

Growth of municipalities in
Ceylon.

H. P. Gamage

A Thesis presented to the University
of Ceylon for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in
the Faculty of Arts,
Peradeniya Campus
1973

117103
25/2/93
H



GROWTH OF MUNICIPALITIES IN COYLAN

FROM 1865 TO 1900

H. P. Ganga
✓

A thesis presented to the University of Ceylon for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts,

Ceyloniya Ganaga

1973

117103

LB/2004/24/92

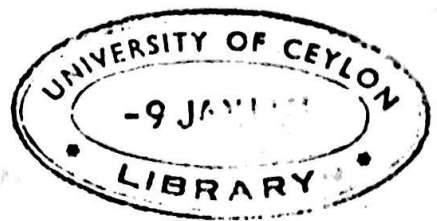
5313/2005/8011	
2011/4	
2.91 37	
5.00 20 0	

CR

320.85095C

~~G184~~ GAM

117103



ABSTRACT

In this study an attempt is made to examine the growth, development, and the history, of the municipal councils in Ceylon, from their origin in 1865 to the end of the nineteenth century, covering a period of roughly thirty-five years. In Chapter I the introduction sets out some of the problems and circumstances that led to the introduction of a municipal system in Ceylon. Chapter II goes on to deal with the aims and motives in establishing these institutions. Here the ideas and intentions of those immediately responsible for the measure have been examined, followed by an attempt to examine the real underlying factors that operated. Chapters III and IV are devoted to a discussion of the development and growth of the municipal constitution during the period. These two chapters deal with the merits and shortcomings of the two principal municipal ordinances belonging to this period. Chapter V brings out certain major limitations and shortcomings that hindered the successful working of the municipal system. A major part of this chapter is devoted to an examination of the financial problems of the municipal councils which happened to be the crux of most of the municipal problems. Chapter VI discusses the financial policy and practice of the municipal councils. Besides examining the factors that moulded the financial policy and practice of the municipal councils in general, the financial relations between the Colombo Municipal Council and the central government are traced in detail. Finally the last two chapters, Chapters VII and VIII, are devoted to an examination of the achievements of the municipal administration in the nineteenth century. In Chapter VII the achievements of the municipal councils in their task of local improvements have been examined while Chapter VIII is devoted to discussing the outcome of this administration

in the political sphere. In this chapter the factors that influenced and dominated at municipal elections, the manner in which the elections were conducted and the political training afforded by these institutions to the people at large have been dealt with.

The body of data is supplemented and strengthened with maps, tables and a diagram, in the form of Appendices.

PREFACE

The study of local government institutions has been sadly neglected in this country, and the present work is in its own way a pioneer effort in the examination of the origins of our modern system of municipal administration. Many more works of this sort will be required before the field is covered comprehensively.

This study has been based entirely on documents available in the major libraries in Sri Lanka - the National Archives at Colombo, the National Museum Library in Colombo, and the Library of the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya Campus. I have also had access to the material in the Municipal Record Room in Colombo and Kandy Town Hall. The theme of my thesis is such that the material necessary for its preparation is available in the island, though it is a point worth mentioning that there are gaps in all these collections.

Many are the debts of gratitude which I have acquired during the preparation of this thesis and the following are perhaps the most notable. This study was undertaken under the stimulating supervision and guidance of Dr. A. H. de Silva, Professor of Ceylon History in the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya Campus. I have benefitted a great deal from his valuable comments and constructive criticisms. He was both kind and generous to me, and my first and deepest obligation is to thank him for so kindly finding time to go through all the chapters several times in the midst of his own research work. To Professor de Silva, therefore, I remain deeply indebted.

Similarly Dr. U. J. F. Laloo, Reader in History in the University of

Ceylon and presently the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the Peradeniya Campus, has helped me throughout this period of study, especially by helping to improve my language of the thesis and my obscure terms go to him.

My sincere thanks are also due to many colleagues and friends who have helped in the preparation of this thesis. They are too numerous to mention in this brief preface, but rather than mention one or two I would prefer to thank them collectively.

During my researches I made unusually heavy demands on the staff of the Ceylon National Archives. I must acknowledge the courtesy of the Archivist and the staff at Peradeniya who ungrudgingly made available to me thousands of volumes of legislation, reports, newspapers and other material. The assistance given to me by them was the key to the successful completion of this thesis. This is especially so because for a long period of 1968 after the outbreak of the insurrection in April 1971, the Archives staff were confronted with the peculiar problem that their buildings - located in the University complex of the Peradeniya Campus - were now part of a rehabilitation camp. In this regard I am most grateful to the civil and military officers in charge of the rehabilitation camp at Peradeniya and to Mr. G. V. de Silva, the Assistant Director of the Department of National Archives, who helped me to gain access to the archives when they were closed to the public.

I am deeply appreciative of the assistance given to me during my researches by the Librarian and staff of the University of Ceylon Library at Peradeniya Campus and the National Museum, Colombo, as well as the Provincial Commissioners and their staff in Colombo and Galle.

