

Hobgoblins, Low-country Sinhalese Plotters, or Local Elite Chauvinists?: Directions and Patterns in the 1915 Communal Riots

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The Ceylonese Elites

The presence of newly-emergent and differently-structured Ceylonese elites beneath the net cast over colonial society by the ruling British elite is one of the several background factors essential for an understanding of the 1915 riots. Broadly speaking, one can identify and distinguish between two elite formations within Ceylonese society; between the "national elite" and the "local elite".¹ The national elite refers to those individuals and families who had a combination of prestige, power, authority, and affluence that was of nation-wide, as distinct from a limited and/or local significance; and whose circles and avenues of influence were more powerful than those available to the local elite. It can be described most conveniently by referring to such typical representatives as the Panabokkes, the descendants of Francisco de Mel of Moratuwa of Harmanis Dias of Panadura, and of Ponnambalam Mudaliyar of Colombo, the Pedrises of Galle and Colombo, the Senanayakes of Botale, the Obeyesekeres and Dias Bandaranaiques of Veyangoda, and the six advocate Jayawardenes. The local elite on the other hand is exemplified for rural areas by two *Pelantiyas*, or family phalanxes, in Hinidum Pattu in the Southern Province which are described by Gananath Obeyesekere in his *Land Tenure in Village Ceylon*: the Wijenayake *pelantiya*, and, on a less influential scale the Weerawardene *pelantiya*;² while in the urban areas it was represented by such individuals as C. Don Bastian, Piyadasa Sirisena, (Pandit) Thomas Karunaratne, J. E. Gunasekera and P. H. Abraham Silva.

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1. Cf. P.T.M. Fernando's distinction between an upper-level elite and a lower-level elite, with the dividing line resting on the possession of a good secondary education by the upper level elite. (*The Development of a New Elite in Ceylon, with special reference to educational and occupational background*, (Oxford University : D. Phil. dissertation in Sociology, 1968, pp. 5-6, 18-19).
 2. G. Obeyesekere, *Land Tenure in Village Ceylon: a sociological and historical study* (C.U.P., 1966) Chapter 9, especially pp. 237-42. The Bastiankorallage Rodrigues of Pamunugama-Hendala locality were a typical example of such an elite in the late nineteenth century: according to Patrick Peebles (in conversation).

The sense in which these groups were "new" must be qualified by at least two points. Both elites were influenced and assisted by traditional forms of status aspiration.³ Among other tendencies, these norms placed a high premium on government office and forms of land-ownership which permitted an individual to emancipate himself from direct cultivation of the soil. Partly for this reason and secondly, one found that several members of the traditional aristocracy of pre-British times were able to maintain their influence, albeit in reduced degree on occasions; and that such individuals used their bases of power and affluence to adapt themselves to the changes that were taking place in the nineteenth century Ceylon, acquiring the necessary levels of Western education and even entering such new status-consolidating professions as that of medicine and law. Nevertheless the total environment was new. The Ceylonese elites of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were not mere extensions of the old elite as in Indonesia.⁴ There were elements in elite status that did not exist in pre-British times. As P.T.M. Fernando stresses "the dominance of the traditional elite was based on ascribed status" whereas that of the new elite (or elites) was based largely on personal achievement.⁵ There was greater social mobility. There were new channels and patterns of elite formation.

These features were part and parcel of the administrative, economic, and social changes encouraged under British rule. The social transformation that occurred provided individuals and families with the opportunity of achieving and consolidating national elite status through two broad channels: (a) new avenues of economic enterprise and (b) educational acquirements in the English medium in an environment which gave scope albeit with limitations, for such acquirements. The two processes are interlaced. The wealth accumulated by the pioneer entrepreneurs enabled them to educate their sons in the best schools in Ceylon; and/or send them to the inns of court in London to become fully-fledged barristers. The second and third generations utilised their education to consolidate their economic and social position. In other cases, the professions provided a channel of entry into the national elite; while the acquisition of landed property from professional earnings, and/or a judicious marriage consolidated this occupational channel. Indeed, dowries and family alliances through marriages constituted another component in the formation of a national elite; but both elements were subsequent steps in social ascent because they rested on the financial and/or occupational standing of individual families.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 216-17, 226-47.

4. Robert Van Neil, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite*, (The Hague: Van Hoeve, 1968).

5. Fernando (1968) pp. 14-15.

Mutatis mutandis, these channels also contributed towards the evolution of the local elite. In their case, the traditional norms were probably of even greater significance in the process of elite formation. The non-entrepreneurial professions involved were less prestigious; they included such occupations as those of the registrar of marriages, the korala, the village headman or *vidane aratchi*, schoolmasters, coroners, presidents of village tribunals and in some instances, notaries public. In short, the petty bureaucracy of the districts, sub-districts and small towns were a segment of the local elite. Local notables or landed gentry, one section of the group which Ceylonese refer to as "landed proprietors", also constituted part of the local elite. Owners of moderate extents of property (whether paddy, tea, rubber, coconut or cinnamon producing properties), these individuals were emancipated from agricultural work and followed the life-style of the *pelantiyas* described by Obeyesekere.⁶ A third element were the *mudalalies* and local tradesmen in other words, the 'petty entrepreneurs'. It also included several (though not all the) members of the Kandyan goyigama aristocracy whose status and power was on the decline, or whose bases of influence were too limited or too localised to enable one to class them within the national elite, however high their social status. Modifications of this sketch of the local elite are necessary, however, with reference to relatively more urbanised areas, round Colombo, Kandy and Jaffna for instance. The occupational groups who formed part of the local elite were more diverse and could be said to include such elements as swabasha-media journalists, authors from lower-class origins, clerks, struggling proctors and others of such rank.

It follows from such a description that the local elite consisted of numerous groups whose physical and social contact with each other may have been limited, but whose range of influence and social position had some common features and whose position vis-a-vis the national elite and the masses was sufficiently similar for them to be viewed as *an* elite (albeit a segmented elite), rather than separate elites. In other words, the local elite was regionally segmented.

The achievement of local-elite status was also a foundation for social progress upwards into the national elite. In this sense the local elite was in part an intermediate station for individuals or families who were, in effect, moving socially upwards or downwards between the national elite and the mass of the people. This made for a blurring of the border zone between the two elites.

6. Obeyesekere (1966) pp.239, 242-44. Note that the term "landed proprietor" covers a wide range of landholdings and income and status-levels. It would include individuals who owned extensive cash crop plantations and who were part of the national elite. It is for this reason that I have spoken of "sections" with reference to this term.

With reference to the districts that were largely peopled by Sinhalese, certain features of the national and local elites at the turn of the century are relevant to this essay. Mention has already been made of the fact that the Sinhalese local elite possessed lesser extents of affluence, power and prestige than the Sinhalese national elite. It was also relatively less Westernised and had closer cultural ties with the rural masses. Where bilingual, members of the local elite were generally more proficient in Sinhalese than in English. By and large they were Sinhala-speaking. In contrast the national elite was inclined to adopt a Westernised life-style and was English-speaking. However, it would be grossly incorrect to view them as wholly alienated and differentiated from the rest of the populace at this stage⁷. Sinhala was used in several (though not in all) homes. The influence of the womenfolk was particularly significant in preserving many traditional practices. More vitally, many of the successful pioneer entrepreneurs in trading and contract-supply concerns, and in the arrack, plumbago (graphite) and coconut plantation industries knew only a smattering of English, or spoke no English at all. Merrenge Arnolis Fernando, P. C. H. Dias, Matthes Salgado, Simon Fernando, Sri Chandrasekera, Don Spater Senanayake, N. D. P. Silva and U. A. Gunasekera provide such examples⁸. Most of them wore the respectable yet peculiarly Ceylonese habits of coat and cloth, or coat and calf-length cloth over trousers, sometimes embellished further by waistcoat, belt, shoes and a comb on the head.⁹

While the Sinhalese national elite had common economic interests of a class nature, it was highly differentiated and divided by strong rivalries. Its composition was disproportionately Low-country; and the Kandyan elite responded with some degree of jealousy, parochialism and hostility to the domination thus implied. Within the Low-Country Sinhalese national elite, caste rivalries were strongly developed between the *goyigama*, *karava* and *salagama* castes in particular. Neither were the *goyigama* elite united. The traditional *goyigama* elite, still maintaining a limpet-hold on the Ceylonese section of the Establishment and represented by such families as the Obeysekeres, Dias Bandaranaiques and Pieris Siriwardhanas, was hostile to the

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7. There were a few who were. This is an impressionistic assessment.
 8. With reference to the first four, this opinion is based on interviews with the following individuals : Dr. T. H. Dias (P. C. H. Dias's eldest son), Mr. Charles Martin Dias, Joyce A. Fernando (grand son of M. A. Fernando) and Shanti Sri Chandrasekera. The other examples are inserted as educated guesses. Note, however that their sons gained proficiency in English.
 9. See Arnold Wright (ed) *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon* (London : Lloyd's Greater London Publishing Co., 1907) *passim*. While pictures here are positive proof of Westernisation they also indicate the forms of dress favoured by the older generation of entrepreneurs.

parvenus represented by such individuals as D. B. Jayatilaka and F. R. Senanayake. Speaking broadly, therefore, one can depict several major factional conflicts within the national elite : Kandyan elite *vs.* the Low-Country elite;¹⁰ the *goyigama* establishment elite *vs.* the *goyigama parvenu* elite ; the *goyigama* establishment elite *vs.* the *karava* elite ; the *karava* elite *vs.* the *goyigama parvenu* elite ; the *karava* elite *vs.* the *salagama* elite. It is probable that the local elite was drawn into this body of conflicts. Some of the conflicts may possibly be described in regional terms as well, by virtue of the regional bases of power held by some groups. Thus, for instance, the hostility between the *goyigama* establishment elite and the *karava* elite was in several ways a conflict between the Veyangoda locality and that of Moratuwa-Panadura (where *karava* leadership centred).

