

Economic Background of Dambadeniya, Yapahuva, Kurunegala, Gampola and Kotte that led to Social Changes in the Medieval Period of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The economic factor can be regarded as the decision of social development in human society and with that development of the economic situation; various structures of society similarly are described. Several scholars have analyzed through their various research that commercial activities and the development of commerce are major facts that society will organize systematically in the world. The economic factor which was a reason for the origin and development of the socio-political organization of ancient Sri Lanka can be studied under two major divisions. Those are an economy based on agricultural activities and an economy based on trading activities. R. A. L. H. Gunawardhana has suggested that periods of prolific activity in building irrigation works in Sri Lanka coincided with the most flourishing periods of trade. The explanation for this is that commercial gain provided the resources for hydraulic engineering. He points out that there was only one new major irrigation project undertaken between the seventh and the ninth centuries, in sharp contrast to the intense irrigation activity in the period immediately proceeding. H. J. Benda has clearly shown from his primary studies that an economy based on agriculture and commerce has affected the changes in society and political organization. Therefore, from this research, the growth of commercial activities will be discussed based on those views and how commercial activities affected society. Commerce is a factor that is based on buying of items, transaction, selling and consumption. A commercial market is a place where the meeting of merchants and consumers takes place. The research will be mainly based on primary sources and wherever necessary material will also be obtained from limited secondary sources published on the political system of the island.

Keywords: internal trade, International trade, Social change, Commercial commodities, Trading groups, Muslim Merchant community.

1.1 Introduction

When we study the commercial history of ancient times, we need to note that there were two major parts which were called local trade and long-distance trade. As has been pointed out by Classen, this idea confirmed the origin of several societies and states and changes in societies as well. The social history of a country cannot be studied without knowledge of the internal trade and international trade of that country because commercial activities affect it very seriously to change society. Those societies become very wealthy societies due to commercial activities. Concerning Sri Lanka, firstly it describes the growth of local trading activities and how far it affected the development of Sri Lankan society.

1.2 Economic background

Explaining causes for the decline of Rajarata civilization Michael Roberts says that the haven provided by the Wet Zone and the potentialities it held out led the population to concentrate their attention on the South-West rather than to attempt a recovery of the civilization in the dry zone. (Roberts, 1971: 99-109). In his view, the drift to the South-West was not merely a story of its occupants being pushed out of the dry zone. It was a push-pull process. He further states that the more widespread use of iron enabled peasant cultivators to effectively cultivate the Wet Zone and that attention should be devoted to the influence of the coconut palm and the extension of its culture in assisting the population to move to the lowlands of the South-West. Siriweera says that there was a special attraction or process in the South and South-West during and after the thirteenth century to which Michael Roberts has not paid any attention. During this era, there were marked changes in the Indian Oceanic trade. Although there had been a demand for gems, pearls, ivory, etc. in the oceanic trade from the very beginning, international trade in spices such as cinnamon, cardamom and nutmeg witnessed an unprecedented spurt after the thirteenth century. Therefore, the Sri Lankans, rulers as well as the ruled, paid greater attention to regions that produced spices. It is due to this factor that ports such as Negombo, Chilaw, Colombo, Bentota, Beruvala, Galle and Dondra developed between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. (Siriweera, 2002: 74). He further says that even the kingdom of Jaffna which towards the last quarter of the thirteenth century concentrated on international sea-borne commerce and expanded along the sea coast in order to gain a greater share in this trade. (*Ibid.*, 74) According to this view, trading activities got a high position during this period. This led to social change in the relevant period. Therefore, we should refer to the commercial background of this period.

As has been pointed out by Hettiaratchi, Paṭṭanagāma or Paṭungam which are showing the development of commerce can be heard in this period. *Alakēśvara Yuddhaya* and *Rājāvali* tell us that officers were appointed by Aryacakravarti to collect the revenues from the Nava Toṭamuna. (Hettiaratchi) Many of these have located in the Northern and Western coastal areas. Prince Sapumal won the Yāpā Paṭuna. Kolomtota or Colombo which was camped by the army of Aryacakravarti, Toṭupalas such as Vattala, Halāvata, Mundalama and Puttalam were located in the Western and South-Western coastal areas. Paṭṭanas such as Pānadura Toṭa, Beruvala, Galle, Vāligama and Devinuvara were located in South and Eastern coastal areas.

The term *Seṭṭhi* who is the person mentioned in some chronicles and other sources was rich and had been an important member of society through commercial activities. Commerce had become so important in the Polonnaruwa kingdom, that the chief of the commercial group or chief of the *Seṭṭhi* was a member of the king's Council. This term is mentioned in the *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* as the *Siṭunā* (*Nikāya Saṃgrahaya*, 1987: 18). and as the *Kaḍagoṣṭhiye āttavun* in the inscription of Niśśankamalla's Rājasabhā. The two terms *Siṭu* and *Mahaveḷandanā* have been mentioned in the *Kandavuru Sirita* (Jayathilake 1956: 139) and *Pūjāvali*. (*Pūjāvali*, 1965: 113). *Seṭṭhinātha* was one of the persons who revolted against king Vijayabāhu I (1070- 1110). (*Mahāvamsa*, LIX, 17). It shows what kind of important status the trading communities had in the Polonnaruwa period. The Alagakkōnāra who was a descendant from a very rich trading family had got a very important place in the Gampola kingdom. It can be said that there were many opportunities to advance through commercial activities. The Jōti Siṭāna (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III, 9.) who was the main administrative officer in the Kandy area in the period of King Parākramabāhu VI (1412-1467) Kotte period, reached a high-level status of the society.

Because of the immense population, the main cities of the country became the major points of commerce. Members of the kings' Council, their families and retinues, army and related officers, mercenaries and various foreigners lived within the city wall or in proximity to the city. Their necessities would have been provided by the merchants. In addition to becoming administrative centers, some capitals became religious centers. Therefore, those cities were very famous among outside people. And it was also a factor that developed trading activities. Furthermore, the king and the devotees had to supply the basic needs of the monastic establishments of a city. According to the model of capital and functions, it was necessary to have separate market rooms and specific areas for merchants. Some streets in the Polonnaruwa were separated for commercial markets full of commercial items. (*Mahāvamsa*, LXXIII, 149). There were commercial streets in Kurunegala (Mudiyanse, 1971: 22) and many markets with an abundance of commercial commodities on the two sides of the road in Kotte. (*Haṃsa Sandēśa*, 1960: v. 24).

