

Ethnic Representation in Ceylon's Higher Administrative Services, 1870-1946

Introduction

A study of the administrative personnel, its composition and changing nature over a period of years is undertaken here. The sociological relevance and implications of such an undertaking are many and significant for the understanding of Ceylon's social structure. Since only the upper rungs of the various administrative establishments are being examined here, our conclusions will pertain only to that part of our society which may be termed—if we disregard ethnic and caste boundaries—the upper stratum. The following issues will be dealt with in this essay : the expansion of our administrative and social welfare agencies from 1870—1946, the changing proportion of Ceylonese to Europeans employed in these services, the relative proportions of the ethnic groups—Burgher, Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim—who secured these much sought after positions, and finally whether under the British regime there were some avenues of service rather than others that were more readily open to Ceylonese. The consideration of these issues throws light on the growth and composition of our contemporary social elite. It is evident, that in Ceylon, as in some other little industrialized, underdeveloped and one time colonial territories, the administrative service has been the chief as well as the most desired source of employment. The persons who found service in these establishments were those who learned the white man's language, knowledge and technology. Under the Imperial government they came to have power and prestige amongst the indigenous population. The rise of this new elite was furthered by the fact that the Colonial power expressly sought to destroy the power of the older pre-colonial aristocracy.¹ The administrative occupational structure in Ceylon (as in other countries in a similar position) provides us with a key context for the study of social stratification. “ Within the middle-class there is a clear differentiation represented in the government service—which dominates social classes far more than in western countries—by the staff officers and clerks . . . ”²

1. This is an over-simplification. The Colonial power often used the aristocratic elements in order to stabilise its system of government and therefore helped them to retain their social pre-eminence. However, their feudal powers and privileges were trimmed with their becoming “ agents ” of a new master ; and the maintenance of their privileged position under the new regime was partly contingent on their learning the conqueror's language and ‘ art of government.’ Macaulay's famous Minute on Education is an apt illustration of British policy. In Low-Country Ceylon the feudal aristocrats—the “ Mudliar class ”—were the first to enter political service under the British : their feudal family status and political power, and their “ modern ” attainments (English education) made them the elite in the new era. The story of the Kandyan aristocrats is different—they were progressively stripped of their privileges and power, and they showed no inclination to be “ modernised.”

2. Sir Ivor Jennings “ Nationalism and Political Development in Ceylon ” in *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. III, No. I, p. 72.

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The Civil Lists of 1870, 1907, 1925 and 1946, and the Census Reports of 1871, 1911, 1921 and 1946 along with other sources were carefully scrutinised with a view to ascertaining the following facts :

- (a) The increase in personnel in the top ranks of the administrative service over a period of 75 years, which may be related to the growing political, economic and administrative needs of the colony of Ceylon.
- (b) The proportions of Ceylonese vis a vis the English recruited into the administrative service. Consideration of the actual opportunities provided educated Ceylonese for securing these jobs will be a reflection of colonial policy not only as to the employment of natives but also as to how self-government which was the avowed ultimate goal of the Imperial government was in reality being implemented. It is obvious that self-government means not only political apprenticeship and increasing representation of Ceylonese in Legislative and Executive Councils but also the increasing recruitment of the indigenous population into the administrative process, so that when the transfer of power takes place the personnel will be there to manage the administration of the country. Other reasons for the increasing recruitment of Ceylonese were the presence of increasing numbers of educated and competent Ceylonese candidates who could be usefully drawn into the services, and the political pressure applied by Ceylonese political groups for a larger stake and share in the administration of the country e.g. the Ceylon National Congress.
- (c) The relative proportions of the Ceylonese ethnic groups—Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamils, Ceylon Moors, and Burghers-Eurasians—in the administrative and social welfare services over the period of years is considered here. Did any particular group contribute a larger number of persons both in absolute terms and also in relative terms i.e. in relation to their total number in the population composition of the Island? An examination of the proportions of the various ethnic groups represented in the civil lists will provide us with an insight into the composition of the “elite” in Ceylon. Especially in the early years of British Administration when political representation of Ceylonese in the affairs of government was minimal, administrative employment would naturally have been a strong aspiration; and those recruited into administrative service would in a sense be regarded

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as elite persons i.e. having a large measure of prestige in the country. They would not only have position and power but also would have attained some measure of equality with the conqueror by virtue of holding administrative posts similar to his.³

- (d) The term "administrative service" as used in this essay includes the Civil Service, Judicial Service, Medical Department and the Public Works, Irrigation and Survey Departments. The non-civil service positions represent "professional" jobs. Which of these departments were special preserves of the Englishmen, and which provided the great opportunities for Ceylonese to find employment is an important problem of investigation.

To make a study of this nature it is both cumbersome and unnecessary to examine in detail all the Civil Lists of the period 1870-1946. The method adopted here is parsimonious and also effective for demonstrating the problems chosen for study. Four civil lists representing different points of time from 1870-1946 have been chosen, and the analysis of these will be supported by other sources of information. All the Civil List jobs have not been included in the study. The Civil Service, Judicial, Survey, Irrigation, Medical Services and Public Works Department are the establishments chosen. Most of these services were the key ones in the administrative machinery and remain so even today.

The Total Number of Civil List Jobs over the period of years 1870—1946

The Civil Lists clearly indicate that the administrative machinery, as judged by the top ranking positions, showed considerable expansion over the period of years. The Civil Service in 1870 consisted of 81 persons, in 1907 of 95, in 1925 of 135 and in 1946 of 160. The personnel in the Public Works Department increased from 35 in 1870 to 66 in 1907 to 73 in 1925 but remained at that number in 1946 (71). The Civil Medical Department employed 36 doctors in 1870, 73 in 1907, 225 in 1925 and 392 in 1946. These increases in the total number of positions indicate a continuously expanding administrative and social service machinery presumably in response to increasing population, economic development (growth of plantations), increasing revenue and a change in the conception of the nature of colonial

3. Ceylon's local elite (i.e. discounting the Europeans) did not in the past and does not today consist only of high government officials and persons following professions. The landed elements, especially those with aristocratic claims, have always occupied an enviable position in the social hierarchy.

