

THE CITY OF JAYAWARDENA KOTTE: HISTORY, FORM AND FUNCTIONS.*

See friend, proud city of Jayawardena,
Renowned by victories achieved,
Outvying the city of the gods in luxury,
Where live rich folk who adore the triple gem with faith.

Salalihini Sandesa

Introduction

The city of Jayawardena Kotte followed the inevitable pattern of a typical defence city. It emerged due to the needs of a critical era in history, attained its zenith under a powerful ruler and receded into oblivion when its defence mechanism and the defenders were weak. The purpose of this essay is to understand this pattern with emphasis on its form and functions. In the latter respect the essay differs from the writings on Kotte by G.P.V. Somaratna¹ and C.R. de Silva,² whose primary attention was on the political history of the city. It also differs from the writings of E.W. Perera,³ D.D. Ranasinghe,⁴ C.M. de Alwis⁵ and G.S. Wickramasuriya,⁶ whose interest was mainly the archaeological remains of the city, its architecture and the preservation of its ruins.

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1. G.P.V. Somaratna, "Jayawardanapura: The Capital of the Kingdom of Sri Lanka 1400-1565", *The Sri Lanka Archives* vol. II, pp. 1 - 7, and "Rise and Fall of the Fortress of Jayawardanapura", *University of Colombo Review*, vol. X, pp. 98-112.
2. C.R. de Silva, "Frontier Fortress to Royal City: The City of Jayawardanapura Kotte", *Modern Sri Lankan Studies* vol.II, pp. 103 - 111.
3. E.W. Perera, "Alakesvara and his Times", *JRAS(CB)*, Vol. XVIII, no. 55 (1910).
4. D.D. Ranasinghe, *Kotte that Was, Rajagiriya* (1969).
5. C.M. De Alwis, *Antiquities of the Kingdom of Kotte*, Colombo (1976).
6. G.S. Wickramasooriya, "Architectural Heritage of a Lost City: Kotte", *Ancient Ceylon* No. 6, Colombo (1986).

Irrespective of the essays of these writers, certain gaps in the chain of evidence are baffling. This is largely due to the fact that most of the ancient Kotte now continues in existence as dwelling places and other buildings, smugly immune to the excavator's spade. Thus, the sources for the study are limited to a few archaeological remains, chronicles such as the *Rajavaliya* and the *Alakeswara Yuddhaya*, and contemporary literature, which includes a major portion of the classic *sandesas* or messenger poems. Silences in history have to be supplied through imagination, of course by piecing together whatever scanty evidence is available, and keeping the historical background in mind.

Kotte becomes a Fortress

The city of Kotte originated from a fortress constructed by Nissanka Alagakkonara, who held the title *prabhuraja* (auxiliary king). He was the chief minister and counsellor of Vikramabahu II (1357-72) of Gampola and later held the same position for about fifteen years under Bhuvanekabahu V (1372-1408), while practically ruling the area around Raigama. According to the Chronicles, Alagakkonara caused the construction of the fortress at Kotte to thwart the territorial expansion of the Aryacakravarti of Jaffna into Sinhalese areas⁷. The Aryacakravarti, in fact, had conducted a successful invasion of the Gampola kingdom by 1359 A.D. and had achieved a paramount position in the island. He had posted his tax collectors at Singuruvana, Balavita, Matale, Dumbara and Sagama Tunrata and had established military outposts at Colombo, Wattala, Chilaw and Negambo.⁸

Nissanka Alagakkonara, whose ancestors were from a rich trading family in Vancipura, identified as Kuruvar in Kerala, selected the village named Darugrama not far from Colombo as the site of his fortress,⁹ perhaps not only to face the challenge of the Aryacakravarti but also to enhance the trade potential of the Sinhala rulers. It may be mentioned here in passing that the prominence gained by him in administration shows upward social mobility at the time and the importance of trade in the economy. Alagakkonara's origins would certainly have helped him to look at Sri Lanka and the outside world from the angle of commerce. Apart from being situated in a strategic location to combat the forces of the Jaffna king, the site of the fortress served the purposes of controlling trade. It was in close proximity to the harbours of Chilaw, Negombo, Wattala, Colombo, Bentota and Beruwala, which were important centres in the import export trade at the time. Cinnamon and other spices which were in demand

⁷. *Rajavaliya* ed. B. Gunasekara, Colombo (1900) 57; *Nikayasangrahaya* ed. D.R.P. Samaranayaka, Colombo (1960) 91-93; *Alakeswara Yuddhaya* ed. A.V. Suraweera, Colombo (1965) 1.

⁸. S. Pathmanathan *The Kingdom of Jaffna* Colombo (1978) p. 240-246.

⁹. *Nikayasangrahaya* *loc. cit.*

in export trade were grown around the area of Kotte, and a fortress at Kotte could also control the trade routes to the interior, where another important commodity of export trade, gems, was produced.

Darugrama was located amidst the marshes to the south of the Kelani river. It was impassable on account of marshes and the meandering Diyawanna Oya on the north, west and east, and access to the valley was through the narrow corridor of land on the south. The site was just over two and half kilometers at its widest point, from east to west. Nissanka Alagakkonara "caused a great moat, very broad and fearfully steep like a precipice, to be dug around Darugrama, and as a solid defence, a wall of stone to be erected bordering the moat".¹⁰ Thus, the narrow corridor of land which paved access to Darugrama from outside was also protected by a deep and broad moat and a wall. The existing remains of the rampart reveal that it had been built in two tiers. The lower portion has been constructed upto about the water line with an assortment of cabook stones of varying size and shape, and the upper section of large latterite blocks neatly joined. A terrace 10 feet in width runs between the two embankments.¹¹ Alagakkonara enhanced the defence mechanism of the fortress wall by establishing watch posts (*attala*) and by fixing 'iron spikes' (*idangani*), 'wooden stakes' (*marala*), 'caltrops' (*bhumiyantattu*), 'pitfalls' or architectural devices of a circular design, perhaps for the hiding of soldiers so that the enemy could not observe them (*vattavetta*) and 'tiger faced traps' (*pulimukham*).¹² The use of the above Dravidian loan-words to illustrate the defence mechanism of Kotte, and the very term Kotte which is derived from Tamil and Malayalam 'kotti', suggest that the technique of constructing fortifications as practised during this period was borrowed from South India, from where a large number of Tamil mercenaries came to the island and from where Alagakkonara's family originated. Even his forces at Kotte consisted not only of Sinhala soldiers but also of Tamil mercenaries.¹³

On top of the great ramparts, Alagakkonara constructed four *devales* facing the four directions and dedicated to the guardian deities of the island, Kihireli-upulvan, Saman Boksal, Vibhisana and Skandhakumara. He ordered that the shrines should be worshipped constantly, accompanied by dancing, singing, beating of drums and other forms of music. The fortress thus built was named "the fortress of the ever victorious city" or "Jayawardhanapura Kotte".¹⁴

¹⁰. *Nikayasangrahaya* 91.

