

## Proprietary class in the Galle District (1880-1948): A Historical Analysis.

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### Abstract

*A section of emerging local entrepreneurial class prospered through Galle harbour took to plantation industry around eighteen seventies and eighties in the outskirts of the cultivated area with the shifting of bulk port activities to Colombo with the construction of the breakwater. They started cultivating coconut, tea and rubber in large estates by using the managerial skills of western planters but using local labour. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century plantation activities of this local entrepreneurial group extended beyond Galle Wallaboda pattu, Walallaviti korale, Talpe pattu and reached Hinidum pattu. With the enforcement of the provisions of the Land Development Ordinance of 1935, the middle class allotments put to sale were purchased by the local moneyed class and converted them into small rubber and tea plantations. The owners themselves using the local labour managed these plantations. In between these small allotments stood the larger estates run by a few European planters manned partly by South Indian labourers and partly by the village labourers. Mean while Low Country Products Association and the planters of the area joined the Planters Association. Thus the managerial expertises of European planters were shared with the low country planters in managing the plantation industry. Thus the interior of the Galle district became a plantation area mostly owned by the Sri Lankan entrepreneurial class with its own separate identity, but having close links with the European planters. This paper examines the role played by the proprietary class in the Galle district during the initial stages of the its cash crop cultivation.*

**Key Words:** Cash crop cultivation, Littorals, Colebrooke-Cameron reforms, Closenberg, Mahabadda.

### Introduction

The early beginnings of cash crop cultivation in Galle district can be traced back to the times of the drift of human activities to the south west wetlands of the island with the fall of the hydraulic civilization of Rajarata and developed under mercantilist capitalism of the Portuguese and the Dutch rule. The outstanding major agricultural products in the process were coconut, arecanut, cinnamon, coffee and spices. These crops were grown in homesteads of the villagers and no systematic plantation or manuring was carried out. The surplus productions were sold to the itinerant traders who processed and shipped to foreign countries at the port of Galle to the east west bound oceanic traders.

Of these crops coconut was intertwined with the development of many rural and cottage industries. The service industries associated with international shipping connected with Galle harbour played a major role in

the formation of moneyed class in the district. By the time the first European trading power, the Portuguese entered Sri Lanka in the sixteenth century the traders of west Asian countries, commonly identified as Muslims, Malabar and Coromandal coast traders, Bengalies and South Asian traders were busy in a lucrative trade in coconuts, coconut products, arecanuts, cinnamon, coffee, spices and cottage industrial products. Portuguese monopolized this trade. But the Dutch who followed them during the middle of the seventeenth century encouraged planting cash crops such as coffee, pepper and other spices in the areas administrated by them. Towards the end of the eighteenth century they encouraged systematic plantation of cinnamon. The business class that was gradually emerging in the littoral of Sri Lanka and the headman class who were closely associating the Dutch made use of the facilities provided by the Dutch in the plantation agriculture. But these plantations rarely exceeded 20 acres in extent and were clustered around the villages in the littorals.

### **Emergence of the Proprietary Class.**

During the early British rule in the nineteenth century at least certain segments of the population in the low country were beginning to make use of these facilities with the liberalization of monopolistic trade. Large scale cultivation of coconut, which had started under the Dutch, expanded as the British government had started a more liberal policy of selling crown lands. This policy helped mostly the *Korale Mudaliyas* who were familiar with the complicated procedure of land sales and were in close contact with the government officials (Jayasekara, P.V.J, 1969, p.23). In these changing circumstances the traditional elite of *Goyigama* caste and the Burghers appears to have enhanced their position as large land owners of coconut, arecanut, pepper, citronella and coffee cultivation while the headman of *Mahabadda*, the *Salagama* caste became the owners of cinnamon plantations.

The implementation of Colebrooke-Cameron reforms between 1832-1835 made notable changes in the plantation activities of Galle district. All government owned cinnamon and coconut plantations were sold out. Majority of the cinnamon plantations were brought by the headmen connected to the deceased *Maha Mudaliyar* Adrian de Silva Rajapaksa in 1824 (Adrian de S. Guneratne, 1892, p.2-7). A large segment of coconut and citronella plantations were bought by the Burgher elite while the *Karawa*, *Durawa* and *Goyigama* caste entrepreneurs purchased coconut and other cultivations. The liberalisation of land sale policy helped the emerging entrepreneurial class in the district in purchasing the allotments advertised for sale by government. Unlike in the Kandyan areas there was no rush of Europeans for the purchase of crown lands in the district, except a hand few of European invertors the majority of buyers were Burghers and Sri Lankans.

The cash crop industry in the Galle district during a major part of the nineteenth century was of mixed cultivation and the estates were fairly small. Majority of the investors of these estates were either Burghers or of Eurasian origin. The few coconut estates above 50 acres in extent in 1855 were owned by T. Dickson, H. Sonnenealb, W. Austin, J. Wilson, B. Armitage and J.H. Hume. They were in the outskirts of the thickly inhabited area of the coastal strip. By 1871 there were twenty two estates of more than fifty acres in extent cultivated with coffee, citronella and coconut around Balapitiya, Hikkaduwa, Dodanduwa, Galle and Ahangama. Of these there were three estates owned by sinhalese and the others run by the Eurasians and joint stock companies (Ceylon Almanac, 1855, p. 355).

