

# Urbanization in Ceylon, 1946 - 63<sup>+</sup>

GAVIN W. JONES & S. SELVARATNAM

## Introduction

The growth of population in Ceylon accelerated sharply during the early postwar period due to a precipitate decline in the death rate during the 1946-48 period followed by a slower decline during the 1950's. During the entire period to which this paper refers, population growth was very rapid, as Table 1 demonstrates. Between 1946 and 1963, the population increased by 55 percent. During the 1960's, the rate of population growth has slackened somewhat, as the birth rate has been declining and the fall in the death rate has slackened. However, the growth rate in 1968 (2.3 percent) was still sufficient, if maintained, to double the population in 30 years.

Table 1: **Population Growth in Ceylon, 1946-63**

Year	Population ('000)	Average annual increase (%)	Birth rate (per 1,000)
1946	6,854		38.4
1953	8,290	2.8	39.4
1958	9,362	2.4	35.9
1963	10,646	2.6	34.6

**Note** The 1958 population figure is a little lower than the Registrar-General's official figure, because the Registrar-General's series was not adjusted to take account of the actual 1963 Census population. The 1958 and 1963 birth rates are slightly higher than the official figures, for the same reason.

At the beginning of the period under discussion, Ceylon's population was predominantly rural: only 16.7 percent of the people were living in towns of more than 2,000 inhabitants. This percentage had risen very little since 1921, when it was 14.2 percent. This does not mean that the towns had not been growing quite rapidly: the urban population grew by 74 percent between 1921 and 1946; but most of the increase must have been contributed by natural increase of the urban population itself, not by migration from the rural areas.

## Problems in Analyzing Urbanization in Ceylon

In many countries, there is an important obstacle to obtaining a clear picture of urbanization, namely that urban populations as measured in censuses are delimited by the official definitions of urban places required for administrative purposes. Two difficulties result. One is that boundaries may not accurately delimit the urban population as defined in demographic, occupational, sociological or morphological terms, (or perhaps they used to, but have not been

---

<sup>+</sup> The authors wish to thank Mr. A. T. P. L. Abeykoon and Miss A. J. Gooneratne for their assistance in the preparation of this paper, Mr. N. Kumara Deva of the Survey Department for supplying a map on which Map 1 is based, and Mr. N. Kandiah, Operations Manager, Ceylon Transport Board, for information on commuter traffic.

altered to keep pace with the changing character and extent of the urban areas). The other is that clusters of population that would qualify as "urban" according to definitions based on population density, occupational structure or some other criterion may simply never have been granted urban status in administrative terms, and are therefore included in the rural population by the census.

Such problems are often not taken very seriously in academic studies of urbanization based on census data, though they can greatly distort the picture obtained. How much do they effect the study of urbanization in Ceylon?

In Ceylon, urban status is conferred by the Minister of Local Government for local administrative purposes and the classifications adopted are, in ascending order, Town, Urban and Municipal Councils. Towns can graduate from one status to the next. There are no definite criteria to guide the Ministry in its decisions. According to the Department of Town and Country Planning, ministerial discretion in the creation of new Town Councils, in the absence of such criteria, seems to be based on "the nature of the development . . . . . (of the locality) . . . or its amenities and urban character." These are not defined and are vague, but apparently, accessibility of the locality and the availability of electricity are given some weight. There is no question that personal and political considerations are also of some importance in the creation of new Town Councils, the upgrading of Town Councils to the higher status of Urban Councils, and the upgrading of Urban Councils to Municipal Councils.

Between 1953 and 1963, a number of new Town Councils were created in Ceylon, and more have been created since 1963. The 1963 populations of five of those created after 1953 exceeded 20,000. With only one exception, these were in close proximity to the Colombo municipal area, and their classification as Town Councils was a belated recognition that many areas surrounding Colombo are assuming suburban status. Some of the other new Town Councils, however, include substantial rural areas, and more than half of their workforce is engaged in agriculture.