¹¹. De Alwis *op. cit.* p. 18.

¹². *Nikayasangrahaya*, *loc.cit.*

¹³. *Nikayasangrahaya*, 92.

¹⁴. *Nikayasangrahaya*, *loc.cit.*

The construction of four shrines dedicated to deities at the very initial stage of a defence fortress is particularly important in understanding the religious ethos and attitudes of the society at the time. Especially during times of adversity or war, the Sri Lankan rulers as well as the ruled sought the blessings of gods and the other supernatural beings of their belief. For soldiers stationed in a fortress, worship and religious ritual gave courage and hope. As seen earlier, Alagakkonara's troops included Tamil mercenaries, who were Hindus, and Sinhala Buddhist soldiers. The representation of gods in image form is more a Hindu phenomenon, and in any case the god Skandha is the Hindu god of war. The complex of shrines dedicated to common deities also served the purpose of bringing about unity among groups of soldiers beyond social and ideological differentiations.

Somaratna states that the rampart at Kotte had four gates facing the four directions, and that at the gates the moat had to be crossed through bridges, which were raised when not in use.¹⁵ The only evidence he cites for this conclusion are the verses 24 and 65 of the *Hamsa Sandesaya*. But neither these verses nor any others in the text warrant his conclusion. Verse 24 mentions the term *bihidora* which usually denotes the entrance and the exit point of a city or a house, but the context in the *Hamsa Sandesaya* describes only the entrances to the buildings in the city. Verse 65 refers to the ford Kontagamtota, from where the city gate could be seen. Somaratna further cites the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* to suggest that four roads connected the king's palace with the four main gates of the fort.¹⁶ The *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* does not indicate or even imply such facts; it only refers to the fact that Parakramabahu VI caused streets to be made in the city of Kotte.¹⁷

As seen earlier, except on the south, the immediate outer periphery of the rampart was covered by marsh as well as the Diyawanna river. If bridges were constructed across the marsh and the river, the ones on the northern, eastern and western sides would have been of enormous length, and raising them, when not in use, would have posed serious problems. Supposing such large and long bridges existed, they would also not have escaped the eyes of the *Sandesaya* poets who described the city, the rampart, the moat and the Diyawanna Oya in glowing terms. In fact, the entrance to the fortress was only through the main door, located on the south. The *Rajavaliya* description of the 'spoliation of Vijayabahu' or *Vijayaba Kollaya*, many years later gives the clear impression that there was only one main entrance to the city.¹⁸ Decouto's account of

¹⁵. "Jayawardanapura" p. 3 - 4; "Rise and Fall of the Fortress of Jayawardanapura," p. 103 - 104.

¹⁶. "Jayawardanapura", *loc. cit.*

¹⁷. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya*. 21.

¹⁸. *Rajavaliya* 65.

the island, which was completed before 1597 A.D., clearly states that the city of Kotte had no access to the outer world except by "a passage like a man's neck". In another instance Decouto states, "The city.... has one single narrow pass, by which it is entered".¹⁹ But Decouto as well as Queyroz mention several passes outside the inner city, some of which were on an outer wall constructed by the Portuguese and some even beyond the outer wall, between Kotte and Colombo.²⁰

Having built the fortress at Kotte, Nissanka Alagakkonara stationed a substantial number of troops there, provided them with necessities such as paddy, rice, salt and coconut, sufficient to withstand a long siege, and chased away the tax collectors of the Aryacakravarti stationed in Sinhala territories. Hearing of this act of Alakesvara, the Aryacakravarti sent a large army, both by sea and by land, but they were routed by Alagakkonara's forces.²¹ The *Niyangampaya Sannasa*, written in the seventeenth regnal year of Vikramabahu III, refers to a victory of Alagakkonara over the forces of the Aryacakravarti.²² On the basis of this evidence, P.A.T. Gunasingha correctly argues that the fortification of Kotte was completed before 1373 A.D., the date that can be assigned to the *Sannasa*.²³

Kotte as a Frontier Fort

Thereafter, Kotte remained a frontier fort for several years. The *Mayura Sandesaya*, the earliest of the messenger poems in Sinhala literature, compiled during the reign of Bhuvanekabahu V of Gampola, refers to prosperous and powerful people and to horses, elephants and the fortress wall at Jayawardenapura.²⁴ It is most likely

¹⁹. Donald Ferguson (translator) "History of Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 A.D. As related by de Barros and Diogo De Couto" *JRAS(CB)* vol. XX. No. 60, p. 216, 75.

²⁰. Donald Ferguson, *op.cit* p. 215, 48; de Queyroz Fernao, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, transl. Fr. S.G. Perera, Colombo (1930) p. 29.

²¹. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* 20 - 21; *Rajavaliya* 57-58; *Nikayasangrahaya*, *loc.cit*; Franco Valentijn "Franco Valentijn's Description of Ceylon" transl. and ed. S. Arasaratnam, Hakluyt Society, London (1978) p. 222.

²². Nandasena Mudiyanse, "Niganpaya Sellipiya ha Tamba Sannasa" *Itihasaya* vol. III, No. 1, p. 12-24.

²³. P.A.T. Gunasingha, *The Political History of the Kingdoms of Yapahuwa, Kurunegala and Gampola*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya (1980) p. 350-353.

²⁴. *Mayurasandesaya* ed. W.F. Dharmawardhana, Colombo (1949) 46-49.

that after the Aryacakravarti was defeated, the fortress had become a permanent feature of the defence mechanism of the Sinhala Kingdom where garrisons of Sinhala and Tamil soldiers and their families lived. However, at the time the *Mayura Sandesaya* was written, Kotte had not developed into a fully fledged city, nor did it have a royal residence, for it states that the king lived at Gangasiripura and Alagakkonara at Raigama.²⁵

After the initial defeat, the Aryacakravarti of Jaffna had sent another expeditionary force into the Sinhala kingdom around 1391 A.D. By the time of this second invasion the *prabhuraja* title had devolved on Virabahu of Raigama, a nephew of Nissanka Alagakkonara, who had expired in 1386/87. According to the *Nikayasangrahaya*, Virabahu (1391-1400), who was endowed with noble qualities had defeated the Tamils, Malayalis and Muslims by employing various devices.²⁶

From Fortress to Royal Capital

Around 1396, Buvanekabahu V shifted his capital from Gampola to Kotte. However, in effect *prabhuraja* Virabahu of Raigama had the real control of the kingdom, while Buvanekabahu V retained his royal title and the crown. Buvanekabahu V was certainly a weak ruler but the transformation of the fortress of Kotte into a royal city ushered in an era of development for the city. It is likely that a royal palace and buildings for the courtiers and their families, at least on a moderate scale, were constructed at Kotte once he moved his residence there. The ramparts and other defence bulwarks, which were meant to keep the enemies away, began to serve other functions such as regulating the activities of merchants and visitors to the city.

