

The Territorial Divisions of Ceylon from Early Times to the 12th Century

(1) Introduction

THE three major Divisions or Principalities of ancient Ceylon are generally accepted to have been (1) RĀJARATṬṬHA, later called PATIṬṬHĀ-RATṬṬHA (PIHIṬI RAṬA), which comprised, approximately, the present Northern Province, the North-Central Province and the Trincomalee District to west of the Mahavāli Gaṅga, and the greater part of the North-Western and Western Provinces as far as the Kalu Gaṅga, (2) ROHAṆA (RUHUṆU DANAVIYA), which included the Southern Province, lower Ūva, and the North-Central and Eastern Provinces to the east of the Mahavāli Gaṅga, that river being the boundary between Rājaratṭha and Rohaṇa, and (3) MALAYA (MALA-MANḌULU), which extended over the mountainous areas of the Central, Sabaragamuva, Ūva, North-Western and Western Provinces.

Rohaṇa and Malaya are mentioned from the earliest times¹, but Rājaratṭha, the standpoint of the writers of the early Chronicles, is not specifically named till the 9th century². There is no evidence as to when the name Rājaratṭha first came into use nor is there any evidence that this division bore another name earlier.

A large portion of Rohaṇa (approximately, the area between the Kalu Gaṅga and the Nilvala Gaṅga, from the sea to the central hills) and considerable extents of Malaya (elevations above 2,000 feet) were uninhabited or very sparsely populated up to the 4th century or even later³.

(2) The Early Period, 5th B.C. to 7th A.C.

The principality of Kalyāṇī (Kalyāṇī-*desa* or -*janapada*), an area approximating to the present Colombo and Kāgalla Districts, had a semi-independent existence of short duration in the first half of the 2nd century B.C. and was thereafter re-absorbed into Rājaratṭha⁴.

The establishment of territorial divisions (*janapadas*) is mentioned in accounts of the earliest times⁵. *Janapada*, *desa* or *padesa*, and *passu* appear

1. *D.* (*Dīpavaṃsa*) 18. 23, 40; 19. 20; 22.16; *M.* (*Mahāvamsa*) 7. 67, 68; 22. 6, 8; 24. 7, etc. Rohaṇa is sometimes styled Rohaṇa-*janapada*, but Malaya is not given any designation in the early period.

2. *M.* 52. 4; 55. 22.

3. *U.C.R.* (*University of Ceylon Review*), VII, 142.

4. *M.* 22. 12, 13. Inscriptions of a Raja and some Ayas of the Kalyāṇī kingdom occur in the Kāgalla District—see C.J.S. (*Ceylon Journal of Science*, Section G.) II, 202 to 204.

5. *M.* 7. 46.

to have been used as synonymous terms in the early Pāli Chronicles, and they represented the largest divisions. The principality of Rohaṇa, like that of Kalyāṇī, was called a *janapada*, and the latter was also called a *desa*. The other *janapadas* mentioned are:—Uttika-*desa* or Uttiya-*janapada*⁶ (in the Kalyāṇī principality); Ambatṭhakola-*janapada*⁷, Hatthibhoga-*janapada*⁸, and Dakkhīṇa-Malaya-*janapada*⁹ (in Malaya); and Giri-*janapada*¹⁰, Koṭṭhivāla-*janapada*¹¹, Aḷa-*janapada*¹² and Kallagāma-*janapada*¹³ (in Rohaṇa). It will be seen that Kalyāṇī-*janapada* and Rohaṇa-*janapada* contained divisions also termed *janapada*, so that *janapada* was a term of somewhat loose application for a territorial area of large size.

A region to east of Anurādhapura was called Girikaṇḍa-*desa*¹⁴. With Anurādhapura taken as the centre, the divisions within Rājaratṭha (which name may not have been in use in the early period) in the four cardinal directions were called Uttara-*passa*, Dakkhīṇa-*desa*, Puratthima-*desa* and Pacchima-*desa*. Inscriptions of the 2nd century A.C. specify two of them, Paḍi-*passa* (Pacchima-*passa*) and Pajīṇa-*passa* (Pācīna-*passa* or Puratthima-*desa*)¹⁵. Whether these were, at this time, terms of general description in relation to Anurādhapura, or defined, territorial divisions is not quite clear. This nomenclature, which had an early origin and persisted into medieval times, recalls the limited extent of the original Anurādhapura kingdom.