Sugar cane plantation was introduced to Sri Lanka by Dutch, but it prospered in the Gin ganga basin under the British. The planters instrumental in encouraging the sugar cane plantations were Winter and Northway. They started their manufactories and started producing sugar and rum. They also encouraged the locals to plant sugar cane which they bought at their factories. By 1855 apart of Sarath Winter, James Purvis Cock, J.M.A. Montclair, A. Odier, Mrs. Orr and C. Gardet were the leading foreign sugar cane planters in the Galle district. Notables among the Sri Lankans in the district who cultivated sugar cane were Aron de Silva Goonewardene, Don David de Silva, Don Andries de Silva Madduma Appu and W. Carolis Appu (Ceylon Almanac, 1855, p. 370).

Sugar cane planters were patronized by the government by constructing Galle-Baddegama road and later connected to Mapalagama. Winter constructed a ferry at Nagoda by providing easy access to major sugar cane planters of the district.

By eighteen seventies there were extensive plantations of major cash crops in the Galle district owned by Europeans, Burghers and Sri Lankans. Later Europeans started their plantations in the interior of Galle district and were concentrating first on coffee and in tea. Only a very few estates exceeded one hundred acres and practically in every estate of some extent of coconut, cinnamon, coffee and citronella has been cultivated. Majority of these large estates were along the coastal border and stretched downwards from Bentota to Ahangama. Among these estate owners were J.A. Van Rooyen, T. Alexander, G. de Hann, W. Austin, George Guan Fraser and Countess De La Rouchefocault. Among the Sinhalese were C.H. de Soysa and N. Dias Mudaliyar (Paterson's Almanac, 1871, p. 435).

At a time when coffee cultivation was affected by the leaf disease and the shifting port facilities to Colombo a notable change had taken place in the planting enterprise. Some of the European planters who entered the plantation industry in Sri Lanka shifted their activities to Galle district. But the most noteworthy investment came from the businessmen who made their fortune when Galle was the main harbour. Among them were Simon Perera of Cloisenberg, William Abeywardana of Piyadigama and Muhandiram Thomas Amarasuriya of Unawatuna.

### **Cloisenberg Perera's.**

Simon Perera, born in 1832, known by the popular name of Cloisenberg Pereras' first recorded ancestor was Emmanuel Perera Abeywardana portage of a Dutch commandant Johannes Von Haylonburgh (Roberts, Norah, 2005, pp. 399-403). Emmanuel lived at Magalle occupying several acres of land stretching from highland to sea. The land was called Cajugahawatta. The sea was their main source of wealth. Emmanuel married twice, once Miss Goonewardena of Delwatta, a daughter of an overseer, a man of considerable wealth and property. His eldest son was Christopher born in 1786; Christopher married Don Gimara Silva, whose family had a flat of boats and draw nets (*Madel*). The draw nets were operated from Magalla to the market place of Galle. Christopher engaged as a ships chandler and later obtained a contract with P & O Company handling coal and rice. He bought a fleet of barges and established a prosperous business which bought him much wealth. He had twelve children and all were drawn to the fathers business. Simon Perera became the General Manager of the business. Later Simon started his own salvage business which bought him much wealth. Simon married Charlotte Wijesekera, a daughter of Andiris Wijesekera, the Interpreter of Supreme Court Colombo. Simon was a Buddhist while Charlotte was a Christian. Charlotte's Mother's

father was an Anglican priest stationed at Hikkaduwa and Simon's wedding took place at Christ church, Galle Face, Colombo.

Simon Perera took to plantation at a time when the business sector was shifting from Galle to Colombo with the construction of the breakwater. Colombo port became a safe harbour for shipping round the year and the construction of railway connecting Kandyan plantations with Colombo made the transportation of estate product quick and easy. The major shipping companies closedown their Galle offices and moved to Colombo.

Simon Perera saw the bleak future of selvage and coaling business turned to plantation. He purchased Walahanduwa estate in 1885 and planted cinnamon, citronella and tea. Two years after his marriage he purchased Wasala Walawwa from Gate *Mudaliyar* Don Bastian Gunawardene and moved in. In 1885, he purchased "Villa Marina" which was built by Captain Francis Bayly, a British sea captain and agent of P&O Company in Galle and renamed "Closenberg" and used to dump the goods salvaged from the ship wrecks.

He had four children, Francis, Dannister, Titus and Regina. He was also the *Maha dayakaya* of Gangarama Vihara at Galle. Simon contested Galupiyedda ward of the Galle Municipal Council and won the seat which they retained as a pocket borough of Perera family. At his death his son Francis won the seat and later Francis's brother Dannister and his nephew J.E. Perera won it. On 25 June 1891 Simon Perera died when his eldest son was only 16 years old. Simon's brother-in-law Abeydeera became the guardians of the four children.