Such conflicts did not serve as overriding considerations on every occasion. The lines of factionalism were not rigid. Social contacts and marriages sometimes cut across these divisions. The circumstances peculiar to each issue influenced the patterns of grouping and conflict. Groups coalesced, split and reformed. On such issues as that of temperance, the groupings took different shape.¹¹ On religious issues differentiation between Buddhist, Protestant and Roman Catholic tended to be more decisive.

The 1915 Communal Riots ; Pre-conditioning and Causes

Twentieth century Ceylonese nationalism¹² developed largely within the social formations which have been described in this essay as national and local elites, though the national elite also contained elements who were strongly pro-British and unsympathetic to the demands and/or the methods of its leading political activists. A description of the ideological and attitudinal origins of Ceylonese nationalism is not needed here. Its existence can be noted as another significant background factor bearing on the 1915 riots. Certain features of its multi-form nature are of relevance however. At this stage

10. This was modified by strategic marriage alliances between some of the Low-Country *parvenus* and some *radala* Kandyan families, which achieved an union between wealth and longstanding status ; e.g. the marriages of D. R. Wijewardene, D. C. and D.S. Senanayake, C. W. W. Kannagara, E. A. P. Wijeyeratne.

11. This amounts to a denial of an interpretation, not uncommonly voiced in Ceylon, that considers the temperance movement as (in part) a *goyigama* blow at the wealth of the *karavas*. Some *karavas* took a prominent part in the temperance movement.

12. Some individuals (e.g. Dr. G. C. Mendis in the course of discussion) would challenge the validity of the term "Ceylonese nationalism" and would argue that sectional and communal feelings were so strong as to preclude a deep-rooted attachment to the concept of a nation state named Ceylon. This is not the place for a discussion of this issue and the term is employed because it is the most convenient.

the most prominent element in the broad stream of nationalism was a group of ultra-moderate constitutionalists whose main demand was for a greater Ceylonese participation in government, and whose culture and value system was significantly Westernised. There was another element, represented by such men as Dr. P. M. Lisboa Pinto, A. E. Buultjens, Ponnambalam Arunachalam, A. E. Goonesingha, C. E. Victor, S. Corea, A. P. Thambyah and C. H. Z. Fernando, whose ideas were more radical and sometimes included an active interest in relatively more radical types of trade union organisation than those favoured by the ultra-moderate constitutionalists. This group can be labelled the "mild-radicals."¹³ Both these groups, however, included several individuals¹⁴ who had some sympathy, and even a close association with another tributary element in the fledgling nationalist movement: the largely Sinhala-Buddhist rooted and tradition oriented movement which was inspired by the Sinhalese past and Sinhalese culture in ways which underlined its Buddhist content, and which expressed militant objection to the changes produced by Western penetration. The latter movement was deeply influenced by recent cultural, religious, and literary developments¹⁵ in the Sinhalese districts, developments which originated largely in the South-Western littoral peopled by the Low-Country Sinhalese. It can therefore be termed the religio-cultural revivalist movement. Its leadership was drawn from both the national and local elites—with such individuals as Arthur V. Dias, Walisinha Harischandra, the Anagarika Dharmapala, Martinus C. Perera, P. B. Ratnayake, R. H.

13. For a discussion of the differences in attitude between the ultra-moderate constitutionalists and the mild-radicals see V. Kumari Jayawardena, *The Urban Labour Movement with reference to political factors, 1893-1947* (London School of Economics : Ph.D. dissertation in Political Science, 1964) *passim* and especially pp. 45-46, 99-102 and 130-34. The choice of examples is also based on the evidence presented in this dissertation. With reference to the listing of Arunachalam within the latter group, I have been influenced by opinions and facts conveyed personally by Kumari Jayawardene and by some of the letters written by Arunachalam to Edward Carpenter in the 1980s and the early twentieth century. See Edward Carpenter (ed.) *Light From the East* (London : George Allen & Unwin, 1927) pp. 47-48, 78/80. Note should be taken of alterations in stance with the passing of years. C. H. Z. Fernando and Victor Corea are among the mild-radicals who 'degenerated' into ultramoderates.

There were several persons in the Sinhala religio-cultural revivalist group who took an active interest in the more militant trade unions : Arthur V. Dias, the Anagarika Dharmapala and Martinus C. Perera for instance.

14. Among the ultra-moderate constitutionalists : W. A. de Silva, D. B. Jayatilaka, Revd. John Simon de Silva, Charles Batuwatudawe. Among the mild-radicals, A. E. Buultjens (a Cambridge-educated Burgher convert to Buddhism).

15. E.g. the Buddhist-Christian debates such as the Panadura controversy ; the Buddhist Theosophical Movement. For a viewpoint on these developments and origins see Robert N. Kearney, *Communism and Language in the Politics of Ceylon* (Durham : Duke University Press, 1967) Ch II.

Mirando and Lindamullege John de Silva representative of the national elite ; and such personnel as Piyadasa Sirisena and the four others named earlier, D. W. Wickremaratchi, Hemendra Sepala Perera and P. P. Wickremaratchi drawn from the local elite. The orientation of this movement was, therefore cultural. For this reason perhaps, it has been argued that it was "of marginal political importance until after independence."¹⁶ The opinion would seem to carry a degree of underestimation. The movement had political and nationalist undertones. Its personnel participated, together with the ultra-moderate-constitutionalists, in the temperance campaigns of the early twentieth century.¹⁷ And these, as Kumari Jayawardena has illustrated, had a political content.¹⁸

While recognising the diverse origins and forms of Ceylonese nationalism, any analysis which attempts to represent these patterns in a cut-and-dried style does so at its own peril. Several political activists straddled at least two of the three tributary streams of nationalist thinking that have been described above.

Such strands of thinking provided the pre-conditioning for the 1915 communal riots. In this sense the background factors were political, though laced with religio-cultural features. As for the more immediate and direct causes of the riots, Chalmers put matters in a nutshell in attributing them to "a combination of creed and purse".¹⁹ Fernando and Blackton have endorsed this view.

The Gampola perahera case provided the immediate cause for Sinhala Buddhist religious unrest. As Blackton has noted, the British authorities in Ceylon handled this affair in a legalistic and insensitive manner, underlining their basic lack of sympathy for Buddhism as well as a partiality for the minority communities.²⁰ Unfortuitously, the Supreme Court judgement which reversed Paul E. Pieris's decision in the District Court in favour of the Moors, occurred on February 2nd, 1915. This was only a month before the hundredth anniversary of the Kandyan Convention, an event that was highly publicised in

16. *Ibid*, p. 41.

17. For the temperance movement see Jayawardena (1964) pp. 31-92 ; Jayawardena (1970), p. 225-226, *supra* p. 9 ; and P. T. M. Fernando (1968) chapter four.

18. Kearney might well retort that the temperance movement was of marginal political importance.

19. *Command Paper* 8167, Correspondence relating to Disturbances in Ceylon (London : 1916) Chalmers to Secretary of State (No. 15), 11 July, 1915, p. 35.

20. Blackton (1967) and (1970), pp. 237-38 and 253.

Sir P. Ramanathan, *Riots and Martial Law in Ceylon*, 1915 (London : St. Martin's Press, 1916), pp. 1-5.

Ceylon.²¹ In consequence, the Sinhalese religio-cultural revivalist movement concentrated its antipathies on the Moors, and on the Coast Moors in particular (a distinction which was not always maintained in the heat of the riots). Such antipathies were not new. Using representative publications and police reports, Kumari Jayawardena has shown that anti-Moorish chauvinistic sentiments were a feature of this movement from an earlier date.²² What was new was the extent to which and the manner in which this latent hostility manifested itself.

At the same time the shortages, the high prices, and the profiteering in basic consumer goods arising from wartime conditions provided an economic factor which contributed towards the riots. This aspect has been clearly illustrated in the essays written by Jayawardena, Fernando and Blackton. Such economic resentment focussed on the Moorish small traders. This is in itself significant. The Chetty and other Tamil traders and in Colombo the Parsee trading establishments were generally not the subject of attack.²³ It suggests that the religious factor was the key variable. As for the vague feeling among Sinhalese that all Muslims were enemies of the Government because Turkey was at war with Britain²⁴, it was at best contributory; and was more probably a convenient tool for mob leaders rather than a contributory cause of antipathy to the Moors. The belief that Moors were seducing as well as proselytising (a form of seduction) Sinhalese women²⁵ was probably more influential as a contributory cause.

Kumari Jayawardena has shown that labour unrest and political tensions also contributed in significant measure towards the rioting in Colombo. The political tensions had their roots in the national awakening that dated from the

21. Blackton (1970), pp. 236-37; and *supra*, p. 21.

22. Jayawardena (1970), pp. 224-25. Also see *Sessional Paper xvi of 1916*, Police Inquiry Commission, Evidence of R. L. W. Byrde (Chairman, Colombo Municipal Council), p. 24 and Evidence of G. F. Forrest (D. I. G. P.) p. 118 cited *supra*, p. 14.

23. Implicit in all the accounts. Also see official photographs of shops in Colombo with the word "Sinhala" and in one instance, "Parsee under the protection of Sinhalese" (*Sinhalayinge baaray parsee*) chalked on them in Sinhalese. Some of these photographs are in the File of the Municipal Office, R. L. W. Byrde (Chairman, C.M.C.) to the Secretary, Police Inquiry Commission, 10 November 1915 among the Newnham MSS in the Queen Elizabeth House Library in Oxford, having been filched from the Municipal Council (according to Newnham himself) by Newnham.