Taking into consideration the planning space of capitals, it can be imagined that commercial centers may have been located in the city or outside the city. The commerce was one task of a capital city and the main task was the port city. There were many port cities on the island such as Mahāittha which was the most important port on the island about the thirteenth century, Ūrātoṭa which was a place of bustling trade activity, Galle, Dondra and Colombo were ports more important after the thirteenth century. (Siriweera 2003: 125-134). Galle Trilingual Inscription is vital for this time. (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III, 334-341). This discloses much information about a larger region in which this island continues to occupy a central position. The three languages evidently, were the regional commercial languages during that period. Historically, thus the 15th century turns out to be the high water mark of peaceful trade and international cultural intercourse in this region of different territorial, racial, linguistic and religious ethnicities. This tolerance is glaringly apparent from the multi-lingual nature of this Galle inscription. This understanding and collective sharing of mercantile profit among diverse peoples of this immense oceanic highway was rent as under with the commencement of European activities from the beginning of the 16th century when violence, rapaciousness and intolerance replaced the age-long cooperation and understanding that prevailed among these oriental

people. Other ports such as Goḍapavata can be dated to the 2nd century, Weligama which can be dated to after the 12th century, Beruwala, Bentota, Wattala and Chilow which can be dated to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. (*Ibid*). Many Sandēśas have pointed out that there were wide streets in port cities. (*Tisara Sandēśa*, 1991: vv. 52-55; *Parevi Sandēśa*, 1967: vv. 84-88; *Girā Sandēśa*, 1920: v. 104). In addition to that, there were many shops of all kinds full of commodities including beads, pearls, gems and other valuable items. The port city was the import and export centers of commercial commodities as well as centers of collecting commercial items and distribution. Merchants collected export items such as pearls, gems, spices and elephants in the internal areas of the country and transported them to the port city. Production of some export items and collection were done in the port city or in proximity areas to the port city. If not, they were transported by internal production centers. Current archaeological excavations, which have been carried out in Alakolawāva, located five kilometers from Sigiriya, Kuratiyawa located fifteen kilometers from Sigiriya and Samanalaweve close to Belihuloya, showed that there was a very high quality and large amount of 99% pure iron production. (Juleff, 1998: 3-9). A part of these sometimes would have been used for exporting. While some exported luxury commodities such as ceramic ware, silk, perfumes and wines were channeled to the local commercial market, a complex trade organization was necessitated for all these things.

Understanding of this commercial network is very limited due to the lack of evidence. A Cola inscription that can be dated to the 11th century, mentions a very important account of the production of trade items in port cities. Taxes for weaving machines in Mantai have been described in this inscription. (Subramanya Aiyar, *South Indian Inscriptions*, 1937, Vol. IV, no. 1412; 1414b). It is reasonable to believe that the coir industry was very successful in areas close to Western and Southern coasts after about 12th century AC. Omani and Yemeni ships came to Sri Lanka for coir for ropes, coconut trees for the masts of ships, timber for their ship industry. (Gunawardhana, 2003: 29). Many port cities were properly protected by soldiers using walls and doors. The population of those cities consisted of various races and there was a variety of groups of communities. There were many and famous monastic establishments in these port cities such as Mahātittha, Devundara and Wāligama. It is reasonable to acknowledge that the necessities of permanent people, people of suburban areas, religious establishments and sometimes foreign merchants had been completed by merchants in port cities. (*Saddharmaratnākara*, 1912: 641; *Rasavāhini*, B. E. 2434: 128). These merchants sold the commercial items which were collected from ports and fulfilled the necessities of minor traders. An inscription located in Māntai, reveals that there was a person called *Tēvan*. Tēvan deposited money in the names of commercial guilds Chankarapatiyar, Verylai Vaniyar and Valakkai Vaniyar in Mantai to light street lamps close to the Tiru- Iramishwaram Kovil in that port. (*South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. IV, no. 1414B). Nānādēsi was also a trading guild that connected to Sri Lankan commercial activities.

Imported luxury commodities such as silk, ceramic ware, perfumes and wines were transported by ox carts or pack animals from port cities to capital and merchant cities and commercial items for exportation were transported in the same way to the port cities. It was easy to transport these trading items, because there was a road network combining the capital and port cities. (Siriweera, 1986: 17-38). It has been revealed by archaeological and literature sources that there were roads from Anuradhapura to Mahātittha, Anuradhapura to Jambukola Paṭṭana via Rambāva, Pāvatkulama and Vavunikulama, Anuradhapura to the Gokanna via Mihintale, Mahakanadarāva, Pankulama and

Ratmale. A road which had been directed via Kataragama, Buttala, Yudaganava, Mahiyanganaya and Dāstota, was connected to Magama or Tissamaharamaya, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva. There was another road which had connected the Southern plain and the North via Mahānāgahula close to Ambalntota, Magama, Devanagara, Bhimatittha, Tittthagama, Kalatittha, Muhunnaru, Badalatittha, Mahāgalla and Mandagalla. Trading fairs like *Tavalama* were held on these roads. Galapāta vihāra inscription, dated to king Parākramabāhu II (1236-1270), mentions a medieval *Tavalama* and Caravan leader (*Sāttunā*) situated close to Bentota. (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. IV, No. 25). A Tamil inscription which was found in Padaviya, mentions another *Tavalama* in which the money was collected as taxes. (Velupillai, 1971: Pt. I, p. 55; Pt. II, 19-20). The term *Kadigai- Tavalam* in medieval South Indian inscriptions has denoted itinerant trading groups or trading fairs. (Abraham, 1988: 113).

Information was gathered only about two merchant cities of all other merchant cities which were located in Padaviya and Vahalkada in the Eastern part of the Northcentral plain. These cities became very important commercial centers at least in the period of 11th, 12th and 13th centuries. Archaeological remains of Buddhist and Hindu establishments with the expansion of a considerable area in Padaviya reveal that there were Sinhala and Hindu people. (Pathmanathan, 1982: 11). This town had a central place which had a wall round eighteen acres. This had mainly benefited as an army security place in the Cola period. Tamil inscriptions at Padaviya which have mentioned South Indian trading communities such as Ceṭṭin, Nānādēsīn and Aiññurvar clearly show that these communities played a very important role in commerce in the Padaviya market town (Nakaram) composed of commercial shops and fairs. (Velupillai, 1971: 46-57; Velupillai, 1971: 32-35).

Vahalkada, located close to Horowpota was a general market town which was developed for a long time. Tamil inscriptions, found in the Vahalkada, mention South Indian trading communities such as Nānādēsī and Valaṅgiyār who were chiefs of this market town. One of these inscriptions mentioned about a gathering of many component groups of the town. This group included the guild chief related to the boats in Māntai. (*Ibid.*, 46-57). It means that Vahalkada market town had very large connections and it was represented at two levels in the commercial development which can be named long distance trade and local trade. The same inscription mentions the superintendent of the streets in the Vahalkada. It can be seen that the market town had a very efficient administrative organization. The term Akkasālai, mentioned in that inscription, denoted an industry that was producing crafts. It can be imagined that there were various kinds of craftsmen who produced crafts items.