Francis Perera married Rita de Soysa, the daughter of plantation and business magnate Charles de Soysa of Moratuwa. The home coming was a luncheon party at Closenberg and a special train was chartered to bring the guests to Galle from Moratuwa. At Galle carriages were lined up outside the station to carry the guests to Closenberg (Roberts, Norah, 2005, p. 404). Regina Perera, the sister of Francis Perera was married to Arthur de Soysa, the son of Charles de Soysa in 1899. Thus the families of the two millionaires of Galle and Moratuwa got wedded together. It also enhanced the plantation industry in the Galle district. Francis Perera opened up a part of Walahanduwa in rubber. He bought the rubber seeds from Hollaway. It was the first estate in Galle district to plant rubber. The rubber boom of the early twentieth century brought much fortune for him.

Regina Pereras' marriage to Arthur de Soysa brought Simon Pereras' family into coconut cultivation. Induranwila at Kataluwa, was cultivated with coconut, Dolosgodnnella at Imaduwa was cultivated with coconut and citronella, Navanakanda at Narawala were planted with tea and citronella (Ferguson's Ceylon Hand Book & Directory. 1897, pp. 679-682).

The marriage of children of Simon Perera of Galle to the children of Charles de Soysa of Moratuwa not only brought prosperity to plantation industry by expanding the total acreage of cultivation, but also the developed scientific and technical know-how of the Kandyan plantations. These estates were some of the best administered estates in the district, producing the best quality products. They also ventured into plumbago industry and also to arrack renting. Simon Perera's salvage and coaling business was now on wane and was sold. Henceforth the Perera family became landed proprietors and estate owners. They had their education at Royal College, Colombo: Simon Francis here ward Perera after receiving education at Royal College entered Poona Agricultural College in India and pursued his higher education on plantation

industry. When he returned from India his services were sought by the European estate companies not only in Galle district but also in other districts as well. Francis made history when he was elected by the European planters who acted so far as an exclusive group elected him as the President of Southern Province Planters Association.

Francis's sister Marjorie Perera was married to F.B. de Mel, brother of Sir Henry de Mel and the son of Jacob de Mel, the planting and business magnates of Colombo and Hatton. One of her daughters was married to C.E.A. Dias popularly known as the "Tea King" of Hatton. In the ensuing years Simon Perera's children and grand children got wedded to the leading business and planting families of the island and were leading planters, proprietors and businessmen (Roberts, Norah, 2005, pp. 397-410).

### **Abeyesundara family of Kaluwella**

Another family in Galle who prospered in business in marine services turned to plantation at the turn of the nineteenth century was the Abeyesundara family of Kaluwella. Perera's were Buddhists and dayakas of Gangarama temple at Magalle while Abeyesundara's were Roman Catholics with chevaliers and muhupoos of St. Mary's Cathedral Kaluwella. Originally Abeyesundara's were from Bentota and during the late Dutch period they moved to Kaluwella, Galle. They prospered in renting the tollgate at Piyadigama in Kaluwella, and during early British times involved in chandlers in ships. Their ancestral home at Kaluwella was Villa Lucilla.

Don Pemyano William Abeyesundara was a contractor to Peninsula and Orient steam Navigation Company and made money like Simon Perera. When Peninsula and Orient shipping lines closed their shutter at Galle office, their marine services as wane, Abeyesundara like his friend turned to plantation. In 1898 he was invested by the Pope with Knighthood of Order of St. Gregory the Great. Abeyesundara represented Kaluwella ward of the Galle Municipal Council from 1887-1893 (Wright, Twentieth Century Impressions, p. 754) which became later the pocket borough of Abeyesundara family.

William Abeyesundara purchased Ratmaharabedda at Baddegama and planted with coconut, cinnamon, and citronella. Later his plantations were extended to Aluthwela, Gonapinuwala and Halpatota villages. In association with Simon Perera he purchased Ratmahara land at Gonapinuwala, later named Fred's Rhue, and Wilpitiya an extensive land of 1470 acres at Akuressa. These estates were managed by qualified estate managers of Eurasian origin (Ferguson's Directory, 1897, pp. 681-682).

Fredrick Abeyaesundara his son born in 1866, had his education at the Royal college and jointed his father in the business of Marine Contractor and on the death of his father in 1899 he took over the full management of his father's business. Ratmahara now named Fred's Ruhe with 1200 acres planted with coconut, cinnamon, citronella and tea was equipped with a tea factory and a citronella oil distillery. He also had extensive plantations in the Kalutara district and proportions with in the city of Colombo. He owned more than 7000 acres of plantations in Galle district alone. He had rubber plantations in the Kalutara district. He was also one of the luckiest race horse owners and won practically all the important racing cups of Gymkana club horse races (Wright, p. 755).

Fred Abeyesundara married Lucy Sirimanne, daughter of planter of Bentota. His daughter Grace Abeyesundara married to E.G.P. Jayatilake, a Crown Counsel. Their daughter Sylvia Jayatilake was married

to Mervin de Silva, the planter and proprietor of Agra Tea Estate Elpitiya and the son of Roche de Silva. Roche de Silva's father owned a fleet of bullock carts playing between Alutgama via Galle to Deniyaya. This bullock cart fleet transported rice and other requirements for planters of Deniyaya. This fleet also transported building materials supplied by Hayley & Company, E.Coates Company and Vavassuers. They had their bullock cart station or *Gala* at Pettigalawatta, Galle.

