

Kalapura: The Colony of Craftsmen in Patha-Dumbara

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1. A General Introduction to Kandyan Crafts

In Kandy district and elsewhere in Ceylon cottage industries form an important field of economic activity. Though usually auxiliary to agriculture in the village economy, they play a vital role as a source of income and in the production of goods and services demanded by the rural populace. The wide range of activities collectively referred to as cottage industries can be divided into three broad loosely defined categories. Those engaged in 'service industries' whose main function, especially in the less backward rural areas, can be described as repair and maintenance, form one distinct type; the village blacksmith, the carpenter and the launderer provide typical examples of this type. Then there are the cottage crafts that reflect the cheapness of labour, the low level of technology and the low purchasing capacity of the consumer. A variety of crafts, such as pottery, brick and tile making, various types of spinning and weaving, beedi wrapping, illicit distilling and brewing, may be included in this category. Thirdly, there are those cottage crafts that are based on traditional artistic skills. Less frequent in occurrence than the other types of rural industries, they differ today from the others also in the extensiveness of their markets. Their importance is not merely in the numbers engaged in them or in the value of the goods they produce; they border on the fine arts, and are an integral part of the treasured heritage from the past.

In Ceylon, the Kandyan areas are uniquely endowed with a rich variety of rural industries that fall into the last category. The techniques and art forms followed in these crafts date far back into the island's history (Coomaraswamy, 1914; Wijesekera, 1962). Drifting along with the centres of culture and political power in the period following the collapse of the Raja Rata civilization, these crafts came to be established in the Kandyan areas around the 16th century. Certain writings contend

This essay presents the results of a survey of Kalapura carried out by me during February to April 1972 at the request of my friend Sudath Gunasekera, the Assistant Director of Small Industries stationed in Kandy. I thank him not only for his assistance in my field work but also for the access he gave me to the records relevant to this study maintained at his office. My reconstruction of the history of Kalapura is based largely on the latter source and on information obtained from the records of the Co-operative Society of Kalapura. The introductory discussion of Kandyan crafts rests on sporadic and incomplete field studies in which I have been engaged during the past two years. I also record my gratitude to Mr. Upali Kirimetiya, the officer-in-Charge of Kalapura at present who helped me in various ways, and to the craftsmen of the colony for their cordiality and tolerance of my repeated visits to their homes.

that the 'renaissance' of the traditional crafts in the Kandyan kingdom was associated with the settling down of the *Visvakarmans*, a clan of craftsmen from South India (Coomaraswamy, 1908; Reimers, 1950). Nurtured by royal patronage and infused into the traditional social organisation these crafts flourished for several centuries, till they receded into relative oblivion during colonial rule when they remained outside the mainstream of socio-economic change.

The recent past has witnessed an expansion of the crafts concerned with the production of ornamental artifacts of traditional form and design. Their market has grown largely as a result of the patronage from foreign tourists and from the wealthy local residents. This, coupled perhaps with increasing unemployment and under-employment in the agricultural sector, has led to an increase in the numbers engaged in these crafts.

Lak Sala, the state sponsored marketing organisation dealing with handicrafts, the ill-fated artificers' co-operative society established in 1951 at Giragama, several small training centres, and Kalapura, the subject of my study, represent the sporadic governmental efforts since Independence to assist this field of activity in Kandy district.

The data available do not permit me to be precise on the overall numerical aspects of Kandyan crafts. However, on the basis of field surveys which I have been conducting in craftsmen's communities, and information obtained from the records of suppliers to Lak Sala, the Kandyan Art Association and certain private dealers in artifacts in Kandy district, I would estimate that there are about 500 household units engaged in the manufacture of Kandyan ornamental artifacts. This includes not only those in Kandy district but also those in the neighbouring areas in Matale and Kegalle districts.

The craftsmen's settlements of today, shown on Figure 1.1, are identifiable in the lists of *pattal vasamas* (land grants made by the Kandyan monarch to royal artificers) compiled by Codrington (1909) and Coomaraswamy (1907). There are also certain scattered remnants of the artificers' *panguwas* (shares) in the *nindagam* and *viharagam* that are still occupied by families of craftsmen.

A majority of these craftsmen belong to the *Navandanna* caste. Smaller numbers also belong to other castes such as *Berava*, *Bathgama*, *Kinnara*, *Velli* and *Vahumpura*. In certain instances (for e.g. Kiriwaula, Embekke, Danture, Madawala, Henawala and Hapuvida) these caste groups live in village communities in which they outnumber the others.

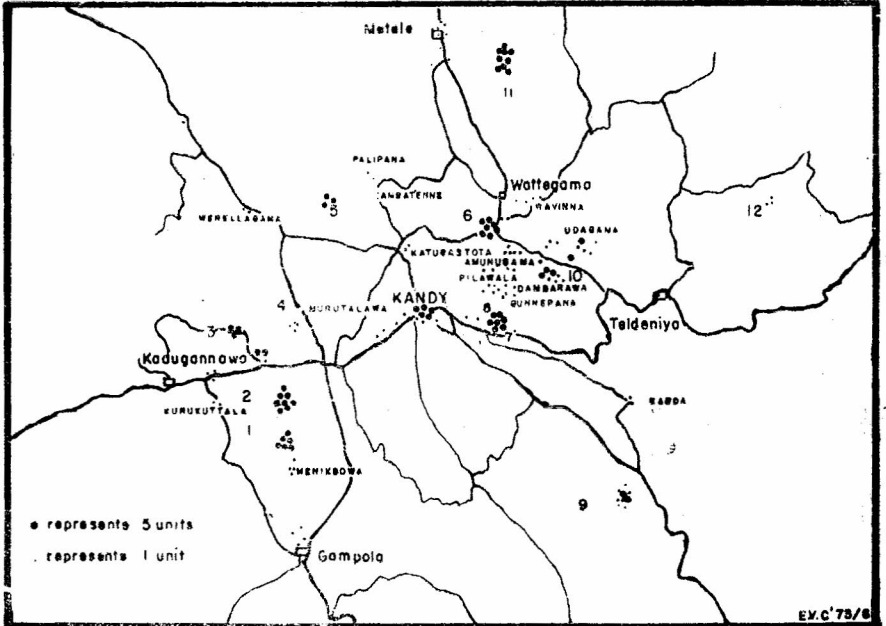


Figure 1-1

Scale: 1 inch = 6 miles.

Fig. 1. I.—The Distribution of Kandyan Craftsmen

1. Embekke-Arattane (light metal carving, brass casting, wood carving)
2. Gadaladeniya-Kiriwaula (brass casting)
3. Danture (light metal carving)
4. Dehideniya-Mangalagama (light metal carving)
5. Embulpure-Ullandupitiya (light metal and ivory carving)
6. Madawala (light metal carving)
7. Polgolla ('art-line' weaving)
8. Nattarampota (light metal carving, brass casting, wood carving etc.)
9. Nilawala (brass casting and light metal carving)
10. Henawala-Huriekaduwa (mat weaving and light metal carving)
11. Palle Hapuwida (lacquer work)
12. Talagune (Dumbara *rata* and 'art-line' weaving)

Note: This map does not present the results of a comprehensive census of Kandyan craftsmen. The locations and the numbers shown are based on data obtained through field studies in the craftsmen's villages and from certain selling firms in Kandy. It is probable that a significant number of family units outside the main craftsmen's settlements have been left out of this map.

However in all these communities agriculture remains the main source of livelihood. Thus, even in the villages referred to here as craftsmen's settlements it is hazardous to assess the relative importance of agriculture and crafts. My field studies suggest that in the main craftsmen's villages, crafts form the main source of income for most family units that engage in handicrafts of the type under discussion. Thus although agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of the community is taken as a whole, for a majority of craftsmen's families, agriculture is probably less important than crafts. In this sense, I disagree with the view that "the artisan-entrepreneur is essentially a cultivator who devotes his off-season time to domestic industry" (I.D.B., 1969, p. 51) insofar as the statement is applied to the Kandyan crafts.

Brief descriptive accounts of the different cottage industries that I refer to as "traditional Kandyan cottage crafts" are given below. They are based on my field work in Kandy town and in the craftsmen's settlements within the district.

1.1 Metal Carvers and Jewellers

In terms of the numbers engaged in this trade and the value of its output, this group is the most important. Their operations involve the manual conversion of brass, copper and silver sheet, and silver and gold coins and ingots, into a variety of articles on which traditional designs as well as patterns adopted from traditional designs are engraved, inlaid or carved in low relief. The finishing work is usually carried out at mechanised polishing and plating centres located either in Kandy or in proximity to the main metal carver settlements. Trays and plaques of various sizes and shapes turned out of brass and decorated with designs such as motifs from the *sandakada pahana*, *liya patha*, *annasi-mala* and *hansa poottuwa* are probably the most common products. A comprehensive list will however include over one hundred items.

The metal carvers, whose number can be roughly placed at 400 to 500, (or about 150 units) are distributed throughout the lower Kandyan areas (Denuwara, Patha Hevaheta, Harispattuwa, Patha Dumbara, and the adjacent parts of Matale district) with important concentrations at Embekke-Arattena, Danture, Ullandupitiya-Embulpure, Madawala-Huriekaduwa, Nattarampotha and Nilawala. Kandy town itself provides regular employment to about 50 persons drawn from this group.

Of those engaged in this field only a few have a reputation for excellence. The brothers Mudalihamy and Sonnandara of Dumbukawela, Abaran Appu attached to the Kandy museum, and Devesurendra of Danture are among those referred to frequently as 'exceptionally good.' In general it could be said that those whose work exhibit exquisite craftsmanship or creative talent are few in number, and that an overwhelming

majority, like their counterparts in and around centres of tourism the world over, turn out the repetitive souvenir and the trinket that attract the indiscriminate buyer.