Officers who were appointed directly by the king or trading communities collected taxes in the main commercial centers such as capitals, ports and the market towns. Perhaps commercial communities were assigned this task, due to getting a lump sum or regular payment to the king. According to the Devundara inscription of King Parākramabāhu II (1236-1270), an officer who was called *Mahāpaṇḍita*, collected customs duties at the Dondra port. (Paranavitana, 1953: 63-64). It seems that some market towns and port cities were reckoned as special units for administrative activities. S. Pathmanathan expresses by quoting Tamil sources that Mahātitttha or Mātoṭṭam was a separate administrative unit and Padaviya and Vahalkada were mainly ruled by the trading community

in the period of 11th and 12th centuries. (Pathmanathan, *Op. Cit.*, 1984: 145). However, those units were under the king and did not act independently.

Although commerce in villages was limited, ideas of self-sufficiency of village should be reconsidered. Views of some earlier British administrative scholars about Asia affected Marks on ideas of Asiatic mode of production which is based on self-sufficiency economy. (Thorner 1966, pp. 33-66;). As has been pointed out by Moris and Stain, the patriotic or nationalist bias of Asian writers resulted in exaggeration of the self-sufficiency of the Asian village. But, it should be mentioned that some essential commercial items such as salt and metal wares were not produced in all the Asian villages. Metal and metal products were always brought to villages in Sri Lanka from the areas of production and manufacture. Salt had to be transported from coastal areas to the internal areas of the island. The other necessities which could not have been fulfilled by village communities locally, merchants from outside had to fulfill. Money exchange or items exchange was necessary for this activity. Mediaeval literature has mentioned that villages paid money (*Kahavanu*) for buying ghee, venison and lime. (*Saddharmālamkāra*, 1954: 450, 503, 675). While merchants who were engaged in commercial activities from home to home, had to always move via regions, they played an important role by selling clothes, rings, necklaces and bracelets which were light trading items to villages. (*Mahāvamsa*, LXVI, 134; *Rasavāhini*, *Lankādippavattuni*, 24 and 134; *Pūjāvāli*, 517). At least some villages had permanent commercial centers. For instance, the *Cūlavamsa* mentioned that there were some trading shops in the vicinity of Polonnaruwa. (*Cūlavamsa*, LXXII, 212) *Parevi Sandēśa*, written in the Kotte period, describes the commercial centers of villages. (*Parevi Sandēśa*, v. 105). Some items which had been produced in villages circulated in the villages themselves by exchanging or selling. For instance, fishermen sold fishes to villages in that area. *Saddharmaratnākara* mentions about a fisherman who had exchanged two thirds of his fish daily for rice, ghee, milk and oil. (*Saddharmaratnākara*, 1912: 469). *Saddharmaratnāvāli* refers to a person who had exchanged his fish for metal weights known as *Aka*. (*Saddharmaratnāvāli*, 1985: 449). One *aka*, as has been pointed out by Hettiaratchi, is 20 *vī āṭas* and 8 *akas* is 1 *kalanda*. (Hettiaratchi, 1988: 263).

Kings in ancient and medieval Sri Lanka played a very important role in the foreign trading activities as well as local trade. Specially, the king directly dealt with foreign merchants besides the ruling commerce in port cities and market towns as well as measurement in the capital. Some exported commodities such as gems, pearls and elephants were under the king's monopoly from the period of 10th century AC. Abu Side, an Arabian writer, has written that the king appointed the men to protect the gem mines. However, as has been pointed out by Batuta and Vartema, the king had all the rights to the gems. But the king permitted to work relating to gems through some payment.

According to inscription found at Gadaladeniya, dated to the 14th century AC, officers of the king could not interfere with the elephant commerce, producing coins and mining of gems. Barbosa's record shows clearly that elephants were the king's monopoly. The king had a right to pearls bank. According to the Chang-Ta-Yuan, a person who worked with pearls, they had to give half of the harvest of pearls to the king. When Ibn Battuta met Āryacakravarti in Jaffna, servants of Āryacakravarti were categorizing the best pearls from a large number of pearls. Barbosa tells us that small pearls were to the divers and large ones was to the king. Servants had to give some payment to

the king for diving for pearls. And the king got a large income from the pearls monopoly. Barbosa furthermore claims that cinnamon also was the king's monopoly.

King Bhuvanekabāhu I (1272-1284) sent envoys to Egypt (Codrington, 1919: 82-85). and King Parākramabāhu VI (1412-1467) sent an army to the Adrayanpet (Ativīrārāmpaṭṭana) port. (*Girā Sandēśa*, V. 148-149; Somarathne, *Op. Cit.*, 1975: 125). These facts were directly connected with kings' desire to promote trade. However, the king had to develop internal trade activities. The research of S. Pathmanathan which mentioned in the South Indian merchant guilds such as *Valaṅgiyār*, *Vīra Valaṅgiyār* and *Nānādēsi* as well as *Ceṭṭin*, *Ceṭṭiputtas*, *Chankarapatiyar* and *Vanniyākas* who were assistants of leaders of guilds in the places such as Mahatittha, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Padaviya, Vahalkada and Viharahinna between the 10th and 13th centuries AC is an extremely vital one because the nature of connections between the king and guilds helped to develop the economy which led to change society. (Pathmanathan, *Op. Cit.*, 1982: 11; Indrapala, 1971: 106-107). These commercial communities which managed their trading activities accepted the permission of the ruling king on the promise of paying some money assessing the income of market towns. Some market towns such as Padaviya and Vahalkada were independent units. Army officers were appointed for security reasons and there were arrangements for public facilities. The functions of these communities are not clear in the politics and war-fare of kings. But, there are many facts regarding the interaction and collaboration of the establishment and maintenance of religious and cultural institutes. (Pathmanathan, *Op. Cit.*, 1982: 11). For instance, Queen Leelawathi made a custom house in Anuradhapura, to be built by the Nānādēsi who was from an Indian merchant guild. The income of that house was utilized to supply spices and other things to the arms house which was called *Palabalavimēdhāvi*. (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I, 179-181; Paranavitana, 1960, pp. 12-13). Re-examining Lankatilaka Tamil inscription, Pathmanathan says that the Tamil inscription engraved on the rock at Lankatilaka, which records a royal order pertaining to the endowments made to the temple, refers to a grant made by the community of merchants called *patineṅvishaiyam*. The inscription indicates the close interaction which the merchant community had with the newly established state temple and the role played by the *patineṅvishaiyam* in the internal and maritime trade of the Gampola kingdom. (Pathmanathan, 2002: 39)

According to Sri Lankan and foreign sources, Sri Lanka became an entrepot of sea-borne trade which was managed by Eastern and Western merchants via the Indian Ocean from the period of Pre-State in Sri Lanka. Contemporary foreign reports tell us that merchants came to Sri Lanka from ancient times, because Sri Lanka was located in a naval route and it had very important ports and an abundance of pearls, gems, tusks and spices. It can be mentioned that pearls and gems were very important commercial items on the commercial history in Sri Lanka. (Deraniyagala, 1969: 140-142; *Inscriptions of Ceylon*, Vol. I, No. 335, p. 28, No. 606, p. 46, No. 931a, p. 72, No. 1158, p. 74.). It will be very beneficial to study early commercial activities from archaeological evidence such as potteries and horses which were imported from various countries in pre-state in Sri Lanka. (Deraniyagala, 1990: 211-291).