Fred's brother Beneset Joseph Abeyesundara was a planter who opened up Fred's Ruhe with tea. On their estate they established the first tea factory in Galle district. The Abeyesundara family members, by the time Sri Lanka gained political Independence from the British was a well established family in the field of plantations, business and in different branches of government service.

### **Amarasuriya family of Unawatuna**

Another notable family in the Galle district which took to cash crop industry and commerce during the seventies of the nineteenth century was Amarasuriya family of Unawatuna. Like Simon Perera and William Abeyesundara, Amarasuriyas were shipping magnates. Thomas de Silva Amarasuriya born in 1847, the founder of a wealthy family had his education at Bouna Vista College at Unawatuna and jointed a mail ship service at the age of sixteen years. During his three year service in mail ships he visited the South and South Eastern Asian countries where he came to know different businessmen. After three years he jointed a Dutch shipping company Vanderspaar as an accountant. In 1869 he married Dona Christina Jayasuriya from Weligama who gave birth to Henry Mahendrapola Amarasuriya in 1872 (Roberts, Norah, 2005, pp. 417-420).

In 1877 Thomas Amarasuriya left Vanderspaar and started a local shipping company of his own. Making use of his contacts he developed his previous service. He developed a foreign service covering the Indian sub continent and South East Asia and earned a lot of money. In Galle had an extensive trade as a renter in arrack tavern and engaged in the Buddhist revivalist movement and became an active member in Buddhist Theosophical movement. He purchased Monrovia estate at Ratgama and became an active planter in coconut, cinnamon and tea and died at the age of 60 in 1917. As a philanthropist he supported the Buddhist movement and established schools at Dangedara, Ganegama, Katukurunda and Pettigalawatta. When Mahinda College was started he became the main supporter of the school when he employed his young son Henry de Silva Amarasuriya as an assistant teacher.

Henry Mahendrapala Amarasuriya was born 1872 and had his early education at All Saints College, Galle and joined Royal College, Colombo. He taught at Mahinda College for two years and took to planting. While engaged in Monrovia estate under his father he acquired a thorough knowledge of the methods of cultivating coconut, cinnamon, tea and rubber and became the most successful sinhala planter in the Galle district. He purchased Citrus Group at Akmeemana in 1894 and planted coconut, cinnamon and tea in 750 acres and later added 150 acres of rubber. He personally supervised his fathers' plantations and planted Olympus at Baddegama with coconut, tea and rubber. He had plantations at Morawak korale. Belligalena with an extent of 240 acres and Kooroogala 620 acres were planted with tea only. Mahendrapala was acknowledged as an authority on coconut cultivation by the planters (Wright, 1907, p. 759). In a short time he had planted more than 5000 acres of rubber in the district.

Mahendrapala like his father took a keen interest in social activities and was a devoted lay member of the Buddhist movement. In 1903 he became the Manager of Mahinda College and had the services of F.L. Woodward, the scholar to assist the English education among the Buddhist children. He patronized several Buddhist temples and became an active member of Young Men's' Buddhist Association. As a cultural revivalist he got the service of Piyadasa Sirisena to publish Sinhala Jatiya paper to encourage oriental studies.

Mahendrapala married Caroline de Silva, the daughter of Galle business magnate K.C. Juanis de Silva who also had his tea and rubber plantations in the Matara district. Juanis de Silva imported rice and wheat flour from Burma and India, sugar from Bombay and London and dry fish from Bombay and Pondicheri. Juanis also was an exporter of Sri Lankan products such as coconut oil and coir to India. He was also the Galle agent of E.G. Adamaly and Company and several Calcutta and Golkonda mercantile firms. Caroline was the youngest daughter of Juanis and the marriage also strengthened the business activities of Amarasuriya.

Mahendrapala had several children. Four sons, Henry Woodward, Thomas, Francis and Buddhadasa and three daughters Susima, Irene and Amara all became important personalities of plantation industry, commerce and politics in the twentieth century. Mahendrapala died on 25 September 1916 at an early age of 43 years of diabetics. His four sons inherited the plantations. Henry Woodward got Citrus Group 2166 acres; Thomas got Monrovia 1118 acres in extent, Francis got Olympus Group 931 acres while got Diyadawa 690 acres.

Henry Woodward Amarasuriya the eldest of Mahendrapalas children took over the management of his fathers' estates and the affairs of the family. Educated at Mahinda College he became the manager of the Buddhist Education Society of Galle. His teachers were paid better than the other school organizations and helped to maintain a higher standard in education.