24. Cd. Paper 8167, op. cit., Chalmers to Secretary of State, 7 June 1915, pp.4-5, and Blackton (1970).

25. C. O. 54/783, Chalmers to Bonar Law, Confid., 22 June 1915, Encl. 6, Report on recent riots in Yatinuwara, Harris pattuwa, Tumpane and Udunuwara by James Devane, Special Commissioner, 15 June 1915.

late nineteenth century. The unrest among (some) labour dated particularly from the railway strike of 1912. The labourers' situation was aggravated by the rise in the cost of living after the outbreak of the world war. In fact, an increase in the price of a cup of tea would seem to have set in motion a chain of events which led to riots in Maradana in the early evening on the 31st May, an event which appears to have sparked off the initial troubles in Colombo.²⁶ In several of the riot scenes the railway workers appear to have been directly involved, and provided mob leadership.²⁷ Kumari Jayawardena, therefore, follows Chalmers in arguing that the riots in Colombo were "actuated by little or no religious impulse".²⁸ While admitting the important contribution of labour unrest towards the rioting in Colombo, one hesitates to deny any influence to the religious considerations. Chalmers's assessment of motivations and directions must be viewed with caution. So must the contention, presented by certain members of the national elite, that the mobs in Colombo concentrated on looting and did not attempt to inflict personal injury. Several members of the national elite who took an active interest in trade union affairs in the early 1910s were individuals who had some association with the Sinhalese religio-cultural revivalist movement and its offshoot, the temperance movement. They included Martinus C. Perera, Charles Batuwantudawe, D.C. Senanayake and Arthur V. Dias—the latter three being among the office-bearers of the Ceylon Workmen's Provident Association that was formed by the railway workers after the strike of 1912.²⁹ It is improbable that some of their views had not rubbed off on the railway workers. These skilled workers must also have been among the Sinhala-literate and presumably constituted part of the clientele of the *Sinhala Jathiya* and *Sinhala Bauddhaya*. One of their activists, the fitter Marshall Wickremasinghe, lived at the Young Men's Buddhist Association.³⁰ The hostility to cheap Indian labour which these workers revealed in 1912-13 and the fact that a few of them had assaulted Indians who were

26. *SP XV* of 1916, Despatches relating to the Report of the Police Inquiry Commission, Encl. 2 in No. 3, Extracts from a letter from Mr. J. G. Fraser; and Jayawardena (1970) pp. 228-9 & *supra* pp. 12. It is probable that the railway workers were stimulated by the news from Kandy. In that sense, the outbreak in Kandy was the spark. Fraser's account reveals that there was a lull in the troubles in Colombo between circa midnight on the 31st, and 6.00 a.m. on the 1st, and that the major outbreaks occurred after a "recrudescence" of the rioting in broad daylight on the 1st morning—an interesting fact.

27. Jayawardena (1970) pp. 27-30 & *supra*, pp. 12-13; and Ramanathan (1916) p. 27 where Inspector W. E. de Silva's evidence is recorded.

28. Kumari Jayawardena, "Pioneer Rebels Among the Colombo Working Class", *Young Socialist*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (November 1968), p. 82.

29. Jayawardena, *supra*, p. 13; Also see Jayawardena (1970), pp. 229-30.

30. Kumari Jayawardena, "Pioneer Rebels Among the Colombo Working Class", *Young Socialist*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (November 1968), p. 83.

working on the railways³¹ is witness to an antipathy to other minority groups which probably contained a mixture of religious and economic considerations ; and which, on Kumari Jayawardena's own showing, was an ingredient in the pre-conditioning for the riots of 1915.

British Reactions

Just as much as in India, many Britishers who were used to the old paternal relations responded with irrational anger when they were confronted with educated "natives" who claimed equality.³² The arrogance and racial prejudice not uncommon to many British Colonialists³³, moreover, made for their social isolation and restricted meaningful dialogue in moments of crisis. The British authorities (particularly those at the centre) in Ceylon had always been sensitive to any challenge to their political authority. Mindful of the development of nationalist sentiments in several Asian countries, a Governor interpreted the powers of combination displayed by the carters of Colombo during their strike in 1906 as "a continuation of the wave of unrest" that was prevalent "all over the East".³⁴ In consequence a close watch was kept on the temperance societies and militant newspapers and journals, and on the activities of such individuals as the Anagarika Dharmapala.³⁵ Officials concluded that Dharmapala was "a calculating and conceited poseur".³⁶ Not incorrectly, they perceived a strong political tinge in the temperance movement. Nevertheless, the communal outbreaks of May-June 1915 took them by surprise. The fact

31. *Idem*, and Jayawardena (1970) p. 228 & *supra*, p. 12.

32. As noted for India by Philip Woodruff, *The Man Who Ruled India, Vol. II : The Guardians*, reprint (London : Jonathan Cape 1965) pp. 17 & 173. For Ceylon see the specific cases related by W. T. Stace in his memoirs and the attitude reflected in Frederick Bowes's memoirs. See Stace MSS "Notes on Life in Ceylon, 1910-1932" (Autobiography in typescript, c. 1950's ?) chapter one & p. 127 ; and Frederick Bowes MSS, "Bows and Arrows" (Autobiography in typescript, circa 1924-25 ?) pp. 71-73, 313, 403-409. The former is available at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London and the latter at Rhodes House Library, Oxford. Bowes was in the Ceylon Civil Service from 1891-1922, retiring as Principal Collector of Customs, a post he held in 1915.

33. See the criticism in Stace's autobiography, *op. cit.*, final chapter. This chapter was published in *The Yale Review*, 1954, and reprinted in *The Times of Ceylon*, 18 May 1954. Also refer to the case of the Colombo Club in CO 54,508, Birch to Carnarvon, no. 68, 16 June 1877.

34. CO 54/702, Blake to Elgin & Kincardie, Confid., 16 August 1906.

35. Jayawardena (1970) p. 225-27 & *supra*, pp. 8-10. Ananda Guruge (ed.) *Return to Righteousness* (Colombo : The Govt. Press 1965) introduction, pp. viii-ix.

36. *Ibid.* pp. lvii-lviii.

that the riots occurred during the first world war inevitably influenced their reactions. In such a situation, and in the more immediate context of nationalist agitation in India and Ireland, and a mutiny in the Guides at Singapore,³⁷ the riots evoked a response in terms of the concept, "our Empire at bay". The evidence marshalled by Kumari Jayawardena also reveals that the participation of "the criminal classes of Colombo" was treated as a serious matter by the Governor, Chalmers, who was influenced to declare martial law largely because of the nature of the disturbances in Colombo.³⁸

In these aspects lie some part of the explanation for the British officials' distorted hobgoblin interpretations of the riots and the extreme counter-measures they applied : "it was necessary," said Chalmers, "to display and to exert the force which was at the Governor's command". The nature of these measures have been described elsewhere by other authors³⁹ and need not concern us here. The various British interpretations on the nature of the riots, however, are an integral part of the major focus of this essay : the patterns and directions of the 1915 communal riots.

There was no such thing as *the* British view on the 1915 riots. The British cannot be treated as a monolithic body. For analytical convenience several groups or components could be separated :

- (a) the civil secretariat in Colombo composed of the Governor (Sir Robert Chalmers), the Colonial Secretary (R. E. Stubbs), the Principal Assistant to the Colonial Secretary (E. B. Denham), the Attorney-General (Sir Anton Bertram), the Government Agent of Colombo (J. G. Fraser), the Inspector-General of Police (H. L. Dowbiggin), the Superintendents of Police and such European civil servants in Colombo as were actively engaged on riot duty (e.g. R. W. Byrde, W. E. Wait and C. V. Brayne);
- (b) the military secretariat under Brigadier General H. H. L. Malcolm ;
- (c) the European civil servants serving as district officers and the civil servants who were sent out into the districts as Special Commissioners ;
- (d) leading members of the British planting, mercantile, educational and missionary circles ;

37. The latter is referred to in Sir Henry Moore's "Postscript" in H. A. J. Hulugalle, *British Governors of Ceylon* (Colombo : The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. 1963), p. 212. I believe the Guides were a sepoy regiment or company.

38. Jayawardena (1970) p. 231 & *supra* pp. 13.

39. See the essays of Jayawardena, Blackton and Fernando, *supra* pp. 6ff.

(e) the Colonial Office in London.

One strand of thinking viewed the riots as a pre-arranged nationalist conspiracy that was not merely anti-Moor but also directed at the British.⁴⁰ This was perhaps the most popular interpretation and prevailed among individuals in all five groups which I have distinguished. It completely dominated the thinking of the military authorities :

the evidence produced shows indirectly that a seditious undercurrent has been travelling through the greater portion of the island.... Furthermore, without any direct evidence on the point, there is a decided opinion amongst those whose duty it...has been to visit the lately disturbed areas, that the movement was not intended to be continued solely against the Moormen, but was to be directed ultimately against the Europeans,

said a military report to the Governor signed by Captain Northcote.⁴¹ J. G. Fraser, R. E. Stubbs and E. B. Denham were among those who held this view. Fraser formed this opinion at the very outset. Facing a riotous mob on San Sebastian hill in the city of Colombo on the 1st June, he concluded

that the disturbances was much more serious than it had at first appeared to be, and that, as it was reported to be occurring all over Colombo simultaneously, it had been planned and that it was political in nature.⁴²

Denham, as we shall see, would appear to have believed in the theory of sedition.⁴³ Within the first week of June, Stubbs was convinced that "the affair had been organised by big people who wanted to see how far they could go in defiance of Government", and located the leadership among the educated Low-Country Sinhalese.⁴⁴ Reporting on the riots in Colombo at a later date, R. L. W. Byrde, (a civil servant) alluded to the political nature of the riots and linked them with

40. A few went further and said that German agents instigated the riots. See *infra*, pp. 76.

41. *Cd. Paper* 8167, *op. cit.*, L. A. Northcote (Captain, D. A.A.G. Ceylon Command) Private Secretary to H.E. the Governor of Ceylon, 7 July 1915, p. 23.