Sea borne trade and transportation were implemented by organized merchant groups and sometimes interference of rulers of various countries in the ancient and medieval world. These merchant groups

posted their merchant members at the ports in the various countries and maintained very close connections with the internal merchants for the purpose of collection of trading items and division of the country as well. Rulers of the country encouraged such activities, because there was a large income by customs duties and foreign items were very useful for the elites in their countries.

The most important function of the Eastern Sea borne trade was activated by Chinese and Indian merchants, Muslim merchants came from Arab and other countries from the period of about 8th century to the 16th century. Islam merchants came from various countries and they were unified under the banner of Muslim flag. After the birth of Mohammad, the biggest empire was built by the Arabians of the ancient world in the seventh century. Persia was invaded by them in the 7th century and they got the place which had belonged to the Persians in the Sea borne trade. Umayyad and Abbasid Calif were ruled theoretically whole Islamic kingdoms including from Spain to Al-Sind or the door of India in the period of 7th century AC to 9th century AC. There was a peaceful and stable empire under the Tang Dynasty in China during this period. This atmosphere helped to develop the Indian Sea- borne trade and countries like Sri Lanka which were situated close to the sea routes joined this commerce in largely.

Al- Biladuri a writer of 8th century mentions that King in Ratnadveepa or Sri Lanka several Muslim girls who were born in Sri Lanka, were gifted to the Calif. According to the Albiladuri's report, these small girls were of a late Muslim merchant. (Siriweera, 2003: 119). According to the inscription, found in the Muslim cemetery in Colombo, datable to the 949 AC, it can be said that Muslim merchants lived in the Island in the 10th century AC. Similarly, a tomb was found at Puliyantiv in Mannar dated to the 10th century. (Siriweera, *Op. Cit.*, 2003: 119). Muslims had lived close to the Canton port in China in 8th century AC. Canton was called by them as "Kanfu." (Hirth and Rockhill, 1911: 14-16).

Golden and silver coins which can be connected to the Muslim dynasties of Bagdad, Alexandria, North Africa and North India were found in areas between Colombo and the central hills. (Codrington, *Op. Cit*, 1924: 157-158). *Mahāvamsa* mentions that Yavana or Muslims brought gifts to the king Parākramabāhu (1153-1186) of Polonnaruva. (*Mahāvamsa*, LXXVI, 264). The objective of this action may have been the extension of commercial activities of Sinhala kingdom. Muslims were the main merchants in the ports of Colombo, Beruvala, Kalpitiya, Chilaw, Weligama, Galle and Hambantota in Sri Lanka in the period 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. Some of these Muslims came from Arabia and Persia and some of them were originally from Malasia and India.

Chinese people and South-East Asian people, Sri Lankans and South Indians with the Muslim merchants played a very important role in the Indian sea borne trade in this period. South Indian merchant groups such as Aiññuruvar, Valañgiar, Nānādēsi, Balañgiyar and Nakarattār activated the internal as well as foreign commerce in Sri Lanka between the period of 8th and 13th centuries. Inscriptions record that their trade centers were located ports like Mantai as well as internal places such as Padaviya, Viharahinna and Vahalkada. (Indrapala, 1970, pp. 1-15). Commerce was the main factor to establish the political hegemony in Sri Lanka by the Colas in the early period of 11th century. Barbosa, a writer of 16th century, mentions that merchants who came from Indian areas such as

Coramendal, Vijayanagar, Malabar, Deccan and Cambey to Sri Lanka, bought elephants and tuskers from the king. (Barbosa, 1866: 167-168).

Luxury commodities were circulated by the necessities of elite class in the international commerce by the time of ancient and medieval periods. Accordingly, except items which were exchanged for re-export of intermediaries in Sri Lankan ports, items produced in Sri Lanka such as pearls, gems, ivory, turtle shells, spices, elephants and tuskers were exported from Sri Lanka. Although spices such as cardamom were exported from ancient time, Cinnamon was important in commerce from the medieval period. *Aja- Ib- Alhind* or Wonders of India, written by Bushug Ibn Shariyar in the 10th century can be considered as the first book which was written about the Sri Lankan cinnamon by a foreigner. (Yusuf, 1970: 142). Records which have been kept in Cairo by Jewish merchants in 12th century AC, tell us that the source of the cinnamon is Sri Lanka. (Goitein, 1973: 120). After that, a letter of Father Montikovino John who went on missionary activities in 13th century refers to Sri Lankan cinnamon. Ibn Battuta who came to Sri Lanka in 1344 AC, mentions that men at Marbar in India gave clothes as gifts and got cinnamon from Sri Lankan king. (Hussain, 1953: 217).

R. A. L. H Gunawardhana who had examined *Al- Kitab- Al Rudjari*, written by Al- Idrisi, emphasizes that Arabian ships came from Oman and Yemen to Sri Lanka as well as proximity islands of Sri Lanka for the purposes of buying ships, masts, ropes and timber for planking for ships. (Gunawardhana, *Op. Cit.*, 2003: 27). There are clear evidences about the export of coconuts from the Island at least from the period of 15th century AC Reports of Gaspar Coreya, a Portuguese writer describes that when ships of Lorenzo de Almeda arrived in the Colombo port, several ships of Muslims which were loading cinnamon, small elephants, timber and coconuts had been seen. The writer Barose mentions that coconuts were exported from Sri Lanka in the 16th century. (Ferguson, 1908: 36).

Gadaladeniya inscription dated to the 14th century, mentions that the king's officers were banned from trading, minting coins and mining gems. (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. IV, No. 3). Barbosa kept a historical record in the second decade of the 16th century, presenting that elephant trading was a monopoly of the king. (Barbosa, *Op. Cit.*, 1866: 170). If we conclude according to the conditions of the ruling of coastal areas of the Portuguese and the Dutch, it can be said that even cinnamon exportation was also under the monopoly of the king. Barbosa's record mentions the king's monopoly of cinnamon. (*Ibid.*, 167).

A variety of luxurious clothes can be considered very important among the exported items to Sri Lanka. India, China and Burma were the main countries that exported textiles to Sri Lanka. There was a great demand for Chinese silk in the world in the ancient period. Facts relating to Chinese silk imported from China and *Kasi salu* imported from Eastern India can always be seen in literary sources in Sri Lanka.