As a planter Henry Woodward Amarasuriya increased the fathers' estate and their production by tenfold and concentrated heavily on tea, rubber and coconut. He completed the Olympus Group tea factory started by his father. He also developed the roads, dispensaries, anti-natal clinic, schools and temples around their estates. With the management of estate and schools he joined the main political stream of by joining the Ceylon National Congress in which he was chosen as the President for 1936-1938. He entered the State Council in 1931 as member for Udugama constituency and in 1936 he was the elected member for Galle constituency. H.W. Amarasuriya was the Chairman of the Southern Province Planters Association, Chairman of the Low Country Product Association, the first President of the Ceylon Merchants Chamber, President of All Ceylon Traders Association. He was an active member of Colombo Young Men's Buddhist Association and a founder member of All Ceylon Buddhist Congress. He patronized the Mahabodi Society and was the first President Ceylon Regional Brands (Roberts, Norah, 2005, pp. 419-422). He was the President of Mahajana Sabas when it was affiliated to the newly formed United National Party in 1946.

Henry Woodward's younger brother Thomas Amarasuriya was one of the ablest planters of the day. He was elected as the first sinhala Chairman of the Planters Association in 1940. He had his early education at Mahinda College and later joined the Royal College. 1926-1928 he followed a course on plantations at the Agricultural College- Kent in England and on his return he took to the management of the ancestral property in plantations. He inherited Monrovia at Ratgama of 1118 acres in which 800 acres of coconut, 300 acres of tea, and 250 acres of rubber were planted. This land was bought up by his grandfather Muhandirum Thomas

Amarasuriya from Captain Baily of P & O Company, Galle. Thomas Amarasuriya was the Chairman of the Low Country Products Association. He was elected three times as the President of the Southern Province Planters Association. In 1942 he entered the State Council as the member for Moratuwa seat. He took to Municipal election in 1935 when he was elected the member for Hirembure ward in Galle Municipal Council unopposed.

Francis Amarasuriya, the younger brother of Henry Woodward and Thomas Amarasuriya, born in 1909, educated at Ananda College, Colombo was a good sportsman, winning the 100 yards athletic championship at Ceylon Cabit Battalion Sport in 1924, played foot ball, cricket and tennis. After leaving the college he took to planting. His inherited estate Olympus Group which was 931 acres covered three villages, Poddala, Baddegama and Wanduramba. He was also a very popular turfite who owned some of the best race horses in 1937 (Roberts, Norah, 2005, p.426).

Susima Amarasuriya the eldest daughter of Henry Woodward was married to a descendent of Closenbergs Simon Perera, S.F.H. Perera who owned the famous Walahanduwa estate at Galle. Thus the second generation of Simon Perera got Charles de Soysas' family into close partnership in estate management and Francis Perera's marriage to Susima Amarasuriya got the Amarasuriya planting family into there fold. Thus by the third decade of the twentieth century major part of estate plantation was in the hand of the Simon Perera Amarasuriya and William Abeyesundara family compact. This family compact was mainly instrumental in ousting the European hold of tea industry after World War II. They purchased the British interests and start producing the best tea.

### **Role played by the *Maha Mudaliyers* (Elite class)**

As we have seen earlier cash crop cultivation started under the Dutch depended mainly in the hands of the Mudliyar class. One such notable family was that of Adrian Rajapaksa the *Maha Mudaliyar* of *Mahabadda* who died in 1824. By the time of his death his family owned the cinnamon and coconut plantations of major extent in the Bentara walallaviti korale and Wellabodde pattu of Galle district. When the state cinnamon plantations were auctioned by the government after 1833 a major part of such plantations were bought by the members of the *Mudaliyar* class. Adrian de Silva Rajapaksa's son Samson d'Abrew Wijegunaratne Rajapaksa – the Mudaliyar of Governors Gate managed the cinnamon and coconut plantations. His son Tudor Rajapaksa born at Welitara in 1868, managed these plantations and improved them by acquiring lands around these plantations (Rajapaksa Charitay, 1892, pp. 2-12). During the first decade of the twentieth century Rajapaksa family had coconut and cinnamon plantations at Eravvila and Kohilawagura at Ambalangoda, Denagoda at Balapitiya, Panilkanda at Uragama, Kekatiya mukalana at Kosgoda (Ferguson's Directory, 1907). In addition to cinnamon and coconut they had citronella and arecanuts planted in these estates. In addition to these plantations they had extensive coconut plantations in Colombo district and around Negambo (Wright, p. 535).

Another notable proprietary estate family was the *Maha Mudaliyar* Nicholas Dias Abeyesinghe of the late Dutch rule in the littorals. Eugene Godfried Abeyesinghe an advocate of Galle, born in 1868, the son of Rev. Abraham Dias was a landed proprietor who invested heavily on tea and rubber during the late nineteenth century. Eugene Godfried Dias educated at St. Thomas College and Royal College joined the Survey Department in 1887 and later appointed as the Mudliyar of Bentara Walallaviti korle. He turned to be a planter and possessed extensive coconut estates and house and property in Bentara Walallaviti korle, in

the Galle district and also in Matara, Kalutara, Colombo and Negombo districts (Wright, 1907, p.758). Borakanda at Ambalangoda owned by Abeyesinghe Mudaliyars family was one of the largest plantations in Galle district with 1500 acres of which coconut, cinnamon and citronella was planted (Ferguson's Directory, 1897).