1.2 Brassfounders

The next in importance numerically are the brassfounders who number about 100 to 150, and who are largely concentrated in the villages of Gadadeniya-Kiriwaula and Nilawala, and in the implanted community of Kalapura, Nattarampotha.

They smelt brass scrap, and cast such articles as oil lamps, vases, betel trays, cuspidors, and decorative artful, etc used in building construction. The motifs engraved and carved by them are similar to those of the light metal carvers. Except for polishing and plating all stages in the manufacturing process (making of moulds, smelting, casting and carving) are non-mechanised.

The produce of the founders lack the variety in form and design characteristic of those of the light metal carvers. Apart from occasional export orders which they supply through a hierarchy of middle-men, they cater mainly to a domestic market.

1.3 Wood Carving

The extensive use of wood is a characteristic of Kandyan architecture. The elaborate and exquisitely accomplished wood carvings at such monumental works as the Audience Hall in Kandy or the Embekke *Devil*, suggest that the services of wood carvers were much in demand during the time of the Kandyan kings. Since then it appears that their numbers have dwindled; and as far as it is possible to ascertain from the dealers in wooden artifacts in Kandy, today the craft is practised only by a few families scattered about the district. Besides the small groups at Udagama and Kalapura, there are isolated families of wood carvers at Gunnepanna, Embekke and Madiwala. Among them, Navaratne of Gunnepana and his son Paul appear to have received wider recognition than the others.

Hard woods like ebony, teak, nedun and burutha are the raw materials in predominant use. Occasionally, the wood carvers (as well as carvers in metal) use ivory as a medium of sculpture.

The wood carvers usually produce diverse 'drawing room ornaments' and small items of furniture. Although their standard products such as the 'ebony elephant' bear the monotonous imprint of factory produced goods, at times one come across sculptures of uniqueness and excellence.

I include within this category the few mask makers found in the district. Mask making is more widespread in the low country than it is in the Kandyan areas. With the exception of masks used in traditional theatre (*Kōlan Mōcun*), the variety of colourful masks described by Jayawardena (1970) appear to be native to the southern and southwestern

parts of the island. Most of the mask makers now living in the Kandyan areas are immigrants or descendants of immigrants from the South. Although turning out masks from soft woods (kaduru, walla and ruk attana) and painting them in a standard colour scheme with Chinese lacquers, involves less skill and care than typical Kandyan wood carving, due to the fact that masks have a current demand from the tourist and the interior decorator, the few persons engaged in this craft in Kandy district find in it a lucrative source of income.

1.4 Lacquer Work

The manufacture of lacquered ornamental-*cum*-utility goods is a craft that has been traditionally allied to both wood carving and carpentry. Today there is a community of about 40 families at Palle Hapuvida (Matale District) and 3 or 4 families at Huriekaduwa, Menikhinna and Nattarampotha (Kandy District), engaged in lacquer work. Using traditional techniques of shaping and polishing the wood, and imported lacquers to paint, these craftsmen produce such items as parapet and balustrade railings, trays, bowls, vases and small furniture. The Department of Rural Development has set up a training school and a co-operative society of lacquer workers at Hapuvida.

1.5 Mat Weavers

The mat weavers who number about 15 to 20 family units are largely confined to the village of Henawala in Patha Dumbara. They use a locally available hemp as their raw material, and turn out mats and tapestries, which have of late been in increasing demand in interior decoration. The possibilities of adopting their techniques and designs to serve contemporary needs and tastes were demonstrated recently by Professor James Somerowski, of Kent State University, Ohio, through his work among the mat weavers of Dumbara.

1.6 Other Kandyan Cottage Crafts

Scattered, economically unimportant, but at times possessing a quaint appeal and economic possibilities, are crafts such as *Dumbara ratā* cloth weaving, lace and embroidery work, manufacture of drums and allied musical instruments, and the manufacture of spectacle lenses (*diya-tharippu*), which can be included in the spectrum of traditional Kandyan crafts. The first among these is practised at present by two old craftsmen in Talagune (Uda Dumbara). While the equipment they use (*alge* the loom, *nīl heda* the warp, *nadāwa* the shuttle and *onkanda* the winding beam) have been superceded by the modern handloom and its accessories, their designs have been adopted in the manufacture of so-called 'art line cloth' at several places in the district. Traditional embroidery work (Coomaraswamy, 1908; Ethel Coomaraswamy, 1960) is probably extinct as a cottage industry, but lace weaving with simple implements is a small subsidiary source of income for many families in the district. Drum making

is a craft with limited potential, largely confined to the scattered communities of the *Berawa* (drummer) caste. The laborious process of making spectacle lenses out of crystal (*Diyatharippu*) is practised by a solitary craftsman at Gadaladeniya.

1.7 Supply of Raw Materials

The Kandyan craftsmen, with the exception of mat weavers and mask makers, purchase their raw materials in the open retail market where prices are subject to wide fluctuation. In the recent past there has been a steady increase in the price of all such raw materials. This increase has been most conspicuous in the case of metals.

The upsurge in the retail prices of metals during the past two years (Figure I.II) cannot be accounted for by the increase in f.o.b. prices or import duties. The process appears to have resulted from the mono-

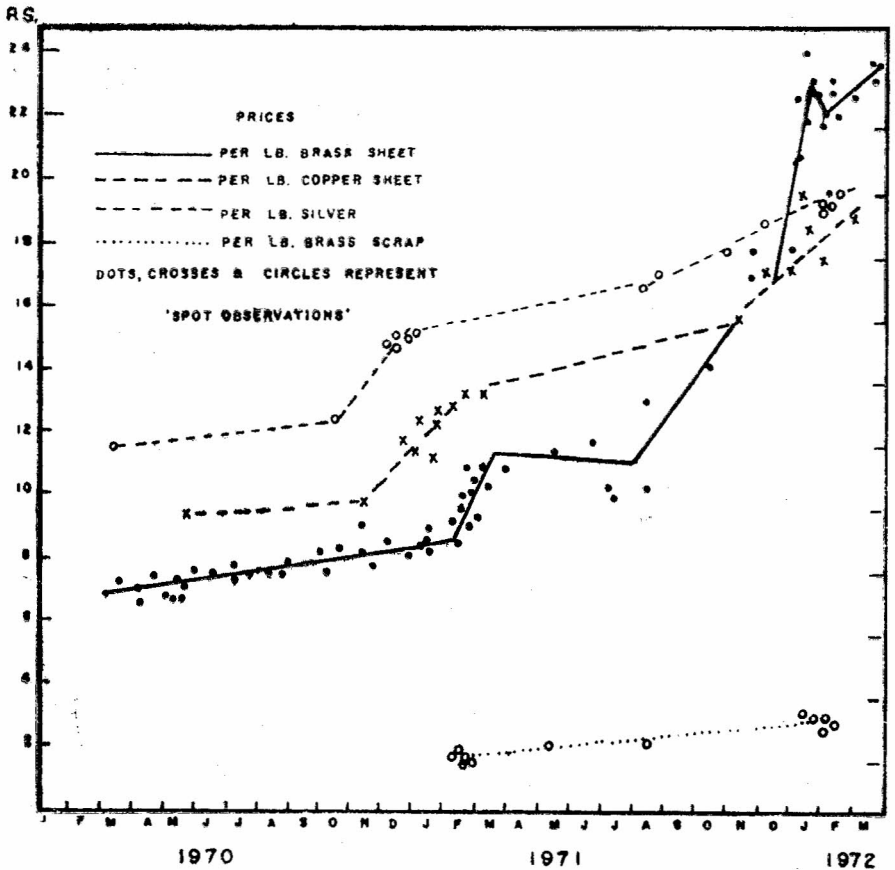


FIGURE I. II

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This figure is based on data obtained from purchase receipts that were available with certain craftsmen at Kalapura and elsewhere who have been interviewed in my field work. Each purchase receipt represents a 'spot observation'.

polistic control which the importers and retailers have over the market. As long as the craftsman can sell his wares at a price which gives some remuneration for his labour, he continues to buy raw materials at whatever prices the retailer demands. When the margin between money costs and selling prices narrows, the craftsman is usually compelled to produce more (if they can afford to 'invest' more on raw materials) in an attempt to counteract the fall in income. It will therefore be evident that the control which the private trader has over the supply of raw materials leads to adverse effects in two ways: on the one hand, the craftsman is deprived of a share of the increasing incomes generated by the recent expansion of his trade; and, on the other, the necessity to produce more imposed by the narrowing margin of profit invariably lowers the quality of the artifacts he can produce.

1.8 Organisation of the Market

With the exception of the reputed craftsman who occasionally receives the patronage of the connoisseur, in general the craftsmen rarely have direct access to the consumer. The marketing organisations sponsored by the government such as Lak Sala and the Kandyan Art Association, and numerous private firms in Colombo and Kandy form the main outlets for the artifacts. These organisations and firms purchase either directly from the craftsmen or from the middle-men who operate at the regional level, and sell in retail to the consumer. Periodically some of them also cater for bulk export orders.

As illustrated in Figure I.III, in its most devious form the channel from the producer to the consumer passes through the craftsman-cum-entrepreneur, the regional middleman and the city trader, who at each stage extract for themselves a share of the margin between the cost of production and the selling price of the product.