It cannot be surmised correctly whether Colombo was the main port where the Muslims lived from 10th century AC. (Nicholas, 1959: 121). Ibn Battuta mentioned that Colombo was the most important city, when he arrived in Sri Lanka in 1344 AC. It was called Kalanbu by Ibn Battuta. Battuta

furthermore describes that Jālasti who had five hundred Abyssinians under him, ruled Colombo and he was called the “Prince of Ocean.” (Hussain, 1953: 223-224). According to these facts, it seems that Colombo was an important place in the maritime commerce. The Colombo port had been developed as the main port of the Island when the Portuguese arrived in the Island.

Even Wāligama was important from the 12th century AC. *Cūlavamsa* mentions that there were rich merchants during the reign of king Parākramabāhu I. (*Cūlavamsa*, LXXV, 45). Kalyāṇi inscriptions records that a ship which was sent by the Burmese king reached Weligama. (Buddhadatta, 1924: 23). According to the Sandeśa poems such as Tisara, Parevi and Kōkila, Weligama was an important port by the time of 15th century. Weligama was also a town where many Muslims lived. The above mentioned Sandeśas show that Muslims, who lived here, spoke Tamil and sang Tamil songs. (*Tisara Sandeśa*, v. 43; *Parevi Sandeśa*, vv. 103-104; *Kōkila Sandeśa*, vv. 55-57).

Galle was also an important port by the middle of the 14th century. Ibn Battuta mentions that he went from Devundara which was called Deenavura to Galle which was called Kvali and a Captain, named Ibrahim who had a house, treated him well. (Hussain, 1953: 223-224). Chinese ships which sailed to Malabar or African coastal area via the Malacca too came to Galle. Tri Lingual slab inscription in Galle which was written in Chinese, Persian and Tamil languages, mentions that Many Chinese, Muslim and South Indian merchants were the ports in Southern Sri Lanka in 14th and 15th centuries. (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III, No. 36). According to the Sandeśa poems, Galle was a town which had wide streets and beautiful houses on both sides of the streets. (*Tisara Sandeśa*, vv. 52-55; *Parevi Sandeśa*, vv. 87-88).

Devundara was also a very important commercial port in the period of 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. Devundara inscription of king Parākramabāhu II (1236-1270) is an inscription which had mentioned about the rules and regulations related to the customs duties and protection of merchants. According to this inscription, Devundara port what was called *Tendirātoṭa*, was ruled by an officer named *Mahāpandita*. (Paranavitana, *Op. Cit.*, 1953: 63-64). *Parevi* and *Haṃsa Sandeśas* describe that there was a highly developed town in Devundara in the 15th century. (*Parevi Sandeśa*, vv. 163-164; *Haṃsa Sandeśa*, vv. 100-101). The above-mentioned Tri-Lingual slab inscription in Galle records that Items such as gold, silver, silk and sandalwood were sent by Chinese envoys to a religious centre located Devundara. (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III, No. 36). Senarath Paranavitana tells that this religious centre was erected by a local king in South India on behalf of the *God Varuṇa* about 7th century AC. (Paranavitana, *Op. Cit.*, 1953: 10).

With the political centers drifting to the South-West and the development of the South-Western areas, ports in Beruvala, Bentota and Vattala became quite important. Farther John de Marignolli arrived at the port Perivils by a ship in the 14th century. (Siriweera, *Op. Cit.*, 2003: 123). Henry Yuls tells us that this was the Beruval port. The record of Father Marignolli as well as Sandeśa poems such as *Parevi*, *Tisara*, *Girā* and *Kōkila*, *Kahakuruḷu* certify that there was a Muslim center in Beruvala. (*Girā Sandeśa*, v. 74; *Parevi Sandeśa*, v. 80; *Kahakuruḷu Sandeśa*, 1954: v. 51; *Tisara Sandeśa*, v. 74; *Kōkila Sandeśa*, v. 92). The ports such as Bentota, Vattala and Chilow were important basically to sail small ships and transportation of people. Salāwata or Chilaw was also a very important port.

Damadeṇi Asna tells us that foreigners landed in this port. (*Damadeṇi Asna*, 1997: 3). *Nikāya Saṃgrahaya* mentions that the Āryacakravarti had army camps at Colombo, Wattala, Negombo and Chilaw. (*Nikāya Saṃgrahaya*: 31).

Sri Lankan had the knowledge of the irrigational technology, building and Arts technology from the early period. Similarly, they had the naval technology too. Details about building of ships in Sri Lanka can be obtained from king Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya's reign 103- 77 BC) by the stories of *Bamiṇitīyāsāya*. The commentary of *Sammohavinodanī* describes that some monks ran away to India for survival during the famine, and ships were built in the Jambukolapattana for their transportation. (*Sammohavinodanī*, 1933: 445-446). *Sammohavinodanī* further mentions that there were three decks (*Tibhumakam*) in these ships and the lowest deck of the ship was built in immersed in water and second part was built for living for the monks and the top part of the ship was built for keeping items. (*Ibid.*). According to the R. A. L. H. Gunawardhana, this type of craft was probably in use in the coastal trade of South India and Sri Lanka. (Gunawardhana, *Op. Cit.*, 2003: 18).

It can be assumed that there had been a special attention about navigation according to a three early brahmi inscriptions which depicted features and expressions. Duvegala inscription in the Polonnaruwa District inscribed a ship with a mast. (*Inscriptions of Ceylon*, Vol. I, Pl. XXV). The oldest figure of sailing craft is inscribed in this inscription. There are two other inscriptions in the Paramakanda in Puttalama District (*Ibid.*, 83). and Maligatenna in the Kurunegala District. (*Ibid.*, 76). The term *Parumaka Navika* can be seen in these inscriptions and it can be decided that there were local naval men who were engaging in marine activities from the earlier periods. As has been pointed out by Pliny the Roman writer, naval personal on Taprobane brought pigeons and they decided the land area by freeing the pigeons and in what direction they flew. (McCrimdell, 1877: 103).

Cosmos has mentioned that commodities were exported in the Sri Lankan ships in the 6th century. (*Ibid.*, 160-162). Chinese records in 9th century mentioned about the Sri Lankan ships. Li Chao expresses that the various ships that sailed to Chinese ports and ships in lion kingdom were the largest ones and they had ladders to go to all the parts of the ships. (Gunawardhana, and Y. Sakurai, 1981, p. 148). This is corroborated by Kien-tchen, the Chinese writer. (Gunawardhana, *Op. Cit.*, 2003: 25). Chinese records mention further that Ships in Sinhadevepa were long about 200 feet and could transport about 700 passengers.

The records of Al- Idrisi, the Geologist, in the 11th century, shows that Sri Lanka had a very prominent place in building of ships. He mentioned that ships of countries like Oman and Yemen came to Sri Lanka to get masts, ropes, trunks of coconuts and planking etc for the purpose of repairing the ships. (*Ibid.*, 23). His report says that Middle East countries came to Sri Lanka to build ships. Timbers such as coconuts, Jack etc were used for the building of ships. (*Ibid.*). South Indian Tamil inscription shows that King Parākramabāhu I (1153-1186) built ships in Uraturai to invade South India. *Mahāvamsa* mentioned that when king Parākramabāhu I was ready to invade the lower Burma, the whole Sri Lankan coastal area became a ship building industry. (*Mahāvamsa*, LXXXVI, 45-48).