Another landed proprietary headman family of Galle district was Gooneratne Dias family hailed from Kukul korale from the Dutch times (Roberts, Norah, 2005, pp. 429-436). Don Domingo Jayatilaka Gooneratne was a *Muhandrium* of Atapattu in Galle Commandery in 1722. His son Don Philipe Jayatilaka Gooneratne was a Mudaliyar. His younger sister was married to Don Nicholas Dias Abeyesinghe the controversial *Mha Mudaliyar* under the Dutch during 1785. 1794, who engaged in clearing the Nakiyadeniya forests Don Bastian Gooneratna, the son of Don Philipe Jayatilaka Gooneratne, the last *Atapattu Mudaliyar* under the Dutch. His son was Don David Gooneratne Atapattu Mudaliyar under the British. He married Don Cecilia Dias Bandaranaika the daughter of Don Abraham Dias Abeyesinghe Mudaliyar. His son was Edmond Roland Gooneratne who joined the government service as a Translator of Galle Kachceri. He steadily rose to become the Office Assistant to the Assistant Government Agent Matara, Police Magistrate of Balapitiya and Registrar of Land, Galle. In 1883 he was appointed Mudaliyar of the Governors Gate and retired in 1897 from service. He lived in Atapattu Walawa, in the lower Dickson Road, built by his grand father Don Bastian Gooneratne. E.R. Gooneratne married J.V. Illangakoon's daughter Matilda. Illangakoon was the Mudliyar of Weligam korale, Matara. E.R. Gooneratne was closely associated with Hikkaduwe Sumangala Thero and was deeply involved in the "Kara-Goi" ("Kara- Goi" contest erupted due to the publication of *Itihasa* a treatise on *Karawa* caste compiled by Weligama Sumangala Thero; claiming *Khastriya* origin which was challenged by the intellectuals of the day Gooneratne, Hikkaduwe Sumangala, Battaramulle Subhuti theros and others. The prominent member of *Karawa* caste led by C.A. Dharmaratne sent a petition complaining of the harassment of *Goyigama* caste headmen supported by the government officials to them to the House of Commons- the British Parliament. The whole episode covers under *Kara-Goi* contest) contest which erupted during the eighteen eighties.

As Mudaliyars closely associated with the Government Agents of Galle for a long time Gooneratne family members made use the privileges to expand their land holdings. By 1887 Gooneratne had extensive tracts of coconut, cinnamon and citronella cultivation in the Galle and Matara districts. Nadun Uyana and Neralu Uyana, Caslte estate, Nidamolana were among them cultivated with coconut, cinnamon, citronella and later tea. They possessed plantations in the Matara and Hambantota districts as well Wright, pp. 754-755).

Gooneratne family was closely connected to the Sirimanna family of Bentota. Induruwa James Sirimanna of Bogahagodawatta estate Bentota, a well known planter married to Lousia of Gooneratne family. They were also in possession of Horawala estate in Bentara Walallaviti korale.

Among these notable planters in Galle district was Alexander Edmund de Silva Wijeygoonaratne Samaraweera Rajapaksa, a product of the Agricultural School of Colombo. He was the son of W.S. Rajapaksa Mudaliyar. Born at Colombo in 1866, educated at Wesley College and later at Royal College, he entered the Ceylon Agricultural School and completed the three year course of studies. As a profession he commenced work on his fathers' estate. Horahena an experimented manuering coconut in his own garden as well as in different parts of the island and their results were published in the form of pamphlet, through Freudenberg Company Limited in Colombo. He experimented in cinnamon as well. Rajapaksa manufactured

copra of his own identity and produced cinnamon- S.D.A.R. Kedirana brand exported directed to Great Britain (Wright, p. 701). He had applied his new techniques to his plantations in Negombo, Kurunagala, Tabbowa and Chilaw district as well. His main plantations in the Galle district were Kekirikanda and Kohilawagura estates in Elpitiya and Ambalangoda respectively.

He received many gold and silver medals for his new scientific and technical findings internationally and locally. In St. Louis exhibition in 1904 he received gold medals for the best cinnamon oil and peeled cinnamon. In recognition of his service to plantation he was awarded the rank of Muhandirum in 1903 by Governor West Ridgeway and in 1906 he was elected to the rank of *Mudaliyar* by Governor Blake. In conferring the *Mudaliyar* rank Blake made the following remarks.

“I have had your name brought before me for the excellent work you have done in your district. You have given your time and your money on the encouragement of what I consider the most important work done in Ceylon, that in the improvement of agriculture amongst the people of the country, It is a great pleasure to me to acknowledge your good work, by conferring you the rank, I now bestow, that is *Mudliyar*, I hope that you will live long to continue the good work you have done before” (Wright, p. 702).

Muhandirum F.A. Wickramasinghe was the store keeper of Hayleys' Company in Galle. He managed to get the land auctioned at kachcheri cheaply by bribing the clerks and opened up small scale plantations. He paid less to the workers and had his brother-in-law Thomas Louis Adihetty as the manager of his estates. He was lucky to expand his plantations with the rubber boom of the early twentieth century. Wilpita Group at Poddala, 787 acres in extent and Lelwala Group at Wanduramba 681 acres in extent were both planted with tea and rubber. Later he developed Mount Pleasant at Wakwella, 116 acres in extent with tea, rubber and coconut (Roberts, Norah, 2005, p. 326).