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responsibility from that of purely exploitative towards one mitigated by welfare considerations.

Further evidence of increasing number of administrative tasks are provided by the censuses of 1911, 1921 and 1946. For example the number of persons classified as Government Servants or "Government Clerks" was 5,375 in 1911 and 7,851 in 1921. By 1946 the number had increased to 22,633.

The period 1850-1910 witnessed the expansion of governmental activities and consequently of administrative Departments. "The establishment of coffee planting as the major industry of Ceylon, and the fact that, in place of the annually recurring deficits of revenue which had been a feature of the administration before the 1833 Constitution, there was a sufficient revenue to provide not only for recurrent expenditure but in a moderate degree for expansion, made it possible for the material development of the country to proceed."^{4a} Roads received first attention and soon afterwards the Railways. Although material development centred round ministering to the needs of the planting enterprise, the general prosperity of the whole population was not ignored as could be seen in Governor Ward's earlier speeches in the Legislative Council. Major irrigation works were undertaken in the Eastern and Southern Provinces, and some of the large tanks lying in disrepair in the North Central, Central and Eastern Provinces were restored. Attention was given to the revival of Local Government institutions: the Irrigation Ordinance of 1856 revived the *gam sabhavas* and in 1865 a Municipal Councils Ordinance was passed which led to the constitution of municipalities in Colombo and Kandy in 1866, and in Galle in 1867. The System of Education was reorganized in 1870 and Health received belated attention. This great increase in Government activity not only led to the recruitment of greater number of personnel (as indicated in previous para) but also to the formation of some new government departments. Expansion had its concomitant effect of specialization and diversification. For instance in 1899 Irrigation which was a branch of the Public Works Department became an entirely separate department. In the eighteen-fifties the Survey Department was separated from the P.W.D., which enabled it to expand its activities. In 1866 the Public Works Department organized itself on a regional basis. The Department of Agriculture was formed in 1912. These examples illustrate the increasing specialization of administrative functions, which took place largely in response to expansion of governmental activity. A direct consequence of this naturally was the increase in personnel.

4a. C. Collins—Public Administration in Ceylon—London 1951. p. 83.

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The proportions of Ceylonese vis a vis Europeans

Up to the late twenties the Civil Service was virtually a monopoly of the English with very few Ceylonese gaining entry into the preserve. In 1870 of the 81 positions only 8 were held by Ceylonese (10%). Of the 14 positions in the Senior Branch of the Service only one was held by a Ceylonese ; two found their way into the 1st class Junior Branch (total 13) and 3 secured positions in the Second Class of the Junior Branch. In addition there was one Ceylonese Writer of the total of 10. (It is interesting to note that 5 of these persons were De Sarams).⁴

In 1907, of the 95 Civil Service jobs 12 (13%) were held by Ceylonese. In the Upper Division of the Service, of the 15 Class I positions, one was occupied by a Ceylonese, of the 18 Class II posts none, of the 16 Class III one, and of the 18 Class IV none. However more Ceylonese were represented in the Lower Division of the Service especially in Class IV where they held 7 of the 10 positions.

In 1925 Forty-three Civil Service posts (32%) out of a total of 135 appointments in the Service were occupied by Ceylonese. Compared with 1907 this shows a spectacular number of Ceylonese recruited into the service. However, even at this period, the top rungs of the service were still occupied by Englishmen. Ceylonese occupied only two of the 8 Grade I Class I positions, one of the 15 Grade II Class I positions and three of the 27 Grade II Class II positions. There were, however, sizeable proportions of them in the lower rungs. Thirteen (33%) of the 40 in Class III, 13 (42%) of the 31 in Class IV and the entire number of Class V jobs (11) were held by Ceylonese.

The twenties therefore appear to be a key period when the nature of the British Colonial Administration was beginning to show an important change. Ceylonese were being increasingly recruited into the responsible positions of the administrative hierarchy, and although at this period most of them occupied the lower rungs it would be reasonable to expect that a good number of them would find their way to the higher rungs by the usual path of seniority and length of service.^{5a}

4. The De Sarams are from the Low-Country 'Mudliar Class' referred to in footnote, page 113.

5a. In the twenties steps were taken for accelerating the Ceylonization of the higher ranks of public services. "A Committee appointed in 1919 to advise on the subject recommended that one-third of the members of the Civil Service should be Ceylonese, and suggested that the proportion should gradually be raised to one-half. Consequent on this recommendation the Secretary of State in April 1920 approved of the recruitment of one Ceylonese for every two Europeans recruited. This was changed again in 1923, when it was laid down that one Ceylonese should be recruited for every European appointed to the Service. By 1927 the prescribed proportion of one-third Ceylonese had been attained but the arrangement by which Europeans and Ceylonese were recruited in equal number was continued." Collins op. cit. p. 101. In 1931 further recruitment of Europeans was stopped, and resumed in 1935. The last European cadets were recruited in 1937.

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The decade following 1901 was conspicuous for its interest in education, especially learning in English. Denham writes⁵ "One of the most remarkable features of the decade (1901-1911) has been the rush into education. The improved standard of comfort throughout the country, the growth of wealth, accompanied by considerable changes in manners and customs, have all produced an enormous demand—which may be described as a passion—for education.

The older regard education as an investment for their children, which will enable them to take up positions to which their newly-acquired wealth entitles them. The small landowner and cultivator who has prospered believes that education will make a clerk of his son or fit him for a learned profession, that the latter will then hold a better position in the world than his father, and that consequently the fortunes and, what appeals to him equally strongly, the status of the family will be assured. The younger generation seek escape from rural life, from manual toil, from work which they begin to regard as degrading, in an education which will enable them to pass examinations, which will lead to posts in offices in the towns, and so to appointments which entitle to holders the respect of the class from which they believe they have emancipated themselves.

.....The demand has passed considerably beyond the desire for a good vernacular education, which is no longer associated with advancement ; it is now a popular clamour for an English education."