There has undoubtedly been some exaggeration of the level of urbanization as a result of the bloated areas of these Town Councils; but the more serious problem is almost certainly the underestimation of urbanization resulting from the existence of urbanized areas that have not yet been awarded Town Council status. The Department of Town and Country Planning states that there are many "urbanized villages" with populations exceeding 5,000, with developed socio-civic institutions, transport facilities, and electricity supply, which indeed are comparable to most Town Councils in terms of their urban character, but which have not been accorded Town Council status. Inclusion of such towns could alter the picture of urbanization to some extent, but as discussed later in the paper, probably not enough to alter our major findings regarding trends.

1. "Urbanization in Ceylon", unpublished report of the Department of Town and Country Planning (mimeo.).

TABLE 2: Number of Towns in Ceylon by Size of Population, 1953 & 1963 : Unadjusted Data

Size of Town in Terms of Population	NUMBER OF TOWNS			POPULATION		
	1946	1953	1963	1946	1953	1963
2,000 - 5,000	24	20	21	79,325	66,684	74,681
5,000 - 9,999	17	13	23	129,326	95,750	158,280
10,000 - 19,999	12	21	21	164,226	275,789	278,153
20,000 - 49,999	5	6	18	178,595	154,727	487,986
50,000 - 99,999	4	6	5	221,388	383,038	379,265
100,000 and over	1	1	2	368,700	426,127	622,578
All Towns	63	67	90	1,141,560	1,402,115	2,000,943

**SOURCE:** Department of Census & Statistics, unpublished data from 1963 Census; 1953 Census; Annual Reports of the Registrar-General's Department, various years, Table XI.

**Notes** •In 1946 and 1953 only the populations of Municipal and Urban Council areas were published in the Census, whereas in 1963 Town Council areas were also included. However, in the table above, the populations of Town Councils in 1946 and 1953 have been included, since their populations at the census dates are available from the Registrar-General's Reports, Table XI. The 1946 Town Council populations are *estimates* by the Registrar-General's Department. Figures for some other towns in 1946 whose boundaries had been extended between 1946 and 1953 are estimates of the 1946 population within the 1953 boundaries.

•Wattala-Mabole and Peliyagoda were separate towns in 1963 but constituted only one town in 1946 and 1953. We have split it into two in 1946 and 1953 according to the proportions of the total population in 1963. Hikkaduwa and Dodanduwa were separate towns in 1953 and 1963 but constituted only one town in 1946. We split it into 2 in 1946 according to the proportions of the total population in 1953.

An important aspect of any study of urbanization is the trend in the degree of primacy of the principal city in the country. This can indicate a great deal about the pattern of economic development (or lack of it) in the country. In Ceylon, Colombo is by far the largest city. As indicated later in the paper, metropolitan Colombo had a population about 11 times as large as that of Jaffna, the second largest town, in 1963. The Colombo District (which admittedly has a population more than double that of metropolitan Colombo) contains nearly

80 percent of all the industrial establishments in Ceylon.<sup>2</sup> However, the official municipal boundary gives a totally misleading picture of the trends in Colombo's metropolitan population over time, because there is an acute shortage of land for housing or industrial sites within the municipal area, and most of the growth during the last decade has taken place in the suburban towns immediately surrounding Colombo. That the function of this growth is largely one of providing commuter suburbs for Colombo is clearly indicated by the marked increase in traffic on some of the bus routes linking these areas to Colombo.<sup>3</sup> Happily, there is a complete ring of such towns around Colombo, and by adding their populations to that of the Colombo Municipal Council at the different census dates, it is possible to obtain a useful approximation of the trends in the metropolitan population.

### Trends in Number of Towns and Level of Urbanization, 1946-63: Unadjusted Data

As indicated in Table 2 above, the number of towns with populations exceeding 2,000 grew from 67 to 90 between 1953 and 1963, after increasing only very slowly between 1946 and 1953. The increase was primarily caused by the creation of new Town Councils. Whereas only two such councils had apparently been created between 1946 and 1953, 15 Town Councils were created in the subsequent decade, four with 1963 populations between 2,000 and 5,000, six with 1963 populations between 5,000 and 10,000 and five with 1963 populations between 20,000 and 33,000.