The zenith of the development of the city of Kotte as the capital and as the centre of royal authority was during the long reign of Parakramabahu VI (1412-1467). But the very nature of the geography of Kotte - surrounding marsh and the river - put sharp limitations to the expansion of the inner city. This in turn limited the functions of the city even under a powerful king like Parakramabahu VI. Thus, unlike many other ancient cities, the inner city of Kotte remained the same in size during the whole period of its existence.

According to the *Rajavaliya*, Parakramabahu VI "having resided at Raigama for three years, went to Jayawardenapura. He caused to be built a range of monasteries for the Buddhist priesthood to live in, besides palaces, streets and every other requisite. He also caused a fort to be constructed and surrounded it with ramparts.²⁷ The need for

²⁵. *Mayurasandesaya* 157-159; 51-67.

²⁶. *Nikayasangrahaya* 94.

²⁷. *Rajavaliya* 59.

reconstructing the buildings and the rampart of Kotte befitting his authority, as well as the work related to the building of monasteries referred to in the *Rajavaliya*, would have delayed Parakramabahu VI at Raigama for three years, before he shifted the royal residence and the capital to Kotte. It may reasonably be assumed that most of the administrative and religious buildings referred to in the contemporary literature such as the *Gira*, *Tisara*, *Salalihini*, *Hamsa*, *Kokila* and *Paravi Sandesas* were either renovated or newly constructed during the reign of Parakramabahu VI.

Considering the fact that several *sandesa* poems refer to large tall buildings including five-storeyed and three storeyed ones in Kotte, and the fact that there still exists a place called *Pasmal Paya Watta*, "the garden of the five-storeyed palace" some writers²⁸ have assumed that the palace of Parakramabahu VI was a five-storeyed complex. If it was so, the Temple of the Tooth, which was definitely a three-storeyed building, would have been located at a higher elevation, because customarily the Sinhalese kings did not have their living quarters above the Temple of the Tooth. No clear evidence is available to determine the structural type of the palace, but E.W. Perera is perhaps correct when he states that it had been built on the principle of similar quadrangular structures at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, the different tiers diminishing as the storeys ascended²⁹. As in most defence cities or pre-industrial capitals, the palace could have been situated in the centre of the city and was the axis of power.

On the basis of legends, Ranasingha has concluded that the royal treasury was located away from the palace, at a place presently known as Gabadawatta.³⁰ But from the description of the spoliation of Vijayabahu, or *Vijayaba Kollaya*, in literature as well as that of Noronha's 'treasure hunt' in 1551, it is reasonable to suggest that there was no separate royal treasury outside the palace. The king's personal wealth, which included silks, pearls, precious stones, silver and gold, was stocked in wooden chests and trunks in the ground floor of the palace itself.³¹ A satisfactory explanation cannot be provided as to the functions of the royal treasury at Kotte, or generally in ancient and medieval Sri Lanka. At Kotte the administrative officer or the chief supervising officer of accounts was *bhandaranayaka*. Presumably keeping accounts relating to taxes, income, expenditure, land grants, payments to officers etc. were his main tasks. Taxes which were collected in the form of grains were rarely brought into the treasury in a strict sense. The issue of coins was a royal monopoly, but the manner in which this prerogative was exercised by the king is uncertain. It may be reasonably assumed that,

²⁸. E.W. Perera "Age of Parakramabahu VI" *JRAS(CB)* vol. XXII, no. 63 p. 14 and D.D. Ranasingha *op.cit.* p. 19.

²⁹. *loc.cit.*

³⁰. *op.cit.* p. 23.

³¹. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* 31; *Rajavaliya* 65; Ferguson *op.cit.* p. 122-123.

while there were several royal store-houses in the kingdom, there was no specific place called the royal treasury.

The *Gira*, *Kokila*, and *Hamsa Sandesas*, all written during the reign of Parakramabahu VI, refer to the Royal Audience Hall or the Council Chamber.³² The Genegoda *sannasa* of Bhuvanekabahu V, the Opata Naravala copper *sannasa* and the Papiliyana inscription of Parakramabahu VI, clearly suggest that, at least until the end of the reign of Parakramabahu VI, the Audience Hall was located outside the "Sumangala palace" of the king.³³ But towards the end of the Kotte period it has been shifted to the palace, as indicated in the Veragama *sannasa* and Devundara Devale *sannasa* of Vijayabahu VI.³⁴ Nevertheless, throughout the Kotte period the Royal Audience Hall was known as the Chitra Mandapa or Chitrakuta Mandapa, as it was known in the time of Polonnaruva kings.³⁵

The Audience Hall of Parakramabahu VI was resplendent with artistic decorations and the throne was embroidered with work of gold, and over it was a white canopy. There was a *makara torana*-a pandol-like structure depicting a dragon - behind the throne.³⁶ When the court was in session, the king, bedecked with sixty four kingly ornaments, sat on the lion throne, while two ladies of the court fanned the king with yak tails (*semara*) and two others held the *sesatas*.³⁷

Queyroz gives a graphic picture of the Audience Hall of Dharmaparakramabahu IX, which was presumably on the ground floor of the royal palace. According to him, when Lorenzo De Almeida despatched Payo de Souza to Dharmaparakramabahu's court, de Souza met the king in the large Audience Hall in which Persian carpets were hung. The king "was seated on a throne of ivory delicately wrought, on a dais of six steps, covered with cloth of gold." "On his head was a kind of mitre of brocade, garnished with precious stones and large pearls, with two points of *squstos* of first rate workmanship falling on his shoulders. He was girt with cloth of silver, the ends of

³². *Gira Sandesaya* ed. Kumaratunga Munidasa, Colombo (1953) 40-48; *Kokila Sandesaya* ed. W.F. Gunawardhana, Colombo (1945) 148-162; *Hamsa Sandesaya* ed. C.E. Godakumbura, Colombo (1953) 49-64.

³³. H.C.P. Bell *Report on the Kegalle District*, Colombo (1904) p. 93; D.B. Jayatillaka *Katikavat Sangara* Colombo (1922) p. 43-46.

³⁴. Bell *op.cit.* p. 96; *Epigraphia Zeylanica* vol. V, no. 6.

³⁵. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* vol V, no. 38.

³⁶. *Hamsa* 49; *Kokila* 148-149.