⁶"The demand for English magazines and cheap editions of novels is very great. Book sellers have increased during the decade (from 257 in 1901 to 278 in 1911) but stationers, who sell cheap editions of standard works, magazines, etc. have increased five fold in number since 1901 (from 15 to 78). The itinerant book hawker is found in all parts of the Island."

It is true that the number of English educated was still very small. In 1911 the number of English literates was only 3.3% for males and 1.2% for females. But compared with the previous census figures (1901) there was a threefold increase in the number literate in English. It is interesting to note that "there are 2,000 natives of Ceylon who are unable to read and write their own language, but yet can read and write English ; over 1,700 of them are Low-country Sinhalese, and belong to the wealthier classes."⁷ Here we see the beginnings of the "de-nationalized" group of Ceylonese, who illustrate some of the characteristics of the "elite" during this period (or more popularly called the (upper) "middle class.")

5. E. B. Denham, *Ceylon at the Census of 1911* Colombo 1912. p. 399.

6. *Ibid* p. 444.

7. *Ibid* p. 433.

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The statistics for 1921 shows a further increase in English literacy. Literacy in this language was 5.2% for males and 2.1% for females. The Census comments on the intense persisting interest in English education. The number of scholars (vernacular and English) showed by 1921 an increase of over 20 per cent compared with the 1911 figures. The number of pupils in English schools increased by 34 per cent. The proportion of scholars in English schools to those in vernacular rose from 10.4 per cent in 1911 to 11.6 per cent in 1921. There were, in 1921, 275 English schools giving instruction to 42,629 scholars.⁸

These facts on the educational progress in Ceylon from 1901 to 1921, especially in English, throw light on the increasing recruitment of Ceylonese into the services as illustrated by the 1925 Civil List. This period is also one characterized by self conscious political agitation on an organized scale by educated Ceylonese. Political consciousness reflects the growth of a nascent educated elite group whose demands, to say the least, must be noticed by the Colonial government. The Ceylon National Association formed in the early years of the 20th century, composed of prominent citizens of the country, held mass meetings, drew up memoranda, and pressed for greater representations in the affairs of government. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, the father of the Ceylon National Association (later the Congress), in an address delivered to that Association in April 1917 pointed out that of the 44 appointments in the Civil Service of the annual value of £ 900 to £ 2,000 only three were held by Ceylonese, that in the Treasury consisting of 3 officers drawing £ 400—£ 700 none was Ceylonese, and that of the 10 Provincial Engineers in the Public Works Department only one was Ceylonese. "A just distribution of places of honour and emolument in the community is the mark of a wise ruler, as by satisfying the legitimate ambitions it largely contributes to the contentment of the people."⁹ The educated Ceylonese advocated not only greater political representation but also demanded a larger share of the posts in the administration of the country.

By 1946 the Civil Service had more or less drastically changed its character. Although 74 per cent of the 23 Staff Appointments, Grade I and Grade II posts (Class I) were held by Englishmen, the more numerous lower posts were monopolised by Ceylonese. Seventy six of the 100 Class 2 posts were held by Ceylonese; all 12 cadetships and all 20 Class III positions were in the hands of native officials. The Civil Service had so many Ceylonese in it that it had become, by this date, a "nationalised" Service.

8. These statistics are from the Census Report of Ceylon 1921, Vol. I, Part II, p. 62.

9. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam "Our Political Needs" in *The Handbook of the Ceylon National Congress (1919—1928)* Edited by S.W. R. D. Bandaranaike, Colombo 1928. pp. 90—91.

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The scrutiny of the type of Civil Service posts held by Ceylonese will perhaps be a more telling commentary on British policy than a mere consideration of the increase in the number of Ceylonese recruited into the service over a period of years. Of the Administrative posts the Civil Service positions were considered the key ones because more than any other positions they were concerned with "administration." High posts such as that of Government Agents and Assistant Government Agents were responsible offices because the persons occupying them were directly concerned with implementing the colonial policy and also in shaping it. Their reports and advice played an important role in the decision making of the executive headed by the governor. Furthermore these persons naturally had to be entrusted with administrative secrets which would be "dangerous" if entrusted to Ceylonese. Of the functions of the Civil Servant, Mills writes, "The principal duties of Government and Assistant Agents were to foster the prosperity of their districts, maintain law and order, and collect the revenue Like the Indian Districts Officers the Government Agents were concerned with almost every phase of the government's activities. The restoration and maintenance of irrigation works, the improvement of means of communication, the condition of the planting industry, the state of native agriculture—these were only few of their manifold duties."¹⁰

By the early 20th century, the Government Agents actually took part in the deliberations of the executive council. At a time when there was very little Ceylonese representation in this council, it was argued by the Governors that the Government Agents were the apt and proper representatives of the people. In reply to the political demands of the Ceylon National Association, Governor McCallum¹¹ wrote to the Earl of Crewe (Colonial Secretary of State) that not these educated 'liberal' westernized Ceylonese, but the Government Agents were fit to represent the interests of the vast majority of Ceylonese.

It is therefore to be expected that Ceylonese in the Service would not be permitted to occupy the highest positions. With few exceptions all of them were sidetracked into the Judicial Service, where in fact Ceylonese were greatly needed. In the 1870ies all the Ceylonese in the Civil Service were serving as judicial officers e.g. David Ernest de Saram as Acting District Judge Kurunegala and Christoffel Henricus de Saram as Commissioner of the Court of Requests and Police Magistrate of Galle. In 1907 the same pattern is observed. P. E. Peiris a noted Ceylonese, who joined the

10. Mills op. cit. pp. 95—96.

11. See Sir H. E. Governor McCallum's Despatch to the Earl of Crewe 26th May 1909.

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Civil Service in the 90ies was serving as a judicial officer. In 1925 he was District Judge, Kandy. Ponnambalam Arunachalam on the other hand became an exception - after serving in the judiciary he became Registrar General in 1905, which post was raised to Class I Grade I so that he could be given his promotion without occupying the key post of Government Agent or Assistant Government Agent.