Table 3 shows that the level of urbanization according to the unadjusted census data rose very slowly between 1946 and 1963: by only two to three percentage points, whether defined as the proportion of total population living in towns above 2,000, 10,000 or 20,000 population. According to this unadjusted data, the urban population grew marginally faster than the rural population between 1946 and 1953, but rather more rapidly in the decade to 1963. The population living in the larger towns (population above 20,000) grew more rapidly, and consequently the share of these towns in the total urban population increased from 67 percent in 1946 to 74 percent in 1963. However, population growth in Colombo City was quite slow, and Colombo's share of both the total Ceylon population and the urban population declined steadily.

2. These are establishments that have been registered with the Department of industries.

3. The following table shows the marked increase in passenger carried between 1959 and 1963 on some of the lines linking commuter areas to Colombo. Route No. 101 (Lunawa - Ja-Ela) is linked service, giving express bus services to areas both to the north and south of Colombo. The 1963 traffic totals would probably be higher still were it not for a one-month strike in January 1963.

Route Number	Service	Passenger Carried		Percentage Increase 1959 - 63
		1959	1963	
101	Lunawa - Ja-Ela	5,185,234	11,752,835	127
114	Pita Kotte - Pettah	5,907,770	7,138,639	21
120	Horana - Colombo	2,201,949	4,848,507	120
260	Hendala - Colombo	2,368,886	2,890,412	--

SOURCE: Ceylon Transport Board.

TABLE 3 : Ceylon - Unadjusted Data + on Urbanization

	1946	1953	1963	1946-53	1953-63
% of total population in towns above 20,000	11.2	11.6	14.0		
% of total population in towns above 10,000	13.6	14.9	16.6		
% of total population in towns above 2,000	16.7	16.9	18.8		
Urban population (Towns 2,000+) ('000)	1,142	1,402	2,001		
Rural population ('000)	5,712	6,888	8,645		
% increase in urban population (average annual)				3.0	3.6
% increase in rural population (average annual)				2.7	2.3
% increase in population of towns above 20,000 (average annual)				3.3	4.4
% increase in Colombo city population (average annual)				2.1	1.8
<b>% Distribution of the urban population</b>					
Towns 2,000 - 5,000	6.9	4.8	3.7		
„ 5,000 - 10,000	11.3	6.8	7.9		
„ 10,000 - 20,000	14.4	19.7	13.9		
„ 20,000 - 50,000	15.6	11.0	24.4		
„ 50,000 - 100,000	19.4	27.2	19.0		
„ over 100,000	32.3	30.3	31.1		
Total	100	100	100		
<b>Cumulative % distribution of the urban population</b>					
Towns over 100,000	32.3	30.3	31.1		
„ „ 50,000	51.7	57.5	50.1		
„ „ 20,000	67.3	68.5	74.5		
„ „ 10,000	81.7	88.2	88.4		
„ „ 5,000	93.0	95.0	96.3		
„ „ 2,000	100.0	100.0	100.0		

+ No estimate is included of the 1946 and 1953 populations of Town Councils created between 1953 and 1963.

### Trends in Number of Towns and Level of Urbanization, 1946-63: Adjusted Data

There are two reasons why the trends shown in the previous section must be queried: the first is that the trends in urbanization in the two periods (1946-53 and 1953-63) are somewhat distorted by the official recognition between 1953 and 1963 of many towns that were already quite sizeable before 1953; the second is that the Colombo City boundary excludes virtually all the suburban commuter areas that were tending to grow much faster than the city population.

