assembly put forward a demand for a federal state with regional autonomy for the Kandyans. The faith in federalism as the solution to the Kandyan problem remained a keynote of their demands for more than a decade thereafter (De Silva 1981, p. 395).

It is worth noting here that the rationale behind the federal proposal is the exact opposite of what federalism is perceived to be in contemporary Sri Lanka. De Silva's book moves on to present the context and essence of the Tamil federalist demand next, and this rich historical account is of much use for this study in tracing the contextual and substantive commonalities of and differences between the Kandyan and Tamil federal demands.

Janice Jiggins's *Caste and Family Politics Sinhalese 1947-1976* provides a comprehensive, and extensive, description on how marriage alliances were used to seal Kandyan-Low Country relations of the Sinhala community. Jiggins notes that "Marriage has served to forestall potential divisions, for instance by uniting up-country and low-country families" (Jiggins 1979, 113) and cites the marriages of D.R. Wijewardene (and two of his brothers), and D.S. Senanayake (along with another of his extended family) to Kandyan aristocratic brides to illustrate her point. A very important marriage in this block of alliances – the marriage of the era if you will – was the Bandaranaike-Ratwatte alliance that merged two powerful and illustrious families in the Kandyan hills and low-country. Jiggins presents how this marriage enabled to a significant degree the absorption of the Kandyan elite into high offices of the government, especially after the demise of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1959. In her description, Jiggins brings into attention a number of instances where the newly widowed Mrs. Bandaranaike appointed members of the Kandyan branch of her family to such positions as Chairman of the State Plantation Corporation (brother Clifford Ratwatte), Director of the Land Reform Commission (daughter Chandrika Bandaranaike), Governor-General (uncle William

Gopallawa), and Minister of Agriculture and Lands (uncle Hector Kobbekaduwa) among others. These data illustrate that elite integration to a significant extent was decisive in integrating the Kandyans to the nation-building project of the Sri Lankan state.

R.A.L.H. Gunawardana's chapter titled 'Roots of the Conflict and the Peace Process' in the collection *Buddhism, Conflict, and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka* (2006) mainly explores the development of ethnic tensions in the island. However, this essay is important for this thesis because it takes into account the different responses of the Sinhala political leadership towards the Kandyan and Tamil federal demands. More specifically, such difference is used to explain how the Kandyans were gradually absorbed into the larger collectivity of the Sinhala community who were coming together in opposition to their ethnic 'other' in post-colonial Ceylon.

Rajan Hoole in his *Authoritarianism and the Crisis of Identity* presents the gradual appropriation of the Sri Lankan state with the Sinhala ethnicity (Sinhala-Buddhist to be particular) and how it "succeeded to a considerable extent in co-opting the Kandyan elite" (Hoole 2001, p. 5) by forwarding the "millennial ideology of the Sinhalese as being a chosen people ... with a mission to hold the entirety of this Island sacred to Buddhism" (ibid, p. 6). This account explains the domination of ethno-religiosity over all other divides in independent Ceylon/Sri Lanka, a factor that was crucial in the construction of an 'Ethnic Nation' in Smith's terminology, who observes that "In Asia and Africa, religion was drawn into the service of ethnic nationalism, wherever ... the customs and vernaculars were embedded in a traditional ethnic religion ... which had so long served to identify communities and their cultures" (Smith 1988, p. 138). This process, in turn, emphasized in the Kandyan consciousness more the commonality of ethno-religiosity between them and low-country Sinhalese than their

differences in the face of Tamil nationalism. Consequently, the state that emerged out of this exclusivist nation not only mirrored it – so much so that it was officially devoted to the protection of Buddhism – but also further fed it with such official mandates. In other words, though ethnicity and religion (and not the state) primarily constituted the basis of Sri Lanka's 'nation' – as opposed to the Western model which proceeded from state to nation – the state later on assumed a significant role in defining 'national' identities.

Uyangoda (2011) observes that the power of Sinhala nationalism has “enabled the ruling elite to maintain links between themselves and the masses” (p. 53) which, again, has served to highlight the common bond of ethnicity between the Sinhalese and resulted in the rise of what he terms as the ‘ethnocratic state’. Uyangoda then notes that the ethno-centric character of the Sri Lankan state which started taking shape after independence, was reinforced in the late 1950s through the emergence of “a broad alliance of social classes ... led by the ‘nationalist’ sections ... constituting the social core of the ethnocratic state” (ibid, p. 55). These developments were instrumental in palming the Kandyan-low country distinction over time, as I illustrate later in the thesis.

While these works are crucial for me in building my analysis, none among them addresses the puzzle in which I am interested. They tackle issues such as colonial politics, the ethnic conflict, state reform, political marriages, etc. all of which are helpful in providing perspective for my thesis, but the topic I pursue here is a novel one on which scholarship is scarce. What little has been written about the Kandyan issue, including works such as those of Roberts (1977), Wickramasinghe (2006), and Welhengama and Pillai (2014), deal exclusively with the emergence of a distinct Kandyan political consciousness towards the end of the colonial era. No previous work pays attention to the actual evolution of the Kandyan consciousness, except

my own undergraduate thesis (Lecamwasam 2017). However, this work also only looks at the factors that led to the dropping of the federal demand initially forwarded by Kandyans. In the current work, in contrast, I look at the greater process of integration this phenomenon signifies, thus transcending the power-sharing framework within which my earlier study was situated. In this study, therefore, I look not only at political, but also socio-cultural and economic developments that led to the Kandyans integrating with the Sinhala nation-building project of Sri Lanka.

1.6 Methodology and Methods

To explore this puzzle, I rely largely, if not exclusively, on qualitative research methods. I use archival material as well as other secondary sources such as books and papers to understand the discourse and conditions within which the Kandyan consciousness has evolved. Since this is a historical phenomenon, the usefulness of actual field work is limited. However, I use the field notes of my undergraduate thesis to illustrate how Kandyans perceive their current identity in relation to non-Kandyan Sinhalese as well as ethnic minorities, which is useful in demonstrating the extent to which their collective perception has evolved from colonial times.

I employ these methods within an interpretivist framework that considers the various dimensions of the phenomenon as constituting an interdependent whole, rather than distinct variables. As such, I make no claims of prediction or generalization, but only of understanding (or *verstehen*, as Weber would have it) a historical phenomenon that would hopefully serve as a concept that can be used for future research (Porta and Keating 2008).

CHAPTER 2 – COLONIAL POLICIES AND THE RISE OF KANDYAN NATIONALISM

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I evaluate the economic and administrative policies introduced by the British in terms of their contribution towards the rise (as well as later decline) of Kandyan nationalism in Sri Lanka. This exercise is important for the larger research exercise of which this chapter is part, namely exploring the conditions under which Kandyans integrated to the nation building project of Sri Lanka, because it sheds light on the role played by these policy factors first in establishing a sense of identity in Kandyans, and then in laying – unwittingly, as I argue – the foundation for the gradual dissolution of it. To this end, I look at two phenomena of the colonial period: The colonial economy and spatial rearrangement of power in British Ceylon.

Under the section on the colonial economy, I briefly sketch the details regarding the introduction of a plantation economy to Ceylon, followed by the geographic and socio-economic ramifications of it. Since the plantations were concentrated in areas that were understood as belonging to the erstwhile Kandyan kingdom, and Kandyans largely refrained from participating in the plantation economy (as investors or labourers), this discussion will be useful in understanding the genesis of a grievance mentality among the Kandyans that later proved to be crucial in consolidating a sense of identity in them. Interestingly, while the socio-economic ramifications of the plantations were key to establishing Kandyan distinction, the geographic integration they made possible was instrumental in integrating Kandy with the rest of the country later on.