When tea and rubber boomed some of the moneyed people took to plantation while well to do made purchases from planting companies and estates running into difficulties. One such person was W.J. de Silva who purchased Gallinda estate from Talgaswala Tea and Rubber Estate Company Gallinda was 687 acres in extent. W.J. de Silva had his son Bertie Warusavithana, one of the best superintendents of the day. The tea chests of Gallinda were transported to Mapalagama through bullock carts and were sent to Gintota railway station by patta boat, and from there to Galle harbour by train.

### **Growing of the moneyed class in the district.**

By the end of the third decade of the twentieth century a new class of native planters emerged as a result of the hard work of their parents as middlemen in the plantation and business sector. They had earned money and got their children educated at the higher English Colleges. Some of them took to Government employment while the others joined the business sector. The plumbago industry gavethem added money which they invested in plantations. Majority of them possessed cinnamon plantations which supplemented their earning.

Among these new class was men who amassed enough wealth through the avenues that emerged with the consolidation of capitalist enterprises. Among them was Robert de Zoysa of Balapitiya whose parents had cinnamon and coconut lands. Robert de Zoysa was the manager of Buddhist Theosophical schools and a devoted public servant who opened up a series of schools around Balapitiya, Karandeniya and Uragaha. He

spent his wealth for the social upliftment of the depressed classes. He was also a good planter and his estate Munewa Group, 337 acres in extent had rubber, cinnamon and coconuts, at Karadeniya Magala estate, 90 acres in extent, at Uragaha was cultivated with cinnamon and coconut. Pehembiakanda of Karadeniya was an estate of 50 acres of cinnamon.

Another planter of that interest was R.T. de Silva who had a fleet of lorries operating between Ambalangoda-Colombo, Colombo, Elpitiya and Pitigala. He was also a good planter. His Pitigala estate was 250 acres in extent and had tea, rubber and cinnamon. Koswatumana with an extent of 109 acres and Malaghadela estate of 98 acres were planted with rubber and cinnamon at Elpitiya.

Sir Ernest de Silva of Ratgama joined the plantation activities in late twenties of the twentieth century and was the founder Chairman of the Board of Directors of Bank of Ceylon. He was a philanthropist and had established Devapatiraja Vidyalaya at Ratgama. He was a graphite mine owner and invested his savings on cultivation of cash crops. Borakanda Group at Karadeniya planted by him with rubber, coconut and cinnamon was 714 acres in extent. He had an extensive coconut plantation at Ratgama kele which was 159 acres. Diviture was another rubber plantation which produced some of the best sheet rubber of the area.

S.P. Abeygunawardana was a leading planter at Kataluwa. He had Bibulegodawatta with an extent of 50 acres and Karayaldeniyawatta with 125 acres at Kataluwa planted with coconut.

### **European and their mercantile companies.**

In the nineteenth century only few European Mercantile and Planting Companies engaged in the plantation activities in Galle district. They actually dealt with the supervision of estates in their charge and the disposal of crops. Added to that was the need of banking facilities. George Steuart & Company was the oldest such agency founded by James Steuart in 1825, and continued as a merchant bank. But in due course it built up the agency side of the business to estates with visiting agents. Their work was not so much to advise on management and cultivation of estates but to value the property. Estates were constantly changing hands and experienced values were needed. During the coffee crash the function of visiting agents as values became very important. With the turn of the century the tea and rubber industry got firmly established and the practical experience became very necessary. The need for efficient planters became a major necessity which the Agency Houses had to fulfil (Roberts, Norah, 2005, p. 313).

The establishment of Agency Houses and Mercantile and Planting Agencies in Galle district had taken place in a slow process. The administrative centre Colombo and the main plantation districts were concentrated around Kandy. Naturally the early Mercantile and Planting Agencies were established around these two major cities. The thrust of the planters was felt in these areas and a very few European entrepreneurs had their investments in the Galle district. However, until the completion of break water in Colombo harbour Galle was the main port. Therefore the European Agencies and Mercantile establishments had their branch offices at Galle.

Mackwoods and Company was such establishment started by William Mackwood in Galle in 1841. John Black and Company had established their coaling and shipping agency for Clan Lines in 1847 and in 1851 J.J. Vanderspaar sons, a Dutch mercantile firm established its office in Galle. Delmage Forsyth & Company established its office in 1850, was later transformed into Delmage and Reid & Company in 1865. E. Coats &

Company, the local agent for many British and American companies opened up their office in 1877. Chas P Hayley started in 1878 was the most outstanding of these agencies as they were dealing with coir and fibre in addition to other local products. Soon they obtained their business on the management of planting and the export of plantation products.