The regional middlemen, whose scale of operation varies widely, have a firm grip on the industry. Each of them have access, on the one hand to the state sponsored and private selling firms in the cities, and on the other, to large numbers of craftsmen. They often own workshops and 'finishing' centres (for polishing and plating) that are operated with the labour of hired craftsmen. The more successful among them have also been favoured with permits for the import of raw materials.

It was primarily to enable the craftsmen to by-pass the regional middleman that the Government instituted Lak Sala. But this organisation has continued to purchase bulk supplies from the middlemen, thereby

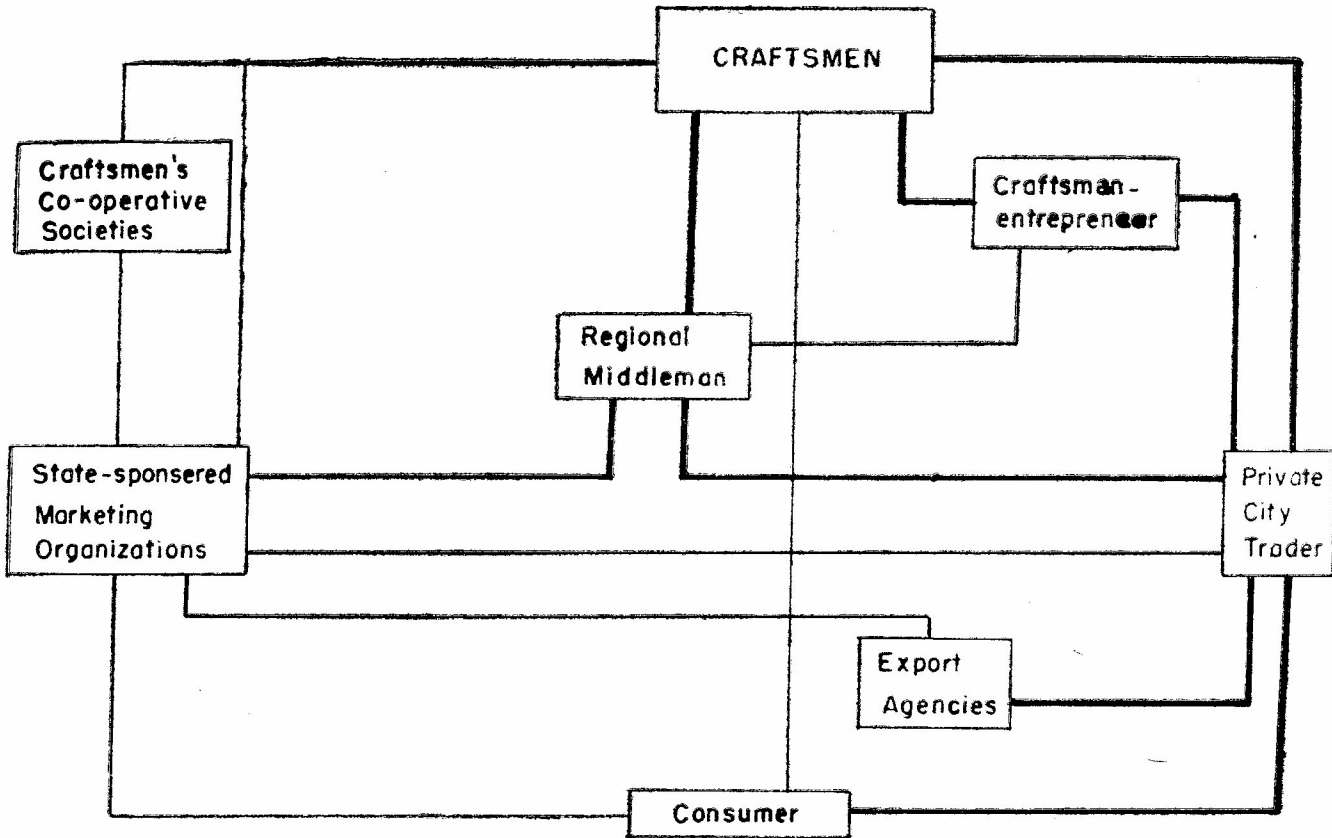


Figure 1 - III - ORGANIZATION OF THE MARKET OF KANDYAN CRAFTS

strengthening their hold on the cottage crafts, while only a small proportion of the genuine self-employed craftsmen have been given the privilege of being its 'registered suppliers'.

1.9 Modes of Operation

Under the conditions that prevail at present, the craftsmen follow one or more of the systems outlined below in producing and selling their artifacts.

- (a) The craftsmen produce artifacts of various forms and designs and in varying quantities in accordance with their capacity and inclination. They are uncertain about the marketability of what they produce. They then hawk their produce among the middlemen, traders and firms. If the articles offered are accepted at Lak Sala or the Kandyan Arts Association, they receive a higher and more uniform rate of payment than from the private trader, who at best follows a rule-of-thumb system of evaluation. This is the only system of operation open to a majority of craftsmen.
- (b) The craftsmen cater for specific orders. Only the more reputed among them receive such orders directly from governmental or private firms. Usually, orders reach the craftsmen indirectly through the middlemen. Far less frequently, the orders originate from Lak Sala and reach the craftsmen through the craftsmen's co-operative societies in the area. When producing under this system, the craftsmen are ensured of their market. The rates paid however vary according to the source and the channel of the order. When the orders are those channelled through middlemen who 'farm out' the work among the craftsmen, which is most frequently the case, the rates paid are relatively low.
- (c) The craftsmen supply to large firms at which they are 'registered'. These firms practice the so called "dispersed factory system" (Staley and Morse, 1965, p. 8), under which the firm advances the raw materials and specifies the artifacts it requires, and the craftsmen who are so "employed" supply their produce to the firm in semi-finished form. Finishing is carried out at central workshops owned by the firm.

Those who work under this system are certain of their sales. The system also helps craftsmen who lack funds to 'invest' in the purchase of raw materials. However, at the one large firm in Kandy which follows this system of operation, the rates paid to craftsmen for their semi-finished products (making allowance for costs of finishing which the craftsmen have to bear when operating under the other systems) are invariably less than the rates obtainable elsewhere.

- (d) The craftsmen are in employment at factories, workshops and firms, and receive either fixed wages or piece-rate payment. The rates paid vary widely from place to place and according to skills.
- (e) The craftsmen are employed directly by the consumer or his agent. In building construction or restoration work, craftsmen are employed and remunerated on a piece-rate or contract basis. On rare occasions private patrons obtain the services of the more reputed craftsmen on the basis of mutual arrangements.

2. Kalapura in Retrospect

The craftsmen's colony at Nattarampotha in Patha Dumbura was conceived in early 1960. At that stage, its parents, the departments of Rural Development and Land Settlement, had no clear vision regarding its purpose and form. In official correspondence at the time, the project (which was referred to as either 'The Industrial Estate' or 'The Colonization Scheme' or 'The Rural Electrification Plan' of Nattarampotha) was variously visualised as a colony of carpenters, potters, blacksmiths and brick makers modelled on the weavers' colonies of India; a land alienation scheme similar in form and function to other village expansion schemes of Wet Zone Ceylon; or a scheme to modernize and re-vitalize the traditional folk crafts in Kandyan areas.

Despite this uncertainty, financial allocations for a settlement project of some sort in Patha Dumbura were made in 1960-61, and the Department of Rural Development proceeded to acquire a block of 22 acres at Nattarampotha for the purpose of establishing a colony of 75 families. A public announcement calling for applications for allotments in the proposed colony made in March 1961, received responses from about 350 persons drawn virtually from the entire spectrum of handicrafts and cottage industries in Kandy district.

This period witnessed the gradual realisation that the proposed project did not have clearly-specified objectives. There were also certain misgivings in the minds of the authorities about the wisdom of establishing a large and socially heterogeneous community comprising of people uprooted from their 'natural habitats'. After some controversy on these issues, in late 1962 the Cabinet approved the establishment of a craftsmen's colony on a staggered process of development in which the settlement of 35 families was to be the first stage. Meanwhile the Department of Rural Development also arrived at a decision to restrict the Colony largely to those crafts concerned with the production of ornamental artifacts of traditional form and design (metal, wood and ivory carving, brassfounding, lacquer work) and to exclude potters, weavers, brick makers and beedi makers from among whom a large number of applications had been received.

The Department laid down three rules for the selection of the colonists. It was decided that those selected must be landless, they must be genuine craftsmen from Kandy District engaged in one of the approved cottage crafts, and they must be skilful in their craft. Understandably there were several transgressions of these rules, but the present composition of the colony shows that a majority of those selected fulfilled the basic conditions that were laid down.

The ramifications characteristic of governmental transactions delayed the birth of the colony by another two years. Finally, in March 1965, the settlers arrived, and at its official opening, amidst much rejoicing, the Colony was named 'Kalapura' the City of Arts.

Reading through the records of the Kalapura Co-operative Society, the Praja Sanwardana Samithiya (community development society) and other scattered references to activities during the early life of the colony, one gets the impression that within the community this was a period of hope, enthusiasm and seriousness of purpose. The colonists appeared to have held the belief that they were the fortunate few whom the government in its benign wisdom has chosen to herald the resurgence of traditional crafts. Thus at meetings of the Co-operative Society, for example, ambitious plans were drawn up, not only to obtain concessions from the government but also to make Kalapura a model which other craftsmen's communities could emulate. Problems such as the size of the loan to be obtained and the manner of its apportionment among members; the necessity of maintaining the highest quality in the artifacts manufactured at, and, bearing the imprint of Kalapura; the quantities of gold, silver, brass, copper and ivory for which import quotas should be obtained or bulk purchase arrangements made; were subjects of lengthy debate. Again, the Praja Sanwardana Samithiya organised *shramadānas* for such communal work as the construction of a playground and the beautification of the Kalapura neighbourhood.