³⁷. *Kokila* 148-150; *Gira* 41; *Hamsa* 59-60.

which fell on his feet, which were shod with sandals studded with rubies, and on his fingers were seen a vast number of them, besides emeralds and diamonds. His ears were pierced and fell on his shoulders with earrings of greater value. Many sconces and torch-stands of silver surrounded him.... "On one side of the hall as well as on the other, there extended two rows of men, brightly clad in their fashion, with naked swords hanging and shields on their arms."³⁸

In amateurish excavations done in his private land called Maligawatta at Kotte by W.M. Fonseka Muhandiram in 1909, remnants of a building with cabook bricks plastered with lime mortar 1 1/2 inches to 2 inches thick were found in association with signs of a *makara torana*. A piece left showed the *makaraya* or the dragon with a lotus flower and buds hanging from its mouth. The door and window frames of the structure were ornamented with lions, peacocks and lotus wreaths.³⁹ Although not identified, it is most likely that the structure was the Audience Hall of Parakramabahu VI.

When the court of Parakramabahu VI met, the ministers, seated on both sides, informed the king about the business of the day. Either on arrival of the king in Council or on arrival as well as when he was preparing to depart from the Audience Hall, court poets versed in Sinhala, Tamil, Pali and Sanskrit, sang eulogies, and the *purohita* brahmins chanted auspicious incantations or *mantras*.⁴⁰

The ministers, in two rows facing each other in front of the king, are named in the *Hamsa Sandesaya* - which is thus an useful index for an understanding of the administrative superstructure of Kotte. The office of *ekanayaka* of Kotte also had the title of *mahanta*, which indicates his position as the chief minister. The officer in charge of accounts - *bhandaranayaka* - sat next to *ekanayaka*. The leaders of the army, or *senanayakas*, and two categories of *mudalis*, namely *vasala mudalis* and *aramudale lekam mudalis*, were next in line in the hierarchical order. The term *mudali*, which has about the same significance as the *amatya*, first came into use at the beginning of the Gampola period and was a generic title. The term occurs in South Indian documents from a somewhat earlier period. The *aramudale lekam mudalivaru* were the 'principal secretaries in charge of accounts'. The last category of dignitaries mentioned in the *Hamsa Sandesaya* are *mukevettis*, who were a group of officers responsible for administering justice.⁴¹

³⁸. De Queyroz *op.cit.* bk. II, p. 180.

³⁹. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon: Annual Reports 1909*, p. 23-24.

⁴⁰. *Gira* 43-47; *Kokila* 154-156.

⁴¹. *Hamsa* 49-56.

Apart from routine administrative duties, the king in Council had two other main functions. One was listening to the grievances of the people.⁴² This may have been a regular feature of the administration of Parakramabahu VI. The other was the receiving of foreign dignitaries and local rulers like the *Vanniyars*. Foreign dignitaries came, perhaps as the occasions demanded, to pay homage to the king with gifts such as gems, pearls and fine clothes.⁴³ The local rulers, including the rulers of the *Udarata*, appeared before the king at least once a year. Around the year 1463 A.D. the ruler of the *Udarata*, Jotiya Sitana, refrained from sending annual tribute, ceased supplying labourers for *rajakariya* and rebelled against the king, and this prompted Parakramabahu VI to punish Jotiya Sitana.⁴⁴ The *Vanniyars* too annually visited the court of Kotte in person or sent a member of their family in order to pay homage to the king.⁴⁵

The dignitaries in the king's court as well as key officials in the army normally resided at the capital.⁴⁶ The rudimentary nature of communications and the prestige factor required them to be living closer to the king's palace. It also gave them maximum protection from outside attack and propinquity enhanced interaction among them. It is likely that these key governmental functionaries at the pinnacle of society were drawn from large extended families, whose exercise of community and societal power persisted over many generations. In feudal Sri Lanka every noble had many dependents as a matter of prestige, who in turn had their servants. Their retinue was drawn from the surplus man-power from the villages of the periphery. Thus, the capital city, in addition to being a centre of administration, was an elitist residential complex.

Food, clothing, perfumes, jewellery and such other requirements of this city elite, their dependents and retinue, had to be catered for by a group of merchants, the prestigious among them living in the city. This merchant group added another dimension to the city's residential pattern. The *Hamsa Sandesaya* refers to thousands of shops on either side of the streets of Kotte where all commodities were available.⁴⁷ The poet certainly has exaggerated the number of shops, but the fact remains that trade was an important function of the city of Kotte. On occasions of palace ceremonies and religious ritual and also on other occasions when ordinary people were allowed to move freely inside the city, trading stalls would have catered to the visitors too. However, it should

⁴². *Kokila* 158.

⁴³. *Gira* 46.

⁴⁴. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* 22-23; *Rajavaliya* 59-60.

⁴⁵. De Queyroz bk. I. p. 32; bk. III, p. 528.

⁴⁶. *Gira* 63.

⁴⁷. *Hamsa* 24.

be noted that political and religious activities in Kotte, like in most feudal capitals, had far more status than economic activities and therefore main trading stalls were undoubtedly subsidiary to political and religious structures.

The elitist nature of the city residential complex has frequently attracted the attention of contemporary poets. They refer to large mansions with elaborate entrances and surrounding gardens which contained ponds.⁴⁸ Well-dressed damsels, appearing in balconies of multi-storeyed buildings and city streets, are treated as a major theme by the priestly authors of *sandesa* literature in beautiful poetry unparalleled in ancient Sri Lankan literature.

A few of the priests and monks too lived within the city walls, some in monasteries constructed by Parakramabahu VI.⁴⁹ The anonymous author of the *Gira Sandesaya* was one such monk. The *Parevi Sandesaya* refers to a monastery closer to the Temple of the Tooth, in which the learned chief priest, Vanaratana, lived.⁵⁰ It is difficult to determine whether both authors of the *Gira* and *Parevi Sandesas* refer to one and the same or to two different monasteries. Most likely these monasteries within the city also functioned as educational establishments of the city elite. It should be noted, however, that, unlike at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, education was not a key function in the city of Kotte. Neither did Kotte have an exceptionally large population of monks, as it was in Anuradhapura⁵¹ or even Polonnaruwa. Spatial limitations and the defensive nature of the city have contributed to this phenomenon. The most renowned educational institutions as well as monasteries at the time were located in the periphery or a distance away from the city of Kotte. For example, the Sunethradevi *parivena* was located at Papiliyana, the Padmavati *parivena* at Keragala, the Vijayaba *parivena* at Totagamuwa, the Sri Ghananada *parivena* at Vidagma and the Irugaltilaka *parivena* at Dondra.