The careers of two persons in the Service—one a Ceylonese and the other an Englishman—are given below as a fairly typical example of the differential advantages accruing from the sheer fact of nationality. Whereas the Ceylonese was confined mainly to Judicial work, the European had a wider experience and was being groomed eventually for the post of Government Agent.¹²

Paulus Edward Pieris

(Sept. 1907—£ 700).

Cadet

- 1896 Appointed by the Secretary of State.
- 1896 Attached to the Puttalam Kachcheri
- 1897 Attached to the Jaffna Kachcheri
- 1897 Attached to the Colombo Kachcheri
- 1898 Office Assistant to G.A., Colombo.
- 1898 Attached to the Puttalam Kachcheri.

Class 5 (1899).

- 1899 Acting Assistant G.A., Puttalam.
- 1899 Police Magistrate, Panadura.
- 1899 Acting District Judge, Ratnapura.
- 1901 Office Assistant to the G.A., Galle.

Class 4 (1901).

- 1903 Acting District Judge, Matara.
- 1903 Extra Office Assistant to the G.A., Western Province.

Class 3 (1904).

- 1905 District Judge, Kegalle.
- 1906 District Judge, Kalutara.

12. The record given here does not cover the entire careers of the persons named. Post 1907 records show that P. E. Pieris was, until his retirement engaged in judicial work, whereas Kindersley became Government Agent.

William Loring Kindersley

(Dec. 1907—Rs 10,125).

Cadet

- 1893 Appointed by the Secretary of State.
- 1893 Attached to the Secretariat
- 1893 Private Secretary to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor.
- 1893 Acting Office Assistant to the G.A. North Central Province.
- 1894 Acting Police Magistrate.

Class 5.

- 1895 Office Assistant to G.A. (Uva).
- 1895 Police Magistrate Point Pedro and Chavakachcheri.
- 1896 Acting Police Magistrate, Matara.
- 1897 Acting Police Magistrate, Kandy.

Class 4 (1899).

Class 3 (1904).

- 1903 District Judge, Kalutara.
- 1903 Assistant Government Agent, Kalutara.
- 1904 Assistant Government Agent, Trincomalee.
- 1905 Assistant Government Agent, Chilaw.
- 1906 Assistant Government Agent, Puttalam.

In 1891 an important step was taken in relation to the Civil Service which provides us with an illuminating insight into the promotion prospects of locally recruited officials. A "lower division" of the Civil Service was created, and a certain number of posts in the lower classes of the Service were reserved for members of this division. The restricted opportunities of rising in the Service created dissatisfaction among the recruits. One of the palliatives recommended by the Governor was the change of title from "Lower Division" to "Local Division" because it would "tend to effect an improvement in the position of locally recruited officers, by removing all suggestion of inferiority in their relation to those members of the Civil Service who are recruited in England."^{12a} As Governor McCallum pointed out "The existing Scheme of the Lower Division of the Civil Service is imperfect inasmuch as it affords to locally appointed officers scant hope of promotion beyond Class III."^{12b} He therefore recommended

^{12a}. Despatch from Governor Sir Henry E. McCallum to the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, November, 23, 1907.

^{12b}. *Ibid.*

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that one office in Class I, and two in Class II, an Additional District Judgeship in Class II and another in Class III be reserved for members of the lower Division. The Earl of Elgin (Colonial Secretary of State) assented and ruled that the members of this division be eligible for appointment to the following offices : one in Class I, two in Class II, five in Class III, six in Class IV and six Cadetships. In addition the following offices were reserved for the Local Division—Police Magistrate, Gampola ; Police Magistrate, Kalutara ; Police Magistrate, Negombo ; Itinerating Police Magistrate, Southern Province. These changes did not materially enhance vertical mobility into the top rungs of the service but signify only the opening of a narrow corridor through the barrier. What is really significant is that some of the offices of magistrate which were hitherto held by locally appointed officers outside the scheme of Civil Service were now confined to the Lower Division.

We have already seen that in 1925, 32% of the Civil Service posts were occupied by Ceylonese, which signified a remarkable change as compared with the previous decade. But almost all of them were in the Judicial Service—P. E. Pieris, Schneider, Allan Beven, Harry Edward Beven, C. Coomaraswamy, V. Coomaraswamy, M. H. Kantawala are examples. C. L. Wickremasinghe and P. Saravanamuttu stand out as exceptions. The former after serving in the Judicial Service until 1917 became Assistant Government Agent for Mannar, He eventually became the first Ceylonese Government Agent. P. Saravanamuttu after a similar early history became Additional Government Agent Colombo in 1923 and ended up as Tea and Rubber Commissioner in the forties.

It is noteworthy that even as late as 1935 Government Agentships were usually restricted to Europeans. Of the 9 Government Agentships, 7 were occupied by Europeans. In 1946 the balance was still in favour of the Europeans. Five of the 10 Government Agents (Acting and Additional included) were Europeans compared with 2 Sinhalese and 2 Ceylon Tamils.

The increasing recruitment of Ceylonese into the Administrative Service is more strikingly shown by the figures for the Public Works Department. In 1870 of the 35 Civil List posts (engineers) in that department only 2 were occupied by Ceylonese, whereas in 1907 nearly a third (20) of the 66 Civil List jobs were secured by Ceylonese. But it is striking that even at this date, none of these Ceylonese belonged to the Headquarters Staff or occupied the posts of Provincial Engineers. Most of them were Grade 2 and 3 District Engineers (14 out of 27, and 4 out of 6 respectively).

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By 1925 one witnesses a more even balance. Four of the 9 (45%) Provincial Engineers and 24 out of 55 District Engineers (44%) were Ceylonese. Twenty one years later (1946) the balance is in favour of the Ceylonese—35 Ceylonese to 29 Europeans. But the process of taking over was not complete as the majority of Headquarters Staff and Provincial Engineers were still Europeans.