Secondly, I explore the spatial reorganization of power in British Ceylon, such that Kandy's centrality as the last native capital was undermined and Colombo emerged as the capital of the

newly emerging nation. Like in the case of the plantations, here too these measures first led to a grievance mentality that was later replaced by notions of solidarity among the Sinhala ethnic fold (in the sense of being united under one flag, largely in response to Tamil nationalism – a topic I will introduce in the next chapter). While these factors are discussed as two separate themes, the organization of the chapter implies no chronological order in which these events occurred, and it is my hope that the reader will treat them as historically parallel, intertwined, and very much interdependent processes.

2.2 Capital and the Economy

2.2.1 Advent of a Plantation Economy in Ceylon

The Kandyan kingdom comprised a vast territory when the British conquered it in 1815. This territory included “the whole of the middle of the island, bounded by a belt of maritime districts, irregularly varying in width from 8 to 30 miles, and at its northern extremity to nearly 50 miles ...” (Appuhamy 1995, p. 496). Within the geopolitics of the ancient Sri Lankan context the Kandyan kingdom belonged to what was called *Malaya Rata*. In terms of the economy, the Kandyan kingdom was never too prosperous largely due to its mountainous terrains that were not too conducive for a prosperous agrarian system (Schrikker 2007). With the arrival of the Europeans the situation turned from bad to worse.

The Kandyan kingdom in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was economically weak due to the combination of a poor agricultural base, an unfavourable balance of trade resulting from European control of the coasts, and the high costs of the periodic wars against the Europeans ...the transition from irrigation agriculture in the dry north to rain-fed cultivation in the central highlands was a move from what had been, prior to political disruptions, a surplus-generating agricultural system to a system which produced at a mere subsistence level. In the central highlands, the flat lands required by wet rice cultivation were largely unavailable. Such land was to be produced at great cost through the construction of artificial terraces or the use of lower-yielding varieties of grain that did not require ponded water. Population densities were lower ... than in the wet, flat coastal lowlands ... where rice could support greater population densities (Duncan 1990, p. 34).

This politically unstable and economically weak kingdom fell to the British in 1815 with the signing of the Kandyan Conventionⁱⁱ that effectively dethroned the Kandyan king and conferred all authority of the kingdom to the English king George III. With this historic convention Ceylon became a colony of the British Empire.

The British were now ready to freely explore the economic dividends of a completely captured land, with the Kandyan pocket of independence fragmenting the otherwise conquered country now safely out of the way. The maritime provinces that had been under them for centuries were already yielding profits from the trades of cinnamon, salt, and trade through the ports. What was now left was the hitherto unexplored hinterland of the island, whose fertile soil and cool climates were ideal for coffee – and later tea – plantation. However, the British soon realized that hindrances came in more than the political form.

Kandyan social organization was in the main sustained by the caste structure of the region, and its attendant service tenure system. Caste was defined by occupation, and the highest caste was the *Goyigama* (farmer caste), from which the nobility originated. The King, when he was of local birth, invariably belonged to this caste. There were times when Kings – and entire dynasties, at times – were ‘imported’ from South India in order to mitigate the risk of intra-elite rivalry over succession (Schrikker 2007). The *Goyigama* caste accommodated further subdivisions depending on the degree of royal favour a family received over time. Thus, those with the most lands and property holdings (implying highest royal favour for a very long time) constituted the *Radala* subdivision (nobility), followed by four other sub-divisions, the lowest of which was the peasantry (nonetheless considered to be of ‘high birth’) who supplied the food for the palace and the greater nobility. Then there were the service castes – the drummers, the goldsmiths, the washers, and so on – all of whom were bound to their respective castes by

the system of service tenure, which required the son to engage in the same profession as the father so that the system could continue uninterrupted.

It is needless to say that this state of affairs was extremely oppressive particularly for those of the service castes. They were tethered – for what seemed like all eternity – to a system that continued to marginalize them socially. For the British, this system proved to be a hindrance in their search for a pool of labour for the coffee plantations they were to introduce. Their abolishing of service tenure through the Colebrook-Cameron reforms of 1833, though packaged in egalitarian language, was really a move to free the labour force from the archaic ties that bound them, in the interest of capitalist expansion (Jayawardena 2000).

The British, however, failed to appreciate that the old system was kept in place not just by royal decree, but also by the force of ideology. Hence even when labour was ideally free to move about, the Kandyan people did not find this new ‘liberating’ alternative appealing because “[a]mong the Sinhalese, a peasant cultivator of paddy land held a much higher status than a landless labourer. In addition, the low wages paid to hired workers failed to attract the Kandyan peasant, and the peak season for harvesting plantation coffee usually coincided with the peasant’s own harvest” (Nubin 2002, p. 114). The crisis mounted to the extent that South Indian Tamil labourers who were by now accustomed to working in plantations were brought to Ceylon to sustain the plantations. Exactly what this meant for Kandy and the larger Sinhala ethnic group will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. However, to concisely capture the general disposition towards the Indian Tamil workers (and hopefully throw into relief a factor that greatly aided in Kandyan integration), I will reproduce here a response of a Kandyan elite to the ethno-demographic changes of the plantation episode:

“The Kandyans didn’t want the Indian Tamils here, that’s all. The biggest problem was the introduction of tea and coffee. They cleared rain forests for these plantations, and brought down

Indian workers to man the plantations. Look at the problems we're having even today because of them" (Respondent 10, Kandyan elite, personal communication, September 27, 2014).

Inevitably, a service economy sprang around the plantations by way of transportation infrastructure, timber industry (for railroads), toddy distilling (for serving the influx of workers), etc., resulting in huge socio-cultural changes in the erstwhile Kandyan regions. Jayawardena (2000) provides an extensive account of how the low-country Sinhalese utilized opportunities presented by the new colonial economy to rise to heights of affluence that later afforded them access to national politics.

In the Central Province there were eight arrack farms. The renters of these areas in the 1830s were outsiders from the coastal regions. Jeronis Soysa ... dominated the rents ... his brother Susew Soysa ... Balappuwaduge Cornelis and Domingo Mendis, Mahamarakkala Patabandige James Cooray, Swarisge Cornelis Swaris, Sellaperumage Abraham Fernando, Weerahennedige Alexander Fernando and J. F. Rodrigo Tambypulle (p. 80).

What is noticeable about this list of names is that all of them came from the fisher caste of the coastal regions, known as *Karava*, and made their fortunes in the Kandyan regions. Significant low-country presence in the Kandyan areas marked by these developments were further consolidated by later generations of low-country Sinhalese who captured the business landscape of the area, particularly in the city of Kandy, married into Kandyan families, and continue their business ventures to date. In the next section, I pay attention to how these changes first started.

2.2.2 Geographical Ramifications

The geographical ramifications of the plantations were wide and far reaching, and lent themselves to social and economic consequences as well. These latter developments will be discussed at length in the next section. As mentioned previously, one of the most crucial

requirements of the plantations was an efficient and comprehensive system of transportation to ensure the crops reached the ports – from where they would leave for their overseas markets – without delay. The network of roads and railroads that thus came into being led to socio-economic ramifications, but the direct political impact of geographical integration they resulted in warrants separate attention.

It would be incorrect to say that the modes of transportation led to political integration. Rather, calculations of integrating Kandy to the rest of the island were instrumental in prompting the British decision to build a road connecting Kandy to Colombo. Munasinghe (2002) notes that the inaccessibility of the lands in the hills, and the luxury it afforded rebel groups to organize themselves to challenge the imperial government in 1817-18, were the immediate triggers of the need for a direct route of access to Kandyan areas. Therefore, the Kandy-Colombo highway was supposed to “remove the principal difficulties that were experienced in the late military operations [and to] destroy the confidence of the people [in the protection offered by the inaccessibility of the terrain]” (Governor Barnes, personal correspondence to Earl Barthurst 19 May, 1820; and to the Commissioners of Inquiry 7 November, 1830, as cited in Munasinghe 2002, p. 7).