The letter which was sent by King Bhuvanekabāhu I to the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt has mentioned about ships and that they can supply 20 ships per year which were made from the best timber. (Codrington, *Op. Cit.*, 1919: 83). Gunawardhana analyzes this letter in another way by saying that this letter points to the persistence of the tradition of shipbuilding in the island. The Sri Lankan Ruler further stated that his kingdom had a good supply of timber and offered to construct twenty vessels each year for the Mamluk Sultan. (Gunawardhana, *Op. Cit.*, 2003: 29). Ibn Battuta, came to Sri Lanka in 1344 AC and he mentions that he saw about 100 ships which were owned to the Ārya Cakravarti in Jaffna in Malabar Coast. (*Ibid.*, 30).

Muslim community and their trading activities was also a cause to lead social changes during this period. Kiribamune and Devaraja have emphasized that Muslim trade established its closest ties with Sri Lanka after the middle of the thirteenth century. (Kiribamune, 2003: 171-182; Devaraja, 2003:183-190). Al Qazwini, a Muslim Encyclopaedist of the late thirteenth century speaks knowledgeably of Sri Lanka and the arrival in Bagdad of a Muslim lawyer of distinction from there. (Imam, 1971: 18-23). Wassaf describes Sri Lanka in glowing terms and seems to suggest that the advantages of trade between Sri Lanka and the Muslims were weighted on the side of the former. Marco Polo who travelled from China to the Persian Gulf in a Chinese ship is a useful authority on maritime trade in the Indian Ocean towards the end of the thirteenth century. He broke journey in Sri Lanka which would have been on the usual East-West maritime route. Reference is made to the immense wealth of gems in Sri Lanka and the attaches great importance to the presence of Muslims in the country. His statement that Sri Lankan rulers hired Muslim soldiers is interesting. (*The Travels of Marco Polo*, 1958: 231-232; 255-258). Merchants were forced to employ soldiers to combat piracy in the Arabian Sea and the soldiers whom Marco Polo speaks of may have been there to guard Muslim trading interests. This brings out even more forcefully the importance attached to the Sri Lankan trade. That piracy was a problem around Colombo is mentioned by Ibn Battuta a little later. (*The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, 1953: 217). Involved in this trade were both Muslim and Hindu merchants, Indian and Arabs. Efforts were made by some Sri Lankan rulers to exclude the Indian middlemen and enter into direct trade with Egypt and West Asia. To quote an Arabic document of the thirteenth century which refers to an embassy sent by Bhuvanekabāhu I (1272-1284). (Codrington, 1919: 82-85).

Referring to this statement, Kiribamune further says that one can see that this state trading was attempted and efforts were also made to attract Muslim merchants from countries such as Egypt. (Kiribamune, 2003: 178). These links with Egypt are confirmed by a number of Arab coins of the thirteenth century found between Colombo and the hill country. Among them, the greater number belongs to Sultan Qulaun of Egypt, the king to whom Bhuvanekabāhu I sent his envoys. (Codrington, 1924: 158). In this connection one could point to a recent find of four Sri Lankan coins, the last of which belongs to Bhuvanekabāhu I at Mogadishu in Kenya. (Chittick, 1980, Pt. 2: 123). Local inscriptional evidence can be shown relating to the thirteenth century. This inscription was written in Arabic on a rock surface at Adam's Peak. The Document simply records an invocation for the blessings of the Prophet. (Sameer, 1966: 37). It would seem that Adam's Peak in the gem country held its spell for Muslim merchants. West Asian perfumes and incense were well known and sought after commodities in Sri Lanka at this time. *Saddharmaratnāvali* of the thirteenth century refers to the four kinds of scents as *Kokum*, *Yon Pup*, *Tuvarala* and *Turuk tel*, sandalwood, Saffron, frankincense and

Turkish oil. (*Saddharmaratnāvali*, 1985: 640). Ibn Battuta and Marignolli supply more information about the Sri Lanka and Muslim connection in fourteenth century. (*The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, 1953: 214-260).

Muslim traders and settlements were very much part of the Sri Lanka according to the Sinhalese literary works of the fifteenth century. The *Kōkila* and *Girā Sandēśas* refer to Muslim women (*Yon Liya*). (*Kōkila Sandēśaya*, v. 59; *Girā Sandēśaya*, v. 104) and a Muslim settlement at Mahaveligama in Southern Sri Lanka referred to in the former text. (*Kōkila Sandēśaya*, v. 56). Beruvala figures as a Muslim trading centre frequented by foreign ships. (*Tisara Sandēśaya*, v. 74; *Girā Sandēśaya*, v. 74.) Galle trilingual slab inscription also can be shown as an example for the Muslim merchant activities in Sri Lanka. This inscription was set up by the Chinese ship captain Zheng Ho in 1410 AC. (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III: 331-341). This was inscribed in Persian, Tamil and Chinese. This document contains lists of offerings to the deities of the Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. The inscription was obviously set up for the benefit of the merchant community at Galle or littoral. This is a clear indication that even in the early fifteenth century the external trade of Southern Sri Lanka was still in the hands of foreign merchants, among them Persian-speaking Muslims. The prevalence of Persian may not indicate an Iranian connection but links with Muslim India.

Gunawardena has emphasized that there were a few women at the ports of this island (as at other ports of the world under such circumstances) to provide some consolation to the lonely sailor or trader. (Gunawardena, 1959: 84). It is natural to expect, therefore, that in course of time, there would arise a considerable community of mixed descent-Arab and Sinhalese or Arab and Tamil- at the seaports of Sri Lanka. When in the course of time, non-Muslim merchants make but rare appearances at the ports-as were the situation by the 14th and 15th centuries-these communities at the ports must have acquired an increasingly Islamic character. But by that time or even considered before it the Arab element in these settlements was being replaced by Indian Muslim elements. Arab traders virtually disappear from the scene and Indian Muslim merchants dominate it to a greater extent than the Arabs had ever done. Apart from the coastal places which developed Muslim settlements in course of time, there probably was one other place that developed a Muslim settlement much more rapidly. This was Beruvala, which during the Battuta's journey along the coast in 1344 does not figure as a place where Muslims were found. Five or six years later it was an important Muslim settlement which John de Marignolli was not pleased with. The tradition about Beruvala is that it was colonized from Kāyalpaṭṭanam. The Parevi and Girā Sandēśas of the first half of the 15th century refers to Beruvala as being peopled by *baburas* a generic term like *Yōna* or *Marakkala* to denote Muslims. As a result of mingling Sinhala and Muslims, it was led to the social change during our period as well as Kandyan time. Thus Gunawardena says the word *Kandyanisation of these men*. (*Ibid.*, p. 91).