It is the Medical Service that from the start appears to have provided Ceylonese with the greatest opportunities of finding remunerative employment. Even as early as 1907, of the 36 Colonial Surgeons and Assistant Colonial Surgeons, 23 (67%) were Ceylonese. Although very few occupied the position of Colonial Surgeons, yet the number in the Medical Department is strikingly large. In 1907 the proportion of Ceylonese was even larger. Six of the Provincial Surgeons, 23 of the 24 Medical officers Grade I were Ceylonese; also all the 37 posts of the order of Medical Officer Grade II were occupied by Ceylonese (and Indians who number 3). By 1927 the total number of Civil List positions had been increased from 73 in 1870 to 225. In this enlarged service we witness the same pattern of high participation by Ceylonese. Six of the 8 Inspecting Medical Officers, all 8 Provincial Surgeons, and all 143 in Grade II were Ceylonese. Thus by 1925 the Medical Department had virtually become a Ceylonized branch of the Colonial Government, although only one of the 6 Provincial officers (Medical Superintendents) was Ceylonese. In the year of Independence (1946) the Medical Service was more or less completely Ceylonized.

It is noteworthy that the Irrigation and Survey Departments have been for a long time the exclusive preserve of the European. None of the Civil List positions in the Surveyor General's Department in the year 1870 was held by a Ceylonese; in 1907 too, of the 21 Superintendants and Assistant Superintendants, none was Ceylonese. In the same year, of the 13 positions in the Irrigation Department—either as Head Quarters Staff or as Irrigation Engineers—not one Ceylonese secured a place. Even as late as 1925 we witness the same pattern—very few Ceylonese had found their way into the Irrigation and Survey Department Civil List jobs.

There are some factors that may partially account for the discrepancy between the relatively large members of Ceylonese in the Medical Service and their virtual absence in the Irrigation and Survey Departments. The factors may be conveniently termed relative opportunities for training, relative attractiveness, and relative prestige rating. Technical education in Medicine was accessible to Ceylonese from a fairly early date—first at

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Calcutta and later at the Medical College in Colombo which was established in 1870. Similar facilities were not available for engineering (civil and irrigational) or the higher branches of surveying, and therefore qualified personnel were lacking. In spite of these disadvantages some Ceylonese elected to specialise in engineering. But almost all of them preferred to join the Public Works Department for reasons of comfort rather than face the dangers of malaria, the strain of physical hardship and the loneliness of isolation in jungle outposts. Lastly, in Ceylon (as in most other countries) the medical profession has enjoyed higher prestige than the engineering profession.

The Judicial Department provided Ceylonese with reasonable opportunities for employment. Whereas in 1870 there were very few Ceylonese in the Judicial Service (2 out of 13), by 1907 the number had increased considerably. In the Supreme Court consisting of 4 Judges, there was one Ceylonese Puisne Justice. Three Ceylonese held the less important posts of Deputy Registrars. In the Attorney General's Department of the 4 Crown Counsel three were Ceylonese. Of the 3 District Judges^{13a} 2 were Ceylonese. The same proportion is maintained in 1925. One of the 4 Puisne Justices was Ceylonese. The Solicitor General was also Ceylonese, so were 6 of the 7 Crown Counsel, all 5 District Judges,¹³ the Registrar and all 4 Deputy Registrars.

There were very good reasons why the British were ready to recruit Ceylonese into the Judicial Service. The reluctance of Civil Servants to serve in the Judicial Branch is well known, the antipathy being strongest among the junior Civil Servants.¹⁴ There are natural difficulties in learning the various systems of law prevailing in Ceylon but the difficulties were greater to a young writer or cadet newly arrived. Further, for a long time the principle of specialization was not followed in the Civil Service—a person might be appointed as magistrate and then just when he was beginning to master the law, he might be transferred to a completely different branch such as revenue, to be transferred back to the Judicial Branch some years later, thus being faced with the unpleasant task of learning the law again. For the interpretation of Ceylon legal systems which in many

13a. District Judge, Colombo ; Additional District Judge, Colombo ; and District Judge and Additional Commissioner of Requests, Kandy.

13. In discussing these figures one important qualification must be made. Many of the Judicial appointments such as D.J's, A.D. J's and Police Magistrates were for a long time made from the Civil Service personnel. The above figures refer only to purely judicial appointments and do not include persons occupying Judicial office as Civil Servants. If proportions were calculated in relation to all members of the Judicial Service, the percentage of Ceylonese will be smaller.

14. See J. R. Toussaint " Annals of the Ceylon Civil Service " Colombo 1935 pp. 20—21.

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aspects were alien to the British system, it would be natural to employ Ceylonese lawyers. Ceylonese were quick to see this and pressed for their "rights." As advocate Adrian St. V. Jayawardene wrote in 1907 "But the principle adopted in the appointment of Judges to preside over the courts is not satisfactory. . . . As regards appointments to the District Courts, Courts of Requests, and Police Courts, there is much more room for improvement But in the majority of cases judicial work is entrusted to Judges who have but a nodding acquaintance with the law and a very slight familiarity with the customs, habits and language of the litigants."¹⁵ "The appointment of civil servants to the judicial posts within a few months of their arrival in the island is subject to the same observations. There is a Bar, strong both in numbers and in intelligence, in Ceylon, and many of its members would have no objection to accepting the magistracies provided they are given the same opportunities for promotion in the judicial line as the members of the Civil Service. . . . and it will not be asking too much to demand that half the judicial appointments should be confined to them."¹⁶

The Colonial Government gradually set itself the task of correcting the evils of its judicial system. "The appointment to District Judgeships of civil servants who had not received a legal training had been criticised as early as the days of Governor Maitland. The system had worked fairly well, but with the growth of the coffee industry complaints from the colonists and burghers became more frequent. In 1856 the Colonial Office ordered that the District Judgeship of Colombo must be held by a member of the Ceylon Bar, since the development of the coffee trade had made it the most important court of original jurisdiction on the island. While it was preferable that the other District Judgeships should be held by barristers the governor was allowed to use his own discretion. The majority of the judicial positions continued to be filled by civil servants but a tendency developed to appoint barristers to the important District Judgeship of Kandy. In 1872 the Colonial office ordered that owing to the increase of the coffee industry the District Judgeships of Kandy and Colombo must always be held by barristers and not by civil servants. This established the rule that the same course must be adopted with the other District Judgeships as their importance increased."¹⁷

15. Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon. "Constitution and Law" by Don Adrian St. V. Jayawardene, p. 89.