In Table 4, a rough adjustment has been made for the first source of distortion by including estimates of the 1953 and 1946 populations of those Town Councils created after 1946. The populations of Town Councils created between 1953 and 1963 were projected backwards to 1953 and 1946 on the assumption that in both 1953-63 and 1946-53 periods, their rate of population increase was a third higher than that of the other towns that were in their town size class in the terminal year of the period under consideration. The reasoning behind this assumption was that a town probably had a better chance of being awarded Town Council status if its growth was unusually rapid, and that there is no question that some of the new Town Councils (especially those near Colombo) were growing more rapidly than other towns of comparable size.

**TABLE 4: Number of Towns in Ceylon by Size of Population 1946, 1953, 1963**

(adjusted by including estimates of 1946 and 1953 populations of towns created between 1953 and 1963)

Size of town in terms of population	NUMBER OF TOWNS			POPULATION		
	1946	1953	1963	1946	1953	1963
2,000 - 5,000	32	29	21	104,919	99,128	74,681
5,000 - 9,999	19	13	23	147,319	95,750	158,280
10,000 - 19,999	17	25	21	230,582	339,470	278,153
20,000 - 49,999	5	7	18	178,595	177,145	487,986
50,000 - 99,999	4	6	5	221,388	303,038	379,265
100,000 and over	1	1	2	368,700	426,127	622,578
All Towns	76	79	90	1,251,503	1,520,658	2,000,943

**SOURCE:** As for Table 2.

**Notes** \*As for Table 2.

\*As for Table 2.

\*The populations of those Town Councils that were created between 1953 and 1963 were projected backwards to 1953 and 1946 on the assumption that in both 1953-63 and 1946-53 periods, their rate of population increase was 1/3 higher than that of the other towns in their town size class.

The result of this adjustment is to raise the number of towns, and the urban population, in 1946 and 1953, and to yield a slower rate of growth of the urban population during the period.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, according to this adjusted data, the urban population grew at the same rate as the rural between 1946 and 1953, and only marginally faster than the rural in the decade to 1963. In the entire 17 year period, the percentage urban increased only from 18.3 to 18.8 (see Table 5).

Our adjustments make very little difference to the proportion of population living in the larger towns (above 20,000), and this proportion *does* show a more marked increase - from 11.2 percent in 1946 to 11.9 percent in 1953 and to 14.0 percent in 1963. The proportion of the total *urban* population living in such towns also rises - from 61 percent in 1946 to 74 percent in 1963. Given the slow growth of the Colombo City population, the outstanding trend is the increase in the share of the urban population living in towns in the 20,000 to 100,000 size range - from 32 percent in 1946 to 43 percent in 1960 (despite the loss of Dehiwela - Mt. Lavinia to this size class through passing the 100,000 population limit). This increase results partly from the entry of new towns into this size range and partly from the above-average growth of some towns, notably those that are growing as commuter suburbs of Colombo (e. g. Kotte, Peliyagoda) and those that have a role to play as service centres for rural areas that are rapidly increasing in population and production (e. g. Anuradhapura, Badulla, Matale).

As mentioned earlier, Colombo City grew more slowly than Ceylon's population as a whole. But, as indicated in Table 6, alternative estimates of the growth of the Colombo metropolitan area give a rather different picture, because they include surrounding areas that have been growing more rapidly than the rather heavily built-up city area. The ideal estimate of the growth of the metropolitan population would perhaps require a moving boundary, to incorporate localities into the metropolitan area at the time they reached suburban status in terms of criteria such as density, occupational structure and commuting patterns. Failing this, however, the use of a fixed boundary for the metropolitan area that appropriately defines the metropolitan area as of the terminal point of the study, although it tends to exaggerate the metropolitan population at the beginning of the period and hence to *understate* its rate of growth, brings us a step closer to reality.

Two alternative estimates of the metropolitan population have been used in this study. One is the population of the Colombo Divisional Revenue Officer's (D.R.O.'s) Division, the other is the population of the D.R.O.'s Division plus a few adjoining Urban Councils and Town Councils that are in reality, suburban areas of the Colombo metropolis. As shown on Map 1,

4. If we had assumed that the new Town Councils had been growing at the same rate as other towns in their size class, the rate of growth of the urban population would appear to be slower still.