Rohaṇa and Malaya were called *maṇḍalas* in the 9th and 10th centuries, but *maṇḍala* did not appear to have that significance in the early period. Dovārika-*maṇḍala* or Dvāra-*maṇḍala*¹⁶ was the name of a village: this is the only *maṇḍala* mentioned in the early Chronicles, but the Pāli Commentaries mention two others, Pañcanikāya-*maṇḍala* and Upari-*maṇḍala*¹⁷. The term is absent in the early inscriptions.

It is noteworthy that the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvamsa* (and even the later Extended *Mahāvamsa*) do not employ the term -*ratṭha* in reference to a territorial division of Ceylon. (The Commentaries, however, name two *ratṭhas*, *Dīghavāpi-ratṭha* and *Devaputta Mahā-ratṭha*¹⁸). Metrical con-

6. *M.* 22. 14; *E.M.* 22. 44.

7. *E.M.* 28. 48.

8. *M.* 35. 44.

9. *M.* 41. 10; *E.H.B.* (*Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, by E. W. Adikaram),

Appendix IB.

10. *M.* 23. 68.

11. *M.* 23. 19; 30. 29.

12. *E.H.B.*, Appendix IB.

13. Commentary on the Aṅguttara Nikāya, 52.

14. *M.* 10. 82.

15. *E.Z.* IV, 222; *A.S.* 7th Report, 47.

16. *D.* 10. 9; *M.* 10. 1, 23, 23.

17. *E.H.B.*, Appendix IB.

18. *Ibid.*

siderations doubtless dictated the choice between *-desa*, *-padesa*, *-disā*, *-passa* and *-janapada*. But the complete absence of *-rat̥ṭha* cannot be accounted for by this explanation. The inscriptions of the *Mahāvamsa* period contain several references to District chieftains or administrators styled *Raṭikas* or *Raṭiyas*: the general rule in these inscriptions is to name the place at which the *Raṭiya* resided, but in two instances the area which he administered is specified but it is not designated *raṭa* or by any other term¹⁹.

The size or importance of a territorial division is deducible from the rank of the official who administered it. A prince who governed *Rohaṇa* bore the title *Rohiṇika*²⁰, while a minister who performed the same functions was called *Rohaṇa-bojika*²¹. The administrators of *Nakadiva*²² (*Nāgadīpa*, the Jaffna peninsula) and *Pajinakara*²³ (the Eastern coast) were ministers. But *Huvāca-kannikā* was administered by a *Raṭiya*. Four other *kannikās* are mentioned in the *Chronicles* and *Commentaries*²⁴. A *kannikā* was a sub-division of a *janapada* or *desa* or *passa*. Its Sinhalese equivalent in the early inscriptions is *kaṇṇiya*²⁵.

Rājī (*rajiya* in inscriptions) was another term for a sub-division. The *Mahāvamsa* mentions *Gaṅga-rājī*²⁶ and *Pācīnakhaṇḍa-rājī*²⁷. The inscriptions add a third, *Nīla-rajiya*, and it is clear that this was a territorial sub-division because there were several villages and tanks in it²⁸.

Vihāra-bija,²⁹ called *Vihira-bija* in inscriptions³⁰, was, likewise, a sub-division. Another sub-division with the same termination was *Upala-bijaka*, also called *Upala-avi-bijaka*, *Upalavi-bijaka* and *Upalavi*³¹. Yet another sub-division was named *Utarapura-atana*³²: it contained about a dozen tanks and villages.

19. *C.J.S.* II, 126, No. 528; *U.C.R.* VIII, No. 2, p. 127. Huvahaka of the latter inscription is identical with *Huvācakannikā* of the *Mahāvamsa*; presumably, then, the area administered by a *Raṭiya* is called a *Kannikā* in the *Chronicles*.