In contrast, the Kandy-Colombo railway was built exclusively for economic purposes. It was meant to reduce the costs incurred by plantation owners in the transport of their produce by way of storage, wastage, and delays (Munasinghe 2002). The railway served this end well enough, but in addition was also successful in further opening up the Kandyan areas geographically. Munasinghe explores the process of change that took place directly as a result of the expansion of railways thus:

The growth of towns as service centres, the introduction of a large agricultural labouring class depending almost wholly on the market for the purchase of goods, requisites, the increasing circulation of currency, availability of new goods and services in the interior and purchasing power of the population, was all rapidly

leading to the breakdown of subsistence agriculture and village self-sufficiency. This was replaced by a money economy where trade and exchange were important ... by 1911 ... the bazaar towns and townlets had boutiques selling a varied range of goods, from US cigarette-tins to Famora soap (p. 261).

Inevitably, the highlands were flooded with people from across the country as well as from South India, so much so that “by 1911 the Kandy Municipality alone had 9,339 low-country Sinhalese, 1,983 Sri Lankan Tamils and 3,592 Sri Lankan Moors compared to 6,594 Kandyan Sinhalese” (p. 266). This geographical integration was, from its very beginning, also very much a socio-economic as well as an extremely political phenomenon, the dimensions of which are briefly explored below.

2.2.3 Socio-Economic Implications of the Plantations

The socio-economic implications of the plantation economy for the Kandyan region constituted the core of all the grievances Kandyans experienced under the colonial rule. As a result of the reluctance of the Kandyan peasantry to contribute labour to the plantation economy, Indian Tamil labourers were brought in, drastically altering the demographic and economic fabric of local society; the infrastructural demands of the plantations were readily met by the low-country Sinhalese, who were by now well versed in the art of commerce, having had centuries of prior trade experience with European powers that colonized the maritime areas; Kandyan soil was fast being appropriated to support the ever expanding plantations, much to the detriment of small holders whose subsistence was largely, if not completely, dependent upon land (Kanapathipillai 2009).

As early as 1869 the Assistant Agent at Kegalle spoke of “a surplus population, a population which cannot derive subsistence from its labour” (Wickramasinghe 2006, p. 56). “Following the paddy tax, evictions had occurred in Badulla and Nuwara Eliya and the peasants who lost their paddy fields were nearest the subsistence level. In the Kegalle district village land was

sold to estates and a landless class of labourers was in the making” (ibid). The dominance – or even complete monopoly – of the low-country Sinhalese in the service economy of the plantations meant that “[t]he Kandyan Sinhalese soon found themselves left far behind in getting a share of the economic opportunities and prosperity that accompanied colonialism” (Kanapathipillai 2009). These developments ultimately led to a sense of economic deprivation in the Kandyan mindset where they understood that their lands were ‘looted’ from them and used for an economic system whose benefits were enjoyed by everyone other than themselves.

Economic marginalization was later translated into political powerlessness as well. Jayawardena (2000) shows how the low-country Sinhalese families that made their fortunes on Kandyan soil then moved on to being involved in legislative affairs, thanks to being able to meet the property requirements laid down by the colonial government as essential to be entitled to the franchise (and later, limited self-government). Since Kandyan elites largely refrained from investing in the plantation economy initially, they were obviously not among those who rose to these ranks in society, and were thus excluded from the power circles in Colombo. Further consolidating this power and wealth of the low-country families were what Jayawardena calls “marriage cartels” which served to pool and lock the wealth – and thereby political gains – of them, typically within the same caste (particularly the upwardly mobile *Karava* caste, but also the older bourgeois of low-country *Goyigama* families). Jayawardena explains that these marriages later gave rise to “the related political families of the 20th century that dominated national politics” (p. 288).

It is needless to state the distaste with which Kandyans underwent this experience of being sidelined. Among the Europeans and low-country Sinhalese who were the major beneficiaries of these developments, most of Kandyan antipathy was channelled towards the latter possibly

because despite their native origin, they found it possible to capitalize on the misery of fellow natives. What is more, the Kandyan by the end of the nineteenth century actually preferred the plantation Tamils over the low-country Sinhalese (Hoole 1998) as a result of the economic displacement they were suffering.

It is clear, then, that Kandyans – and particularly the Kandyan elite – could not reap the benefits of the prosperous plantation economy (and in fact even suffered tremendous loss of property that was confiscated for the plantations), leading to later political losses as well.

The crux of the discord between Kandyan and Low-Country Sinhalese was the discrepancy, real or perceived, in the distribution both of *de jure* power resources – that is, the power resources which accrued to each individual by virtue of his or her citizenship in the state, in particular the right and ability to petition the government and organize political action – and of *de facto* power resources such as education and wealth. The more articulate members of the Kandyan community translated this sense of deprivation into an appeal for remedial political action (Wickramasinghe 2006, p. 56).

2.3 Spatial Politics

2.3.1 Kandyan Identity and British Administrative Policies

If the preceding account suggests a pre-existing Kandyan identity that found itself under attack from other – contending – identities during the colonial era, let me now place that understanding in historical (and factual) perspective. It was the British who in the 1901 census registered a separate entity as ‘Kandyan’ and included residents of Central, Uva, Sabaragamuwa, and North-Central provinces as people belonging to that entity for the first time in the island’s history (Wickramasinghe 2006). Prior to that, the kingdom in the hills with Kandy as its capital was but the inevitable successor to the Sinhala kingdom whose capital changed constantly to evade conquest by South Indian invaders (Malalgoda 1976), understood by the Sinhala community living even in coastal areas as their capital city. Wickramasinghe

(2006) confirms this observing that even when the coastal line was under the Portuguese, Sinhalese living in those areas “emphasized the Kandyan king’s overlordship over the territory ... [and in] some of the Matara writings emanating from the lowlands ... the kings of the Kandyan kingdom were praised as though the poets lived in an area under Kandyan rule rather than under Dutch colonial rule” (p. 11). Clearly, then, the Kandyan identity as it is understood today was of British manufacture.

This does not, however, constitute a calculated move on the part of the British. It is rather a reflection of their understanding of local politics in Ceylon, a country which, by the time they conquered it, had a Northern kingdom that spoke Tamil and was already under European powers, a South-Western coastal belt which spoke a separate language called Sinhala and was also already under European powers for centuries, and an autonomous kingdom in the obscure hills of the island that, even though it spoke the same language as the South-Western coastal belt, seemingly had little to do with it. As such, they set out to conquer the one independent kingdom Ceylon accommodated at the time, and once they did, took all possible measures to undermine the perceived distinction of that kingdom by way of further administrative policies, leading to the consolidation of an identity called ‘Kandyan’.

The ‘further administrative policies’ I have mentioned above included centralizing the country and dividing it into five administrative provinces with Colombo, Galle, Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Kandy as their respective capitals ostensibly to enable administrative expediency. The real reason behind this division, however, was “to prevent any possible resurgence of Kandyan nationalism by cutting it off from the various branches of the erstwhile Kandyan kingdom with each of them attached to the remaining four provinces” (Sebastian 2013, p. 126). In this demarcation of provinces it is clear that “there was no historical, geographical, or demographic

consideration” (Sebastian 2013) except the calculated move to isolate the Kandyan regions from the rest of the country and thereby check the strong possibility of a striking back at the British Raj. Along with these administrative changes, the new colonizers started seeking economic dividends by way of introducing a plantation economy, the ramifications of which, as has been discussed previously, induced a grievance mentality in the residents of the Kandyan areas, leading to further consolidation of the notion of a distinct identity against which injustice has been exercised.