It did not take long for this enthusiasm to wane and for the dreams of the settlers to be shattered. Their demands, requests and pleas went unheeded. Within the community there was the gradual emergence of a few individuals who unlike the representatives of the Co-operative Society found easy access to the powers that be, and who like their counterparts in the villages began to flourish and to dominate the economic life of the community. The Co-operative Society became ineffective and a tool of these favoured few. (The vicissitudes of the Co-operative Society discussed here are reflected in Figure 2.1 which shows the rates of payment of membership fees and the number of fully paid in shares since the inception of the society). Thus, soon the realization dawned on the colonists that Kalapura, though grandly named, is yet another of the numerous highland colonization schemes found scattered throughout the Kandyan areas.

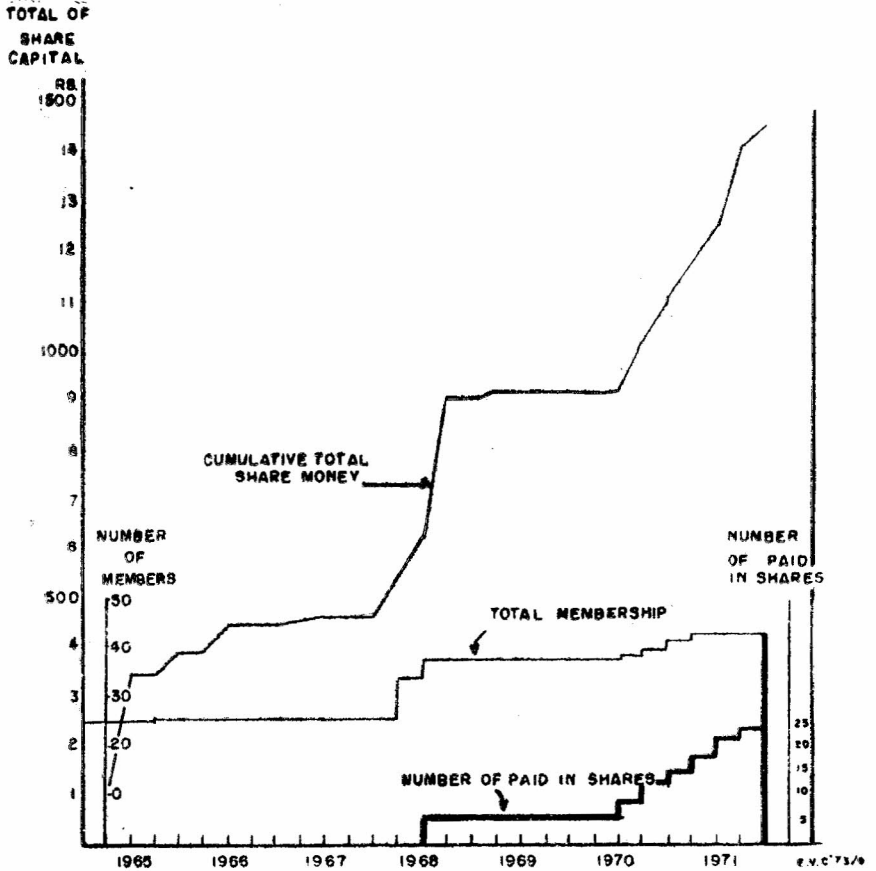


FIGURE 2-1 - CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY OF KALAPURA

Neglected by the government and the officialdom during the first 6 years, the prospects at Kalapura were dim for a majority of the settlers. They were probably worse off than before, and worse off than those outside, because of the significant difference that for the craftsmen who were part-time agriculturists earlier, that source of income, particularly important during the season of low demand for ornamental artifacts (April to about September) was largely lost. The isolation and separation from their kinsmen would have aggravated the difficulties of those in the minority occupational and caste groups. While a few were driven to abandon Kalapura and return home, most others plodded on amidst much hardship.

From my conversations with the colonists, I gathered that one reason for the absence of interest in Kalapura during this period was political. The scheme was inaugurated during a Sri Lanka Freedom Party (S.L.F.P.) regime and one of its chief spokesmen was the then M.P. for Kundasale.

With the change of government in 1965 and with a new representative for the area in Parliament, Kalapura came to be looked upon as a S.L.F.P. project. Probably added to this was the difference in caste between the local M.P. and a majority of the colonists. It was also suggested to me by several persons that the few favoured individuals to whom reference has been made earlier were *persona grata* with the party in office.

Within the past one year or so there has been some revival of interest on Kalapura. In mid '71, the Co-operative Society received for the first time an order for the supply of artifacts from Lak Sala (Colombo), and by the end of the year the Society had supplied goods to the value of Rs. 19,965/- to Lak Sala (Table 6.2). This, coupled with the obtaining of a loan of Rs. 5,000/- from the People's Bank last year, has given the Society a new lease of life, and has led to a slightly more equitable distribution of income than before. There have also been some welcome changes in the officialdom both at the district level and in the colony. The craftsmen appear to feel that the attitude of their officials has changed from partiality and indifference to benevolence and active interest.

Yet, I cannot conclude that all is well at Kalapura and that it is on the path of self-sustained progress. Since early this year there appears to be a barely perceptible waning of interest. One wonders whether once again the debilitating forces are at work. Much remains to be done before this pioneer project is made viable, before it can justify its costs, and before it can have at least a marginal effect on the broader field of Kandyan crafts.

3. Population of Kalapura

At present the craftsmen and their dependents residing at Kalapura number 259. They form 34 family units. The approximate average number of persons per family is 8. According to my investigations, 87 persons are engaged full-time in their respective crafts, 41 can be classed as part-time, while un-employed dependents number 127. Four persons are engaged in activities that fall outside the employment complex of the colony.

The following Table gives the Age-Sex composition of the population of Kalapura. It may be noted that in this respect the population of the colony is similar to the population of the district as a whole.

Table 3.1. Age and Sex Composition

Age Group	Male	Female
Less than 5 years	17	18
4 to 14 years	39	30
15 to 49 years	73	68
Over 50 years	9	5
Total	138	121

In the next Table of statistics a classification of those employed into different fields of activity is presented. Those whom I have referred to as 'light metal carvers' are more numerous than the others. This group together with the brassfounders account for roughly 63 per cent of the

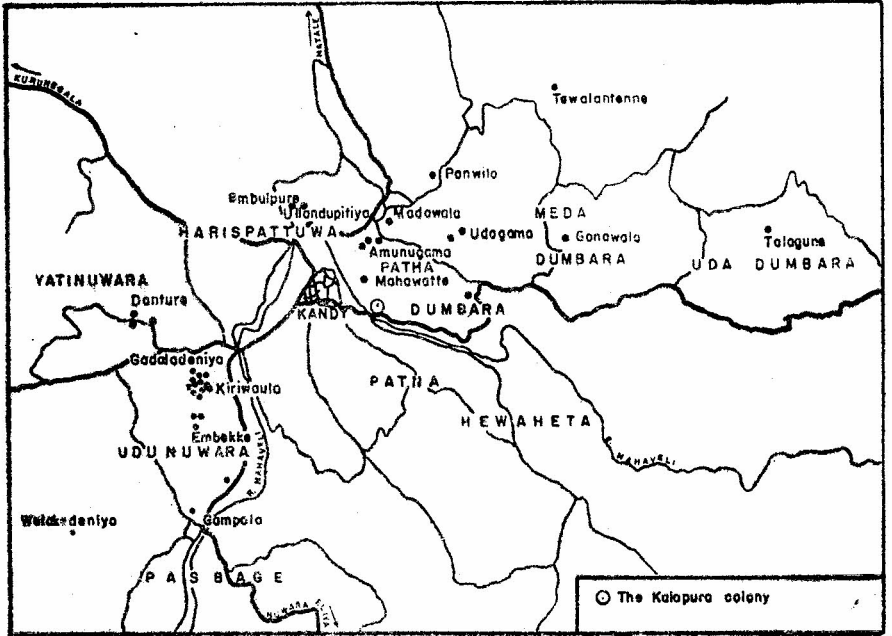


Figure 3.1

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total employed. The 'wood, ivory and lacquer worker' group consists of 5 units engaged in wood carving, 1 in ivory carving, 1 in lacquer work and 1 in carpentry. (This sub-division is made on the basis of their main medium of work). The names given to the other fields of employment in my classification are self-explanatory.

Table 3.2. Structure of Employment

Field of Employment	No. of Units	Nos. Engaged	
		Full Time	Part Time
Light metal carving	12	37	18
Brassfoundering	9	30	15
Wood, Ivory and Lacquer work	8	14	4
Iron work	2	3	2
Batik and art work	2	2	1
Weaving (Dumbara rata)*	1	1	1
Total	34	87	41

*2 part-time hand-loom cloth weavers belonging to family units in the 'metal carver' group have been excluded.

The villages from which Kalapura has drawn its present population are shown on Figure 3.1. Prior to their migration to the colony most families have belonged to 'communities' which have traditionally practised

their respective crafts. There are 8 exceptions to this point and of them 7 belong to minority occupational groups.

Twenty-two families have been resident in the colony since its inception in March 1965. On several occasions subsequently, others were brought in to fill the units that either remained vacant from the beginning or fell vacant after 1965 due to departures. Thus there have been 8 arrivals in 1968, 1 arrival in the following year, and 2 in 1972. Unit number 3 has been vacant since its abandonment by its former occupant in late 1965.