16. Ibid p. 91.

17. L. A. Mills Ceylon under the British Rule 1795—1932. Oxford University Press 1933. p.91.

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Proportions of the various Ethnic Groups holding Civil List positions

Previous analysis dealt with the changing proportions of English and Ceylonese in the Civil Service and Administrative posts which were eligible for inclusion in the Civil Lists. The nature of the inquiry now is to examine the representation of different ethnic groups to find out the pattern of ethnic representation during the years 1870—1946. Has any particular ethnic group dominated these services or contributed more than other groups in relation to its and their numbers in the total population ; and what reasons could be suggested for such differential representation ? To examine these issues it is necessary to start with the ratio of these ethnic groups to the total population at different points of time. (Only the indigenous groups will be considered here).

	1871		1911	1921	1946
Total	2,405,287		4,110,367	4,498,605	6,657,339
Sinhalese (Low Country and Kandyan)	69%	{	66%	67%	69.4%
		{	41.8%	42.8%	43.6%
		{	24.3%	24.2%	25.8%
Tamils (Ceylon and Indian)	13%	Ceylon Tamils	13%	11.5%	11%
Moors (Ceylon and Indian)	6.8%	Ceylon Moors	5.68%	5.65%	5.6%
Burghers and Eurasians	.6%	Burghers and Eurasians	.65%	.65%	.63%

Mention was made that in the Medical and Judicial Services and the Public Works Department a noticeable feature of recruitment was the inclusion of fair numbers of Ceylonese. The composition of the Civil Service also began to show greater assimilation of Ceylonese by the 1920ies. (In 1925, for instance, 32% of the Civil Servants were Ceylonese, although most of them occupied the minor rungs of the service).

In 1870, all of the 7 Ceylonese Civil Servants were Sinhalese. Of the Ceylonese in the Service in 1907, 6 were Burghers—Eurasians¹⁸ (50%), 4 were Sinhalese and two Ceylon Tamils. In 1925 forty-three posts were held by Ceylonese (and Indians (4)) of which 14 (35%) were held by Burghers, 17 (40%) by Sinhalese and 8 (20%) by Ceylon Tamils. Although in absolute numbers the Sinhalese have contributed most to the service, yet in relation to their numbers to the total population (.6% to .7%) the Burghers have provided a dramatically large number of Civil Servants. It is noteworthy that the number of Burghers and Sinhalese in the years considered

18. Hereafter the term "Burgher" will be used for this group.

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here is very close. One must draw a distinction between Low-Country and Kandyan Sinhalese. The Kandyans are conspicuous by their virtual absence in the Service—there appears to have been a discrepancy between the educational levels and motivation of these two groups of Sinhalese.

The preponderance of the Burghers is even more strikingly seen in the Medical and Public Works Departments. In 1870 there were virtually no Ceylonese engineers employed (only two). In 1907, there were no Ceylonese Provincial Engineers (or higher officials) ; but of the 20 Ceylonese District Engineers 14 (70%) were Burghers, 4 Sinhalese and 2 Ceylon Tamils. The same pattern is witnessed in 1925 : there were only 4 Ceylonese Provincial Engineers, all of them Burgher. Of the 24 District Engineers 13 were Burgher 6 Sinhalese and 5 Tamil. In the Public Works Department as in the Civil Service the Ceylon Tamils seem to have found a larger ratio of positions than the Sinhalese, judged by their numbers in the total population.

The Civil Medical Department could have been characterized as a preserve of the Burghers. In 1870 of the 23 Ceylonese Colonial Surgeons and Assistant Colonial Surgeons, 21 were Burghers. In 1907 all six of the Ceylonese Provincial Surgeons, and 31 of the 61 Medical Officers (50%) were Burghers. The Sinhalese doctors comprised only 23% of the total number of Ceylonese doctors in service. By 1925 we begin to see a larger infiltration of Sinhalese doctors into the Medical Department, but the Burghers were in the majority at the higher levels. Five of the 8 Provincial Surgeons were Burghers, and of the Grade I Medical officers 22 were Burghers compared with 21 Sinhalese and 10 Ceylon Tamils. At the Grade 2 level however the Sinhalese preponderate with 66, Ceylon Tamils coming second with 48 and Burghers third with 23. Thus in contradistinction to 1870 and 1911, Sinhalese dominate the Service in absolute numbers with Tamils second, but in relation to the total population, the Burghers (and next the Tamils) show remarkable representation. The fact that the Sinhalese dominate in the lower rungs is symptomatic of the shift in composition. The higher rungs represent persons who had joined the service earlier (the period of Burgher supremacy) and reflects the pattern of recruitment in former years.

It has often been stated that in the early years of British administration the Burghers were the liason between the conqueror and the non-English speaking conquered. The Burghers, being in various degrees composed of European blood, and in manner of life more European than native, adopted

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the English language with speed.¹⁹ Table I shows the superiority of the Burghers in respect to their knowledge of English. Whereas in 1901 65.7% and in 1911 over 75% of them were literate in English, the literacy among low-country Sinhalese—more westernized than the Kandyan—was very low (3.4%—4.1%). The Ceylon Tamils though a little superior in this respect to the low-country Sinhalese, fell very far short of the Burghers.²⁰ Even in 1921, the same large differences existed: 82.6% of the Burgher males were literate in English compared with 5.9% for Low-country Sinhalese, 8.5% for Ceylon Tamils and 1.3% for Kandyan Sinhalese.

It is of course one thing to say that the Burghers and Ceylon Tamil were “over-represented” in the administrative services when judged from the standpoint of their relative numbers in the total population, and another to infer from this that they actually dominated the professions such as Medicine and Law, for great numbers did not seek employment in the Government but were engaged in private practice. (The Public Works Department and related services were exceptions in that engineers did seek employment as government personnel. So that our conclusions regarding high Burgher participation in the Public Works Department hold: in the year 1921²¹ there were 163 Engineers and Architects in the Island, of whom 26 were Burghers as compared with 19 Sinhalese and 6 Jaffna Tamils. The Europeans were in the majority (107)).