TABLE 5: Ceylon - Adjusted Data on Urbanization

	1946	1953	1963	1946to53	1953to63
% of total population in towns above 20,000	11.2	11.9	14.0		
% of total population in towns above 10,000	14.6	16.0	16.6		
% of total population in towns above 2,000	18.3	18.3	18.8		
Urban population (Towns 2,000 +) ('000)	1,252	1,521	2,001		
Rural population ('000)	5,602	6,769	8,645		
% increase in urban population (average annual)				2.8	2.8
% increase in rural population (average annual)				2.8	2.4
% increase in population of towns above 20,000 (average annual)				3.6	4.2
% increase in Colombo city population (average annual)				2.1	1.8
% increase in Colombo metropolitan population (average annual)				3.4	2.8

**% Distribution of the urban population**

Towns 2,000 - 5,000	8.3	6.5	3.7
„ 5,000 - 10,000	11.8	6.3	7.9
„ 10,000 - 20,000	18.4	22.3	13.9
„ 20,000 - 50,000	14.3	11.6	24.4
„ 50,000 - 100,000	17.7	25.2	19.0
„ over 100,000	29.5	28.0	31.1
Total	100	100	100

**Cumulative % distribution of the urban population**

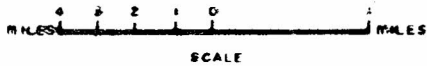
Towns over 100,000	29.5	28.0	31.1
„ „ 50,000	47.2	53.2	50.1
„ „ 20,000	61.5	64.8	74.5
„ „ 10,000	79.9	87.1	88.4
„ „ 5,000	91.7	93.4	96.3
„ „ 2,000	100	100	100



## ALTERNATIVE BOUNDARIES FOR COLOMBO METROPOLITAN AREA

- 1. COLOMBO M.C.
- 2. DEHIWALA - MT. LAVANIA M.C.
- 3. MORATUWA U.C.
- 4. KOLONNAWA U.C.
- 5. KOTTE U.C.
- 6. WATTALA - MABOLA U.C.
- 7. PELIYAGODA U.C.
- 8. HENDALA T.C.
- 9. KANDANA T.C.
- 10. BATTARAMULLA T.C.
- 11. MAHARAGAMA T.C.

- COLOMBO MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
- ..... COLOMBO DIVISIONAL REVENUE OFFICERS DIVISION
- URBAN COUNCILS, TOWN COUNCILS, ADDED TO D.R.O.'S DIVISIONS FOR THIRD ESTIMATE.



CARTOGRAPHY BY E.V. CHRISTIAN

the D. R. O.'s Division incorporates large areas to the east and south of the city; our second alternative estimate includes, in addition an area to the north of the city, plus Battaramulla T.C. to the east and Moratuwa U. C. to the south. Although the latter is located at a fair distance from the city centre, it is joined to Colombo by unbroken urban development and is served by frequent commuter bus and train services.

Neither of the two alternative estimates of the Colombo metropolitan area are ideal, but the second estimate does come close to including all of Colombo's "commuting suburbs" as of 1963.<sup>5</sup> Both estimates give a similar rate of growth for the metropolitan population, a rate well above that for Colombo city

TABLE 6 : **Alternative Estimates of Trends in Colombo Metropolitan Population, and its share of Urban and Total Population of Ceylon**

	1946	1953	1963	%increase 1946-53 (Av.ann.)	%increase 1953-63 (Av.ann.)
Colombo City	368,700	426,127	511,644	2.1	1.8
Colombo Divisional Revenue Officer's Division (1)	532,212	656,152	846,401	3.0	2.6
Colombo D.R.O.'s Division + surrounding towns (2)	621,463	783,213	1,036,141	3.4	2.8
<b>Share of total urban population (3)</b>					
Colombo City	29.5	28.0	25.6		
Colombo D.R.O.'s Division	42.5	43.1	42.3		
Colombo D.R.O.'s Division + surrounding towns	49.6	51.5	51.8		
<b>Share of total Ceylon population</b>					
Colombo City	5.4	5.1	4.8		
Colombo D.R.O.'s Division	7.8	7.9	8.0		
Colombo D.R.O.'s Division + surrounding towns	9.1	9.4	9.7		