The first draft of my thesis was typed by Mrs. H. Kottimatchi of the Department of History. The final version of the thesis was done by Mrs. S.C.

to both of them I am most grateful for their efficiency and courtesy

Finally, I must thank my husband not only for his help in typing preliminary drafts of the thesis, but also for his active encouragement in my work. During the three years of work that this thesis involved, he shouldered the burden of looking after our three growing children.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.R.	<u>Administrative Report</u>
A.M.	<u>Administrative Reports</u>
C.H.H.S.	<u>Colonial Journal of Historical and Social Studies</u>
C.M.C.	Colombo Municipal Council
Col. Sec	Colonial Secretary of the Ceylon Government
CIA	Ceylon National Archives
G.A., C.	Government Agent, Central Province
G.A., S.	Government Agent, Southern Province
G.A., W.	Government Agent, Western Province
G.M.C.	Galle Municipal Council
H.M.C.	Hampey Municipal Council
H.L.C.	Member of Legislative Council
H.M.C.	Member of Municipal Council
Ord.	Ordinance
P.C.H.O.	Principal Civil Medical Officer
Q.A.	Queen's Advocate
Sec. of State	Secretary of State
S.P.	<u>Statutory Papers</u>
U.C.R.	<u>University of Ceylon, Colombo</u>

C O N T E N T S



Abstract
Preface
Abbreviations
Contents

C O N T E N T S

I	Urban Problems of an Emerging Colonial Society	1-24
II	The Establishment of Municipal Councils in Ceylon ✓	25-39
III	The Growth of Municipal Councils and the Constitution From 1865 to 1887	70-101
IV	The Growth of the Constitution From 1887 to 1900	102-159
V	The Municipalities in Action 1865 to 1900	140-176 ✓
VI	Municipal Services	177-226
VII	Municipal Finance	227-265
VIII	Municipal Elections and City Politics in Colombo	266-283
	Conclusion	284-295

A P P E N D I X

A	Growth of Population within Colombo, Sandy and Calle From 1884 to 1900	296
B	Colombo Municipal Election Results From 1865 to 1900	297-305
C	Growth of Area and Population of the Colombo Municipal Council From 1866 to 1900	306
D	Diagram Showing Revenue, Expenditure and Public Works of the Colombo Municipal Council for the years 1866 to 1878	307

M A P S

1	Map denoting the boundaries of wards of the Colombo Municipality	308
2	Map denoting the boundaries of wards of the Sandy Municipality	309
3	Map denoting the boundaries of wards of the Calle	

CHAPTER I

Urban and Rural of an Ancient Colonial Society

The term urban used in contrast to rural implies certain differences. An urban area has a compact form, characterized by the patterns of buildings, street systems and component open spaces. Secondly, it has a dense population which is revealed by the varying spatial arrangement of residential types. Thirdly, its way of life, linked with commerce, business, governmental administration, and industry, is different to its counterpart in the rural economy.

Accordingly, the society in Ceylon from the earliest times up to the early nineteenth century can mainly be described as rural. Agriculture was the main occupation of the Sinhalese from ancient times. They did not buy or sell in abundance. They provided themselves with their own food, clothing and shelter or rendered service in return for them. There was hardly any money in use and the little internal, (and foreign), trade that took place was based on a barter system. Few people left their villages except to go to war. Communication was slow and difficult. Accumulation of wealth is, evidently, found to be an essential feature of an urban society and in the traditional Ceylon the basic structure of the social system and the constitution of its ethos were such that there was no inducement for individuals to exert themselves in accumulating wealth.

1. B.S. Handikarathna, S.S.A.S. vol. 7, no. 2 (July-Sept. 1964), pp. 203-13.

2. Robert Knox, An Historic Relation of Ceylon, (1681), pp. 154-57; Ralph Peiris, Sinhalese Social Organization, (1958), p. 140.

3. I. Vandendriesen, C.J.E.S., vol. 3 no. 1 (Jan.-June 1960), pp. 1-17; Ralph Peiris, S.S.A.S. vol. 9 no. 3 (July 1951), pp. 171-85.

entailed a counter obligation on their part to render to the state either a part of the produce of the land or personal services. Scarcity of specie did not permit the conversion of grain into money. Hence there was no need for storing an abundance of agricultural produce which was liable to perish and hence little inducement to accumulation of wealth. Therefore there were no towns or urban societies in the modern sense of the term, and the following description of the Ceylon towns in the seventeenth century by Robert Knox explains the type of ancient towns.