42. *SP xv of 1916*, *op. cit.*, Extracts from a Letter from Mr. J. G. Fraser, G. A. Western Province. He also noted, with reference to the renewal of rioting in broad daylight on the 1st June : "No one credited the Sinhalese at that time with such power of organisation and with such daring." This letter was written in July 1915 at the latest.

43. *Infra*, p. 72.

44. CO 54/353, Private letter from R. E. Stubbs to A.E. Collins, 2 June 1915 bound with despatch no. 353.

a form of nationalism similar to those prevailing in India and Ireland.⁴⁵ However, it would seem that few district officers subscribed to this view. The officer stationed in Matara and G. F. Forrest, reporting on Kegalla District, whom Jayawardena has quoted,⁴⁶ appear to be exceptions.

There were others whose reports indicate their conviction that the riots were pre-arranged, without suggesting that it was directed against the British. Dowbiggin's subsequent *Administration Report* suggests that he held such a view.⁴⁷ It was an opinion shared by many district officers. R. G. A. Festing reporting on the Panadura-Kalutara locality, H. D. Burden reporting on Kegalle District, G. S. Wodeman reporting on Upper and Lower Dumbara, J. R. Walters reporting on the riots in Gampola town, C. R. Cumberland and C. H. Collins reporting on Kurunegala District, H. W. Codrington reporting on the Puttalam-Chilaw locality, and N. Izat reporting on the Siyane Korale East in the Western Province, were among those who subscribed to such a view.⁴⁸ Blackton is probably correct in noting that few administrators in the field "felt that they were in the midst of an uprising against the British" and that they were relatively more unflappable than officials at the centre in Colombo.⁴⁹ Burden's report⁵⁰ made a clear distinction between the role of the Kandyan villagers and the Low-Country Sinhalese in Kegalle District. In his opinion "the average Kandyan villager (had) no idea whatsoever of a preconcerted plan" and was a catspaw influenced by the religious appeal and a looting instinct - a view which Chalmers was to endorse on a more generalised basis.⁵¹ He also made the following points : "where there were no societies with low-country influence there were no ring-leaders and no outbreak"; the greatest damage was in localities with strong Low-Country influence ; the (Low-Country) ringleaders could be identified "with a considerable aspect of certainty" and were "almost invariably members of a local temperance or political society". Collins and Cumberland also pinpointed the leadership

45. For a picturesque extract from his report, dated 26 August 1915, see Jayawardena (1970), p. 231 & *supra* p. 14.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 230-31 & *supra* pp.

47. *Administration Reports*, 1915, Police, 20 May 1916, Part III, p. B 6, Also see *infra*, p. 82.

48. For citations concerning Burden, Festing, Cumberland and Collins, see the footnotes that follow. Also see CO 54/782, Chalmers to Bonar Law, 16 July 1915, Encl. Wodeman (Special Commissioner) Col. See., 8 July 1915; and *Ibid.*, Encl. 2 ; J. R. Walters to G.A., Central Province, 2 June 1915 ; and Blackton.

49. Blackton (1967). Also see Blackton (1970) pp. 252-53 & *supra* pp.

50. CO 54/783, Chalmers to Bonar Law, Confid., 22 June 1915, Encl., Extract from a letter from the A.G.A., Kegalle (H. D. Burden).

51. Armand de Souza, *Hundred Days in Ceylon*, 2nd edn. (Colombo: Morning Leader Press, 1919) p. 74.

in the Kurunegala District among the *samagam*⁵² and among Low-Countrymen who were sometimes local residents and in other instances were alleged to have moved inland in small bands⁵³. Festing, in a report that is patently prejudiced and more imbalanced than Burden's argued that the educated *karavas* of Panadura were behind the outbreak. ("a thoroughly well-organised affair") and named individuals who constituted part of the national elite described at the beginning of this paper.⁵⁴ While maintaining this view in his subsequent evidence before the Police Inquiry Commission, Festing stressed that "most of the rioters" came from the coastal village of Pinwatte which is situated immediately south of Panadura and was (and still is) noted for its large quota of thugs and criminals.⁵⁵ In his evidence before the Commission Burden elaborated his views on the question of pre-arrangement. In his view there was "no general preconcerted plan"; but certain individuals in Kegalle District had for some time past, working through temperance societies, sought to constitute themselves a separate authority in society; and these very same individuals had incited and "preconcerted" the riots :

When I say preconcerted, I do not mean that they had been making arrangements for months or weeks beforehand, but for days and hours. There was no evidence in Kegalla of a preconcerted plan that showed any sort of hanging together.

While it is difficult to generalise on the opinions held by the galaxy of individuals who constituted the British planting, mercantile, educational and missionary circles, it would seem that they echoed the view postulated by Stubbs

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52. In Sinhalese the plural form for "association" (or "society") this word might, perhaps, be read in the sense of "religious association". Today the words *samagama* and *samithi* are used indiscriminately to mean "assembly", "society", "association" etc.. But in the language of the religious controversies it was used with reference to Christian associations. (I am indebted to Mr. N. Amarasinghe of the Library, University of Ceylon for his explanations on this point). The word was also used for literary and debating associations and for village welfare associations. See the sixth annual report (in Sinhalese) for the Colombo Association For the Awakening of Intelligence—*Kolombe Gnanaprabodha Samagama haveni sungvathsarika varthava* (Welikada, 1905). Also see *infra*, pp. 81-82.
53. Blackton (1967). Also see *AR* 1915 North Western Province, C.R. Cumberland (G.A.) 19 June 1916, pp. 5-6, and note M. W. Roberts Oral History Project, Interview with C. H. Collins, 25 January 1966.
54. CO 54/782, Chalmers to Bonar Law, Confid. 16 July 1915, Enc. 5, Report of the Special Commissioner, R. A. G. Festing, 12 July 1955.
55. *SP XVI* of 1916, Police Inquiry Commission, Evidence of R. A. G. Festing (A. G. A. Kalutara) p. 68. Also see P. N. Bank's evidence, p. 70. Festing stated that there was no less than 15 habitual criminals in Pinwatte. Needless to say that rioters in Kalutara District numbered much more.

and J. G. Fraser of a nationalist anti-British conspiracy.⁵⁶ They certainly gave members of the Ceylonese national elite such an impression.⁵⁷ It is probably on information supplied by individuals in such circles that Henry Long, a missionary who had served in Ceylon, produced a version of the anti-British conspiracy theory which was further embellished by an allegation that German agents were behind the riotleaders.⁵⁸ This interpretation itself had its roots among certain officials and unofficials in Ceylon.⁵⁹ A subsequent issue of the "Planting Gazette", however, denied that seditious and anti-British ideas had prevailed and proclaimed that "the vast majority of rioters had none but the Moors in mind."⁶⁰ While referring to the riots as a dangerous armed insurrection, the memorial presented by leading European residents in Ceylon in 1917 also remarked that it was "primarily directed against the Moors".⁶¹

At the same time, there were officials within the civil secretariat as well as the district administration who discounted the theory of a nation-wide anti-British conspiracy. This included no less a person than Chalmers, the Governor. "I do not attach any political significance to the outbreak. . . . There is no feeling against the Government nor any desire to molest Europeans or to damage railways or non-Moslem property", wrote he at the very outset on the 1st of June 1915.⁶² He reiterated the same opinion subsequently and, as Blackton notes, his despatches used such terms as "riot" and "lawlessness" rather than the words "sedition", "pre-arranged conspiracy", or "organised rebellion".⁶³ According to Blackton Sir Anton Bertram "believed in plots in 1915" but revised his opinion later.⁶⁴ He would, if one is to say rely on Newnham's appraisal

56. Blackton (1970) p. 253 & *supra*,

57. (The Sinhalese Memorial), "Ceylon Riots in 1915", section 18.

58. See *The London Quarterly Review*, (July 1916), pp. 120-25.

59. See Jayawardena (1970) p. 230 for a remark by Byrde; and *infra*, p. 76 for Frederick Bowe's views.

60. Quoted in de Souza (1919) pp. 50-52. For a description of the riots in Kandy by the Principal of Trinity College, "Alex" Fraser, see W. E. F. Ward, *Fraser of Trinity & Achimota* (Ghana University Press, 1965) pp. 101-07. For his view on the nature of the riots see James T. Rutnam's article in the CJHSS.

61. See de Souza (1919) Appendix, p. 4.

62. *Cd. Paper* 8167, *op. cit.* Chalmers to Bonar Law, 1 June 1915. pp. 3-4.

63. Blackton (1970) p. 252 *supra* p. 41 & *Cd. Paper* 8167, *op. cit.* Chalmers to Bonar Law, 11, August 1915, where Chalmers states categorically that "the rioters certainly neither did nor wished to, include Europeans or Government in their attack".