- (1) In 1946, was called Colombo Mudaliyar's Division. Area in all years was 42 sq. miles. Area includes Colombo Municipality plus the Nugegoda food control area, or more precisely, Colombo Municipality plus Kolonnawa U. C., the area that is now Kotikawatta T. C., Kotte U. C., Maharamgama T. C., Dehiwela-Mt. Lavinia M. C. and Kotte-Galkissa V. C.
- (2) Includes, in addition to the D. R. O.'s division, Hendala T. C., Kandana T. C., Wattala-Mabole U. C., Peliyagoda U. C., Battaramulla T. C. and Moratuwa U. C.
- (3) Using the adjusted figure for urban population.

5. Additional areas that might have been included are Ja-Ela urban council, to the north of Kandana T. C., and the areas adjoining Peliyagoda V. C. and Battaramulla T. C. that were formed into Town Councils in 1964; Dalugama T. C., Kelaniya T. C. and Mulleriyawa T. C. However, 1963 populations of these three T. C.s are not available.

As indicated in Table 6, the Colombo metropolitan population has been increasing slightly faster than the total Ceylon population, and also a little faster than the remainder of the urban population. Hence its share of both the total and urban population of Ceylon has risen very slightly. Our refined estimates, then, although they correct the misleading impression that Colombo's share of Ceylon's population has been declining, certainly do not point to any marked "metropolitanization" of Ceylon's population. Nor do they point to any substantial net migration inflow: the rate of natural increase has almost certainly been lower in the metropolitan area than in the rest of the country, but possibly not very much lower, because the lower birth rate in Colombo is probably offset to some extent by a lower death rate.<sup>6</sup>

There has not yet been any detailed analysis of the migration data from the 1963 Census. But what has almost certainly happened is that the commuter suburbs circling Colombo city have, on balance, gained population from two migration streams, one originating in crowded Colombo city and the other in the rural areas and to a much lesser extent the towns away from Colombo. (This was certainly the pattern revealed by analysis of migration data in the 1953 Census).<sup>7</sup> The net gain in the population of the suburbs has done little more than offset the net loss in the population of Colombo city, with the result that the metropolitan area has barely increased its share of the country's population.

Table 7 shows the Colombo metropolitan population as a multiple of the population of Jaffna, the second largest town in Ceylon. The data must be interpreted cautiously, since we have not been able to adjust for possible extension of Jaffna's built-up area outside the municipal boundaries. As they stand, the data show a slight increase in Colombo's primacy, which is in contrast to a fall in the degree of primacy that would be indicated if the Colombo city population were used in the calculation.

6. Unfortunately, although birth and death rates are given for residents of both rural and urban areas in the Registrar-General's Report (Table XII), the data are not reliable due to mis-reporting of place of residence, and it would be unwise to base any conclusions on them. However, fairly good indications of fertility differentials between urban and rural areas are given by the child - woman ratios (ratio of children 0-4 to women 15-44) and data on children ever born to women in the child bearing ages. These show a more substantial difference between rural and urban fertility. Child - woman ratios in rural areas of Ceylon were consistently about 20 percent higher than the urban areas of the Colombo district (-1, 19 and 23 percent higher in 1946, 1953 and 1963 respectively), which in turn were almost the same as in urban areas for the country as a whole. In 1946, the number of children ever-born per woman 15-44 years was 38 percent higher in rural than in urban areas. Part of these fertility differences can be explained by earlier marriage in the rural areas (Sarkar op cit., p. 112).
7. See W. Percy T. Silva and Kusuma Gunawardena, "The Urban Fringe of Colombo: Some Trends and Problems Concerning its Land Use", (mimeographed), Ceylon Studies Seminar 69/70 Series, No. 3, University of Ceylon; see also S. Vamathevan, *Internal Migration in Ceylon 1946-53*, Monograph No. 13, Department of Census and Statistics, Ceylon, 1961.