4. Standard of Living at Kalapura

A feature which was impressed upon me at the very early stages of my survey was the apparent presence of wide disparities in the standards of living at Kalapura. The task of expressing these disparities quantitatively is not simple. My experience both at Kalapura and elsewhere is that the direct 'questionnaire method' of eliciting information on income and expenditure does not yield reliable results, particularly in rural communities where there is a tendency for the haves to conceal and the have-nots to exaggerate. In this context, in order that I may attempt at least a rough assessment of the *relative* standards of living, I collected data from all units in the colony on certain directly observable features on which, to some extent, are reflected the varying levels of living.

In 1965, each family settled at Kalapura was allotted a type-plan two roomed cottage of approximately 400 sq. ft. floor area. Within the past 7 years considerable extensions and improvements have been effected by the allottees in some of the cottages. Thus today those cottages that have undergone the greatest metamorphosis have a floor space of over 1000 sq. ft., 4 or 5 rooms, work sheds, outhouses and electricity (e.g. units 2 and 30). Yet another conspicuous variation is in the manner in which the residences are furnished. While certain homes are lavishly furnished with a variety of luxury and durable consumer items, there are others almost entirely devoid of furniture and 'non-essential' household effects. Since these were features which I was myself able to count and measure and upon which I could impute a monetary value with a fair degree of accuracy, I have used them as 'indices of affluence' to provide me with a rough measurement of variations in living standards within the community.

I am aware of the inadequacy of these criteria as indices of standards of living. It is obvious that what people spend on luxury and non-essential goods depend not only on their income levels but also on their spending priorities and saving habits. Nevertheless, since it is possible to assume a certain degree of homogeneity in values, habits and attitudes within the community of Kalapura, since data directly obtainable on income and all aspects of expenditure are unreliable, and since my criteria of assessment lend themselves to objective verification, it is possible to claim

some justification for treating variations in the level of expenditure on directly observable aspects of what may be loosely termed 'conspicuous consumption,' as an index of variation in the level of affluence. The presence of empirical evidence suggesting the prevalence of a positive correlation between income on the one hand and expenditure on luxury and durable consumer goods on the other (Central Bank of Ceylon 1953, Table 28; Central Bank of Ceylon 1963, p. 123; Department of Census and Statistics, 1971, Table 40.0) gives further justification to the use of the present index.

The results of my estimates of expenditure on 'conspicuous consumption' incurred by each family unit at Kalapura which are summarised on Table 4.1 show the following features:

- (a) There are wide differences in living standards.
- (b) Although a majority of the relatively more affluent families belong to the 'light metal carver' group (e.g. units 2, 15, 23 and 30), there is no clear relationship between the field of employment and the level of affluence.
- (c) The other socio-economic or demographic variables cannot consistently explain differences in the standards of living.

Thus, what is clear is that there is no simple answer to the question, why some at Kalapura are well off while the others are not.

With the intention of probing deeper into this problem, I included in the sample of families which were selected for detailed study those that are at either extreme in my Table of estimates. This more detailed study has led me to the conclusion that the following factors in a cumulative cause and affect process have contributed to the prevailing economic disparities:

- (a) The economic differences that were there to begin with appear to be one of the factors accounting for some of the present disparities. Although at the selection of the colonists, ostensibly, preference was given to the more depressed craftsmen, it seems unlikely that those finally selected were in the same economic stratum at the time they moved into Kalapura.
- (b) Most craftsmen who enjoy a higher 'standard of living' have a number of workers serving under them. Nominally, such workers are apprentices learning the craft from the master craftsman, but in reality they are invariably poorly paid or unpaid labourers working for an exacting employer-cum-middleman. Often, a system of piece-rate payment is followed by the master in the case of the more competent apprentices, while the remuneration of the tenderfoot is restricted to provision of board of

Table 4.1 Estimated Expenditure on durable consumer and luxury goods, and earner/dependent ratio

Unit No.	Occupation	Estimated cost of improvements on residence (Rs.)	FURNITURE AND HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS (Rs.)					Total (Rs.)	Earner/Dependent Ratio
			drawing room suites, chairs tables etc.	almirahs cupboards showcases	sewing machines	radios	Other items		
1	Wood carver	450	50	250	—	—	—	750	3:3
2	Light metal worker	6000	480	650	—	400	80	7,610	4:2
3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	vacant	—
4	Brassfounder	60	25	—	—	150	—	235	5:6
5	Brassfounder	550	80	450	—	—	—	1,080	5:5
6	Wood carver	300	80	150	500	—	—	1,030	4:3
7	Light metal worker	200	30	525	—	—	—	755	4:5
8	Blacksmith	50	—	—	—	—	—	50	1:5
9	Brassfounder	400	130	150	—	100	—	780	3:8
10	Brassfounder	150	125	650	—	100	125	1,050	1:5
11	Light metal worker	200	95	—	—	—	—	295	2:8
12	Light metal worker	—	15	—	—	—	—	15	1:5
13	Weaver	—	50	—	—	—	—	50	1:4
14	Ivory carver	30	40	500	—	—	—	570	3:7
15	Light metal worker	3000	460	650	500	300	300	4,800	5:6
16	Brassfounder	30	20	—	—	—	—	50	1:12
17	Light metal worker	—	70	—	—	—	250	320	1:5
18	Wood carver	500	400	—	—	—	—	900	1:7
19	Brassfounder	2000	170	—	—	—	—	2,520	4:8
20	Wood carver	3000	180	1300	600	275	300	5,655	1:7
21	Light metal worker	50	45	—	—	—	75	170	2:11
22	Lacquer work	50	120	150	—	—	100	420	1:2
23	Light metal worker	3400	100	675	150	600	50	4,905	6:3
24	Jeweller & light metal carver	—	10	—	—	—	—	10	2:2
25	Wood carver and carpenter	800	35	—	—	—	—	835	1:1
26	Brassfounder	2500	80	200	150	150	100	3,180	6:12
27	Blacksmith	1800	40	—	—	100	20	1,960	2:4
28	Batik maker	1000	60	—	200	100	—	1,380	2:4
29	Light metal worker	2200	140	350	—	200	—	2,890	3:2
30	Light metal worker	6600	730	850	1300	200	200	9,880	7:5
31	Light metal worker	30	75	—	—	100	—	205	1:5
32	Artist	—	70	125	—	125	—	380	1:6
33	Brassfounder	20	10	—	—	—	—	30	1:2
34	Brassfounder	20	50	—	—	—	10	80	1:2
35	Light metal worker	—	—	—	—	—	—	not available	—

lodging. Where this system operates, I also observed that the artifacts turned out even by the less trained apprentices require only a little 'finishing' by the master or one of his senior apprentices before they are ready for the market. The system always leaves a wide margin of profit for the master craftsman.

- (c) Some of the wealthier craftsmen (especially units 2 and 30) unlike a majority at the colony have an easy access to the market. Even during the bleak period which Kalapura went through during the first 6 years of its existence (see 2, above) there is evidence that these persons supplied sizable consignments of artifacts to Lak Sala and other marketing organisations and that, periodically, when they received large orders from outside, they even farmed out some of the work among the under-employed craftsmen in the colony at low rates of payment. This advantage cannot be explained solely in terms of the skill and the reputation of the individuals who have been so favoured. The greater likelihood is that they possess the shrewdness, the business acumen, and the knowledge of the correct approaches to operate as middlemen in the highly competitive but lucrative trade in traditional ornamental artifacts.
- (d) In respect of some of the more successful metal carvers at Kalapura, superior skill is undoubtedly one of the factors that contributes to their higher earning capacity. In making this point I do not mean that they are always superior to the others in handling the tools of their craft, because the mastery of technique is something acquired usually early in life by hundreds of craftsmen. Nor do I imply that the artifacts turned out by the less well-to-do craftsmen are always of poorer quality. But what is probably true of Devendra, Wijeratne and Jayatillake is that they produce a greater variety of goods, they can afford the luxury of experimentation, and their produce generally have a better finish than those of most others.
- (e) The ability to invest more on raw materials is also a factor which accounts for the apparent higher incomes of those who have been referred to above. These craftsmen work more with silver than with other metals. As shown in Table 5.1, silver is a more profitable medium of work than brass and copper.
- (f) No clear generalization is possible about the family units that are at the other end of my economic gradation. The size of the family and, more specifically, the earner-dependent ratio has some relationship to standard of living, as evidenced by certain

families exhibiting a low level of affluence (e.g. units 8, 9, 11, 12, 16, 21, 31 and 32). The brassfounder Jeewathamy, the sole earner in a family of 13 and the juvenile blacksmith, Wijeratne, who carries alone the burden of supporting his mother and three sisters, are probably extreme cases of poverty in the colony. However, my data do not indicate a consistent relationship between living standards and the earner-dependent ratio. There are noteworthy exceptions where despite a high ratio there appears to be a low standard of living (e.g. units 24, 33 and 34), and conversely, at least one unit (20) at which the earner dependent ratio is low but the "standard of living" is high.

- (g) Low output resulting from senility, sickness or innate laziness (e.g. units 14, 31), low marketability of the articles produced (unit 24), and under-employment which may result from a variety of causes (especially conspicuous in the case of the artist at unit 32) are some of the other factors that in varying degrees adversely affect individual family units.

5. Costs of Production and Profits

As stated earlier, although it is possible on the basis of certain observable criteria to examine variations in the standards of living at Kalapura, a number of factors confound any attempt to make accurate estimates of the craftsmen's earnings. Similarly, due to the wide variations that exist in the scale of operation, the skill and capacity of craftsmen, and the nature of the produce, it is difficult to make generalization on costs of production and profits that are derived from the different crafts.