But Gideon Sjöberg's general observations on the intellectual in the pre-industrial city⁵² can safely be applied to the intellectuals of the Kotte period in particular, and ancient and medieval periods of Sri Lankan history in general. Unlike

⁴⁸. *Kokila* 122-124; *Salalihini* 10-11; *Parevi Sandesaya* ed. T. Sugatapala, Colombo (1932) 8, 3 and 18; *Gira* 17, also 21-26.

⁴⁹. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* 21; *Rajavaliya* 59.

⁵⁰. *Gira* 55-56; *Parevi* 41.

⁵¹. R.A.L.H. Gunawardana "The Pre-Colonial City in South Asia" in *The Formation of Urban Civilization in South East Asia*, Kyoto University (1989) p. 17.

⁵². Gideon Sjöberg *The Pre-Industrial City*, Chicago (1960) p. 230.

the intellectual in many industrial societies, the feudal society's intellectual did not criticize the *status quo*; it was his task to merely reinforce it. Most of the literary products of the intellectuals of the Kotte period can be aptly described as belonging to "the great tradition", in Redfield and Singer's jargon.⁵³ These literary works reinforce and rationalize the authority of the sovereign by arguing in terms of tradition. For example, poets of the reign of Parakramabahu VI frequently refer to the fact that the king ruled in accordance with the ten kingly virtues (*dasarajadharma*) and rules of Manu.⁵⁴

From the inception, the defence function was an important aspect of the fortress city, until it was abandoned in 1565 A.D. Even in the most stable and long reign of Parakramabahu VI, the presence of soldiers with shields and swords in the city of Kotte was a general feature.⁵⁵ Obviously the king had to command military power if he was to maintain dominance over the people. Therefore, it is likely that the key officials of the army and their families lived within the city walls. For purposes of defence, prestige, ceremonial functions as well as for the conveyance of royal dignitaries, elephants and horses were kept in the stables inside the city walls.⁵⁶

The ritual aspect of the city of Kotte during the reign of Parakramabahu VI, though not as marked as that of ancient Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, was not negligible. In ancient Sri Lanka the political bureaucracy was invariably interwoven with religious functionaries. The sovereign and top-level bureaucrats looked to religious leaders to legitimize their rule in the eyes of the people. This the priests did by appeals to tradition, preserved in the sacred writings of which they were the custodians. Yet, unlike Anuradhapura or Polonnaruwa, Kotte cannot be called a "sacred city" in the strict sense that Paul Wheatley has used the term.⁵⁷

Religious ritual as well as the ceremonial ritual of the court performed a two-fold function. First, they made the subjects of the king submit to authority. According

⁵³. R. Redfield and M. Singer "The Cultural Role of Cities" in *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities* ed. R. Senett, New York (1969) p. 206-233.

⁵⁴. *Gira* 33-40; *Hansa* 28-48; *Parakumbasirita* ed. K.D.P. Wickramasingha, Colombo (1954) 28-48.

⁵⁵. *Gira* 27.

⁵⁶. *Mayura* 48; *Kokila* 121; *Hansa* 17-18; *Parevi* 15-16.

⁵⁷. Paul Wheatley *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origin and Character of the Ancient Chinese City*, Edinburgh (1971).

to the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya*,⁵⁸ Parakramabahu VI was crowned fifty times, an indication of the king celebrating an anniversary of the coronation in order to reimpose his authority. Secondly, rituals and public performances provided entertainment for the populace, rich and poor, and integrated the individual to his community.

The Temple of the Tooth, which was constructed by Parakramabahu VI, was the centre of ritual in the city. Customarily it was located near the royal palace. It was a three-storeyed building in the form of a conical crown, constructed of stone with finely carved granite pillars surmounted by a pinnacle of solid gold. The Tooth Relic was kept in the innermost casket of four golden caskets of decreasing size.⁵⁹

It seems that rituals were performed at the Temple of the Tooth thrice a day to the tune of drums and other music. The *Gira Sandesaya* refers to the fine music of the Temple of the Tooth, which could be heard even outside the rampart.⁶⁰ Parakramabahu VI celebrated relic festivals regularly and provided regular alms with the eight articles of equipment (*atthaparikkhara*) to the community of monks.⁶¹

Of the four shrines built and dedicated to deities Upulvan, Saman, Vibhisana and Skandha Kumara at the very initial stages of the construction of the fortress at Kotte by Alagakkonara, one had overshadowed the other three by the time of Parakramabahu VI. That was the shrine of god Skandha Kumara or Kartikeya, the war god of the Hindus, popularly known to the Sinhalese as the deity of Kataragama. In the contemporary literature the temple of Skandha or Maha Sen Maha Paya, is described as having risen on the southern side of the city, flashing like a 'blazing-orb'. The shrine contained a painted image of Skandha, adorned with jewels and banners, borne on golden handles bearing one of the god's symbols, the emblem of the cock. Skandha is described as a six-faced god whose vehicle was the peacock.⁶²

Jayawardhana Kotte under Parakramabahu VI, was also a cultural centre. Music, dancing and drama in the city are often mentioned by contemporary poets.⁶³ Douglas D. Ranasingha refers to a public hall for theatrical plays and musical

⁵⁸. 24.

⁵⁹. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* 21; *Salalihini* 17; *Gira* 50; *Hamsa* 48; *Parevi* 39.

⁶⁰. *Gira* 63.

⁶¹. *Culavamsa* 91.17-29.

⁶². *Salalihini* 25; *Hamsa* 45-48; *Parevi* 42.

⁶³. *Gira* 18,42; *Salalihini* 11,17; *Parevi* 20; *Hamsa* 24.

entertainments situated on the north-western side of the city,⁶⁴ indicating that the city elite were patrons of art.

Undoubtedly Parakramabahu VI was the most powerful ruler of Kotte. It was only during his reign that the entire island was brought under the suzerainty of the Kotte king. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the size of the inner city of Kotte remained the same due to its geographical limitations, and in turn had affected the functions of the city. As Bruce Trigger has pointed out, certain pre-industrial cities performed specialized non-agricultural functions in relation to the broader hinterland. When specialized functions grew, cities expanded to exceptional proportions, with centres of handicraft manufacture and trade.⁶⁵ But in view of the geographical limitations and the defensive nature of the city, inner Kotte does not seem to have had places of handicraft manufacture. Nor did it experience expansion of trade. Perhaps even the establishment of the large educational institution, the two-storeyed Sunethradevi *parivena*, by Parakramabahu VI in honour of his mother at Papiliyana in the periphery of Kotte and not in the inner city, was also a result of the spatial limitations. Consequently, it is reasonable to guess that the periphery of Kotte and satellite settlements around the city were areas of bustling activity in the field of craft production, trade, education and other services.