There was another very interesting figure in the colonial bureaucracy who played a key role not only in the more refined articulation of a distinct Kandyan identity, but also in aggravating its victim mentality: Governor Manning. Manning’s interest was really in splitting the Ceylon National Congress (CNC), which he regarded as “an intolerable challenge” (De Silva 1981, p. 390). As such, he took painstaking efforts to convince the Kandyans “that they, like the Moors and Tamils, were a minority” (Welhengama & Pillai 2014, p. 83). He went so far as to declare that separate electorates should be created for the Kandyan provinces and constitutional safeguards should be put in place to protect Kandyans from low-country political encroachment (Welhengama & Pillai 2014). He is also believed to be a chief architect of the KNA created in 1925 (ibid). Having successfully convinced those of Kandyan origin in the CNC of their aggrieved minority status, he put the full weight of his office behind the subsequent Kandyan federal demand. Egged on by Manning – and indeed the setbacks they suffered due to the advent of the plantation economy – the Kandyans demanded federal autonomy from the Donoughmore Commission that took evidence from the locals before introducing universal franchise to Ceylon in 1931. In fact, their sentiments of distinction by this time were so strong that they referred to the low-country Sinhalese as “Buddhists of other nations” (Donoughmore Report, p. 134)ⁱⁱⁱ.

A fascinating parallel to the construction of Kandyan identity can be found in the Scottish Highlands of Britain. Trevor-Roper (1983) engages with historical evidence in arguing that what is known as the ‘ancient Highland tradition of Scotland’ today is of very modern manufacture. His description of how this distinguishing apparatus “was developed after, sometimes long after, the Union with England against which it is, in a sense, a protest” (p. 15) perfectly echoes the Kandyan case in the sense that both movements sought to resist assimilation – by the English mainland and low-country Sinhalese respectively – by resorting to cultural markers, especially in the absence of other means by which to achieve this end. The author’s observation here that “the whole concept of a distinct Highland culture and traditions is a retrospective invention” (ibid) aptly captures both situations. However, Scotland’s case is more complex because the retelling of Scottish history witnessed extensive borrowing from Irish heritage, despite the contentious – and hierarchical – relationship between the two, and this reconstruction was to mark its distinction from a third party – England. In contrast, in the Kandyan case, a shared history with the Sinhala low-country was what was ‘tweaked’ during colonial times to instil a sense of distinction in the Kandyans, and the low-country itself was the entity against which such distinction was sought.

Coming back to the Kandyan case, these feelings of distinction gradually subsided in the post-Donoughmore era once the effects of the spatial rearrangement of political power in Ceylon started setting in. I present this dimension of the phenomenon in the following section.

2.3.2 Emergence of Colombo and Ceylon

In his ‘Territorial Spaces and National Identities: Representations of Sri Lanka’, Nihal Perera (1997) maps the construction of Ceylon by the British through the use of Colombo “as the node

from which to transform Ceylon into a unified political territory” (p. 25) such that it destroyed the “territorial self – or geo-body – of the last kingdom of Kandy, eliminating and subordinating the principle traces of indigenous political power and cultural identity” (ibid). That ‘Ceylon’ as an administratively and politically comprehensive entity emerged thanks to British administrative unification of the island has already been established in the previous section. In this section, while my focus is mainly on exploring what this new arrangement meant for distinct political identities in the island, I will also look at the fascinating – and informative – phenomenon of the very accidental development of Ceylon emerging as a national unit separate from the larger Indian sub-continent.

In connection to this latter observation, Perera notes how following the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857, British control over territories in South Asia was transferred from the East India Company to the British Crown in 1858. It was as a consequence of these negotiations that Ceylon was established as a separate crown colony, as opposed to part of India. National consciousness was, by this time of history, still very alien to these lands. Even India was but a scattered collection of princely states that was rarely understood as a single political unit prior to British arrival. Had the aforementioned negotiations gone another way, Perera muses, “Ceylon could well have been integrated into a future India state by the British, especially since it was conquered and ruled by the company forces of the Madras Presidency, which later constituted a part of India” (p. 26). I point this out to illustrate just what an accident nationalism was for Ceylon/ Sri Lanka, as perhaps for the rest of the colonized world, despite its later integrative force in merging some of its constitutive identities as well as its disintegrative function in isolating yet others.

Perera further posits the interesting thesis that it was Colombo that created Ceylon – not Ceylon that accommodated Colombo within it – with its function as the locus of a single nation that did not exist until then. Ceylon’s native capitals were “principally identified according to their metropolitan centre ... kingdoms were defined by the centre and its reach and not by its boundary ... The outer peripheries of Lankan kingdoms were, therefore, closer to the Western notion of frontiers than boundaries” (p. 27). It was Colombo, Perera argues, that for the first time “assumed a totalised relationship between the social and territorial units” (ibid) that made up the island. Since actual political power was located in London and Colombo was only the colonial capital of the land unified thus, Perera observes that the latter inverted the country’s spatial order “from one being inward, to another being outward oriented. The plantation economy would only reinforce this in the 1850s” (p. 29).

These reflections are very important in understanding the gradual decline of Kandy’s spatial importance. Clearly, the administrative reorganization of the island served to break the territorial integrity of the Kandyan kingdom, but its symbolic force was only truly compromised with the increasing importance of Colombo as the new capital, and the drawing of the boundaries of the new nation it connoted. Though Kandyanness was in fact a British creation, the sense of political community structured around Kandy (with even what is today called the low-country looking up to Kandy as its capital city) was gradually replaced with the idea of a Westphalian nation-state. In this light, I think any consciousness of the political unit called the Kandyan kingdom would have naturally withered away, had the British not [inadvertently] created and fuelled a geo-cultural identity to define that kingdom.

2.4 A Theoretical Proposition

I would like to forward a minor theoretical proposition stemming from the discussion so far. Given how the plantation economy and its support services led to infrastructural and later economic integration of the Kandyan region with the rest of the country, consequently assuring political integration as well, it may be observed that the imposition of British colonial economic structures on Ceylonese society acted as a key driver of the nation-building process of the country. This is applicable to the greater colonized world as well. Munasinghe (2002) observes how along the Gold Coast of Africa the Sekondi and Tarkwa railways gave rise to an exchange economy and subsequently a national market (p. 262), which was instrumental in orienting the country towards ‘national’ thinking. Friedmann and McMichael (1989) demonstrate how export-based plantation economies in tropical countries gave rise over time to a market system of comparative advantage, which presupposed and later consolidated national units that specialized in certain areas and conducted transactions with the global market. Recognizing ethnic and national identities as products of imperialist accumulation, Patterson and Kelly (2000) reflect that “nation-states as units of analysis obscure as much as they reveal” (p. 29). Nation-building in colonized societies, then, is necessarily of market manufacture. The reason I bring this up here is to flag the inadequacy inherent in viewing pre-colonial dynamics in these societies through national lenses. As the ‘Kandyan’ case reveals, one may be starting with a myth.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the numerous policies of the British that, deliberately or otherwise, served to integrate the former Kandyan kingdom to the rest of the country. Ironically enough, the British initially sought to integrate Kandy in every conceivable manner to the rest

of the country in order to prevent any challenge to their rule in the country, but they themselves were also instrumental in – unwittingly at first and quite intentionally further down the line – highlighting a perceived ‘Kandyan distinction’ also to prevent a challenge to their authority. In this chain of events, the factors that initially led to geographic and economic integration of Kandy were also precisely the factors that were used to generate a grievance consciousness in the British-created cultural-demographic category called ‘Kandyans’, thereby giving rise to resentful sentiments and later nationalistic claims by the latter. However, the integrative forces unleashed by these initial developments took their natural course over time, partially accounting for the Kandyans relinquishing their claims to distinction later on. Based on this discussion, I have also proposed a minor theory, namely that nation-building in colonized societies is necessarily of market manufacture, as evidenced not only by the case of Sri Lanka, but also other colonized societies the world over. As such, I argue, the treatment of these societies through national lenses may lead to uninformed conclusions about the nature of the problems they face.