However, on the basis of data which have been gathered mostly through direct observation, I have tabulated below (Table 5.1) estimates of money costs and of other inputs that go into the production of selected artifacts manufactured in the colony.

There are some limitations to the accuracy of my data. While the estimates of costs of raw materials, consumables, finishing processes, and selling prices can be regarded as accurate, labour inputs represent only rough assessments. Craftsmen in cottage industry rarely have regular hours of work; nor do they work continuously and at uniform intensity. Hence the difficulty of making accurate assessments of labour inputs. The present estimates are based for the most part on repeated observations made during successive visits to the colony. However, I have been compelled to lean heavily on the information supplied by the craftsmen—particularly in the case of objects that represent a relatively large labour input.

Despite these limitations in accuracy, the estimates could be used as the basis of certain general conclusions on costs of production and profits.

5.1 Raw Materials as a Component of Cost

A striking feature borne out by the data is that raw materials represent a large component of costs. The cost of raw materials, taken as a percentage of the selling price is seen to vary from about 40% to 75%. In crafts that are related to the fine arts and in which the 'value added' in the process of production lies in the skill and the aesthetic sense of the producer, one would not expect raw materials to be an important item of cost. That with a few exceptions, the contrary is true for the goods produced by the Kandyan craftsmen is a depressing phenomenon, and one that reflects the insignificant position accorded by the market to the creative contribution of the craftsmen in evaluating their produce.

5.2 Earnings

The 'earnings' estimated in relation to specific articles produced (Table 5.1) tend to give an exaggerated notion of what the craftsmen actually earn. For example, while most articles itemised in my Table suggest a possibility for the craftsmen to earn over Rs. 10/- per day, earnings on certain items (e.g. items 9 to 12) are seen to exceed Rs. 3/- per man hour. In reality several factors impose restrictions on earnings. The amount of work possible is restricted, on the one hand by the tedium and the intense concentration which the work involves; and on the other by raw material supplies and market demand. The restriction on earnings imposed by market demand is particularly important in the case of wood-carvers who, as suggested by the data presented in Table 5.1 (c), have a *potential* to reach a relatively high level of earning per man-day.

These restrictions imply, from the point of view of man-hours of work, that there is considerable under-employment at Kalapura. Outside the colony, in the Kandyan villages, it is possible for at least some of the under-utilised labour of the craftsmen to be channelled to agriculture and other avenues of employment. Kalapura provides no such outlet. This is probably the main defect of the conception of a colony devoted exclusively to cottage crafts.

The estimates of 'earnings' show that returns for the labour that goes into the production of artifacts vary widely on the basis of what is produced. In general, the light metal carvers earn more for their labour than the brassfounders. It is also seen that silver is a more profitable medium of work than brass and copper. The latter feature bestows on those capable of investing larger sums of money on raw materials a distinct advantage over the others. The craftsmen usually prefer to work with silver; but since silver is more scarce and more expensive, they are compelled to work with cheaper metals which give them a lower return for their labour.

Table 5.1 (a) Estimated Costs of Production and Earnings
based on data obtained through field study at Kalapura during March 1972

<i>Number of observations recorded</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost of raw materials & consumables</i>	<i>Cost of finishing</i>	<i>Approximate labour input (man hours)</i>	<i>Average selling price (Rs.) to Lak Sala</i>	<i>Average earnings per man hour</i>
2	1. 6,7" silver plates MS brass trays	57.50	7.50	16	78.00	.81
6	2. 14" MS brass tray (polished)	29.50	2.00	10	42.50	1.10
6	3. 14" MS brass tray (silver-plated)	29.50	6.30	11	48.00	1.10
1	4. 1 set, silver plates brass coffee spoons (3")	1.00	1.50	8	11.00	1.05
1	5. 1 set, brass chimes (polished)	8.25	2.00	7	30.00	2.82
2	6. 1 brass bottle cover (polished)	17.00	3.50	16	52.50	2.00
1	7. 1 silver plated brass casket (16" × 2")	14.00	3.00	16	42.00	1.50
1	8. Silver coffee spoons, 3" (1 set)	64.00	2.00	8	—	—
2	9. 1, 12" silver MS tray	178.00	—	64	510.00	3.60
1	10. 1 silver jewellery box (9" × 5" × 3")	300.00	7.00	58	504.00	3.40
1	11. 1 pair, ebony elephants (4" × 4") decorated with silver and semi-precious stones	258.00	—	80	575.00	3.80
1	12. 1 ebony elephant (8" × 8") decorated with silver and semi-precious stones	652.00	—	136	1,450.00	5.87

All estimates of costs are at current prices.

Table 5.1 (b) Estimated Costs of Production and Earnings
based on data obtained through field study at Kalapura during February-March 1972

<i>Number of observations recorded</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost of raw materials and consumables (Rs.)</i>	<i>Cost of finishing (Rs.)</i>	<i>Approximate labour input man/days</i>	<i>Selling price (Rs.)</i>	<i>Average earnings per man/day (Rs.)</i>
2	10 Rose bowls (8") on elephant stand (brass polished)	285.00	25.00	30	600.00	9.70
1	4 dinner gongs 11" × 5" <i>Makara Thorana</i> design (brass polished)	49.00	12.00	40	660.00	15.00
2	12 (8") vases (brass polished)	46.00	15.00	16	240.00	11.10
1	1 pair of 24" brass vases (polished)	142.00	25.00	15	450.00	18.45

All estimates of cost are at current prices.

Miscellaneous Products

Table 5.1 (c) Estimates Costs of Production and Earnings
 based on data obtained through field study at Kalapura during February-March 1972

<i>Number of observations recorded</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost of raw materials and consumables (Rs.)</i>	<i>Cost of finishing</i>	<i>Approximate labour input man/days</i>	<i>Selling price (Rs.)</i>	<i>Average earnings per man/day (Rs.)</i>
1	18" wooden Mask of <i>Naga Raksha</i> design (lacquered)	4.00	—	3	60.00	18.65
1	Set of 10, 15" wooden masks, miscellaneous designs	35.00	—	20	450.00	20.75
1	Carving a floral pattern on a teak door* (8' x 4')	15.00	—	22	850.00	37.95
1	Conversion of handles of large umbrella	52.00	1.50	3	100.00	15.50
1	Weaving 50 cloth bags (14" x 16") (Dumbara-Rata)	190.00	—	25	450.00	10.40

*Payment was on the basis of a private contract with the door supplied by the client.

All estimates of cost are at current prices.

6. Social Life at Kalapura

In so far as it is permissible to express an opinion after 12 days of observation extending over a period of two months, I would say that life at Kalapura is fairly peaceful. Scenes of wild abandon reflecting perhaps the mutual intimacy of communal village life, or drunken brawls following the tot of hooch after a hard day's labour, appear to be far less frequent in occurrence here than in other areas of which I have experience. Minor frictions and aberrations, often ending up in the watcher's log-book, do not seem to leave permanent scars at least on the surface. As to why this is so, I cannot be definite. Perhaps it is because every one at Kalapura is still literally an outsider; or, is it due to the inspired selection of colonists by the Department of Rural Development?

Concealed, and at times not well concealed rivalries, antipathies and prejudices are there. To generalize and to isolate interwoven phenomena, these appear to be based on lack of community of interests between occupational groups, caste differences, and political differences.

6.1 Factionalism between Occupational Groups

Although the people at Kalapura, with two exceptions, are all producers of artifacts, catering to the same or similar markets, the specific problems that affect each craft have important differences. In collective activities such as the work of the co-operative society, the interests of the majority occupational groups tend to remain in the limelight. When representations or negotiations are made, they are invariably done by delegated drawn from the 'light metal carver' and 'brassfounder' groups, and hence it is their needs and interests that receive greater attention. In Tables 6.1 and 6.2, I have presented data on the supply of goods to Lak Sala, and to the apportionment of the loan obtained by the co-operative society among its members, that would substantiate the point I am making. These have created a certain amount of resentment among those in the minor occupational groups, and less consistently, a resentment among the brassfounders against the metal carvers.

Table 6.1. Loans obtained from the Co-operative Society from September 1971 to March 1972

<i>Occupational Groups</i>	<i>Total Amounts Obtained (Rs.)</i>
Light metal carvers	6,631.68
Brassfounders	2,486.25
Others	345.00

Source: Records maintained by the President of the Co-operative Society.

Table 6.2. Value of Purchases by Colombo Lak Sala from the Kalapura Co-operative Society June 1971-January 1972

Month	Value of Purchases from Light metal carvers (Rs.)	Value of Purchases from Brassfounders (Rs.)	Value of Purchases from others (Rs.)	Total (Rs.)
1971:				
June	3,106.00	665.00	—	3,771.00
July	570.00	370.00	—	940.00
August	464.00	—	—	464.00
September	1,769.00	3,887.00	—	5,656.00
October	1,604.00	795.00	—	2,399.00
November	3,073.00	1,718.50	143.50	4,935.00
December	1,800.00	—	—	1,800.00
Total	12,386.00	7,435.50	143.50	19,965.00

Note: The Society retains 10 per cent of the value of goods supplied through it as a commission. Average value of goods supplied per unit works out:
to: Rs. 952.77 from the light metal carvers,
Rs. 826.17 from the brassfounders, and
Rs. 11.96 from the others.

Source: Records maintained by the Secretary of the Co-operative Society.