The story of ethnic interaction becomes even more interesting after the fall of Polonnaruwa because of the emergence of a third major group, namely the Muslims. Their origins go back to the West Asian as well as Indian Muslim trade settlements at the ports and market towns of the island. These Muslim traders, it must not be forgotten, married local women and, therefore, their descendants share the ancient ancestry of the Sinhalese and Tamils. Since the Malay soldiers and the Portuguese

who came later did not bring their womenfolk with them but married locally, the Malay and Burgher communities, too, share the ancestry of the others.

In ancient times, services rendered to the state were paid for more by grants of land than by the payment of cash. The members of the upper class had the designation of *Samdaru*. The officials of the royal palace and the various departments of administration were recruited from them. The most desirable of land tenure was the *pamunu*, an estate possessed in perpetuity by a family in hereditary succession... In some cases owner of a *pamunu* estate had full rights over it, and apparently was not obliged to pay any dues to the State..... Those who enjoyed *pamunu* lands were referred to as *pamunu laddan* and they appear to have held their estates irrespective of any services they rendered the State. (Attigalle, *UCHC*, Vol. I, Pt. II, 1960: 375-376). The situation describes to the late Anuradhapura period. In the Polonnaruwa period, this system developed further. "Next rapidly the members of the Buddhist Sangha and brahmins, who enjoyed a privileged position, came those who had acquired a patent of nobility the possession of land heritable in the family (*pamunu*) from which they derived rents....., A desirable form of land tenure is referred to in the documents of the period by the term *parapura* which must have denoted land which had come down in succession in a family. (*Ibid.*, 560-561). In regard to the period with which this research is concerned the system of land tenure which prevailed this period was basically the same as that in the Polonnaruwa period. (*Ibid.*, 720). Quite probably the *janapravani* of family such as the *Sēnādhilamkāra*, and the *Alagakkōnāras*, which were referred to in our sources, would have preferred to the *pamunu* and *parapura* lands. It may also be remembered that a modification in the fiscal system of the time was the overlord, instead of appropriating a portion of the produce of all the land, had a price of land in his land holding cultivated free by the villagers the produce of which he appropriated totally.

The very products that demand for which are growing in the outside world such as Cinnamon, Cardomons, Pepper etc. either grow wild on the lands in the wet zone, or the climatic conditions were such that they could be easily grown. It is probable that the traditional administrative hierarchy, which received lands on service tenure or, were given lands on the *pamunu* or *parapura* basis, i.e. heritable lands would have interested themselves in cultivating, collecting and selling these products to the trade network that were operating in the country, which had contacts abroad as well. This would have been motivated to do this by two factors. Firstly, the revenues acquired from the land even under the modified system of land holding described above, would have been less than what their forbears in the dry zone had received. Secondly, their efforts in trading would have been facilitated by the State, which was also interested in increasing its revenues making effort to encourage the growth of trade.

It was probably under their circumstance that the traditional noble families, the descendants of the *samdaru* of the Anuradhapura period such as the *meheṇavaras*, the *Ganavesi* and even later entrants to this class such as the *Alagakkōnāras*, came to have great wealth they possessed in the 14th century. *Sēnādhilamkādhikāra* of the *meṇavara* family and of the the *Sangharāja Sīlavamsa Dhammakitti* of the *Gaṇavāsi* family were very wealthy persons. The *Mayūra Sandēśa* refers to the great wealth of *Dēvamantriśvara*, nephew of *Niśśanka Alagakkōnāra*. We find in documents of the period, several references to persons bearing the title *siṭu*. The word is derived from the Palihad *seṭṭhi*, meaning wealthy merchant or banker. (Childers, 1909: 473). *Jayamahale*, who was either a son of *Vikramabāhu III*, or a person bearing this title in 1373 AC, is called *situin* the *Niyamgampaya Sannasa*. (*Sahitya*,

1972: 128). Among the grants made to the Gadaladeniya vihara in 1344 AC were a house and a garden for his own maintenance. (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. IV: 90-100). Verse 159 of the *Mayūra Sandēśa*, of the late 14th century, mentions the nagaram situ of the court the court of Bhuvanekabāhu V of Gampola, a word which Paranavitana interprets as controller of finance. (Attigalle, *UCHC*, 1960: 729). In this context, Alagakkōnāras were doubly fortunate in acquiring their wealth. As members of the merchant caste, they would have engaged in trading with foreign countries, and as a family which had intermarried with other local noble families, and had become absorbed into the social fabric of the island, they would have formed a part of land owing aristocracy as well. They would thus have drowned profits from the earnings of their hereditary pamunu lands in their fief at Raigama, and gained additional profits as traders as well.

The picture that emerges from the above evidence is the existence of a number of persons from leading families who seem to have possessed great wealth. It must be emphasized that this did not represent the rise of a new merchant class distinct from the land owing nobility itself to financial affluence as a result of the products of their lands finding a merchant class to the upsurge of trading activity in the Indian Ocean. It must be remembered also that the land owing class was the class from which the administrative hierarchy was recruited.

Along with the increase of the wealth of land owing class, we find a situation where the group of families that had governed the country for nearly a thousand years had dried out and even these who claimed descent from this family, such as the Savulus of Dambadeniya, did not have their claims substantiated by recent occupancy of the throne. They, in fact, were only another noble family whose only difference from their colleagues was that they claimed royal descent, and in fact, they had intermarried with the other local nobility. Under their circumstances, the personal sanctity available to a family which had been in recent occupation of political leadership was not available to them, which in turn resulted in their dependence on the support of their wealthy and powerful nobles who sometimes placed them on the throne as happened in the case of Sēnālaṃkādhikāra placing Bhuvanekabāhu IV in the position of kingship. The political leadership of the country in the 14th century, therefore, lay, not in a single family whose position was stabilized and sanctified by long occupation of the throne, but in the hands of a wealthy land owing oligarchy itself closely interconnected by marriage.

Simultaneously to this situation had come the weakness of the economic position of the State. There is no doubt that on the case of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa kingdoms, and even the Dambadeniya kingdom, the economic power of the king, and hence his military power was such larger than any single one of his subordinate rulers or nobles. The large grain surpluses enabled him to collect a larger amount by way of taxation which enabled him to maintain effectively the instruments of State power. As against this, the ruler of the wet zone kingdoms did not possess the same degree of revenue potential, the increase in trade probably not compensating for the loss in land revenue. Thus the differential between the financial power of the state and the financial power of the land owing nobles became less. Apart from the lack of personal sanctity attached to a ruling dynasty of the 14th century, the latter would have found it necessary to obtain the support of the wealthy noble families in the country in maintain themselves on the throne with any degrees of stability, as the power of enforcement

of state authority was much less in their case than was the case with their predecessors of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa.