Ranasingha is perhaps correct in stating that present Battaramulla was earlier known as Battotamulla, which was the service *paraveni* village of the "*Multange* people" who served in the kitchen establishment of the palace.⁶⁶ It is likely that minor functionaries such as city cleaners, petty service personnel involved in guard duties, lower ranks of people who performed various functions in administrative offices as well as in religious institutions, lived outside the city.

The periphery of Kotte also had centres of ritual, educational institutions, trading stations, watch posts, as well as areas of agricultural activity. The *Gira Sandesaya* refers to a *poysage* - an ordinance hall - constructed by Parakramabahu VI with the sacred boundaries laid out just outside the city walls.⁶⁷ Perhaps the Veperkanda monastery complex at Baddegana, situated some distance to the south of the limits of the ancient city and excavated by the Archaeological Department in 1949, was one of the many monasteries constructed by Parakramabahu VI outside the inner city. The excavations brought to light the remains of two *stupas* built on an oblong platform,

⁶⁴. Ranasingha *op.cit* p. 24.

⁶⁵. B. Trigger "Determinants of Urban Growth in Pre-Industrial Cities" in P.J. Ucko, R. Tringham and G.W. Dimbleby, *Man, Settlement and Urbanism*, Gloucester (1972) p. 575-599.

⁶⁶. *op.cit.* p. 31-32.

⁶⁷. *Gira* 59.

measuring 97 feet east to west and 53 feet north to south and 5 1/2 feet in height. The flights of steps on the north and west gave access to the platform. Of the two *stupas*, the large one is 30 feet in diameter at its base, the smaller one 21 feet in diameter at the base.⁶⁸

There was also a shrine dedicated to god Isvara (*Isuru kovil*) just outside the city beyond the ford, known as Kontagamtota, on the Diyawanna Oya. The shrine is referred to as a place where hymns were recited in Tamil.⁶⁹ In fact, during the Kotte period Tamil influence on Sri Lankan society and culture was marked and it is likely that a substantial number of Tamils lived on the periphery of Kotte.

Reference is made in the *Gira Sandesaya* to a trading post named Kongas Sevana outside the city gate of Kotte, where women sold various commodities.⁷⁰ The context in the text suggests that these women traders had collected items of trade from surrounding areas and perhaps from port-towns and sold them near the city. It is reasonable to assume that there were several such trading posts outside the city of Kotte catering to the needs of the people who lived in the periphery.

The capital city was undoubtedly the focal point of contact with outlying provinces. If routes taken by messenger birds in the contemporary *sandesaya* literature indicate a semblance of the road network during that time, it is clear that several roads radiated from the city of Kotte. One of the roads ran from the city across the prosperous agricultural hinterland to Kelaniya, on which there was a watch post called Kaikavala. The soldiers stationed at Kaikavala were armed with weapons such as arrows, spears and swords.⁷¹ At least in turbulent times, the access to the royal capital was defended at all entrances of the periphery. In the reign of Bhuvanekabahu V, soldiers were stationed at Wattala and at a place called Paratakara off Bentota.⁷² The Kotte-Kelaniya road, referred to above, went past Pamunuwa, Vebada, Veliveriya and Madalgasgama to Keragala.⁷³ Another road connected Kelaniya with Gampola through Attanagalla, Dorawaka, Arnadara, Bulatgamuwa and Ambulukada.⁷⁴ The capital's

⁶⁸. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon; Annual Report 1949*, G. 21-23.

⁶⁹. *Salalimini* 21.

⁷⁰. *Gira* 60.

⁷¹. *Salalihini* 24-40.

⁷². *Mayura* 78, 158.

⁷³. *Hamsa* 122-172.

⁷⁴. *Mayura* 25-34.

main connecting road with the south was through Attidiya, Moratuwa, Panadura, Potupitiya, Kalutota, Paiyagala, Maggona, Beruvala, Bentota, Kosgoda, Totagamuwa, Hikkaduwa, Ratgama, Galle, Miripenna, Veligama, Matara and Devinuwara.⁷⁵ Kotte's control of the northern region and the Jaffna Peninsula was primarily through a road which ran *via* Kelaniya, Wattala, Weligampitiya, Bowalana, Migamuwa (Negambo), Nikapitiya, Halawata (Chilaw), Puttalama, Pomparippu, Mavatu Patuna and Javaka Kotte (Chavakacceri).⁷⁶

The stability of the city of Kotte under Parakramabahu VI mirrors the broader reality of the society and country in general at the time. The king could command the resources of the agricultural hinterland as well as of the trading posts. Parakramabahu VI's punitive action against the provincial ruler of Udarata -- Jotiya Sitana -- when the latter ceased the supply of labour for *rajakariya* and neglected the payment of annual taxes implies that, apart from fulfilling obligations relating to the supply of human resources and the sending an annual tribute, provincial rulers were left to themselves to administer their territories. The Vanniyars or forest chiefs were also expected to appear before the king or send a member of their family with gifts to pay homage to the king once a year. So it seems that there were strong centrifugal tendencies even during the reign of Parakramabahu VI.

Decline of the City

After Parakramabahu's demise chaos prevailed. The turbulent conditions at the succession of Jayavira Parakramabahu (1467-1469) which was challenged by prince Sapumal was reflected in court politics. When prince Sapumal assumed royal authority as Bhuvanekabahu VI (1469-77), his reign witnessed a series of revolts throughout the Kotte kingdom. His successor Pandita Parakramabahu VII (1477) was murdered in the palace before he could reign for even a few months. Vira Parakramabahu VIII's reign (1477-1489) too was a disturbed one, and when an ill-conceived venture in constructing a canal connecting Kotte and Negombo, perhaps with the idea of enhancing foreign trade contacts, brought in salt water and areas of cultivation around the canals were destroyed, the capital city was under siege by rebels for three months. The fortunes of Kotte further dwindled under his successors Dharmaparakramabahu IX (1489-1513) and Vijayabahu VI (1513-1521). The position of the king increasingly became precarious and his power base was weakened. Jaffna and the Kandyan territories asserted their independence and the Vanniyars refrained from paying the annual tribute. In fact, under Dharma Parakramabahu IX the territorially weakened Kotte kingdom was ruled not only by him but also by his four brothers. Although there had been a commendable unity among these brothers in trying to keep the provinces loyal to the reigning monarch, they had their independent centres of administration at Madampe, Manikkadavara, Raigama

⁷⁵. *Gira* 70-218; *Parevi* 48-128.