6.2 Caste Differences

According to information which I have gathered the residents of the colony belong to different castes as shown below:—

- (a) *Navandanna* .. 24 families (includes 11 light metal carvers
9 *lokuruwa* or brassfounders
2 blacksmiths
1 jeweller, and
1 ivory carver)
- (b) *Velli Vansa* (or .. 5 families (Rajapakse, the artist,
Panna Durai) Jayasinghe, the lacquer worker,
and all wood carvers with the
exception of G. W. Sirisena)
- (c) *Vahumpura* .. 1 family (Abiththa, the carpenter)
- (d) *Nekathi* .. 1 family (Y. G. Sirisena, the weaver)
- (e) *Bathgama* .. 1 family (Nuwarapakse, the Batik maker)
- (f) unverifiable .. 2 families (G. W. Sirisena, the wood carver,
and Davith Hamy, the welder-
cum-metal carver).

There is a general correspondence between caste divisions and occupational differences. The noteworthy exceptions are G. W. Sirisena and A. A. Davith Hamy for both of whom their respective occupations are said to be 'non-hereditary'.

Status variations between and within the caste groups at Kalapura are by no means clear. The *Navandanna* usually claim a position higher than the others. Within this group, the 'light metal carvers' who consider themselves the most 'respectable', treat the blacksmiths, the jeweller and the ivory carver as their equals, and the brassfounders as their inferiors. This suggests the persistence today of the shades of differences within the *navandanna* caste described by Coomaraswamy (1907, pp. 55-61); Codrington (pp. 221-253) and Peiries (pp. 182-3). The five families who refer to themselves as the *Velli vansa* (but referred to by others as *Panna durai*), do not concede the superiority of the metal carvers. Their numerical importance and the kinship they claim to certain persons in the national and local elite seem to have instilled into them an attitude of superiority over the members of other castes particularly those that are represented at Kalapura by single family units.

As one might expect there are no consistent behavioural patterns and attitudinal variations associated with caste differences. Those who were more amenable to frank discussion often claimed that they themselves are free from caste prejudices, that status variations based on caste are outmoded and meaningless, and that they being members of one community (at Kalapura) treat every one alike. But invariably, terms such as '*ape minissu*' (our people) and '*un*' (derogatory, 'they') and abbreviations with an echo of derision such as '*pannayo*' and '*paddo*' when referring to the castes of the others, unwittingly creep into their conversation, suggesting that the reality is not as liberal and egalitarian as they claim.

6.3 Political Differences

The colonists at Kalapura could be ascribed to those 'classes' from which both the United National Party (U.N.P.) and the S.L.F.P. draw their support in rural Ceylon. Political loyalties have been volatile, but there are some individuals who are known UNPers or SLFPers, whose influence and prestige have varied according to changing political circumstances. I have not examined this aspect in detail, but it appears to be related to the subterranean currents of factionalism present in the colony.

In making these observations on factions and on caste and political differences, I do not wish to over-emphasise their importance and to create the impression that conflicting interests and loyalties, differences and prejudices make collective activities in the colony ineffective or meaningless. The co-operative society though periodically dormant in the past, is still viable; the community development society is a going concern; voluntary group work can claim credit for several achievements; and, as

in the villages, calamities that strike individuals evoke prompt and spontaneous response that transcends social and political differences and divisions.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Kalapura represents the only substantial effort made by the Government since Independence to foster the development of traditional Kandyan crafts. Though initially it lacked clarity of purpose and design, its conception reflected a desire on the part of the government to "do some thing", and perhaps a realization not only of the economic potential of this sphere of activity, but also of the need for the state to play a positive role in its development.

The decision made in 1962 to restrict the first stage of development of the scheme to 35 family units and to leave its further expansion to a future date (see 2, above) appears in retrospect sensible and far-sighted. The colony has been in existence for seven years. It is now possible to treat it as a experiment in craftsman's colonies, to review its experience, and to evaluate its achievements.

7.1 The Cost and Benefits of Kalapura

The following estimate of the cost of the Kalapura project is based on records maintained at the office of the Assistant Director of Small Industries, Kandy:—

	Rs.	Rs.
Capital Costs		
(a) Land, Transfer, Surveys, blocking out (22 acres 3 roods) ..	180,200.00	
(b) Clearing, levelling and provision of common facilities (roads, water services, community buildings and store room) ..	100,000.00	
(c) Construction of 35 cottages and 1 house	140,700.00	
(d) Construction of 35 kitchens ..	11,600.00	
(e) Other expenses ..	<u>1,000.00</u>	
Recurrent Costs (March 1965 to March 1972)		433,500.00
(a) Salaries and allowances of government employees ..	33,600.00	
(b) Expenditure on visiting administrative staff, at the rate of 50/- per month ..	4,200.00	
(c) Contingencies, at the rate of Rs. 100/- per year ..	<u>700.00</u>	38,500.00
TOTAL ..		<u><u>472,000.00</u></u>

N.B. I have excluded from this estimate the costs of the workshop, since it has been operating at most times as an independent unit.

This estimate, though possibly inaccurate in detail, gives a rough idea of the *direct cost* of the project. To this must be added as *indirect cost* the value of what the 22 acres would have produced in its original form of utilization. Assuming that prior to 1965 the land was of low productivity yielding a net income per acre of Rs. 400/- per year (although a portion of the colony was a part of a coconut estate) the estimated indirect cost of the project works out to about 61,600/-.

Thus the total cost of the Kalapura project since its inception is in the region of 535,000/- which works out to about 15,500/- per family unit settled; a figure considerably higher than that of the major colonization schemes of the Dry Zone of Ceylon (Farmer, pp. 316-334).

7.2 General Conclusions

These estimates make it clear that the experiment at Kalapura has been expensive. It may be noted that, since the project has affected less than 8 per cent of the estimated number of families engaged in traditional Kandyan crafts, the provision of aid to the entire field of activity on the same financial scale as at Kalapura would involve an expenditure of over 7 million rupees.

When looked upon in this context, the project cannot justify itself. Its achievements are insignificant. The little it has achieved could have been achieved through other less expensive means. The only tangible benefit of the scheme has been that a few allegedly landless craftsmen have been provided with places to live in. Elsewhere, I have commented on the problems that have arisen from the physical separation of the crafts at Kalapura from agriculture and other avenues of income. It is indeed doubtful whether the advantage of the possession of a house and a plot of land compensates the disadvantages arising from the isolation of the craftsmen from other segments of the rural economy.

The 24 craftsmen at Kalapura with whom I conducted detailed interviews (Table 7.1) were asked whether their conditions have improved after migration to the colony. Twelve responded in the affirmative, eight said that there has been no change, and four that they are worse off than before. When requested to specify reasons for their respective views, of the 12 who felt that their conditions have improved, 9 were able to think of only their possession of a house as the difference between the past and the present. Admittedly, one should not place much significance on replies given to questions of this sort seeking opinions and feelings. Nevertheless, these responses strengthened my view that the benefits bestowed even upon the 34 families now living at Kalapura are not substantial enough to justify the cost of the project.

As mentioned earlier, the planners of Kalapura did not have a clear idea of the specific purpose of the project (see 2 above). A project of this sort could of course have had several purposes. It could have been

directed at the problem of congestion and land hunger in the craftsmen's villages within Kandy district. If this was the purpose, the project is ill-conceived and unjustifiable: for apart from the fact that landlessness is a general phenomena in the rural Wet Zone (Kandyan Peasantry Commission 1951, pp. 95-96; University of Ceylon 1957, pp. 1-4; Department of Census and Statistics 1962, p. 35) which expensive mini-schemes such as Kalapura cannot effectively counter, priority in the solution to the problem of landlessness must be given to farmers rather than to craftsmen. Then again, the aim of the planners might have been to set up at Kalapura a show-piece of the Kandyan crafts, a centre of excellence and innovation, and a model settlement for emulation. There is ample justification for a project with these aims: but Kalapura has fallen far short of achieving them. The most that could be said on the credit side of the scheme is that it has provided certain benefits for a small group of craftsmen's families in Kandy district.

Here I must emphasise the fact that Kalapura has had no significant impact on the broader field of traditional Kandyan crafts. As the focus of my introductory general survey indicates, and my specific discussion of Kalapura substantiates, the problems that afflict the Kandyan crafts today are of three types: those relating to marketing, those associated with the supply of raw materials, and those reflected in the absence of individuality, the pervasiveness of monotony, and often, the low quality of craftsmanship. To these Kalapura affords no solution. The craftsman at the colony is subject to the same exploitation by the trader in raw materials and the dealer in finished products as those outside, his products in general are of the same quality. He is affected by the same disincentives to innovation and self-expression.

There is thus no justification for a further expansion of the scheme. Although nearly 17 acres of originally acquired land are available for a second stage of development, and recurrent costs (especially costs on administration) are likely to be proportionately lower in an enlarged settlement, the provision of housing and other infra-structure facilities would cost considerably more now than they did 10 years ago. It is also possible that in a colony consisting of a larger and more heterogeneous population, social problems that appear insignificant today would assume importance.

Effort now should be directed at improving Kalapura in its present size. Such an effort is justified not only for the fulfilment of undertakings given by the government at the original settlement of the colonists at Kalapura (see, 2 above), but also by the need to make what has so far been spent on the Colony worthwhile. However, since it would not be reasonable to confer upon those at Kalapura special privileges that are denied

to the vast majority of craftsman outside, attempts to improve conditions at Kalapura should be a part of a broader governmental effort at fostering the development of Kandyan crafts.

7.3 Suggestions relating to the general field of Kandyan Crafts

The Department of Small Industries in collaboration with the Department of Co-operative Development should embark upon a general programme involving the formation of craftsmen's co-operative societies, the issue of raw materials quotas to these societies, and co-ordinating them with the state-sponsored marketing organisations. The specific details of such a programme should be planned out with care, taking particular note of the problems and the dismal experiences of the past craftsmen's co-operative societies. Here I shall confine myself to a brief discussion of certain suggestions that should be taken into consideration in formulating such a programme.