64. Blackton (1970) p. & *supra* 41.

of his personality appear to have been a weak-kneed and vacillating individual who was easily persuaded by others⁶⁵ which suggests that his opinion did not count for much. There were a few district officers such as James Devane and 'John' Strong, the former reporting on the riots in the environs of Kandy and the latter stationed in Ratnapura, who did not subscribe to either of the pre-planned conspiracy theories.⁶⁶ In a subsequent appraisal H. E. Newnham presented a similar opinion. As a Landing Surveyor in the Customs, Newnham had not witnessed any of the scenes connected with the mainstream of the riots.⁶⁷ His memorandum on the subject was written on the 23rd March 1942⁶⁸ and must be treated as a considered review based on his experience of the riots in Colombo, his social contacts, and a reading of the printed documents on the riots. His interpretation is as follows :

The origin of the trouble was a small incident, inflamed by latent economic, racial and religious hostility, encouraged by lack of prompt suppression and spread by the success attending general looting. There was nothing of the nature of "sedition" or "treason" except in a technical sense and except in so far as some of the permanent inhabitants of a "Colony"

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65. "The Attorney General was a brilliant scholar and lawyer with a highpowered nonconformist conscience, easily swayed by the last person who talked to him. It was aptly remarked that he had a brilliant brain but should never be allowed to use it himself" noted Newnham in his inimitable, caustic style in his "Riots of 1915 in Ceylon", 23 March 1942. This memorandum can be found among the Newnham MSS, Queen Elizabeth House Library, Oxford. Bowes supports Newnham's basic point in calling him "Poor Anton" a "weak creature". See "Bows and Arrows", *op. cit.*, p. 331. Interestingly, Chalmers coached the ("good Anton") (Chalmer's phrase) on the speech he had to make in the Legislative Council in defence of Dowbiggin; and made him go through it three times on the night before the speech, (*Idem*).
66. CO 54/783, Chalmers to Bonar Law, Confidential, 22 June 1915, Encl. 6, Report on recent riots in Yatinuwara, Harrispattuwa, Tumpane and Udapalata by J. Devane, Special Commissioner, 15 July 1915; and Roberts OHP, Interview with A. N. Strong, 15 December 1965, pp. 26-27 of transcript. Where transcribed, the records of these interviews are available at the University of Ceylon Library and Rhodes House Library.
67. For his report on what he saw of the riots in the vicinity of the port and in Colombo see copy of Report in File No. 1274 of the Customs Department, 3 April, 1937 in the Newnham MSS, Queen Elizabeth House.
68. *Ibid.*, "Riots of 1915 in Ceylon", 23 March 1942. Also see Roberts OHP, Interview with H. E. Newnham, 24 December, 1965, pp. 5-30 of the transcript, and Copy of Letters from Newnham to S.A. Pakeman, 31 August 1945 and Newnham to Sir J. B. Nihill, 11 November, 1944, in the Newnham MSS. Newnham's memorandum on the riots was activated by a request from General Inskip, who wished to know the background because "prominent Sinhalese were continually referring to the 1915 Riots with great bitterness", (Copy of letter from Newnham to Brigadier A. H. J. Snelling, H.Q. Ceylon Army), 16 June 1943.

are always "against the Government" when they want more political power. In spite of the finding of the Police Inquiry Commission, I do not believe that the riots were in any measure "pre-arranged".

Confronted with these interpretations, including the variant of the anti-British conspiracy theory which saw German inspiration behind the riot leaders, the Colonial Office favoured the opinion that it was a pre-arranged nationalist movement against the British, while discounting German influence.⁶⁹ Perhaps the most influential figure in the opinion formulation within the Colonial Office was one of the Clerks, A. E. Collins. Collins was a former colleague and a friend of R. E. Stubbs. Through Collins as well as directly, Stubb's private and official communications, his exaggerations, and his bland fabrications and denials⁷⁰ had a considerable influence on the Colonial Office⁷¹ till Sir John Anderson arrived in Ceylon as Governor and began sending more balanced reports.⁷² In any event, the theory of a nationalist anti-British conspiracy was an useful ploy in parrying questions in a House of Commons that was largely concerned with problems of war :

... it was a racial question very largely. It was a question of the Sinhalese thinking that Ceylon should belong to them...⁷³.. I think everything pointed to the fact that it was premeditated,

said Bonar Law on the 8th of August 1916 in reply to a question raised by a Member of Parliament.⁷⁴

69. See Fernando (1969) pp. 250-55; Blackton (1970) p. 252 ; and Jayawardena (1970), p. 231-32 ; *supra*, pp. 13-15, 46-54.

70. I recall Newnham telling me that another civil servant had reported Stubbs as making a remark on the lines : "Oh! I can tell them anything. They will believe me". Unfortunately this was not during the tape-recorded part of the interview. In any event, this is tenuous evidence because it is third hand and I would not have included it if not for the fact that it is in accord with what I know of Stubbs's character and if not for the circumstantial support provided in Fernando's findings. See Fernando (1969) pp. 252-53.

71. E.g. see minute by Collins, 1 June 1915 re Chalmer's despatch of the 7th June 1915 in CO 54/782; and Minute by ? on the despatch dated 16 June 1915 in the same volume. The arrival of Dharmapala's feverish letter (see Guruge, *op. cit.*, pp. 537-42) at this important stage aggravated matters. An official minuted : "This letter is only of value in showing the arrogant and hostile spirit with which the Sinhalese for whom he speaks against the Mohammedans". See CO 54/791, Dharmapala to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 June 1915.

72. Fernando (1969) pp. 252-53 & *supra*, p. 51.

73. Precisely the thesis in Dharmapala's letter.

74. *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons LXXIII*, 8 Aug. 1916, p. 581.

It will have been evident from the description of opinions held by Britons in Ceylon that those who reached the conclusion that the riots were pre-arranged (whether against the Government or the Moors) did so on the basis of their personal experiences or on the evidence presented to them in (and from) the field. A review of this evidence will be more apposite in connection with the investigation of the theory that the riots were pre-planned.⁷⁵ Another potent factor which shaped the reactions and interpretations of the British authorities needs mention at this stage, particularly because it has received scant attention from other authors : namely, the fact that certain members of the Ceylonese national elite purveyed the notion that the riots were an organised affair and influenced British thinking in this direction.

British Officialdom and Ceylonese Peddlers of the Pre-planned Theory

In Ceylonese elite circles it was commonly believed that a few of its members spread false information amongst leading British officials. Newnham's explicit evidence and an incidental reference in one of Stubb's letters confirm the validity of this view. Stubb's opinion that Ceylonese educated in Europe were mostly responsible for initiating the riots was, as suggested in his letter to Collins, based on "stories"⁷⁶. In his memorandum on the riots Newnham stresses this point in the following words:⁷⁷

The Principal Assistant Colonial Secretary (Denham) was highly ambitious and implicitly believed the highly coloured stories of Sinhalese "sedition" told him, in my hearing, by a prominent Burgher who was the family lawyer of many Sinhalese families. These stories were duly submitted as true and believed, and were the basis of much ill-advised action by Government.

In his interview with the author Newnham also referred to the fact that, on a visit to the military headquarters one night, he saw a Ceylonese (who was not known to him) ensconced in a chair besides an adjutant named Andrews, "whispering, whispering, whispering".⁷⁸

It is possible to identify some of these informants and rumour-mongers, largely on the basis of secondary evidence from Ceylonese sources. The Supreme Court Judge, Thomas Edward de Sampayo's letter of the 7th October

75. *Infra*, pp. 77 ff.

76. For full quotation see Fernando (1969) p. 250 or *supra* p. 49. Also refer to de Souza (1919) p. 72.

77. Newnham MSS, "Riots of 1915 in Ceylon", *op.cit.*

78. Roberts OHP, Interview with H. E. Newnham, 24 December 1965, p. 19 of transcript.

1915 to Sir Arthur Lascelles reveals his belief in the pre-planned conspiracy theory and proves that he was one of those who peddled such a view to the British.⁷⁹ It is however, not certain whether he conveyed similar opinions before October and in the heat of the riots. Both W. A. de Silva and the Reverend John Simon de Silva explicitly name Sir Hector Van Cuylenburg, a prominent Burgher lawyer and newspaper proprietor, as one of those who supplied the Government with misleading information.⁸⁰ Van Cuylenburg is probably the lawyer to whom Newnham refers. Noting that Van Cuylenburg had been *persona grata* with the Sinhalese at one time but began to drift away because he “developed into a Burgher of Burghers and rather looked down upon the Sinhalese in his heart”, Reverend de Silva jotted the following comments in his diary on the 11th December 1916 :

he gradually lost in the esteem of the people until at last the part he is alleged to have taken in misleading Government officials regarding the late riots made him detested by the Sinhalese people. It is believed that Sir Hector was the chief of the mischievous unofficial advisors of Government in the recent upheaval. Probably the perverse and calamitous attitude which Sir Robert Chalmers... took was largely prompted by this advice.

W. A. de Silva also pointed his finger of accusation at Francis de Zoysa and two members of the Colombo Municipal Council, Emmanuel G. Jayawardene, and J. A. Perera. Jayawardene apparently chairman of a railway workers' union in 1915, is said to have incited the railway workers to riot and then provided the British with false information in order to save himself.⁸¹ Apparently these 'facts' were revealed to W. A. de Silva, in association with many tears, by Jayawardene himself. C. H. Z. Fernando was cautious in his reaction to my queries with reference to Perera and Jayawardene and did not positively support de Silva's allegations, while remarking that the Congress leadership had always suspected them of having provided information to the British.⁸² Without information from other

79. CO 54/792, Sir Alfred Lascelles to A. E. Collins, Encl., T. de Sampayo to Sir A. Lascelles, 7 October 1915. Also Blackton (1970) p. 247 & *supra*-p. 35.

80. Diaries of Revd. J. S. de Silva, 11 December 1916 (following news of Sir Hector Van Cuylenburg's demise). I am indebted to Sriani and Ratna de Silva for the loan of these diaries.