20. *C.J.S.* II, 18.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *E.Z.* IV, 237.

23. Inscription at *Kūmacōlai*, in *Batticaloa District*.

24. *Kūlumbāri-Kannikā*, *M.* 23. 45; *Nakulanāga-Kannikā*, *M.* 23. 77; *Kāṭṭayana-Kannikā*, *M.* 34. 89; and *Ullabbhakola-Kannikā*, *E.H.B.*, Appendix IB.

25. 1st century inscription at *Kaduruvāva*; 2nd century inscriptions at *Dakkhiṇa Vihāra*.

26. *M.* 36. 15.

27. *M.* 23. 4.

28. *A.I.C.* 20; 2nd century inscription at *Ratanapāsāla*; 2nd century inscriptions at *Dakkhiṇa Vihāra*. The following phrases occur:—*NĪLARĀJIYA ARITAGĀMA VĀPI*; *NĪLARĀJIYA KĀKĀKA AVUḌĀKA-GĀME CA GĀMA*; *NĪLARĀJIYA JAḶĀGĀMAKA VAVI*; *NĪLARĀJIYA CITAGĀMAKA*; *NĪLARĀJIYA CUḶĀ* . . .

29. *M.* 17. 59.

30. *A.I.C.* 20; *E.Z.* I, 255; 2nd century inscription at *Dakkhiṇa Vihāra*.

31. *E.Z.* I, 211; *A.S.* 7th Report, 47. Nos. I and II.

32. *A.S.* 7th Report, 47. 49; cf. *Badakara-atana* at *E.Z.* IV, 237.

Although the names of some 40 divisions and sub-divisions emerge from the *Chronicles*, *commentaries* and *inscriptions* of the early period, the information is insufficient to form even a tolerably accurate picture of the scheme of territorial division at that time. The terms used for various territorial areas have already been recounted: *janapada*, *desa* and *passa* were synonyms for the major divisions, but it is not possible to differentiate as to their relative size between the sub-divisions. By the 1st century territorial division and administration had developed upon an organised basis. Princes or ministers governed *Rohaṇa* and, probably, also *Malaya*. Ministers administered large or important divisions. The *Raṭiya* was one of the officials who stood between the ministers and the village headmen, but we have no definite information as to who the other regional administrators were and what the sub-divisional organisation was.

(3) The Medieval Period, 8th to 12th Centuries

The volume of information available for the medieval period is considerably larger and more precise. 'Provinces' were clearly distinguished from 'districts': in contemporary inscriptions the governors of 'provinces' are styled *Pas-ladu* and the governors of 'districts' *Raṭ-ladu*³³.

The terms used for territorial divisions in the *Mahāvamsa* are strikingly different from those used in the *Cūlavamsa*. Where the former mentions eight *janapadas*, the latter names only one³⁴; but the term did not become obsolete, as its rarity in the *Cūlavamsa* might lead one to believe: its Sinhalese equivalent, *danaviya*, occurs in several medieval inscriptions and was used to designate *Rohaṇa* and other large divisions. The *Cūlavamsa* names 31 *rat̥ṭhas* while the *Mahāvamsa* omits this term altogether. *Maṇḍala*, which occurs once in the *Mahāvamsa* and does not there appear to signify a division, is used in the *Cūlavamsa* as a synonym for *janapada*, *desa* and *rat̥ṭha*. *Kannikā* and *rājī* of the *Mahāvamsa* (*kaṇṇiya* and *rajiya* in the early inscriptions) disappear in the *Cūlavamsa* and the medieval inscriptions: the *Cūlavamsa* names no sub-divisions, but the medieval inscriptions call them *kuliya* and *biṃ*. Common to both the early and later *Chronicles* and with no change of meaning are *desa* and *passa*. The *Cūlavamsa* introduces a new term, *vagga*, (*vaga* or *vaka* in inscriptions), which was an alternative for *rat̥ṭha*.