⁷⁶. *Kokila* 165-205.

and Udugampola.⁷⁷

From the time the Portuguese landed in Colombo in 1505, the fate of Kotte hung on their military strength and the trade in the Indian ocean. As long as the Portuguese dominated this trade and were militarily strong, it was inevitable that the weak king of Kotte had to play a subordinate role to them. In fact, the response of the people of Kotte to their arrival described in detail in the *Rajavaliya* and the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* indicate that the state was weak and was unprepared to face a militarily advanced foreign power.⁷⁸

The Kotte palace rebellion of 1521, known as the *Vijayaba Kollaya* or the "Spoliation of Vijayabahu", accelerated the decline of the city of Kotte and the city quickly entered a very gloomy period of its history. In the rebellion, the mob forcibly went into the palace, broke open the royal stores, robbed treasure chests and plundered the king's wealth -- silks, pearls, precious stones and gold.⁷⁹ The *Vijayaba Kollaya* put the eldest of the rebels, Bhuvanekabahu, on the throne of the capital while the other two, Mayadunne and Madduma Bandara, ruled small territories from Sitawaka and Raigama respectively.

The events narrated in the *Rajavaliya* regarding the "Spoliation of Vijayabahu", give an idea of the nature of the communication system that existed within the city. After looting the palace, the mob started to loot the streets but were stopped by the rebel leaders by beat of drums. Again, when Bhuvanekabahu was enthroned the day after Vijayabahu VI was killed, a proclamation was made by the rebel leaders in the same manner.⁸⁰ Thus, like in any other ancient and medieval city, ringing bow bells or beating drums was an important means of communication at Kotte, particularly when the proclamations were made. Even the elites had to depend on word-of-mouth communications in governing the society. This would indicate that the market place, the places of worship etc. were the main centres of news.

As his brother Mayadunne repeatedly waged war against Bhuvanekabahu VII (1521-1551), the latter became heavily dependent on the Portuguese. The dependence of the king of Kotte on a foreign power changed the functions of the city of Kotte to a

⁷⁷. G.P.V. Somaratna *Political History of the Kingdom of Kotte*, Colombo (1975) p. 162-175.

⁷⁸. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* 23-30; *Rajavaliya* 63-64.

⁷⁹. *Rajavaliya* 65.

⁸⁰. *Rajavaliya* 65-66.

considerable extent. The Portuguese soldiers, as well as mercenaries supplied by them,⁸¹ added a new dimension to the defence of the palace and the city. Cannons and guns were included among the defence weapons of the city. Besides, the Portuguese "arranged many boats in the Diyawanna river to prevent the enemy if they sought to cross over it".⁸² Bhuvanekabahu VII also had a few Portuguese officials, such as the Portuguese interpreter, living closer to him. Thus, the Portuguese soldiers, officials, their families and retinue added a new group to the residential pattern of Kotte. This in turn had its effects on the religio-cultural functions in the city. The Portuguese, who professed Catholicism, were intolerant towards Buddhists and Hindus. Although Bhuvanekabahu VII refused to be baptized a Catholic, the Portuguese missionaries had succeeded in converting some of the residents of Kotte to their faith. According to a letter of Viceroy Joao de Castro of Goa, sent to the king of Portugal on 16th December 1546, in the inner city of Kotte there was a church "where divine services [were] held" and "a brotherhood that [went] to inter the dead through the whole city with a raised cross."⁸³

When Bhuvanekabahu VII died of a gunshot fired by a Portuguese guard, which was said to be an accident, Bhuvanekabahu's grandson Dharmapala nominally became the king of Kotte in 1551. Traditional consecration ceremonies were dispensed with on this occasion and he was crowned "without any festivities or pageantry."⁸⁴ Dharmapala, though in theory on the throne and ruling from the city of Kotte, was virtually a puppet of the Portuguese. Dissatisfied with the affairs in the palace after the death of Bhuvanekabahu VII, "the Buddhist monks who were at Kotte departed to Sitavaka and Kandy."⁸⁵ Even the Tooth Relic was smuggled out of the city and taken to Sitavaka.⁸⁶ These developments and the intolerant religious attitudes of the Portuguese further limited the traditional religio-cultural functions of the city of Kotte.

The manner in which the defence mechanism, warfare and court life in Jayawardana Kotte changed after the accession of the puppet king Dharmapala can be gauged from the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya*. According to this text, in order to enthrone Dharmapala, the Viceroy, his nephew Don Juan Anrikristi (Ariques), several captains and many soldiers arrived in the port of Colombo from Goa, bringing along with them

⁸¹. T.B.H. Abayasingha *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon*, Colombo (1966) p. 10.

⁸². Ferguson *op.cit.* p. 75.

⁸³. Cosme De Silva *Sri Lanka and the Portuguese* Colombo (1986) p. 25, 50.

⁸⁴. Ferguson *op.cit.* p. 147.

⁸⁵. *Rajavaliya* 69.

⁸⁶. *Sulurajavaliya* ed. D.P.R. Samaranayaka, Colombo (1959) 33.

cannon, hand guns, spears, helmets, gun powder and cartridges, and proceeded to Jayawardana Kotte. Later on, the Viceroy left for Goa, leaving Don Juan Anrikristi to aid king Dharmapala.⁸⁷

Although the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* refers to the Viceroy as Don Francisco, the Viceroy in Goa was Alphonso da Noronha, who in a letter dated 27th January 1552, wrote to the king of Portugal of his visit to Ceilao at the death of Bhuvanekabahu VII.⁸⁸

According to Decouto, Noronha having gone to Kotte with his whole force, "laid hands on the chief modeliares to be put to the torture." Due to these tortures "more than six hundred of the principal men" left Kotte and joined Mayadunne of Sitavaka. Then Noronha offered the king's palace to be searched and carried off all his gold, money, silver, jewels and precious stones.⁸⁹ It is said that even golden spittoons of the Sinhalese king were carried away in this 'treasure hunt' by Noronha.⁹⁰

The Viceroy left a garrison of four hundred men in the city of Kotte for its security. He nominated Dom Joao Ariquez as Captain Major of the island and ordered that Ariquez should reside in the city of Kotte. From De Couto's account it is clear that at least by the time of Dharmapala's nominal reign in Kotte, the Portuguese had constructed an outer wall encircling Pita Kotte to strengthen the defence of the city. De Couto states that "This defile our people [the Portuguese] had fortified with vallation of thick walls at each end; two walls besides that ran across this defile, one outside, and the other nearer in and this passage was called Prea Cota" [Pitakotte]. They had also constructed on the outer wall watch posts (tranqueiras) and placed garrisons in them. In describing Rajasingha's siege of Kotte in 1563, Decouto further states that the army of Rajasingha caused the elephants to exert such force that "they burst through the first wall of Prea Cota.... and so with that onrush Prea Cota was entered." After the attack was repulsed "the king [Dharmapala] and the Captain, without taking any rest, rebuilt and fortified Prea Cota on the inner side very strongly."⁹¹ Queyroz too states that Pita Kotte was fortified and that there were nine passes leading from Pita Kotte, through which suburbs could be reached. These were all fortified in times of war.⁹²

⁸⁷. *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* 35.