This interaction of these forces, i. e. the reduced military power of the central government, the loss of stabilizing factor by a ruling family that had an element of sanctity attached to it and the rise of the land owing administrative class to a position of economic financial affluence, explains the instability and fragmentation of government authority that was a feature of the 14th and 15th centuries, we find Sēnalaṃkādhikāra, a wealthy noble, setting up Bhuvanekabāhu IV on the throne, a position rendered vacant by the disappearance of the Dambadeniya royal family, and Alagakkōnāra, another wealthy noble, supporting Vikramabāhu III who had rebelled against Bhuvanekabāhu IV. The noble became so powerful that they came into existence the title of prabhuraja, connoting the most eminent of the local nobles. The position ultimately come to be occupied by the Alagakkōnāras who were foreign origin, and not long standing members of the hereditary administrative class (though they had intermarried with it.) which itself show the growth of the power of the nobles. In the reign of Bhuvanekabāhu V, the various members of the Alagakkōnāra family were at war with each other, not for the kingship, but for the post of prabhuraja, the post of de facto power. Even in the 15th century, a nobleman named Jōtiya Siṭāna, who was in control of the hill country, rebelled against Parākramabāhu VI of Kotte. (Attigalle, *UHC*, 1960: 760). In the reign of Bhuvanekabāhu VI, two chief named Siriwardhana Patiraja and the Lord of Kuragama rebelled against the king. (*Ibid.*, 679). During the same reign, a prince named Senasammata Vikramabāhu established himself as the ruler of Kandy. (*Ibid.*, 680). We find the same pattern, being repeated in the case of the latter; in the Alut Nuvara Inscription inhabitants of the Satara Korale, (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. IV. 268-270) led by Yāpā Bandāra, Dodanela Parākrama, Varāve Bandāra and Gampola Bandāra declared their fealty to Sēnāsammata Vikramabāhu in return for his promise not to cause them harm, a situation unheard of in the reigns of Vikramabāhu I and Parākramabāhu I of Polonnaruwa, who made short shrift of rebels by hanging and implying them. (*Cūlavamsa*, LX, vv. 42-43; LXXV, vv. 160-162; 192). This chronic weakness of the state, which continued till no political factors came into play after the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505 AC, was a result of the fundamental economic and social changes that had occurred with the shift of the base of power of the Sri Lankan kings to the wet zone of the island, and the rise of the power of the land owing class as result of the upsurge of trade in the period under survey.

As has been pointed out by Indrapala, there were also other ordinary people who migrated to perform economic functions. (Indrapala, 2005: 284). It is well known that the origin of some of the major castes in the Sri Lankan society is to be traced to such migrations from South India. In the fourteenth century, when the lucrative trade in cinnamon began to expand, the Sinhalese kings encouraged members of the Tamil *Cāliyar* (weavers) caste to migrate. In time, this community became the caste of cinnamon-peelers and was absorbed into the Sinhalese population as a service caste with the name of *Salāgama*. (De Silva, 1995: 179-180). De Silva says that the weaver caste of *Cāliyar* find mention in the south Indian inscriptions of the Cola period. The migration of this caste to Sri Lanka may have begun as early as the eleventh or twelfth century. De Silva says that the *salāgamas* who were an important group which had migrated from the Malabar, Coast between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries had originally been primarily weavers. Some of them had been ordered by the king of Kotte to peel cinnamon. With the rising demand for cinnamon there was a tendency to enlist all of

them for cinnamon peeling. In time, members of other castes too were required to peel cinnamon and there are instances of karāva, hunu and batgam people performing this task. In course of time, these peelers were absorbed by the *salāgama* caste.” By the sixteenth century, the new immigrant karāva, salāgama groups were developing identification with an occupation but had not as yet developed a ritual connection with the goygamas. (De Silva, 1995: 179-180) Obeysekere is however, inclined to treat the *salāgama* as later immigrants. He tells us that The *salāgama* caste were weavers, later cinnamon peelers from Malabar who were brought to the south coast by the Portuguese... The original settlers of the West and South were Sinhala *goigama* (farmers), some of them originally from Malabar. Much later, in early Portuguese times, there were immigrations of karāva (fishermen, karaiyar of South India) and *salāgama*. (Obeysekere, 1984: 527). As Gunawardana has stated, “there were several waves of immigration which brought not only linguistic groups like Demaḷa, Malala, Kaṇṇaḍa and Doḷuvara (Tulu) from South India but also the Jāvakas from south east Asia, and these groups of immigrants who originally spoke different languages came to be absorbed into the two main linguistic groups in the island. (Gunawardhana, 1990: 65).

The result of all these interaction was a mingling of peoples that led some to caution those who talked about racial purity or exclusivity or superiority in modern times. Citing Gunawardene, Indrapala says, while endorsing the view that Sinhala had become an umbrella-like term giving shelter under to persons of diverse linguistic origins,” quotes a cautionary statement by W. A. de Silva, made early in the twentieth century. Analyzing the evidence of the class of Sinhala writing called *vittipot*, de Silva pointed out that one *vittipota* states that from very early times the island was colonized by people from all parts of India who mixed freely to form one nation. Concluding the analysis, de Silva added; “Therefore those inhabiting this Sinhala (country) should not say that they belong to some one particular family or race. (Indrapala, 2005: 284).

1.3 Conclusion

In the light of foregoing discussion, it may be concluded that economic background led to the social changes during the period under survey. Muslims, One major ethnic community in Sri Lanka emerged with the development of commercial activities in this period. As much as there was political instability in the Muslim world since the fall of Bagdad in 1258 AC, Sri Lanka too encountered a period of political unrest after the middle of the 13th century. Though this had adverse effect on the economy, the island’s foreign trade grew in importance and Sri Lanka still continued to be an important strategic centre in the east-west trade of the period, and the Muslims still played a significant role in the country’s external trade which was carried through to the ports of west coast such as Kalpitiya, Puttalam, Chilaw, Negombo, Colombo, Kalutara Beruwala and Galle. It was shown that with the increase in the importance of foreign trade, the Muslim settlements in in the coastal areas especially around ports increased. The Sri Lanka Sandēśa poems of the 14th and 15th centuries refer to the commercial prosperity of some places.

According to the facts analyzed above, it could be seen that there were commercial activities in Pre-Colonial Sri Lanka in the medieval period of Sri Lanka. With the development of irrigational technology, building activities, Arts and Architecture, there was well organized commerce in ancient

and medieval Sri Lanka. Commercial activities were very important in the capital, port cities and market towns. Although agriculture was the main economy in the country, itinerant merchant had a task at the village too. After the 12th century AC, trading activities very rapidly came to the zenith of the economy in Sri Lanka according to the above mentioned facts. Therefore, the development of commerce resulted in the wealth of the society. With the wealth, elites and various groups of community emerged during this period

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