81. Newnham MSS, Newnham's transcript of a conversation with W. A. de Silva in 1923, dated 12th November 1923. A note by Newnham re this typescript provides the above date and indicates that he was Secretary to the Local Govt. Board when he had this conversation with de Silva, who was a member of that body. Also see *infra*,

82. Roberts OHP, Unrecorded portion of interview with Mr. C. H. Z. Fernando, 4 June 1968. This was written up on the 4th & 6th June, Kumari Jayawardena was also present at this interview.

sources such evidence cannot be held conclusive.⁸³ It is perhaps significant that J. G. Fraser took Charles Batuwantudawe and Emmanuel Jayawardene with him when he went to settle the initial troubles near the locomotive workshop on the late afternoon of the 31st May ; and that they helped him to disperse a truculent crowd without any trouble.⁸⁴ Francis de Zoysa was in the forefront of the campaign for justice mounted by the Ceylonese in opposition to the countermeasures which the Government had taken ; he even functioned as secretary of the committee appointed to draw up a memorial on the subject—a choice which the leading political activists (including W. A. de Silva) would hardly have made if de Zoysa was a suspect.⁸⁵

On the evidence supplied by C. H. Z. Fernando two other possibilities are Sir Solomon Christoffel Obeyesekere and one Vander Straaten whom Fernando identified as the nephew or son-in-law of Hector Van Cuylenburg.⁸⁶ He mentioned that Vander Straaten was one of the commanding officers in the Town Guards and had the ear of the British, without saying that he (Vander Straaten) had actually provided information. Almost certainly, his information relates to the proctor W. P. D. Vander Straaten, because he was a captain in the Dutch Burgher section of the (Colombo) Town Guards.⁸⁷ He could even be the lawyer to whom Newnham refers, though Van Cuylenburg is clearly the best candidate. Vander Straaten may, however, have been the informant whom Newnham spotted at military headquarters. As an officer in the Town Guard he would have known the British military officers.

83. Note that in his conversation with Newnham, W. A. de Silva is said to have expressed great bitterness regarding Francis de Zoysa's (recent) speech before the Ceylon National Association at which de Zoysa is alleged to have attacked "the Governor, the Mudaliyar and also (de Silva) and the Senanayakes".

Reference to a newspaper account of the meeting of the Ceylon National Association (*Ceylon Daily News*, 10 November 1923) suggested, however, that de Zoysa did not make any such verbal assault. In fact, W. A. de Silva proposed de Zoysa's name for the Presidentship. This fact calls into question the validity of Newnham's report.

84. CO 54/782, Chalmers to Bonar Law, Confid., 16 July 1915, Encl., 1, Extract from a letter from Mr. J. G. Fraser n.d.; and *SP XVI* of 1916, Police Inquiry Commission, Evidence of Walter Dias Bandaranayake, p. 59.

85. See E. W. Perera MSS, Library, University of Ceylon, *passim*.

86. Roberts OHP, Interview with Mr. C. H. Z. Fernando, *op. cit.*,

87. Samson Abeyesooriya, *Who's Who of Ceylon*, 3rd edn. (1928) p. 215.

Sir S. C. Obeyesekere's speeches in the Legislative Council provide an inconclusive measure of evidence in support of the allegation against him. He referred to the possibility that some "giddy-headed youngsters... may have prepared the minds of the Buddhists to attack the Moors" and later made the same point about preparation in a manner which suggests that he believed it to be true.⁸⁸ Circumstantial evidence lends a further measure of support to the view that he misrepresented matters to the British authorities. One of the diehards in the Low-Country *goyigama* establishment, his contempt and hostility towards the *nouveaux riches* (of all castes) was openly expressed.⁸⁹ In view of his connections with the centres of British officialdom, one would not be surprised if he used the opportunity to deliver a body-blow at the *parvenu* political activists.

Several Moorish leaders also conveyed their ideas about the riots to the British authorities. Among them was the Nominated Moorish Member of the Legislative Council, W. M. Abdul Rahiman. In a letter to the Governor on the 1st July 1915 he remarked that there was "perhaps more in these riots" than surface impressions would suggest and that "undoubtedly there (had) been organisation beforehand."⁹⁰

A tally-sheet can now be drawn up. There is strong evidence that W. M. Abdul Rahiman, T. E. de Sampayo and Sir Hector Van Cuylenburg were among those who retailed the idea of a pre-planned movement to the British. The evidence against W. P. D. Vander Straaten, Emmanuel Jayawardene and Sir S. C. Obeyesekere is not inconsequential but hardly conclusive. That against Francis de Zoysa and J. A. Perera is negligible. Obviously further investigation is called for in this sphere.

Possible Historical Interpretations of the 1915 Riots : Seven Positions

On the basis of contemporary opinion in the 1910s as well as the patterns perceived by historians today, one has to consider and choose between seven different interpretations of the 1915 riots.

88. *Ceylon Hansard*, 1916, Debates on the 9th June, 1916. The first Low-Country Sinhalese Member's Speech, p. 21.

89. The statement that "the nobodies" were trying to become "somebodies", itself a reflection of the *goyigama* establishment's conviction that it was the "creme de la creme" (to use E.F.C. Ludowyk's words) of Ceylonese society, are commonly attributed to him. See Ludowyk, *The Story of Ceylon* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962) pp. 221-22 and A. E. Goonesinha, "My Life and Labour" in *The Ceylon Observer*, 4 July, 1965.

90. CO 54/782, Encl. 11 in despatch of the 8th July, W. M. Abdul Rahiman to H. E. The Governor, 1 July 1915. See also *Cd. Paper* 8167. *op. cit.*, pp. 8-11 for M. Macan Markar's report, which does not allude to pre-organisation in a direct manner.

- (1) The riots were a pre-planned Sinhalese nationalist conspiracy directed at British rule. This view can be labelled "the anti-British nationalist conspiracy theory."
- (2) The riots were a pre-planned nationalist conspiracy instigated by German agents and directed against the British. Essentially a variant of the first interpretation, this view can be distinguished as "the German-conspiracy theory".
- (3) The riots were a widely and centrally pre-planned outburst against the Moors and was not directed at British rule. This contention can be described as "the theory of an anti-Moor plot".
- (4) The riots were a regional plot against the Moors, centred among some of the Low-Country Sinhalese nationalists. Basically a variant of the third interpretation, it has been broached tentatively by Blackton and appears to restrict the influence of pre-planning to particular districts and to a section of the national elite. As a convenient shorthand this interpretation can be termed "the Blackton viewpoint".
- (5) The riots were a spontaneous communal outbreak in which criminals and other "undesirable elements" took a leading part. This contention can be termed, for want of an apt phrase, "the traditional Ceylonese hypothesis".
- (6) Common causal and background factors resulted in anti-Moorish communal riots which revealed some common patterns and which involved some uncoordinated pre-planning on the part of either the national elite and/or the local elite. Such an interpretation, I shall label "the sixth hypothesis".
- (7) Common causal and background factors led to anti-Moorish communal riots which were not in the least degree pre-planned, but which revealed common patterns and which threw-up riot leaders who were, in part, associated with similar organisations and were centred in the local elite. I shall call this interpretation "the seventh hypothesis".

An Appraisal of the Interpretations

The German-conspiracy theory can be dismissed first. The evidence presented in support of this theory is so negligible that it does not even merit the description "tenuous". Perhaps the fullest official expression of this view was reiterated subsequently by an administrator named Frederic Bowes.⁹¹ Said Bowes :

91. "Bows and Arrows" *op. cit.*, (see fn. 3, *supra*, p. 64), p. 321. Previously (pp. 282-83) he referred to the Freudenburgs as Jews from Frankfurt and noted that "by generous credits they had obtained mortgages over a large proportion of native holdings". While this needs investigation, his exaggerations and bias are evident.

No proof of German inspiration was ever discovered, but the fact that the outbreak originated in Dumbara, where the Freudenburg's had developed a considerable tobacco industry among the villagers and where their native agents still carried on, satisfied me that the inspiration must have come from Germany by this channel.

Apart from the inaccuracy revealed in this extract regarding the location of the first outbreak, Bowes's whole review of the riots is merely an illustration of the power of prejudice and poverty of critical analysis. Such criticisms cannot be levelled against Chalmers. He saw no German intrigues anywhere.⁹²

Neither can the theory of an anti-British nationalist conspiracy be sustained. In the first place, it contains a total misconception of the extent of militance and radicalism among all three elements in the fledgeling nationalist movement, and particularly among the ultra-moderate constitutionalists. In the second place, one can ask how the alleged conspirators hoped to challenge British rule⁹³ by attacking Moors and Moorish mosques, shops and houses? Such an interpretation insults the intelligence of the national elite. The notion is, to stand Forrest on his head, "fantastic".⁹⁴ Thirdly, the social isolation of the British, the background of developing nationalisms and a major war, and the influence of dubiously-motivated Ceylonese peddlers of the anti-British nationalist conspiracy theory, together provide one with a partial explanation of the origins of this theory in a manner which suggests that the theory itself is distorted and invalid. Fourthly, it is significant that the subsequent and more considered verdict of the Police Inquiry Commission did not make any allusions to anti-British objectives (or German instigation), though endorsing the view that the riots were "in some measure prearranged".⁹⁵ In the fifth place, an examination of some of the arguments on which this theory was based reveals that the evidence admits of different constructions to those which were derived by individuals subscribing to the anti-British nationalist conspiracy theory.

The Evidence of Pre-planning

The contention that there was pre-arrangement is common to six of the seven positions delineated earlier, the only exception being the seventh hypothesis. It is therefore, a crucial point.

92. Cd. Paper 8167, *op. cit.*, Chalmers to Bonar Law, 11 August 1915, p. 35.

93. With reference to the mob cries that 'British rule had ended and Sinhalese rule begun', see *infra*, p. 78.

94. Jayawardena (1970) p. 231 & *supra*, p. 14.

95. *SP XVI* of 1916, Police Inquiry Commission, p. viii.