I will now add a little concerning their towns. The best are those that do belong to their idols wherein stand their bowshans or temples. They do not care to make streets by building their houses together in rows, but each man lives by himself in his own plantation.... Their towns are always placed some distance from the highways for they care not that their towns should be a through-fare for all people but only for those that have business with them. They are not very big, in some may be forty, in some fifty houses and in some above an hundred and in some again not above eight or ten. 1

Effective Portuguese and Dutch sovereignty rarely extended beyond twenty miles of the western coast. They were content, moreover, within this area, to allow the prevalent machinery of government and socio-economic affairs to continue without serious change or interference. Notwithstanding the presence of the Europeans from 1505, the old rural society thus remained largely unchanged till 1796.²

Since 1796, for the first few years of British rule, as well, the administrators confined themselves to collecting revenues and farming out taxes in the maritime areas in much the same way as their predecessors. Such innovations as they introduced applied mainly to details of administrative

1. Robert Knox, (KNOX), p.10.

2. S.G. Ferrera, A History of Ceylon-Portuguese and the Dutch Periods, 1505-1796, (1955); P.N. Floris, Ceylon and the Hollanders, (1718), P.140. P.141

procedure and routine and did not affect the objects of government or the realms of socio-economic policy. Hence, as late as the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century Ceylon's society and economy were in the basic sense still overwhelmingly rural in nature.

Urbanization and Urban Conditions

Urbanization is characterized by those factors associated with the emergence, growth, development and spread of towns and their socio-civic affairs. Some of these factors influencing a concentrated pattern of settlement are tied up with the economic opportunities of the towns, availability of civic facilities, amenities and utilities, all these providing an environment more urban than found in the rest of the land.² The growth of Ceylonese towns in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and urbanization in general were the outcome of British policy. Besides local considerations, the growth and development of transportation, and the needs of plantation industry led to the organization of the urban areas offering certain public utilities and as "service centres".³

The importance of being the capital of Ceylon and its port played a major role in the urbanization of Colombo and hence in the emergence, development and growth of the town of Colombo. However, Colombo was a port long before it became the capital of the island. Ceylon, by virtue of its midway position in the Indian Ocean, has been throughout her history a meeting place of foreign merchants and travellers. About 700 A.D. "Polonnaruwa" or "Polonnaruwa"

1. I. Vandenriesen, S.S.A.S. vol. 3 no. 1, pp. 1-17; G. de Silva, Ceylon under the British occupation 1796-1833 vol. II, (1942), p. 445; Lennox A. Mills, Ceylon under British Rule (1964), p. 3.

2. S. L. Fernando, S.S.A.S. vol. 7 no. 2, pp. 203-18.

3. Ibid.

became a Muslim trading settlement and was one of the first six settlements on the west coast of Ceylon. The Muslims had built warehouses (hangamas) and carried on trade in cinnamon and elephants. They also brought to "foreign" gold and silver, cotton and silk-stuffs from Calcutta. This trade attracted a concourse of merchants and the port was both rich and populous. Thus the settlement of "Colombo" developed in its size and functions from about 1300 A.D. and it was "one of the finest and largest cities of the island of Ceylon, the residence of ¹basir, lord of the sea".

Under the Dutch, from 1658 to 1796, the port of Colombo changed very little in its form although its functions increased. Cinnamon was one of the most important articles of foreign trade and the port of Colombo with its rich cinnamon hinterland was the centre for storing, packing and shipping of cinnamon to Europe and India. Colombo shared also in the foreign trade with Madras and Coromandel Coast. The Dutch imported large quantities of rice and clothing to be sold in Colombo and here the traders met to barter their wares for them. In the port to port trade, Colombo provided the other ports mainly with goods imported from foreign ports. In this respect the port of Colombo was gradually establishing itself as the chief port and the trading centre of the island.

Though the functions of the port much increased, the Dutch failed to provide adequate facilities for shipping. Hence Colombo remained "nothing more than an open road affording safe anchorage to ships for only four months of the year" ² until 1820, when the British decided to improve the harbour by

1. Iwan Baitsa, Travels in Asia and Africa, translated by H. A. H. Gibbs, (1936), p. 260.

the construction of breakwaters and the installation of port facilities. Despite the limitations and meagre port facilities, the trade of the port of Colombo increased as its hinterland provided both goods for export and a market for consumer goods. By 1870 coffee exports reached 539,720 cwts. and rice imports 4,735,832 cwts.¹ With the construction of the breakwaters and the provision of harbour facilities (1870 onwards) the port of Colombo had by the turn of the century come to be called the "Singapore Junction of the East".² It had eclipsed all other port towns that thrived on commerce and business during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

While the port of Colombo was growing in its importance it also emerged since 1505 as the capital of the island. The Portuguese, who were carried by the monsoons to the shores of Ceylon in 1505, set up a garrisoned factory close to the Muslim settlement, Colombo. The choice of the site was no accident, but it owed more to considerations of local strategy than to its strategic location in the Indian Ocean. The port of Ceylon offered the Portuguese a better site for shipping in their colonial ventures.³ But by establishing themselves in Colombo it was easier for the Portuguese to come into contact with the local king who resided at Kotte, a mere six miles distance. Colombo was also the centre of the cinnamon trade and thus enjoyed an advantageous commercial position. Moreover the Portuguese were the enemies of the Muslims and when they were within the principal Muslim settlement of Colombo it was easier for them to destroy the Muslim trade. Hence by the beginning of the seventeenth century the Portuguese had established themselves in the Sinhalese

1. Ferguson's Directory for 1863, p.65.

2. S.L. Handikarathna, C.I.D.I.S.S. vol.4 no.1, pp.71-91.

3. Ibid.