CHAPTER 3 – DISSOLUTION OF THE ‘KANDYAN DISTINCTION’ IN POST-INDEPENDENCE CEYLON

3.1 *Introduction*

In this chapter, I examine how the Kandyan identity that was manufactured during the British colonial time was negotiated by the low-country Sinhalese during post-colonial times, such that Kandy was gradually absorbed into the larger Sinhala polity. This discussion is intended to explain the dissolution of Kandy’s identity over time as Kandy became an integral part of the exclusivist process of nation-building in Sri Lanka. The chapter focuses on two developments – namely intermarriages between Kandyan and low-country elites, and the binding role of Buddhism in the process of nation-building in post-independence Sri Lanka – in this connection.

The first section maps the series of intermarriages between Kandyan and low-country elites in the post-colonial era – starting with the renowned Bandaranaike-Ratwatte alliance – that proved to be highly effective in absorbing Kandy into circles of power in the country. As previous scholarship demonstrates, intermarriages were also instrumental in the subsequent absorption of Kandyan elites to the prestigious bureaucracy, thus paving the way to end the longstanding marginality of Kandy in Sri Lanka’s socio-political mainstream.

In the second section, I explore the ethnic bases of the nation-state of Sri Lanka bound by the symbolic force of Buddhism, to the effect that other ethno-religious groups are effectively excluded/ marginalized in any understanding of the nation. I argue that this was on the one hand key to roping Kandy (as represented by both the elite and masses) into the country’s nation-building process, and on the other prompting a reactionary secessionist project by the ethnic minority Tamil community. In this vein, I also make brief comparisons between the

Kandyan and Tamil cases to illustrate the dynamics that affected the different trajectories of two nationalistic projects that were generated under similar circumstances.

3.2 Intermarriages and Absorption of Kandyan Elites to the Bureaucracy

Marriages between Kandyan and low-country Sinhalese elites were a deliberate and highly effective measure towards integrating Kandy into the socio-political mainstream. As historical examples such as the Susa Weddings during the days of Alexander the Great (Robertson 1955) suggest, intermarriages have played a crucial role in keeping political units together throughout human history.

Jiggins (1979) notes how a series of marriages were arranged to blur the distinction between Kandyan and low-country elite Sinhala families and discourage the escalation of such distinctions into acute divisions. Jiggins cites the marriages of D.R. Wijewardene, D.S. Senanayake, Sinha Basnayake, and S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike as examples that validate her claim. Especially the last marriage, Jiggins observes, pitted the combined strength of Ratwatte-Bandaranaike people power against that of the Senanayakes (who contested that election drawing from the traditional electoral bases of the UNP), earning victory for the former bloc.

Several other elite families followed suit shortly after. Consequently, as my fieldwork demonstrated, the cultural consciousness of Kandyan elites seems to have diminished in strength, serving, as Jiggins noted, “to forestall potential divisions ... by uniting upcountry and low-country families” (p. 113). To better illustrate my point, I reproduce some responses I received during my undergraduate fieldwork below:

“Our uncle married a Bandaranaike. He was the first Kandyan to do so. Now it is not uncommon. Rambukwathas and Jayawardenas for instance always intermarry” (Respondent 8, Kandyan elite, personal communication, September 20, 2014).

“Low-country itself has so many different castes including aristocrats. They have so many Walauwas (residences of the elite). So many marriages have happened between Kandyan and low-country families” (Respondent 12, Kandyan elite, personal communication, October 12, 2014).

Indeed, the process of modernization is very much intertwined with the conscious move to integrate Kandyan elites with their low-country counterparts, and the former can be considered largely a consequence of the latter. In other words, the lifting of the taboo in intermarriages opened up space for greater receptivity to such marriages, gradually making it a more commonplace phenomenon.

“I like those marriages. We always used to give our women to the low-country, but honestly, we never brought anyone from there. But today unlike before if people are good, should go ahead. It would result in much better unity in the country. It would help create one nation” (Respondent 10, Kandyan elite, personal communication, September 27, 2014).

“People say that there’s a difference between Kandyans and low-country people. I think at times it is significant. For instance, the customs of marriage, beliefs, and things like that are different. There are certain things about them that we don’t agree with wholeheartedly. I personally would prefer a Kandyan of the same caste as I am for my daughter. But this younger generation goes out and mingles a lot more than we used to do. So if she one day comes to me

and tells that she has found a non-Kandyan, am I to say no?” (Respondent 13, Kandyan elite, personal communication, October 12, 2014).

An important consequence of these marriages was that power politics at the national level was opened up to the Kandyan aristocracy, starting with the Ratwattes who had the easiest access to this arena thanks to the position of the Bandaranaiques in national politics. The most illustrative evidence of this can be found in the series of appointments made by Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike who, upon the death of her husband, assumed the SLFP’s leadership and later became the world’s first female Prime Minister. Jiggins notes how Mrs. Bandaranaike appointed many members of her Kandyan family circle to such positions as Chairman of the State Plantation Corporation (brother Clifford Ratwatte), Director of the Land Reform Commission (daughter Chandrika Bandaranaike), Governor-General (uncle William Gopallawa), and Minister of Agriculture and Lands (uncle Hector Kobbekaduwa) among others. This process of the Kandyan elite being merged with its low-country counterpart through marriage and being given access to the hitherto exclusively low-country domain of national politics can be viewed as a strong factor that sped up Kandyan integration to the post-independence Ceylonese polity.

I will next look at the role of religion in aiding/ expediting Kandy’s integration to the greater Sinhala polity and thereby Sri Lanka’s nation-building process (in relation first to colonialism and later Tamil nationalism).

3.3 Buddhism and Nation-Building in Sri Lanka

3.3.1 Buddhism, Ethnicity, and the ‘Nation’

Sri Lanka’s nation-building process has been exclusive in ethnic terms to the extent that the nature of the resultant state has been termed as “ethnocratic” (Uyangoda 2011). Gunewardena points out that “the intense rivalry between the South Indian and the Sinhala kingdoms would have been a factor which encouraged the extension of the Sinhala identity to cover a wider social group” (Gunewardena 1990, p. 79). Gunewardena’s articulation of the gradual synonymization of the Sinhala ethnicity with the Sri Lankan nation is noteworthy. Citing Gurulugomi (author of the renowned work *Dharmapradipika*) he says that “The island ruled by the dynasty received the name of the dynasty; the inhabitants of the island received the name of the island; and their language was called *Simhalabasa* ... Thus it is evident that the term Sinhala had come to denote ... ‘the inhabitants of the island’” (ibid, p. 80-81) and therefore the Sri Lankan nation^{iv}. This appropriation of the island’s majority ethnicity – Sinhala – to the nation, as Smith (1988) identifies, is a common development in nation-building exercises in Eastern societies whereby the nation is “formed on the basis of pre-existing ... ethnic ties” (p. 137), to the effect that the nation comes to form the state, instead of the state coming to constitute a nation, as happened particularly in Western Europe in most cases.