Table 7: **Colombo Metropolitan Population as a Multiple of the Population of the Second Largest Town (Jaffna).**

Estimate used for Colombo population	1946	1953	1963
Colombo D.R.O.'s division	8.5	8.5	8.9
Colombo D.R.O.'s division + surrounding towns	9.9	10.1	10.9

### Reasons for slow rate of urbanization in Ceylon

Ceylon appears to be following the recent Indian pattern in its slow rate of urbanization. However, whereas India experienced a "spurt" in urbanization between 1931 and 1950,<sup>8</sup> Ceylon has had little increase in urbanization throughout the present century.

Explanations for the slow rate of urbanization since World War II are not difficult to find. A major reason is that the postwar period, and particularly the interval between the 1953 and 1963 Censuses, was one of very slow economic growth; indeed, during the early 1960's, only Indonesia and Burma of all the countries in the ECAFE region had as slow a rate of economic growth.<sup>9</sup> Tea production and exports increased substantially during the period, but exports of rubber declined and of coconut products did not increase much. The terms of trade turned against Ceylon, and increasingly severe import duties had to be imposed in an attempt to stem the increasing deficits in the balance of payments, culminating in the imposition of quantitative import restrictions in 1961 that led to a 20 percent reduction in the physical quantity of imports. As a result of the relatively small increase in the volume of international trade in the 1946-63 period there was no great boost to the transport system, including port activities in Colombo, such as might have caused a rapid growth of urban-based employment. The development of manufacturing industry, hampered by the small domestic market, was also very slow, and the growth of tourism was held back by the lack of hotel accommodation.

On the other hand, there was a substantial amount of new land opened, primarily for rice cultivation for the domestic market, and this enabled increasing numbers of farmers to be accommodated on the land, and reduced the tendency for population growth in rural areas to result in urbanward migration. It must be borne in mind, too, that the rate of natural population increase in rural areas was rather less rapid than in many areas of Asia where rural-urban migration has been much greater.

8. For a discussion of the Indian experience, see Ashish Bose, "*Six Decades of Urbanisation in India, 1901 - 1961*", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. II, No. 1, Jan. 1965.

9. United Nations, *Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East, 1967*. Table II-1. Per capita G. N. P. barely increased at all in Ceylon between 1960 and 1965.

In many countries of Asia, migration to the cities has been boosted by a flow of refugees seeking security from the unrest and instability of the rural countryside. This factor was not operative in Ceylon, except possibly to a very small extent around the time of the race riots in 1958.

One might also speculate that the tight family structure in Ceylon inhibits the movement of single young men and women to the towns to a greater extent than in some other Asian countries.

It is also noteworthy that Ceylon has a better network of facilities such as health and education services and electricity supply throughout the country than most Asian countries, and consequently there is not such a strong incentive for urbanward migration to make use of these facilities. However, the quality of health and education services is higher in the urban areas, and this is recognized by the rural population.

One might well query whether urban, as opposed to rural residence has much meaning in relation to the process of socio-economic development in Ceylon. Ceylon is a small country with a fairly well-developed urban hierarchy, and the great bulk of the rural population lives within 30 miles of a town of 20,000 or more people and has relatively frequent contacts with it. Many rural areas are well-served with amenities such as electricity, schools and health facilities. Moreover, the settlements on the larger tea and rubber estates, while not considered to be urban, certainly perform many urban functions for their inhabitants. In general, there is no question that the rural/urban dichotomy is less sharp in Ceylon than in many countries of Asia.

### The Future

Between 1963 and 1968 the population of Ceylon increased by 1.4 million. A recent set of population projections for Ceylon<sup>10</sup> indicate that in the next 20 years, the population will increase by a further 8.3 million if fertility remains at 1968 levels, and by 5.2 million if fertility declines rapidly to western levels by 1988. In the higher-fertility case, then, the urban population will increase by 1.8 million in the 25-year period 1963-88 if the percentage urban remains constant, and the Colombo metropolitan population will increase from 1.04 million to 1.97 million during the same period if it merely maintains its 1963 percentage of the total population.