In the medieval period, the three principalities were called (1) *Rohaṇa-desā* or *-maṇḍala* in the *Chronicles*, and *Ruluṇu-danaviya* in inscriptions, (2) *Malaya-desā* or *-maṇḍala* in the *Chronicles*, and *Mala-maṇḍulu* in inscriptions, and (3) *Rāja-rat̥ṭha* in the *Chronicles*, and *Rāja-raṭa* in inscriptions. Except in the case of *Rāja-rat̥ṭha*, *rat̥ṭha* signified a division of a *passa*, *desa* or *maṇḍala*: this obvious anomaly was apparently well understood. But it was not the

33. *E.Z.* III, 290; *E.Z.* IV, 41, 53, 179, 251.

34. *Cuṇṇasālā-janapada*, *M.* 57. 46, 57.

only anomaly. In Rohana-*desa* or -*maṇḍala* or -*danaviya*, there were one other *desa*, five *maṇḍalas* and one *danaviya*; in Malaya-*desa* or -*maṇḍala*, there were one *jana-pada*, three *desas* and one *maṇḍala*; and in Rāja-*raṭṭha*, there were six *desas* or *passas*, one *danaviya* and several *raṭṭhas*³⁵.

Briefly, in the medieval period, the major divisions, except Rājaratṭha, were named *desa*, *passa* (S. *passa*), *jana-pada* (S. *danaviya*) and *maṇḍala* (S. *Maḍulu*): each of these was divided into *raṭṭhas* (S. *raṭas*) or *vaggas* (S. *vagas* or *vakas*): these latter were further sub-divided into smaller divisions called *kūliya* and *biṃ*.

Though outside the period covered by this paper, it may be mentioned here for completeness that 18 major divisions or 'provinces' are mentioned in the 13th century³⁶ and '5 districts of the highland country' in the late 16th century³⁷: the Kaḍaimpot, the earliest of which may belong to the 16th century, divide Ruhuna, Māyā and Pihiti into 47, 28 or 29, and 41 *raṭas* respectively³⁸.

Rājaratṭha

As already stated, Rājaratṭha is not specifically mentioned by that name till the 9th century. It was the premier division since it contained the capital city, first Anurādhapura and afterwards Pulatthinagara. Sometime in the 12th century the name Rājaratṭha was changed to Patiṭṭhāratṭha: an inscription of the year 1,059 employs the old form, Rājaraṭa³⁹, but the inscriptions of Nissaṅka Malla (1187-1196) and Sāhasa Malla (1200-1202) have Pihiti-rajaya and Piti-rajaya⁴⁰ (Patiṭṭhāratṭha = Pihiraṭa).

Rājaratṭha was divided, as in the early period, into four *desas* or *passas* named after the four cardinal directions. Pācīna-*desa* or Puratthima-*desa* (in medieval inscriptions, Pādum-*passa*) was assigned by a 6th century king to his eldest son⁴¹ and by an 8th century king to his uparāja⁴².

The most important of the four divisions of Rājaratṭha was Dakkhinadesa or Dakkhina-*passa* (Dakun-*passa* in inscriptions)⁴³. It is first mentioned

35. These anomalies exist today. For instance, in the N.C.P. a Palāta is a D.R.O's division, but elsewhere it is a sub-division: a Kōralē is a sub-division in the N.C.P., C.P., Ūva and Kurunāgala District, but in the W.P., S.P., and Puttalam District it is a D.R.O's division; Pattuva is a D.R.O's division in the S.P. but it is a sub-division in the C.P. and Sabaragamuva.