What is interesting here is that the Sinhala ethnicity, though it actually consists of at least three sub-identities of a religious nature, is discussed and defined exclusively in terms of Buddhism, and Sinhala-Buddhists are the ones considered integral to the nation. The “millennial ideology of the Sinhalese as being a chosen people ... with a mission to hold the entirety of this Island sacred to Buddhism” (Hoole 2001, p. 6) explains and justifies – to the Sinhala-Buddhist mind – the understanding of the nation with their ethno-religious stock. The centrality of Buddhism

to Sri Lanka's nation-building exercise is largely a consequence of the evangelical function of Christianity during colonial days, facing off which required sustained and organized resistance on the part of vernacular religions. It could be hypothesized that since Buddhists were the numerical majority, the struggle of warding off the colonial religion overtime became mainly – and almost personally – theirs.

De Votta (2007) identifies Anagarika Dharmapala – a prominent figure of the Buddhist revival movement in Sri Lanka – as the father of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism in the country. One finds many [un]conscious references in the latter's speeches to a 'Sinhalese [Buddhist] nation' which he uses interchangeably with the 'island nation'. De Votta liberally quotes Dharmapala to make his case: In his attack of alcohol, Dharmapala urged the people to be like King Dutugemunu "who rescued Buddhism and our nationalism from oblivion" (ibid, p. 15); in his glorification of the Buddhist civilization in Sri Lanka he claimed that "no nation in the world has had a more brilliant history"(ibid); in his explanation of why Ceylon was spared from the brunt of colonial aggression he declared that Buddhism guarded the country from being exposed to such brutality and that Buddhism was the only reason why "the Sinhalese have not met with the fate of the Tasmanian, the African savage, or the North American Indian" (ibid).

Once an "ethnic nation" (Smith 1988) was created and consolidated through majoritarian democracy, the state came to reflect the values and priorities of the majority ethnicity, making the accommodation of minority demands a near impossibility. This is the basis of the fierce resistance to power-sharing one sees in today's Sri Lanka.

In cosmological conception the state protectively encloses the nation of Sinhalese Buddhists, whose integrity as persons is dependent on this encompassment. The state in such a conception encloses other peoples or nations who are not Sinhalese Buddhists. But critical here is that these peoples are maintained in hierarchical subordination to Sinhalese Buddhists. The encompassing and ordering power of the state is hierarchical, and the integrity of nations, peoples, and persons within the

Sinhalese Buddhist state is dependent on the capacity of the state to maintain by the exercise of its power the hierarchical interrelation of all those it encloses. The failure in the power of the Sinhalese Buddhist state to maintain hierarchy in the whole order it circumscribes threatens the integrity of persons. Thus the fragmentation of the state is also the fragmentation of the nation and is also the fragmentation of the person (Kapferer 2011, p. 7).

I bring this up to introduce a development that was instrumental – and possibly the single most instrumental – in enabling Kandyan integration to the larger Sinhalese polity and its nation-building exercise. In a nutshell, the exclusivist nation-building project of the Sinhalese prompted a reactionary secessionist movement on the part of the Tamils, serving to undermine all intra-Sinhalese divides including that between the Kandyans and low-country Sinhalese.

In the next two sections, I look at the impact of these ethno-inspired policies of Sinhala politicians on Kandy's political consciousness, and what they meant for the Tamil community and their initial demand for greater autonomy, especially as compared with the trajectory of the Kandyan demand.

3.3.2 'Kandy' in the Equation

The colonial government, towards the latter part of its rule in Ceylon, introduced universal franchise under the Donoughmore reforms of 1931, a mere three years after it was introduced in Britain. The island's seemingly cosmopolitan political outlook as reflected in the poly-ethnic Ceylon National Congress (CNC) may have inspired their confidence (De Votta 2007). However, what they did not perhaps anticipate was the undemocratic turn the country would take once its political elites came to appreciate the numerical implications of expanding the franchise.

Consequently, prospects for ethnic politics started to appear very promising, as evidenced by “the reparation of the national flag [and] the citizenship and electoral laws of 1948/49” (Bandara 2006, p. 37-38), both of which deliberately sought to limit minorities – particularly the Tamils – to the margins. However, it was only after the notorious 1956 reforms that ethnic politics came to occupy centre stage, and set off a vicious cycle of ethnic outbidding.

S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, whose ambitious designs were not offered a promising future in the Senanayake-dominated UNP, broke away from that party and set up the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), forming coalitions with leftist parties and mobilizing the public along lines of ethno-religiosity (Sinhala-Buddhism) to rival the electoral power of the UNP. Bandaranaike’s choice to appeal to Sinhala-Buddhist consciousness was prompted as much by the prospects of territorial representation as it was by the social dynamics of the time.

At three levels ... post-colonial Sinhala nationalism made a strong impact on the politics of the country. Firstly, it developed a fairly cohesive vision for Sri Lanka’s post-colonial nation-state, a vision constructed through grievances as well as aspirations of the Sinhala Buddhist majority. Secondly, it articulated a set of demands, meant to address the grievances of the Sinhala Buddhist community. These demands appear subsequently to have influenced state policy after 1956 ... The third impact concerns the transformation of social bases of state power in post-colonial Sri Lanka ... In class terms, the UNP leadership came from an urban, conservative and anglicized elite ... [that was] not in line with the middle class, rural nativism of the emerging nationalist forces (Uyangoda 2000, p. 63).

Hence Bandaranaike, himself an Anglican converted to Buddhism for the sake of power, was able – and willing – to mobilize the bulk of the electorate by appealing to their majoritarian ethno-religious sentiments. This endeavour was mainly carried out by presenting the new SLFP as an alternative political force that was more representative of the grievances and aspirations of the majority of the country, the rural Sinhala-Buddhists who already perceived themselves as being socio-economically under threat by other ethno-religious groups. Of special interest here is the fact that the lower castes of this body of people were for the first time experiencing

a slackening of the grip of caste discrimination such that they were now presented with the opportunity of upward mobilization, a hitherto forbidden fruit. Bandaranaike's approach, though lethal to inter-ethnic harmony, constituted a laudable measure to those who were oppressed in society because of their caste, especially within the rigid caste stratifications of Kandyan society.

Insights from the focus group sessions conducted for my undergraduate thesis confirm this understanding, whereby some respondents of the Kandyan lower castes demonstrated their endorsement of Bandaranaike, a low-country Sinhalese politician, whose policies served to undermine caste divisions by highlighting ethno-linguistic commonality.

"The caste factor was very strong before Bandaranaike was elected in 1956. There was a time when they would have very small chairs in the house separately for us to sit on. Some would even throw the chairs we sat on. But that changed after Bandaranaike" (Respondent 18, Kandyan Bathgama caste, personal communication, September 6, 2014).

"Politicians like Bandaranaike are treasures of this country. Some consider him to be like God. His politics was noble" (Respondent 24, Kandyan Navandanna caste, personal communication, September 6, 2014).

Therefore, it could be argued that Bandaranaike's politics played a crucial role in reaching out to the lower strata of Kandyan society, though perhaps unwittingly so. To be realistic, Bandaranaike's focus was on mobilizing the Sinhala masses across the country, not their Kandyan variant in particular. However it was intended, the effects of his decision found expression in lower-caste Kandyans finding a strong incentive to rally around Bandaranaike's

call for Sinhala solidarity, a cause with which even the Kandyan elites identified later on, in response to the worsening ethnic war with the Tamils, the dynamics of which I present below in relation to the Kandyan case.

3.4 'National' Destinies: Kandyan v Tamil Trajectory

Initially both the Kandyans and Tamils forwarded their claims for regional autonomy within an overarching framework of the existing nation-state. Neither group demanded the setting up of a separate state to secure their interests, making it clear that federalism during these initial days was viewed as a means of preserving political unity by addressing the need for cultural distinction of the constituent identity groups of the polity. Burgess (2006) notes that “federations were conscious rational attempts or experiments designed to create and foster a sense of belonging to what, at least initially, was an artificial political community” (p. 114). This is in stark contrast to the view of the concept today as a sure stepping stone towards secession.