Walkar & Sons, the oldest engineering firm to cater to plantation engineering and construction needs established its Galle branch in early forties of the nineteenth century. It was instrumental in repairing the machinery used for processing coffee and later the manufacture of tea and rubber. Cargills opened up their Galle branch in 1848 and became the oldest British departmental store in the region.

By the mid seventies of the century Galle had the office of Oriental Bank Corporation and Chartered Mercantile Bank of India, London and China. They provided the financial needs of the planters. In addition there were 17 Insurance companies operating through branch officers at Galle. The agents were Clark Spence & Co, J. Gibson Thompson & Co, Delmage Reid & Co, J.J. Vanderepaev & Co and Julian Lewis Vanderstraaten (Paterson's Almanac, 1871, p. 435).

The first mercantile and planting company ventured to manage plantations in the Galle district was the Ceylon Company Limited. At the beginning they ventured to manage coconut and citronella plantations of the European planters. By 1871 Ceylon Company Limited were managing 180 acres estate Bellevue at Balapitiya, 600 acres of coconut and citronella plantations at Karandeniya and 80 acres of coconut and citronella Milligantuduwa at Elpitiya (Ferguson's Directory, 1871).

By 1883 Sabonadiere & Co was managing 113 estates when Oriental Bank, the main financial supplies to the planters crashed and the owners declared bankrupt. In the mean time Henry Cumberbatch took over the liabilities under the name of Cumberbatch & Co. It was amalgamated with Carson's & Co and later engaged in tea industry through the association of Bibby Lines (Roberts, Norah, 2005, p. 313).

Chas P Hayley got off to a fine start and quickly established a profitable business due to hard work for long hours by its manager Charles Pickering Hayley. They had their office and fibre store at Fort, Galle and their fibre factory at Talapitiya and mat weaving centre at Pettigalawatta. The factory at Talapitiya pressed and packed the coir hanks into bales of mattress fibre, bristle fibre for shipment. The coir was twisted into coir ropes and the coir ropes packed in coils. Over the years export-agent activities of Hayleys Company were extended to include most of the major items of Ceylon products including tea, rubber and coconut.

Two other major European establishments instrumental in manufacturing plantation needs were Clark Spence & Co and E. Coat Co Ltd. Clark Spence and Company chief of the European mercantile firms in the Southern Province was established its office at Galle in 1860. They dealt with the export of all kinds of Sri Lankan products at Galle port and imported all articles of commerce. Towards the end of the century they were heavily involved in the plumbago business which brought capital for future local planters. Plumbago had to be graded and classified according to the quality before shipping them to Europe. They also exported coconut products such as copra, coir and ropes. They were the main shippers to United Kingdom, Europe, United States and Australia.

By 1897 four foreign companies have entered the plantation industry. C.P. Hayley & Co had purchased 200 acres of tea plantations at Udugama and 62 acres of tea and cinnamon lands at Galle. However, their

investment seems to be small when compared to the other companies. Udugama Tea and Timber Company Limited managed by C.P. Hayley & Co had three extensive blocks of land partly planted with tea at Udugama and another at Galle. Ginoredominie estate with 1000 acres extent had planted tea in 240 acres extent, Homadola estate with an extent of 2000 acres of which only 139 were under cultivation. Mamadulla estate 3400 acres in extent in Galle had only 150 acres under tea plantation. Saumereg estate of Udugama 234 acres in extent had 127 acres planted with tea. Talgaswella Tea Co Ltd had purchased 2017 acres of land at Talgaswella at Mapalagama was planted with tea in 712 acres. L.T. & P.P. Boustead had 1273 acres of land at Diviture-Elpitiya planted with tea in 305 acres and 75 acres of cinnamon (Ferguson's Directory, 1897, pp. 654-681).

In the same year five foreign companies were acting in the capacity of Agents in the management of seven estates all owned by foreign investors. E. Coats were the Agents for o was the agent Doon vale estate in Udugama. C.P. Hayley was the agent for two estates at Udugama, Daphe and Riceland. Delmage & Reid and Co was the agent for Digdola estate at Udugama. S.C. Vanderstraaten was the agent for Pati Raja estate at Elpitiya. Bosanquet & Co managed at St. Leonard's estate at Elpitiya (Ferguson's Directory, 1897, pp. 654-681).

Thus we see that a large number of foreign investors and foreign firms have joined the cash crop cultivation around Udugama and Elpitiya where they have purchased extensive tracts of land. But however, due to lack of road transportation and other necessities they were not fully cultivated.

When rubber prices were lucrative more and more foreign firms joined in the plantation as managers. Majority of them had their headquarters either in England or in a European country. They had their residential managers in estates. Towards the end of our study there were twenty such foreign firms directly involved in the plantation activities. Majority of them were concentrated around Udugama and Hiniduma area (Ferguson's Directory, 1948).

## Conclusion

The implementation of the Colebrooke- Cameron Commission recommendations in 1832-1835, was the turning point in cash crop industry in Sri Lanka in bringing a new era of development. State owned plantations were sold out in small plots and the up and coming wealthy classes purchased them and improved the existing cultivation. The Government upholding to the *laissez- faire* policies provided the necessary infrastructure facilities to the planters especially in the Galle district.

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