36. M. 86. 10.

37. M. 94. 4.

38. J.R.A.S. (C.B.), XXX, No. 80, 314.

39. E.Z. II, 214.

40. E.Z. III, 234; 330, note 5.

41. M. 41. 33 to 35.

42. M. 48. 32, 33.

43. Codrington was the first to fix the position of Dakkhinadesa accurately—see his 'Notes on Ceylon Topography in the 12th Century', J.R.A.S. (C.B.), XXIX, No. 75, 62 ff.

in the early part of the 5th century⁴⁴. Silākāla (524-537) appointed his second son to administer Dakkhinadesa and Malaya, with the title of Malaya-rāja⁴⁵. Towards the end of the 6th century Dakkhinadesa was assigned to the yuvarāja or heir-apparent, and, thereafter, this became the established practice⁴⁶. Vijayabāhu I (1059-1114) appointed his uparāja to the charge of Dakkhinadesa 'in the customary way'. In all the inscriptions, except one, of the 9th and 10th centuries in Dakun-pasa (Dakkhinadesa) the edict is described as an order of the Mahapā (Mahādīpāda, equivalent to Yuvarāja)⁴⁷. In the 12th century, Dakkhinadesa was also called Yuvarājaratṭha⁴⁸. Parakamabāhu's aggressiveness in the reign of Gajabāhu I (1137-1153) added to Dakkhinadesa portions of Rājaratṭha and Malaya, and the three principal divisions at this time were Rājaratṭha, Dakkhinadesa and Rohana⁴⁹. In the reign of Nissaṅka Malla (1187-1196) the name Dakkhinadesa ceased to be used and was replaced by Māyāratṭha (Māyā-rajaya)⁵⁰, so called because it was an appanage of the Mahayā or Māyā (synonymous with Mahapā). Māyāratṭha embraced both Dakkhinadesa and Malaya: together with Patiṭṭhāratṭha and Rohana it formed Tisihala (Trisimhaḷa-rajaya or Tun-rajaya) in the latter part of the 12th century⁵¹.

Rohana

Rohana was frequently ruled by independent or semi-independent Princes and was generally the resort of turbulent elements in the kingdom. Revolts and uprisings usually originated there. Vijitanagara first and Pulatthinagara later (both places were very close together if they are not identical) were key-points for the defence of Rājaratṭha against rebel forces from Rohana advancing on Anurādhapura: they commanded the two important fords, Kacchakatittha and Sahassatittha, across the boundary, the Mahavāli Gaṅga. Mahinda II (772-792) decreed the Galhā Gaṅga (present Gal Ōya in Batticaloa District) as the boundary between Rājaratṭha and Rohana, depriving Rohana of all the intervening territory between that river and the Mahavāli Gaṅga⁵², but it would appear that the *status quo* was restored not long afterwards.

44. M. 38. 24.

45. M. 41. 35.

46. M. 42. 8; 44. 84; 45. 23; 48. 32, 33, 42; 50. 44 to 49; 51. 7, 12, 19; 52. 1;

59. 11.

47. E.Z. IV, 182.

48. M. 67. 26; 79. 60.

49. M. 61. 1 to 3; 69. 6.

50. M. 81. 15; E.Z. III, 329, 330, note 4; E.Z. IV, 79.

51. M. 81. 46; E.Z. I, 180; E.Z. II, 79, 225; E.Z. III, 329.

52. M. 48. 132.

the 7th century (see *Kāmaṇḍakāvyā* in 10th century inscription of Rūmāśāra) or inscription of Nīssaṅka Mahāpā, Vijayabāhu I (1114) in the reign of the overlordship of Kolaṅga (he is youngest brother of Kāmbhānī, i.e. the Prince of Dakkhīnadesa, extended his principality include Pānāvajjāna rājya (Paschim Kōṅkōś), and the boundary of it would therefore have receded from the Kalu Gaṅga to the Beṅgōta

Malaya

Malaya (*maṅḍala*) was ruled from the early part of the 6th century junior Prince styled the Malayarāja⁵³. The title continued in use in 12th century, but Parakkamabāhu's principality of Dakkhīnadesa had begun to absorb portions of Malaya and, in the reign of Jayabāhu I, a kārā was Malāmaṅḍala Nāyakkān (Chief of Malaya)⁵⁴. The Malā or Malayarājara of Parakkamabāhu was, likewise, not a royal person, a high official under the Prince of Dakkhīnadesa⁵⁵. That portion of which, at this time, had not been incorporated in Dakkhīnadesa appears to have been distinguished by the name Malāmalayadesa⁵⁶. The fusion of Malaya and Dakkhīnadesa into Māyārājya occurred after the accession of Parakkamabāhu I.