It is useful in this connection to categorise the types of evidence which led British officials (and others) to the conclusion that it was a pre-arranged movement.⁹⁶ One can distinguish the following categories :

- (a) the fact that some of the rioting crowds and mob provocateurs proclaimed that British rule had ended and Sinhalese rule had begun ;
- (b) the simultaneity of the outbreaks ;
- (c) evidence to the effect that there was systematic spreading of false reports about threatened attacks by Moors or alleged Moorish atrocities together with the ringing of *pansala* (temple) bells to gather crowds which then turned into attacking bands ;
- (d) evidence to the effect that there was an accumulation of arms and bombs in *pansalas* and the fact that dynamite was used on several occasions to blow up mosques and other buildings owned by Moors ;
- (e) the suggestion that various means of distinguishing between Sinhalese (or non-Moor) and Moorish boutiques and houses were employed : the chalking of the word "Sinhala" on boutiques owned by Sinhalese and the display of Wesak lanterns in houses being such examples ;
- (f) the tone of the vernacular press in the period preceding the riots and evidence to the effect that street preachers had conducted agitation against the Moors in the same period, agitation in which dire threats were aimed at the Moors ;
- (g) evidence to the effect that many of these open-air preachers as well as riot-provocateurs and riot leaders were members of local societies or associations ("*samagam*") devoted to temperance and or religious work, with the implication that this could not be a coincidence ;
- (h) evidence which alleged that such societies had actually mobilised and prepared the people on the days immediately preceding the outbreak of rioting in Kandy ;

These categories of evidence can be reviewed *seriatim*, both with reference to their authenticity and their implications.

There is no doubt that on some occasions crowds raised entirely unrealistic, if exultant, shouts to the effect that British rule had ended and Sinhalese rule begun.⁹⁷ It was one of the elements in the riots which contributed towards

96. The evidence is summarised in one paragraph of the report submitted by the Police Inquiry Commission. See *ibid.*, p. viii. Later, Bonar Law repeated some of these lines, word for word, in meeting questions in the House of Commons.

97. See W.T. Stace, "Notes on Life in Ceylon, 1910-1932", *op. cit.*, p. 142 ; and CO 54/782, Chalmers to Bonar Law, 16 July, 1915, Encl. Wodeman—Col. Sec., 8 July, 1915 and Blackton.

the theory that they were an anti-British, nationalist conspiracy. Yet such cries, in all probability, reveal no more than a spontaneous and momentary fantasia induced by mass hysteria and by a sudden release from the bonds of authority, after years of frustration within the strait jacket of law and order. Where proclaimed by mob provocateurs such claims could easily have meant little more than a means of making their invitations to defy authority more attractive, for it carries the implication : "we can do as we please".⁹⁸

The simultaneity of the outbreaks of rioting was particularly influential in leading several officials to the opinion that the riots were pre-arranged.⁹⁹ These officials did not have the experience of communal riots which their counterparts in British India possessed. The simultaneity was more apparent than real. Hours and sometimes days separated the outbreak of rioting in various parts of Ceylon and the original outbreak in Kandy around midnight on the 28th May. These spans of time were sufficient to enable the news often embellished and distorted, to be conveyed verbally by travellers on train, road and footpath. The manner in which the rioting fanned out around Kandy on the 29th-30th supports this view. One of these arteries of wildfire rumour was the railway line. The news led to eruptions of rioting at towns along the line and eventually in Colombo. Each stage in the line also served as a centre for other arteries or capillaries of rumour (probably corresponding roughly to the road system) to spread and ignite trouble. Colombo in turn served as a nucleus for more arteries to originate southwards and northwards along the coast as well as inland along the railway and the roads to the Kelani Valley. Within a few days these various arteries and capillaries converged, merged, and cut across each other, thereby obscuring the original patterns of genesis.¹⁰⁰ In short, the seeming simultaneity only evidences the speed of rumour. It supports little else.

98. In fact one of the rumours that was circulated stated that, because Britain was at war with Turkey "the Sinhalese had been given a six days holiday to do as they liked with the Moors". See CO 54/782, Chalmers to Bonar Law, Confid., 16 July 1915, Encl. Report of the Special Commissioner, R. A. G. Festing, from Kalutara 12, July 1915.

99. See *supra*, pp. 66-68 and *SP XVI* of 1916, Police Inquiry Commission, p. viii & pp. 24-26, 73.

100. The most convenient source for gathering a picture of the sequence of the riots is, once again, the report of the Police Inquiry Commission (*ibid.*, p. i.). Apparently rioting was in progress on the 1st-5th June as follows :

- 1 June : 86 centres (including Colombo)
- 2 June : 116 centres (including Galle)
- 3 June : 83 centres (including Galle)
- 4 June : 54 centres erupted in fresh outbreaks
- 5 June : 38 centres

These arguments can be considered the final nails in the coffin bearing the theory of an anti-British nationalist conspiracy to its appropriate place of rest.

One can hardly challenge the authenticity of the facts presented in connection with the categories c, d and e. Such evidence was presented by a large number of British officials, and on many occasions finds support in the statements of headmen and non-official witnesses. Mosques and buildings were dynamited. Temple bells were rung. Stories were spread that such-and-such-a *pansala* was going to be attacked. Some mobs originated from among the crowds who had assembled to defend their *pansalas*. Shops were marked appropriately and served as guidelines for rioting mobs bent on loot and destruction.¹⁰¹ But do these characteristics necessarily mean that there was pre-planning in the sense of planning before the riots began in Kandy? The display of Wesak lanterns on Sinhalese houses for days after Wesak is not uncommon. It required little direction for individuals to take the elementary precaution of identifying their own boutiques and houses through chalked signs and the display of lanterns. However it is possible that word was passed down some sort of grapevine that such precautions should be taken, while the marking of Moorish shops with the word "Hambaya" shows a measure of pre-meditation. But such measures could have originated from among local ring-leaders without any direction from a central clique; and they could have originated after the 28th night. Similarly, the spreading of rumours, the ringing of bells and such like demand no long-term planning. Handarms of the crowbar and rice-pounder variety would invariably be brought by the villagers as they assembled in the belief that their *pansalas* were in danger.¹⁰² Stones did not cost even a dime a dozen. Dynamite was not difficult to come by, especially in areas where there were stone-quarries and plumbago (graphite) pits and mines. All the characteristics listed above could have been the product of resourcefulness and opportunism revealed after the initial match had been lit.¹⁰³ Resourcefulness there was in plentiful measure: one ring-leader named Wijesinghe perhaps taking his cue from the police, even directed his gang with a whistle.¹⁰⁴

101. See the following sources: *ibid.*, *passim* including the notes of evidence; *Cd Paper* 8167, *op cit.*, the reports enclosed with Chalmer's despatches of the 22nd June and 16 July 1915 in CO 54/783 and CO 54/782 respectively; de Souza (1919) pp. 47, 67; F. R. Senanayake's evidence in Ramanathan (1916) pp. 261-63; and the essays by Blackton, Fernando and Jayawardena in this Symposium.

102. As it requires some preparation to have bottles filled with sand, it would be interesting to ascertain how far such weaponry was found.

103. Cf. Burden's views on the disturbances in Kegalle, *supra*, p. 68.

104. AR 1915, North Western Province, C.R. Cumberland (G.A.) 19 June 1916, p. F6. It would be ironical if the whistle originated from the Police ordinance stores!

Even in combination, therefore, the categories of evidence identified by the letters a to e do not provide conclusive proof of pre-planning. The other three categories (f, g and h), however are of a different complexion. Since they are related they must be viewed together.

It is clear that in some districts, if not everywhere, Buddhist open air preachers conducted a campaign of abuse and threats directed at the Moors. Both C. P. Dias¹⁰⁵ and A. A. Wickremasinghe provided witness to fact. The latter noted that just before Wesak, "agitators went about the country stating that it would help the Buddhist cause if they showed resentment against the Moors in some tangible form" and that this agitation was conducted mostly by "street preachers in a new 'national' attire."¹⁰⁶ Macan Markar alleged that one Durmabandu in Kalutara and the president of the village tribunal in Welitara had, well before the riots, threatened to expel the Moors.¹⁰⁷ Immediately before the riots broke out in Gampola on the evening of the 30th May, a preacher who was a member of one of the (three) Buddhist *samagam* in the town and a teacher in a Buddhist school was seen addressing a crowd at a street corner.¹⁰⁸ Several district officers were convinced that preorganisation originated from within such *samagam*: with reference to Kegalle District, Burden identified the leadership among members of the temperance societies while the A.G.A., Matara was inclined to say the same thing for his district; with reference to Kurunegala District and the Siyane Korale East, Cumberland, Collins and Izat alleged complicity on the part of bodies described simply as *samagam*.¹⁰⁹ "Samagam" referred to an association and did not necessarily mean a village society.¹¹⁰ The evidence of the Ratemahatmaya of Udapalata, one H. D. Keppitipola, throws some light on the nature of these societies with reference to Gampola.¹¹¹ The town had three such societies: the Buddhalankara Samagama, the Siri-Sambuddha Sasana-dara Samagama and the Siri Puneyawardhana Amadeyapana Sama-

105. Ramanathan (1916) p. 270.

106. Albert A. Wickremasinghe, *Reminiscences of the Riots of 1915*. (Colombo: The United Press Ltd., 1941) p. 1. He added: "No one took the agitation seriously and certainly no Buddhist leaders supported it". The first phrase in this qualification cannot be maintained in view of the fact that riots occurred.

107. *Cd. Paper* 8167, M. Macan Markar to The Principal Asst. to Col. Sec., 19 June 1915, p. 9.

108. *SP XVI* of 1916, *op. cit.*, Evidence of H. D. Keppitipola, Ratemahatmaya of Udapalata, pp. 187-88. Referring to the same riots the A.G.A. Walters, spoke of a bhikkhu addressing a crowd that evening. See Blackton (1970), p. 240 & *supra*,

109. See Blackton (1967); Jayawardena (1970) *supra* and enclosures in Chalmers to Bonar Law, 22 June 1915, in CO 54/783.