TABLE 1.

**The Percentage of English Literates by each “Race and Sex”
1901, 1911 and 1921. (Infants of age 0—4 excluded).²²**

Groups	Sex					
	Males			Females		
	1901	1911	1921	1901	1911	1921
All Races	3.04	3.8	5.2	1.1	1.5	2.1
Burghers and Eurasians	65.7	77.7	82.6	61.6	74.1	81.4
Low Country Sinhalese	3.4	4.1	5.9	.9	1.2	2.0
Kandyan Sinhalese	.5	.8	1.3	.09	.2	.3
¹ Ceylon Tamils	—	5.7	8.5	—	1.3	2.1
² Ceylon Moors	—	2.0	3.2	—	.1	.3

¹ and ² No separate figures for these groups for the year 1901.

19. It should also be noted that Burghers were (and are today) largely an urban group and therefore had better facilities for studying English.

20. Figures pertain to males only.

21. Figures are from the Census of 1921 Occupational Statistics.

22. From the Census Reports of 1901, 1911 and 1921.

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To take the Legal Profession : in 1921²³ there were 816 barristers, advocates and proctors in the country of whom 377 were low-country Sinhalese (46%), 31 Kandyan Sinhalese (4%), 228 Ceylon Tamils (28%), 129 Burghers (16%), 19 Ceylon Moors and 16 Europeans. In absolute numbers the Sinhalese—especially those in the low-country—clearly dominated the profession, though the Burghers and Tamils, especially the former show representation which is clearly disproportionate to their numbers in the total population. The following are the figures for the physicians and medical practitioners for the same year.²⁴ The figures do not include vedaralas and native doctors, dispensers and apothecaries.

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Low Country</i>	<i>Kandyan</i>	<i>Ceylon</i>	<i>Burghers</i>	<i>Ceylon</i>	<i>Europeans</i>	<i>Others</i>
	<i>Sinhalese</i>	<i>Sinhalese</i>	<i>Tamils</i>	<i>Tamils</i>	<i>Moors</i>	<i>Moors</i>	<i>Moors</i>	<i>Moors</i>
841	259(31%)	22(3%)	374(44%)	99(12%)	8	26	53	

It appears that in the medical profession the Ceylon Tamils dominated in absolute numbers followed by the Sinhalese ; the Burghers show high representation judged by their number in the total population composition.

This analysis has shown that two of the minorities in Ceylon—the Burghers and the Ceylon Tamils—have contributed large numbers of personnel to the administrative services from 1870 to the 1920ies. Their contributions were always in excess of their numbers in the total population. Sometimes, especially in the case of Burghers, they have had the largest representations in services such as the Medical and Public Works Departments. The Burghers as a group showed the greatest literacy in English and were quick to avail themselves of western education. They were not a landed group and in general did not interest themselves in agriculture. Their energies seem to have been directed towards administrative and professional employment. The Ceylon Tamils also found attractive avenues of employment in the administrative services and the professions. Coming from the northern region of Ceylon where land was both scarce and infertile, they had no scope for large scale agricultural activity which was possible in the case of the Sinhalese—especially those in the low-country. The Census of 1921 comments : “ The growing demand for English education is clearly shown by the increased percentage of English literates in every race, especially among the Ceylon Tamils ”

“ The Ceylon Tamils were ahead of the Low-Country Sinhalese in English literacy, though they were behind them in literacy generally. This is what one ought to expect from the high rate in the Northern Province of

^{23.} *Ibid.*

^{24.} *Ibid.*

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Scholars in English schools to scholars in vernacular schools..... The number of clerks supplied by Jaffna to the government service is out of all proportion to the size or population of the district, and for the purpose of becoming government clerks, if for no other, the educated Jaffnese realize the value of an English education.”²⁵

The minimal participation of the Ceylon Moors and the Kandyan Sinhalese in the Administrative service is a striking phenomenon. The Moors seem to have confined themselves to trade and commerce. To cite an example, the following are the statistics for Drapers and Cloth dealers in 1911 and 1921 :

<i>Draper & cloth dealers</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Ceylon Moors</i>	<i>Low-Country Sinhalese</i>	<i>Kandyan Sinhalese</i>	<i>Ceylon Burghers</i>	<i>Tamils</i>	<i>E'peans</i>
1911	4890	2186(45%)	528	12	523	7	2
1921	5531	2509(44%)	843	29	503	6	5

The Kandyan Sinhalese neither evidenced interest in planting nor showed a passion for English education and employment in administrative service and professions. They remained backward. “The Kandyans were some way behind the other Eastern races in English literacy, chiefly because of the very large number of them who are “cultivators,” and have no use for any language, but the vernacular. The number of Kandyans who take up trade or become clerks, or enter any other profession in which a knowledge of English is necessary, is very small.”²⁶

The educated low-country Sinhalese divided their attention between large scale agriculture and government employment. In the 1930ies they contributed the largest number of lawyers and a large number of the Island's medical practitioners. Plantation agriculture seems to have been a major interest of the low country Sinhalese, unlike the other groups considered. Table 2 illustrates this strikingly. The low-country Sinhalese had virtually a monopoly of the coconut and plumbago industries. They also dominated the rubber plantations, and if in the case of tea we exclude the Europeans, they were in control of that industry too. Thus unlike the Burgher and Jaffna Tamil, the Low-Country Sinhalese found in plantation agriculture a remunerative source of revenue and a field of occupational interest.

25. Census Ceylon 1921, Vol. I Part II, p. 69.

26. *Ibid.* p. 69.

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TABLE 2.