However, it appears highly likely that both urbanization and metropolitanization will occur during the next 20 years. In the absence of urbanward migration, the rural labour force will increase by 75 to 80 percent during the 20 years following 1968, whereas even if the ambitious Mahaveli Ganga scheme is developed according to schedule and some additional opening of new land takes place, the land under cultivation is likely to increase by only

10. S. Selvaratnam, Nicholas H. Wright and Gavin W. Jones, *Population Projections for Ceylon, 1968-98*, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Colombo, 1970.

about 20 percent. Thus the man/land ratio will rise unless substantial movement to the towns occurs. It is not entirely clear whether the new rice technology will require an increase in labour inputs per acre, but it seems unlikely that the entire increase in the rural labour force can be absorbed in this way.

Future trends in urban-based employment also remain uncertain. There is no indication that the volume of overseas trade will increase substantially during the next few years at least, since production of Ceylon's major exports is not increasing rapidly, tight import restrictions will be maintained and the major effort will be in the direction of import substitution. Expansion of the service sector will be slow unless growth of the other economic sectors is rapid; for example, the current aim is merely to maintain, not to substantially expand, the coverage of health and education services. The main hopes for a rapid expansion of non-agricultural employment must be pinned on the development of manufacturing and tourism; developments here will carry over into the construction and service sectors.

The most reasonable prognosis is for a slow increase in the proportion of Ceylon's population living in urban areas. A rapid increase is likely only if the rural economy were to fail in reaching the ambitious targets that have been set for it (in which case urban unemployment would probably be aggravated), or if industrialization grows very rapidly.

## APPENDIX Ceylon: Population of Principal Towns, 1946, 1953 and 1963

	1946	1953	1963	% increase 1946 - 53	% increase 1953 - 63
				(Average Absolute annual)	(Average annual)
Colombo	368,700†	426,127	511,644	2.1	1.8
Dehiwela-Mt. Lavinia	56,881	78,213	110,934	4.7	3.5
Jaffna	62,543	77,181	94,670	3.0	2.1
Moratuwa	50,698	60,215	77,833	2.5	2.6
Kotte	41,600†	54,381	73,324	3.9	3.0
Kandy	51,266	57,200	68,202	1.6	1.7
Galle	49,009	55,848	65,236	1.9	1.6
Negombo	32,479	38,628	46,908	2.5	2.0
Trincomalee	32,507	26,356	34,817	2.9	2.8
*Battaramulla-					
Thalangama	—	—	32,775	n.a.	n.a.
Matara	23,000†	27,641	32,541	2.7	1.6
Anuradhapura	12,314	18,390	29,426	5.9	4.8
*Maharagama	—	—	28,599	n.a.	n.a.
Kolonnawa	13,815	21,384	27,460	6.4	2.5
Badulla	13,387	17,043	27,115	3.5	4.7
Kalutara	18,965	20,223	25,260	1.0	2.2
Matale	14,090	17,244	25,609	2.9	4.0
Panadura	18,400†	20,395	23,967	1.5	1.6
Peliyagoda	7,686††	9,900††	23,247	3.7	8.9
Batticaloa	13,037†	17,439	22,986	4.2	2.8
*Kehelwatta	—	—	22,936	n.a.	n.a.
Ratnapura	12,600†	16,598	21,592	4.0	2.7
*Hendala	—	—	21,531	n.a.	n.a.
Kurunegala	13,372	17,505	21,179	4.0	1.9
*Kandana	—	—	20,038	n.a.	n.a.

\* Town Council created between 1953 and 1963.

† Estimated population within 1953 boundaries.

†† The populations of Peliyagoda and Wattala-Mabole were not separated at the 1946 and 1953 Censuses. We have separated them according to their share of the total populations of Peliyagoda and Wattala-Mabole in 1963.