- (a) At present the state-sponsored marketing organizations (of which the most important is Lak Sala, Colombo) obtain their supplies mainly from private sources—craftsmen, dealers, and firms. Only a minority of craftsmen enjoy the advantage of being registered suppliers of Lak Sala. Placing orders for the supply of goods and the selection or the rejection of goods offered for sale, are done at the discretion of a few individuals at Lak Sala. Purchasing is done mainly in Colombo. There are inordinate delays in the payment for goods supplied. The craftsmen are not adequately informed about either the criteria of selection and rejection or the type and quantities of goods in demand. These imply not only that Lak Sala does not serve the needs of a vast majority of craftsmen, but also that the system of purchasing it follows causes frustration and hardship to craftsmen, and leaves room for large-scale corruption. Hence the present system should be radically altered. A change from the present system to a more equitable one can probably be achieved if the state-sponsored marketing organizations initiate a phased out scheme of reducing their purchases from private sources and increasing purchases from the craftsmen's co-operatives.
- (b) In the proposed programme, craftsmen's co-operatives would have to perform a vital role. In addition to the societies that are presently in existence (e.g. Kalapura and Hapuwida), others should be instituted in the main craftsmen's settlements. The existence of societies that have been clamouring for recognition (e.g. those at Embekke and Embulpure) suggests that the formation of such craftsmen's co-operatives would be a feasible proposition.

- (c) Largely as a result of the well known failure of the co-operative society at Giragama, the idea of craftsmen's co-operatives has fallen into disrepute. It must however be noted that what occurred at Giragama could have been averted through proper supervision and guidance. That, given adequate assistance, a craftsmen's co-operative society can function effectively has been demonstrated by the Society at Kalapura during the recent past. Close supervision by committees that include representatives of the Department of Small Industries and Co-operative Development, and the enforcement of regulations directed both at facilitating an equitable distribution of benefits of the co-operatives among their membership, as well as preventing excessive concentration of power with certain members of the co-operative societies, could reduce if not eliminate corruption to which such societies are prone.
- (d) The state sponsored marketing organizations should channel orders for the supply of goods through the craftsmen's co-operative societies. For this purpose, it would be necessary for such organizations to estimate in advance the market demand for various types of artifacts. Past sales records would enable the making of the necessary short-term forecasts. The intended dates for purchasing consignments of supplies from different co-operative societies should also be specified in advance. Purchasing should be done, not in Colombo as at present, but at a centre to which a majority of the craftsman have easy access.
- (e) The control of quality of the goods offered for sale by the craftsmen will always constitute a major problem. Obviously, rigid standards cannot be enforced. This is perhaps the main reason adduced for the perpetuation of the present system under which the selection of goods depend entirely on the decisions of the purchasing officers at Lak Sala. This system could be replaced by one in which a share of the responsibility of quality control is passed on to the craftsmen's co-operative societies, and the purchasing at Lak Sala is supervised by committees consisting both of officials as well as representatives of craftsmen's co-operatives. To minimize possibilities of corruption and favoritism the composition of these committees could be changed from time to time.
- (f) In a previous section of this article (vide, 1.7 and 5.1 above) I have shown that particularly in metal work the existing modes of raw material supply have enabled the private traders to obtain a large share of the economic benefits from the recent expansion in demand for artifacts produced by Kandyan craftsmen. A concerted governmental effort to strengthen Kandyan

crafts should include measures directed either at effectively controlling the supply price of raw materials without creating scarcities, or at removing entirely the trade in the more important raw materials from the private sector. In a radical change from the present system of raw material supply, the proposed craftsmen's co-operative societies could perform the function of retail distribution.

- (g) As in other sectors of the rural economy, in cottage crafts too, the absence or the inadequacy of easy credit facilities constitute a major handicap. Among the various consequences of this perhaps the most significant is that it exposes the craftsman to exploitation. Here again the government could utilize the proposed co-operative societies to channel loans to craftsmen. Since the circulation of money in the process of production and sale of artifacts is rapid, large block grants to co-operative societies will not be necessary to institute such credit facilities. The issue of loans would take the form of supplying raw materials on credit. What would be necessary, as the experience at Kalapura shows, is to ensure that such credit facilities are equitably distributed.

7.4 Recommendations on Kalapura

In making the above suggestions relating to the broader field of Kandyan crafts, I have implied that it is not possible to justify favoured treatment being given by the government to the craftsmen at Kalapura. However, an attempt by the Department of Small Industries to improve conditions at Kalapura could include the initiation in the colony of some of the measures which I have suggested. I list below the specific measures that could be adopted immediately:—

- (a) Arrangements could be made for enabling the co-operative society at Kalapura to receive regular orders for the supply of goods to Lak Sala. This would be consistent with the suggested policy of craftsmen's co-operatives being given priority as suppliers to Lak Sala. It is desirable that the orders sent to Kalapura should be sufficiently varied to enable the co-operative society to farm out work equitably among its members. Payment for the goods supplied should be done with the minimum delay.
- (b) Until it is possible to alter the present system of purchasing at Lak Sala, it would be beneficial if the authorities in charge of purchasing at Lak Sala advise and instruct the craftsmen on such matters at the variation in demand for different types of products, and the criteria adopted in the selection of artifacts offered by the craftsmen.

- (c) After nearly 6 years of sustained effort, the Kalapura co-operative society succeeded last year in obtaining a loan of Rs. 5,000. The records of the co-operative society show that this loan has been used reasonably, and that the repayment of the loan instalments has been regular. However, considering the fact that the total loan given works out to about Rs. 150/- per family or Rs. 50/- per full-time craftsmen (the latter figure is approximately equal to the current cost of 2 lb. of brass sheet), it appears to be too small to make a significant impact. I suggest that at least an additional Rs. 5,000/- be granted in order to expand the credit facilities of the society. Here too, the department should fix ceilings on borrowing and ensure that the credit facilities reach all sections of the Kalapura community.
- (d) Some special attention should be given to the craftsmen in the minority occupational groups. I find it difficult to understand the rationale behind the settlement of some of these groups (e.g. batik maker, jeweller, lacquer worker, mask maker, artist and blacksmith) in the colony. Kalapura affords no special advantage for their crafts, and they benefit little from its co-operative society. Now that they have been settled in the colony, it is incumbent upon the Department to safeguard their interests.
- (e) Until recently there have been no regular operational links between the central workshop at Kalapura and the craftsmen. While the presence of the workshop has been of little benefit to the colony, some of its expensive equipment (e.g. the electrical furnace for smelting brass) have remained idle throughout. Steps should be taken to utilize these or to dispose of them, and the workshop should be linked more closely than in the past with the crafts at Kalapura. However, the turnover of metal artifacts at the colony does not justify the immediate setting up of polishing and plating facilities in the workshop.
- (f) The so-called "dispersed factory" or the "industrial homework" system has been successfully developed in several countries like Japan and Switzerland in their process of economically strengthening cottage industries and utilizing the skills of the rural craftsmen for modern industrial needs (Stein, 1935; Zimmermann, 1950; Lockwood, 1954). Although problems and limitations of the system have been recognized (Staley and Morse, 1965), Japan and Switzerland have demonstrated its possibilities in several modern industries including those that demand a high degree of precision and technical skill from the craftsman. Certain Kandyan crafts (especially those involving metal work) present potential for development in this direction. The department should undertake such a venture after a careful study of

the prospects. Kalapura could be the starting point of an experiment in 'industrial homework' in which some of the unutilized equipment available in the workshop is used.

- (g) The seventeen acres of idle land belonging to the colony should be speedily put into productive use. As to what form it should take depends on the developmental needs and priorities of the area; but a section of it could be usefully set apart for the needs of the present residents of Kalapura. As I have mentioned earlier, under-employment and seasonal unemployment is a pressing problem for certain family units. In my interviews some craftsmen expressed the need for land on which they could practice agriculture as a subsidiary occupation. Hence, on an experimental basis, it would be worthwhile to lease out small extents of suitable land to those craftsmen wishing to undertake part-time farming.
- (h) The supply of electricity to the cottages, a long existing demand of the colonists, should not be done entirely at state expense. In view of the fact that there is considerable under-employment amongst the craftsmen at present, the claim made by some that the output would increase considerably if electricity is supplied appears dubious. If arrangements are currently being made to supply electricity, its costs should be recovered from the colonists.
- (i) The vacant cottage on lot number 3 should be allocated. This cottage could be used to relieve the extreme congestion in one of the over-crowded units in the colony (e.g. 16, 19, 21 or 26). Absenteeism, as in the case of unit 35, which remains closed up at most times should also be discouraged.

In a spirit of enthusiasm and genuine interest, it is easy for the well-meaning official to lose sight of the broader issues and the more pressing needs, and to expend both his energy as well as the resources of the state on what could easily become a personal 'pet project'. Hence I should re-emphasise the fact that whatever is done for Kalapura affects only a small minority of those engaged in traditional Kandyan crafts.

Table 7.1. The Survey of Kalapura conducted during February-April 1972

<i>Occupational Group</i>	<i>Total No. of Units</i>	<i>Units in the Preliminary Survey</i>	<i>Sample of Units Studied in detail</i>
Light metal carver	13	12	9
Brassfounder	9	9	5
Wood/Ivory carver	5	5	3
Blacksmith	2	2	2
Mask maker	1	1	1
Lacquer worker	1	1	1
Batik maker	1	1	1
Weaver	1	1	1
Artist	1	1	1