The rise of Tamil nationalism and its claims against the ‘Sinhala state’ brought ethnicity to the forefront of the political dialogue of post-colonial Ceylon/Sri Lanka, incentivizing the Sinhala community to underplay their internal divisions and unite in the face of the common enemy. Conversely, the points of convergence between the Sinhalese and Tamils were underplayed in response to mounting tension over the sharing of political power. The Tamils, on the other hand, were able to identify less and less with the increasingly Sinhalizing state, and became further isolated from the nation building endeavour of Ceylon. The post-colonial state formation process of Ceylon gradually became a pan-Sinhalese exercise that accommodated Sinhalese from different caste and territorial backgrounds, thus opening up possibilities for the Kandyan Sinhalese to become integrated to the state more than the Tamils. The result was that

the Kandyans subsequently dropped their federal demand and became completely integrated to the unitary project of the island, while the Tamils' self-determination claims became stronger and stronger until they culminated in an armed struggle for secession.

Despite this one similarity in the framing of the initial demand, the two projects subsequently travelled in entirely different directions due to numerous factors. I discuss these below.

The self-determination argument of the Tamils, first within the federal framework and then in the secessionist context, was grounded on three key assertions: First, Tamils possess “a separate historical past” from the Sinhalese (“I.T.A.K. Resolutions” 2009, p. 212). Second, they are “a linguistic entity entirely different from that of the Sinhalese” (“I.T.A.K. Resolutions” 2009). Third, they have “territorial habitation of definite areas which constitute one-third of the island” (“I.T.A.K. Resolutions” 2009). Hence “by every fundamental test of nationhood” (“I.T.A.K. Resolutions” 2009) Tamils in Ceylon constituted a nation, and therefore had the right to agitate for political autonomy. Indeed, these three characteristics deeply engaged the Tamil imagination and earned increasing currency for the Tamil nationalistic movement as it evolved from a federal demand to a secessionist struggle.

In contrast, the Kandyan movement for autonomy possessed only the territorial requirement since the Kandyans spoke the same language and had the same history as the low-country Sinhalese. Roberts (1977) claims that in their attempt to validate the need for federal existence, the Kandyans had reconstructed history claiming that they had lived as a separate political entity for nearly 2400 years in the island. The earlier observations that the jurisdiction of the Kandyan kingdom prior to British capture comprised areas that are considered as low-country today (Appuhamy 1995), that Kandy was the natural successor to the shifting capitals of the

Sinhala kingdom (Malalgoda 1976), and that the Sinhalese living under Portuguese rule in the coastal belt accepted the Kandyan king, and not the Portuguese, as their overlord (Wickramasinghe 2006) confirm the claim of Roberts that history was indeed reconstructed to show Kandy as a separate political entity.

Secondly, the Tamil project was located in an exclusivist and hostile policy environment created by Sinhala politicians, gradually isolating the Tamils from the nation-building process of Ceylon. In contrast the Kandyan project, though it originated in a context of politico-economic discrimination, soon started experiencing more favourable conditions.

Bandara (2006) points out that the reason for the Tamils to be left out in this process was that Ceylon's nation-building project concentrated more on assimilation rather than integration. According to him, assimilation aims at cultural homogenization while integration refers to political unification of culturally distinct constituencies. The latter recognizes and preserves different identities. The assimilationist policies of successive governments in independent Ceylon sought to absorb the island's various ethno-religious elements into the newly sovereign 'nation' that was largely Sinhala in its outlook. The Kandyans who, like the low-country Sinhalese, had no homeland outside of the island and shared a common history with their low-country counterparts, did not argue strongly against this. The Tamils, however, resisted such policies due to their historical and cultural distinction from the Sinhalese, resulting in them being excluded from the island's post-colonial nation-building process. This exclusion found increasing legitimacy in a context where the Tamils were perceived as having disproportionately benefitted by the colonial administration, intensifying the grievances of the majority Sinhalese. The resultant exclusivist nation-building project heightened Tamil insecurities and promoted their argument for self-determination from mere regional autonomy

to secession. In his National Identity Theory, Mylonas (2007) identifies that the absence of an external homeland and cultural proximity encourages speedier integration of core and peripheral groups, while advantage of a peripheral group over the core one and demands for a revision of the state structure by the peripheral group serve to disintegrate the two.

Manor employs an aspect of Myron Weiner's (1965) Typology of Integration namely elite-mass integration to posit that "... a prominent element in Sinhalese chauvinism is the equating of the 'nation' of Lanka with the Sinhalese 'race'" (Manor 1982, p. 92) which has led to a situation where "most of the ruled, most members of the larger Sinhalese majority, have usually responded warmly to its use by their leaders ... This same chauvinism has also helped leaders to overcome divisions among Sinhalese" (ibid, p. 93). Manor specifically mentions the forestalled Kandyan-low country divide in addition to caste and class divisions to support his point. As I illustrated earlier in the chapter, Buddhism played a crucial role in this exercise. In the absence of such a point of convergence, and especially in light of a history of ethno-based discrimination, the Tamils were gradually (and naturally) disintegrated from the nation-building project of post-colonial Ceylon.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have evaluated the role of post-colonial politics in enabling Kandyan integration to the nation-building exercise of Sri Lanka. In this regard, two factors were considered: Intermarriages between Kandyan and low-country Sinhala elite families, and Buddhism as an integrative force among the Sinhalese. As the preceding discussion has shown, ethnic politics that dominated the post-colonial phase of Sri Lanka was both a cause of Kandyan integration – by way of undermining intra-Sinhala divides – as well as a consequence of it –

by way of being part of an exclusivist exercise in national integration that was made possible through common ethno-religious affinity with the Sinhala low-country.

The aim of this discussion was to highlight the factors that contribute to national integration in post-colonial societies by juxtaposing the Kandyan case with its Tamil counterpart. To this end, I have also briefly compared the trajectories of the two cases with a focus on the dynamics that determined such trajectories. In conclusion, I have argued – drawing from Mylonas’ National Integration Theory – that in addition to ethno-religious affinity, a shared history and the absence of an external homeland were factors instrumental in integrating the Kandyans with the low-country and its nation-building project, while the perception of Tamils having disproportionately advantaged from the colonial rule was a key factor in them being isolated from the same.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I looked at the process of integration by which the Kandyan Sinhalese of Sri Lanka became a constituent – and integral – part of the country's exclusivist nation-building project. Relying largely on secondary sources, coupled with some primary data obtained from the field, I positioned my research within an interpretivist framework where various dimensions of the phenomenon are viewed as constituting an interdependent whole. As such, my primary aim here was to understand this historical process, rather than attempt at prediction or generalization. I hope the insights this exercise has yielded will hopefully inform research running along similar lines.

To this end, I built my case in two phases namely colonial policies and post-colonial politics. Under colonial policies, I discussed how British administrative policies, inadvertently at times and otherwise at others, led to the gradual geographic and economic integration of Kandyan areas with the rest of the country. It is interesting to note here that these policies were introduced because of the British understanding that 'Kandyan' constituted an entity separate from the low-country Sinhalese (who were by the time of the conquest of Kandy well accustomed to European presence in the island), with the capacity – and more than that, the will – to strike back against the British Raj. The consequent measures to 1) geographically open up Kandyan areas through a network of roads and railways 2) economically open them up by inviting people of other areas to invest in business in the Kandyan plantations and 3) spatially relocate power in Colombo as the capital of the emerging Ceylonese nation (though admittedly this only had an impact that was originally unintended) led to the gradual economic marginalization, demographic revision, and spatial undermining of Kandy and its neighbouring provinces, resulting in a grievance mentality that proved to be instrumental in the consolidation of a distinct identity called 'Kandyan'. In other words, the factors that were crucial in

integrating the hills with the rest of the island in economic, geographic, and spatial terms were the very same ones that later paved the way for a distinct ‘Kandyan’ identity to emerge.