As would be expected, the mountain fastnesses of Malaya often proved a sanctuary for absconders from justice and vanquished pretenders and

(4) Tabular Statement and Map

The territorial divisions and sub-divisions mentioned in the Pāli-Chinese and Sinhalese inscriptions (all the published ones and several unpublished Brāhmī inscriptions) from the earliest times to the 12th century are set out in the tabular statement appended hereto. Identifications have been attempted in most cases.

The map which accompanies this paper is both topographical and geographical in its composition. It may be regarded as a continuation of the 12th century of the epigraphical map of Ceylon, 3rd B.C. to 3rd A.D., published in this *Review*⁵⁷, and the following further facts and inferences may be added to those set out in the paper which accompanied the earlier map:

- (i) The upper montane zone and the south-western area (Galle and Ratnapura districts) were sparsely populated up to

53. *E.Z.*, I, 204; *E.Z.*, II, 12, 67; *E.Z.*, III, 221, 273; *E.Z.*, IV, 184, 257.
 54. *E.Z.*, III, 329.
 55. *M.*, 59, 12.
 56. *M.*, 68, 51, 52.
 57. *M.*, 41, 33 to 35; 42, 6 to 8; 44, 43; 46, 29; 52, 68; 53, 36.
 58. *C.J.S.*, II, 122, No. 500.
 59. *M.*, 69, 6; 70, 62.
 60. *M.*, 69, 31; 70, 2.
 61. *C.C.R.*, VII, No. 2, 142 ff.

the 7th century; by the 12th century there had been a considerable opening up of these areas except, perhaps, the highest elevations;

- (ii) the absence of inscriptions of the first eight centuries A.C. in the Kāgalla District, an area in which pre-Christian inscriptions occur at several sites is striking;
- (iii) the south-eastern area between Arugam Bay and Situlpavva appears to have become depopulated about the 6th century⁶²;
- (iv) as in the early period, the bulk of the population resided in the Dry Zone where the irrigation system had developed upon a vast scale; perennial rivers were dammed in the hills and their waters diverted to the Dry Zone canals and tanks to keep them supplied during the annual drought (e.g. the Hattoṭa Amūṇa on the Kalu Gaṅga, the headworks of the Minnēriya scheme; the dam on the Demada Ōya above Nālanda, the headworks of the Kalāvāva scheme; and the Minipē dam);
- (v) the devastation and partial abandonment of the Dry Zone had not yet begun at the end of the 12th century, but it was imminent.

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62. Paramavithana has pointed out the absence of inscriptions later than the 8th century in this area—*A.S.C.I.R.*, 1934, para 80. An early Portuguese map bears a note which states that the Kingdom of Yāla was devastated by sickness 300 years previously—Constantine de Sa's *Maps and Plans of Ceylon*, page xv.

Rohaṇa is called *Ruḥuṇu-danaviya* in 10th century inscriptions⁵³ and *Ruṇu-rajaya* in an inscription of Nissanka Malla⁵⁴. Vijayabāhu I (1059-1114) assigned the governorship of Rohaṇa to his youngest brother⁵⁵. Parakkamabāhu I, while Prince of Dakkhinadesa, extended his principality to include Pañcayojana-raṭṭha (Pasdun Kōralēs), and the boundary of Rohaṇa would thereafter have receded from the Kalu Gaṅga to the Beṇtoṭa River⁵⁶.

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As would be expected, the mountain fastnesses of Malaya often provided sanctuary for absconders from justice and vanquished pretenders and rebels.

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- (i) The upper montane zone and the south-western area (Galle, Mātara and Ratnapura districts) were sparsely populated up to about

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56. *M.* 68. 51, 52.

57. *M.* 41. 33 to 35; 42. 6 to 8; 44. 43; 46. 29; 52. 68; 53. 36.

58. *C.J.S.* II, 122, No. 509.

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