Plantation and Plumbago mine owners, managers and Supervisory Staff 1911 and 1921

	YEAR 1911						
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Low-Country Sinhalese</i>	<i>Kandyan Sinhalese</i>	<i>Ceylon Tamils</i>	<i>Ceylon Moors</i>	<i>Burghers and Eurasians</i>	<i>Europeans</i>
Coconut-Plantations Owners, managers and Supervisory Staff.	74793	66425(89%)	2870	2164	2666	221	45
Rubber „	850	333(38%)	49	62	26	70	141
Tea „	5412	1497(28%)	346	546	166	450	1217
Plumbago mine owners	384	361(95%)	20	—	—	—	2
	YEAR 1921						
Coconut-owners managers and Supervisory Staff	68294	58777(86%)	3952	2172	2642	201	57
Rubber „	6586	1575(24%)	574	570	194	290	958
Tea „	4787	2456(51%)	278	344	95	222	423

The Transition—1935

In the thirties we witness the gradual change-over whereby the “ under-representation ” of the Sinhalese in the administrative services appears to get “ corrected.” Proportionate to their numbers more persons of this group enter the administrative services and professions such as medicine. But even as late as 1935 we see not the completion of this process, but the trends.

In 1935²⁷ the composition of the Home Ministry was the following : 16 Europeans, 13 Sinhalese, 11 Tamils and 9 Burghers. Of the 9 Government Agents, 7 were Europeans. This shows that the proportion of Europeans in the Civil Service remained large and that they still occupied the majority of the superior posts in the service. What is more impressive is the small differences between the relative numbers of Sinhalese, Tamils and Burghers in the Home Ministry. In the Public Works Department and Judicial appointments the minorities are seen to hold their own. Of the Civil List posts pertaining to the Public Works Department (H.Q.Staff, Provincial Engineers, District Engineers and Assistant Engineers) 13 were Burghers, 12 Sinhalese and 10 Tamils with the Burghers dominating the higher rungs. (This service was still the preserve of the Europeans, who held 29 posts). Of the 12 Supreme Court appointments 6 were held by Burghers (including 2 of the 6 Puisne Justiceships) which compares very favourably with the Sinhalese contribution of two. In the District Court Appointments (District Judges and Additional District Judges) the Ceylon Tamils dominate (10), the Burghers and Sinhalese tying with 6 each.

27. Figures compiled from Ferguson's Ceylon Directory, 1935.

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It is in the Medical Service that we see the complete reversal of the former pattern. Previous analysis showed that up to the 20ies the Burghers dominated this profession and that a large proportion of Ceylon Tamils took to Medicine, but that by 1925 although the Burghers still held the majority of Grade I posts, the Sinhalese outnumbered the other groups in the Grade 2 posts (66) with the Ceylon Tamils following close behind (48). In 1935, we find 156 Sinhalese doctors in Government Service as against 54 Burghers and 73 Ceylon Tamils, the large discrepancies in numbers being evident especially in the junior positions. The composition of the senior posts is interesting as a reflection of the position in previous years. If we take account only of the superior posts such as H.Q. Staff, Inspecting Medical Officers, Provincial Surgeons and Medical Officers Grade I, the Sinhalese, Tamils and Burghers are found to be qually represented—29, 24 and 27 respectively. Since these senior officers are persons who have been in service for a period of many years, this composition reflects the time when these two minorities were 'over-represented' and the Sinhalese 'under-represented.'

The Change Over—1946

By 1946 the Sinhalese dominance in the Administrative service is complete. The Civil Service is composed of 69 Sinhalese, 31 Ceylon Tamils, 16 Burghers and 39 Europeans. (The Europeans at the year of Ceylon's Independence hold the key positions—15 of the 28 positions of the order of Staff Appointments, Grade I and II positions were occupied by them). The numerical superiority of the Sinhalese is evident from these figures (44%), but the number of persons contributed by Ceylon Tamils and Burghers is still significantly larger than their representation in the total population.

Of the 12 Supreme Court appointments 5 were Sinhalese, 3 Burgher, 1 Ceylon Tamil and 3 Europeans. In the Judicial Service²⁸ the Sinhalese have a clear majority. There were 21 of them to 11 and 13 of Burghers and Ceylon Tamils. In the Civil List jobs of the Public Works Department the same pattern is witnessed—the Sinhalese engineers are 35 in number compared with 17 Tamils and 15 Burghers. Though superior in absolute numbers it is equally significant that the Sinhalese are almost equalled by the two minorities put together. The Civil List statistics for the Department of Medical and Sanitary Services show a clearcut majority of Sinhalese doctors, and a very noticeable decline in the Burgher representation. There

28. Many of the District Judges and Additional District Judges were drawn from the Civil Service, and they have been included in these figures.

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were 205 Sinhalese doctors in the Service compared with only 25 Burghers. The Ceylon Tamils contribute however more than half the Sinhalese total (115) thus maintaining their usual high numbers in the Medical Service.

Thus the last year of the period examined here shows a large change in the ethnic composition of the country's administrative and social services. Until the 20ies it could not even be said that the Sinhalese comprising 2/3rds of the country's population contributed as much in absolute numbers as the Burghers and to a lesser extent the Ceylon Tamils. By 1946 they dominate the services, but not to the extent of their numbers in the total population, if we were to take this as a criterion.

The reason for this change is not necessarily the greater interest of the Sinhalese in English education as compared with the other minority group. The Census of 1946 reports that English literates were 6.3 of the population (excluding children 4 years old and under). This is an advance of 2.6% over the percentage recorded for 1921. (Male literacy in 1946 was 8.4%, in 1921 it was 5.2 per cent). These figures do not convey the impression that spread of English education was remarkable. But it is to be noted that the Island's population increased at a rapid rate (from 4,498,605 in 1921 to 6,657, 339 in 1946) and that therefore the increase of 2.6% over the percentage for 1921 implies quite a considerable increase in absolute numbers. This gain in English literacy would certainly have produced more English educated Sinhalese scholars than Burgher or Tamil.

This gain however does not provide a total explanation of the dramatic change in the ethnic representations of the Administrative Services. Perhaps the lack of further possibilities for the development of plantation agriculture, the division of family properties among succeeding generations thus making the total dependance on landed income impossible in the case of many persons, the recruitment into the ranks of the elite of socially mobile people who were English educated but not landed in their origins, and the change in motivation or direction of interest among Sinhalese regarding occupational employment may be other factors in the change over.

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