In the section on post-colonial politics, I evaluated the integrative function of intermarriages and Buddhism in bringing the Kandyans together with the low-country Sinhalese. Special focus here was on the parallel trajectory of the Tamil nationalist project, which put the Kandyan case in comparative perspective, thereby juxtaposing factors that led to the integration and disintegration of various identity groups in Sri Lanka’s nation-building exercise. The latter half of this chapter (on the role of Buddhism) was situated against the backdrop of the country’s ethnic conflict, where I argued that ethnic politics in the post-colonial phase of the island was both a cause and a consequence of Kandyan integration to the larger Sinhala polity. My observation was that the ethnic conflict provided an impetus for intra-Sinhalese divisions to be pushed to the background and intra-Sinhalese commonalities – such as common faith – to be emphasized (thereby becoming a ‘cause’ for Kandyan integration), while the ethnic conflict was also further intensified by such integration and the exclusive Sinhala base of the “ethnic nation” it signified (thereby becoming a ‘consequence’ of Kandyan integration).

Drawing from Harris Mylonas’ National Identity Theory, I demonstrated that Kandy’s integration to the larger Sinhala polity overtime constitutes a manifestation of the Endogenous National Identity Theory, which explains that a shared history and the absence of an external homeland (among other things) are factors that bring core and non-core groups together. Similarly, the Tamil case exemplifies a dimension of the Exogenous National Identity Theory, because the perception of Tamils having disproportionately benefitted from the colonial rule was a key factor leading to their isolation from Sri Lanka’s nation-building project (a development Mylonas has termed ‘non-core advantage’).

Within the course of the thesis, particularly in the chapter on colonial policies that led to Kandyan integration, I also developed a minor theory to explain the nation-building exercises of post-colonial societies. In addition to the case I have dealt with in the thesis, I also used comparative literature in making the claim that nation-building in colonized societies is necessarily a phenomenon of market manufacture. Drawing from previous scholarship on how the plantation economy of the British times and their support services led to infrastructural development and later economic integration of the Kandyan region with the rest of the country – consequently assuring political integration as well – I argued that the imposition of colonial economic structures on local societies acted as a key driver of the nation-building processes of those societies post-independence. Therefore, viewing these societies through national lenses may lead to uninformed conclusions about the nature of the problems they face, particularly in relation to ethnic strife.

NOTES

ⁱ One instance of this is was the continuous and intense investment in educational institutions in low-country areas by the British that later translated into underrepresentation of Kandyans in the newly emerging local class holding jobs in prestigious fields like medicine, law, engineering, and the plantations. The statistics of 1921 show that the number of Kandyans occupied as lawyers and doctors were 53, accounting for a mere 3.4% of the native population to be occupied thus. Statistics on the number of Kandyan men involved in ‘white collar’ professions as against low-country men from 1901 to 1921 throws this phenomenon into greater relief. In 1901 low-country Sinhalese men made up 39.4% of the white collar force, while Kandyans did only 1.6%. By 1921 this number had risen to 3.2%, only to find that the low-country percentage had also gone up to 42.5% (Roberts 1977). While it cannot be clearly established that the British initiatives were specifically geared towards this outcome and the crippling of the Kandyan elite class it suggested, the above mentioned chain of events certainly led to that, perhaps unwittingly. Later, however, more pointed initiatives were taken by the British to isolate Kandy both socially and economically, when Kandyan farmers were evicted from their paddy fields and their lands were taken for plantations which the low-country enthusiastically invested in (Wickramasinghe 2006), and when the administrative boundaries of the island were re-drawn to deliberately break up the areas forming the previous Kandyan kingdom (Sebastian 2004).

ⁱⁱ The Kandyan Convention was signed between a number of disgruntled Kandyan nobles who had grievances against their king and hence sought British help to overthrow him, and representatives of the British crown.

ⁱⁱⁱ Chapter VI of the Donoughmore Commission report (formally referred to as the ‘Report of the Special Commission on the Constitution: Ceylon’) presents the Kandyan federal demand in intricate detail. It first cites the Kandyan justification for demanding a federal system which is two-fold. First, and foremost, is their fear of the economic as well as political encroachment of the low country Sinhalese. They have presented their case expressing this fear saying that the innocent and inexperienced Kandyans were being easily exploited by the cunning and intelligent low-country Sinhalese who have migrated to the Kandyan areas to escape the intense economic competition in the densely populated coastal belt. The latter has also managed to access not only the high political offices in the country, but also those in the Kandyan areas. Additionally, they have come to an agreement with the Tamils to share political power in the country including that of the Kandyan territories. In these circumstances, the Kandyans have said, it is inevitable that the identity of the Kandyans along with their rights will be compromised. Any agitation for constitutional reforms by the local political elites, therefore, represents the rise of the low-country populace over the Kandyans and the subsequent dissolution of the Kandyan nation (Ceylon: Report of the Special Commission on the Constitution Cmd. 31313, 132). Second is their grievance against the British regarding the 1815 Kandyan Convention which the latter, according to the Kandyans, did not honour. They have accused here that the British have neglected their responsibilities towards the Kandyan nation and betrayed their trust by not taking measures to preserve the Kandyan customs and structures as well as the status of Buddhism which is of paramount importance to the Kandyans (Donoughmore Report, p. 133). Next they have forwarded four arguments to support their plea for separate existence: 1) The Kandyan kingdom is being controlled by a legislature in which there are no Kandyan representatives and hence legislating on affairs pertaining to the Kandyans has been left to the mercy of a third party that is neither Kandyan nor British 2) Kandyan institutions and laws are being substituted by foreign institutions and laws, and Buddhists of other nations have been allowed to intervene in matters of Kandyan Buddhist sites 3) Apart from those offices that are held by Kandyan leaders by virtue of tradition, all other high government offices are being held by persons not of Kandyan or British origin 4) When compared with the situation in 1815, the education status of Kandyans has declined considerably due to the discontinuation of the temple education system, which is only one example of the general decline of the Kandyan (Donoughmore Report, 134). In their argument for federalism, the Kandyans have stressed on the fact that their demand is by no means racially-oriented or designed to cater to the power needs of a few, but rather a case to exercise their right to exist as a distinct nation and determine their own fate. They have reconstructed history to support their argument claiming that the Kandyans have lived as a separate political entity for more than 2400 years in the island of Ceylon, and have described the Kandyan Convention as a document exchanged between two sovereign nations (Roberts 1977).

^{iv} Gunewardena’s thesis was that Sinhala was initially only used to denote the ruling elite and their language, and that the expansion of its definition to include the masses who spoke it happened only as late as the 12th century. Building on this, he argued that the ‘myth’ of an encompassing group identity called ‘Sinhala’ having existed since ancient times was the construction of Sinhala protagonists and scholars of the 19th century and later. Contesting this view, K.N.O. Dharmadasa published an article citing the *Dhampiya Atuwa Getapadaya* of the 10th century which records that the Hela (Sinhala) people were all those speaking the Hela language who had descended from the retinue of Sinhabahu’s son Vijaya. The name ‘Hela’ means ‘lion slayer’, a reference to Sinhabahu’s slaying of his father, a lion. Hence, Dharmadasa

argued that the group identity called ‘Sinhala’ pre-existed the 19th century by several centuries (Galahitiyawa 2011).

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