⁸⁸. Cosme Da Silva *op.cit.* 87-88.

⁸⁹. Ferguson *op.cit.* p. 122-123; De Queyroz *op.cit.* p. 300.

⁹⁰. P.E. Peiris *Ceylon: The Portuguese Era* vols. I and II, Colombo (1913-1914) p. 117.

⁹¹. Ferguson *op.cit.* p. 153, 215-223, 302.

⁹². De Queyroz *op.cit.* bk. 1, p. 29.

Dharmapala was baptized in 1557 by a Franciscan Friar, Joao de Vila Conde, who came from Goa along with a captain named Alphonso Pereira and several Portuguese men. At his baptism many leading men of Kotte and a great number of people were also baptized.⁹³ In the words of Queyroz, "as soon as Dharmapala was baptized the pagan ceremonies became odious to him" and "he favoured the Christians so publicly."⁹⁴ Buddhist religious edifices that adorned the city of Kotte, suffered with this change and Dharmapala confiscated the temple property and gifted them to the Franciscans.⁹⁵ At the time, the Portuguese with their troops were in virtual control of the city and the royal palace. It seems that the city completely lost its traditional aspects. According to the *Rajavaliya*, after Dharmapala's baptism "leading men of the city of Kotte, coveting the wealth of the Portuguese, and many low caste people, unmindful of their low birth, intermarried with the Portuguese and became proselytes".⁹⁶ In fact, the city of Kotte reflected political and social changes that were to take place in the low-country at large. Queyroz's account shows how the ritual aspect of Kotte changed towards the last stages of the existence of the city. He describes a procession in the inner city in the later years of 1550s with various banners of Christian saints such as St. Francis and St. Peter. At the end of the procession a life-like image of the crucified Christ was carried.⁹⁷

The City is Abandoned

By embracing Catholicism, Dharmapala forfeited allegiance of the Buddhist population, as the Sinhala Buddhist tradition expected their kings to be Buddhists. Consequently, Dharmapala's rival Mayadunne and his son, Rajasingha of Sitawaka, could champion the case of the Sinhala Buddhists and expand the territories of the Sitawaka kingdom. They could virtually maintain a state of siege on Kotte for five long years, from 1560 to 1565.

In the final siege, in 1565, Sitawaka Rajasingha diverted the Diyawanna river at various places in order that his army could march across the dried up river to the fortress of Kotte. During this siege, provisions were so scarce in the city that "the Captain offered two of the king's elephants to be killed, with which they kept off hunger for some days, and they did the same with a horse, and after this [the Portuguese] fell upon the dogs and cats of the city, and there escaped them not a single one, nor even

⁹³. *op. cit.* p. 239.

⁹⁴. De Queyroz.

⁹⁵. De Queyroz bk. II, p. 330-331.

⁹⁶. *Rajavaliya* 69.

⁹⁷. De Queyroz bk. II. 343.

the other unclean vermin of the country, so that they consumed everything." This final siege "lasted for four months, and the last forty days were days of cruel hunger in which they ate nothing but herbs, and even those failed some days."⁹⁸

The Portuguese finally abandoned the fortress at Kotte in 1565, withdrew their garrisons and friars, took the king Don Juan Dharmapala along with them and transferred all they had to Colombo. Dharmapala, who deserted the capital of Sri Jayawardana Kotte, was without subjects over whom to rule and without an army to defend whatever territory he had.⁹⁹ Immediately after 1565, the city of Kotte and its territories fell into the hands of the Sitawaka ruler, and from then onwards, for about three decades, the combined authority of Dharmapala and the Portuguese rarely extended beyond the walls of Colombo. The city of Kotte was no more a capital, a centre of royal authority and a fortress of defence.

The foregoing account shows that the city of Kotte has acted as an instrument of historical change. There was a significant relation between the rise and fall of the city and the rise and fall of the kingdom of Kotte. Both experienced violent fluctuations in political, economic and military fortunes. While performing specialized non-agricultural functions, the city interacted with the periphery and the outside world in a complex and multi-faceted manner in different eras. It controlled the economic resources of the agricultural hinterland in varying degrees, depending on the vagaries of its authority. Like any other defence city, it was also vulnerable. Despite its advantages of concentration and fortifications, it could be besieged and cut off from its food supply. In a state of internal economic and political decay, the final collapse of its political power eliminated its economic base and the city ceased to exist.

In the words of Queyroz, after 1565, "The city remained abandoned and disfigured, the buildings and walls razed, given over to wild elephants and other beasts of the forest."¹⁰⁰ Rebeiro, in the middle of the seventeenth century, observed ruins of Kotte and the foundations of buildings, overgrown with trees.¹⁰¹ By this time, a good deal of stones from Kotte had been used by the Portuguese to strengthen the fortress at Colombo and for the construction of churches and other buildings. Subsequently, the Dutch utilized some of the material remaining in the former city of kings for the construction of houses, churches such as the Wolfendhal Church, and bridges on public

⁹⁸. Ferguson *op.cit.* p. 222-223, 228, 240.

⁹⁹. Abayasingha *op.cit.* p. 35.

¹⁰⁰. De Queyroz *op.cit.* bk. III. p. 421.

¹⁰¹. *Rebeiro's History of Ceilao* trans. P.E. Peiris, Colombo (1909) p. 3.

roads.¹⁰² When the Belgian physician, Aegidius Daalman visited Kotte between 1687 and 1689, he found only the ruins of some grey stone pillars there. He also saw some coconut gardens where *arak* (arrack) and *surie* (perhaps toddy) were sold.¹⁰³ What was left there by the nineteenth century, were utilized by individual purchasers of land to build their residences and walls around them. At least one of these individuals, namely W.M. Fonseka Muhandiram, has disposed of several cart-loads of sculptured stones found in his private land called Maligawatta.¹⁰⁴ Besides, a few perfect stone columns that were left in the ancient city were carted away by the Public Works Department in the early years of the twentieth century to build a bridge at Hendala, and a carved granite water vessel to adorn the courtyard of the supreme court at Hulfsdorp.¹⁰⁵ All these explain why not even bricks and stones remained in Kotte in at least reasonably sufficient quantities to tell the story of the city.

W.I. SIRIWEERA

¹⁰². P.E. Peiris *op. cit.* p. 118, 517; E.W. Perera *op. cit.* 305.

¹⁰³. D.W. Ferguson "A Belgian Physician's Notes on Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 A.D. tr. from the Dutch" *JRAS(CB)* vol. X, no. 35. p. 151.

¹⁰⁴. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon : Annual Reports 1909* p. 23; 1949: p. 520-521.

¹⁰⁵. E.W. Perera *op. cit.* p. 305.