110. As erroneously rendered by Dowbiggin and Blackton, See *supra*

111. *SP XVI* of 1916, *op. cit.* p. 188.

gama. These societies are said to have discussed both religious and temperance matters at their meetings though only the last named was ostensibly a temperance society. The biography of Abraham de Silva reveals that he was the architect of three *samagam* in the Gampaha-Rambukkana area in the period 1905-1915 : the *pragnavardhana samagama*, or association for the development of knowledge in Gampaha ; the *sasanabhivardhana samagama* or association for the development of the sasana in Rambukkana ; and the *gramarakshaka samagama* or rural protection society, in Rambukkana.¹¹²

Wodeman, Hodson and Dowbiggin go further than the other district officers in providing details as to how and when these *samagam* are alleged to have prepared the ground for the riots and mobilised village support. Hodson alleged that P. B. Ratnayake organised a temperance meeting in Hanguranketa on the 28th May while admitting that he could not prove it.¹¹³ Wodeman remarked that a notary public named Henry de Abrew Rajapakse¹¹⁴ was the president of a society in Upper Dumbara "which met at his house, at Mangoda temple and other centres . . . and appears to have plotted to drive out the Moors"; and stated more definitely that several temperance meetings and school prize-givings held in May served as a facade for the conspiratorial preparation for the disturbances in Lower Dumbara, while noting that P. B. Ratnayake was "probably the prime mover" as he had been present on these occasions.¹¹⁵ Dowbiggin's report* needs to be reproduced in extenso :

Evidence was obtained at Attanagalla, in the Western Province, as to the manner in which the attack on the Moors was committed. At Attanagalla there was a *samagama* or village society. Sixty or seventy villages belonged to this particular society ; four representatives from each village attended meetings, which were held at Attanagalla. Every village got a notice to hold a general meeting on May 28. On that day people were ordered to collect at the Attanagalla junction, when they heard the bell ring ten times in ten minutes. The bell is hung in the Buddhist temple. On June 1 the bell was rung. All the principal men of the *samagama* were present and all those who assembled were addressed as follows :

'The Tambies are insulting our nationality and our religion. We must harrass the Tambies, and they must be driven out of Ceylon. We have received letters to the effect that Tambies are being harassed all over the

112. W. M. Punchi Banda (ed) *Kruthagnathavaya* or Gratitude (Kandy: 1950) pp. 7-8, 12. This pamphlet was written in 1929 by the Revd. bhikkhu Hakerugammana Dambedinna.

113. Blackton, (1967)

114. Obviously from the *salagama* caste and therefore a Low-Countryman.

115. CO 54/782, *op. cit.*, Encl. Wodeman (Special Commissioner) to Col. Sec., 8 July 1915.

* AR 1915, Police, Dowbiggin, 20 May 1916, Part III, p. B 6.

place, and ordered (*sic*) to break their boutiques and mosques. We will give our lives for this. Go without fear, and break the churches and boutiques of the Moors and loot their property’.

Those assembled were divided into parties under leaders and moved off in different directions, looting the boutiques of the Moors. They were provided with food and arrack free of charge, and armed themselves with clubs, guns, swords, dynamite and bottles filled with sand.

How reliable is this body of evidence? And what implications does it carry vis-a-vis the concept of a pre-arranged conspiracy? The evidence on the role of the *samagam* derives from sources similar to those which provide information on the personnel who are alleged to have instigated and organised the riots. An examination of these sources and its bearing on the authenticity of the evidence must precede a survey of the riot-leadership which is, in turn, an essential preliminary to any expression of views for or against the theories favouring the existence of a pre-arranged conspiracy.

The Sources of Such Evidence and Their Validity

It is established that immediately after the riots the Moors proceeded to settle old scores by charging “any one whom they disliked with murder, raping or whatever else came into their heads”.¹¹⁶ Where such charges were pressed before military courts-martial, under which the laws of evidence were relaxed,¹¹⁷ there was every likelihood of conviction. Therefore, court verdicts which point to active incitement and leadership must be treated with ultra-caution. A distinction would have to be made between convictions by military courts-martial and the civil courts, for the latter functioned concurrently and gave much fairer hearings.¹¹⁸ A detailed review of each case is called for, with particular reference to the community to which prosecution witnesses belonged, since

116. W. T. Stace, “Notes on Life in Ceylon, 1916-1932”, *op. cit.*, p. 145. Also see de Souza (1919) pp. 190-217, especially chapter entitled “A Carnival of Perjury”; and Fernando (1970) pp. 255 & *infra*.

117. Roberts OHP Interview with A. N. Strong, 15 December 1965, pp. 31-32 of transcript.

118. Referring to cases brought before him, Stace recalls that case after case ended in acquittal and remarks that “in practically all cases the evidence was worthless” (*op. cit.*, p. 145). P. B. Ratnayake was fortunate in that he was brought before a civil court, where he was acquitted by the Judge without even being called upon to present his defence; de Souza (1919) pp. 209-117. On the other hand, see the seemingly prejudiced decisions reached by C. V. Brayne in the Samarasekera case, (*Ibid.*, pp. 194-97).

non-Moorish evidence was also employed.¹¹⁹ In the absence of such case-studies, however, one should be warned against the opposite danger of discounting all the convictions as travesties of justice. It is improbable that every Moorish witness lied, nor is it uncommon in Ceylon for false testimony to be used to nail the right culprits.

However the bulk of the information which I have utilised—and only a tiny segment of the available sources have been seen—derives from the administrative side rather than the judicial. The question arises whether the district officers leaned on Moorish witnesses. Unfortunately the means of meeting this question are limited. There were several instances where it is known that the district officers relied incautiously and solely on Moorish witness.¹²⁰ But it is reasonable conjecture that these officers received a significant part of their information (where it was not based on their personal observations) from official channels: from headmen and from other personnel in the petty bureaucracy. While such informants (and other non-official witnesses who were not Moors) were also capable of malicious and vindictive motives,¹²¹ their witness could be treated as relatively more reliable than that of the Moors.

It is in this context that one must test the validity of the evidence which directs suspicion against street preachers and the religious and temperance societies (the categories f, g, and h,) and serves as a basis for pre-arrangement. Some of the statements are patently based on hearsay and very thin: Hodson's and Wodeman's (and Festing's re Panadura) for instance. In other instances the observations of such members of the national elite as Dias and Wickramasinghe¹²² lend strong supporting evidence. The details supplied by Dowbiggin

119. In some Kachcheri records which I fortuitously discovered among the E.A.P Wijeyeratne MSS, there are some letters sent by the Police Office in Kegalle, dated 5th August 1915, in which those accused of riot offences are named and a list of witnesses for the prosecution and for the defence is supplied. In seven cases involving 20 accused there were 52 prosecution witnesses listed; 31 were non-Moor and 19 Moor, while the ethnic origins of the other two cannot be easily distinguished from their names.

I am deeply indebted to Mr. Tissa Wijeyeratne for the loan of a mass of documents which included some files on the riots.

120. See de Souza (1919) pp. 194-97 and 201-06 with reference to verdicts given by Moore and Brayne which were subsequently reversed.

121. See E. A. P. Wijeyeratne MSS for a petition from 5 inhabitants (including headmen) of Mawanella which alleged that Boyagoda Ratemahatmaya of Galboda & Kinigoda Korales had encouraged his subordinates to demolish Moorish boutiques and, thereafter, sought to evade suspicion and pay off old scores by arresting innocent people whom he disliked.

122. Though Dias was a Methodist and Wickremasinghe a Roman Catholic their general status and the role they played in the remonstrance against the excesses of martial law provide a sound rockbed for the reliability of their evidence. The latter was instrumental in bringing the Kelani Valley shootings to light.

are so exact that it has to be substantially correct ; or wholly false. On the whole, the evidence does not admit of light dismissal. Its general direction is supported by circumstantial fact. As noticed earlier in this essay, the first half of the year 1915 was marked by considerable ill-feeling against the Moors. The desire to drive them out or teach them a lesson¹²³ was natural. It is not surprising that street preachers gave expression to such desires. In village-Ceylon and bazaar-town-Ceylon one could expect such preachers to be drawn from among the political activists in the locality, i.e. the local political elite. Such political activists would invariably have been members of local temperance and religious associations. It is tempting to take a further step and argue that these individuals employed the institutions which lay at hand, i.e. the *samagam*, to give positive and violent expression to these antipathies. But it does not necessarily follow. Nor is it a *sine qua non* that such activists and the *samagam* prepared for the riots before the 28th night in a coldly premeditated way. On the present evidence it only remains a possibility. Even if pre-planned, it does not follow that the planning was under the direction of a central agency or a small clique with wide-ranging fingers of influence. The latter implies that the pre-planning was centred among members of the national elite. By definition, the local elite did not have wide-ranging lines of influence which could co ordinate and direct a general communal conspiracy. This is the crucial point of difference between the theory of an anti-Moor plot and the sixth hypothesis, for the former hinges on co ordinated direction and therefore implies that the plot was centred among members of the national elite. It is for this reason that a look at the alleged and apparent leadership is imperative.

The Riots in the Districts ; From Where did the Ringleaders Originate?

This survey will concentrate on the alleged ringleaders of the riots in the districts rather than in the towns of Colombo and Kandy, partly because the riots in Colombo had special features and in part because of the diffuse data at

123. The Coast Moors in the Central Province undoubtedly gave cause for provocation by their arrogant demeanour and aggressive claims. See de Souza (1919) pp. 7-37 and Ramanathan (1916) pp. 1-7. Cf. Significantly in 1857, the excitement created by the background of the Indian Mutiny would appear to have influenced the Moors in Ceylon to adopt a belligerent stance and served to awaken underlying communal feelings. In Kandy a general *kolahalaya* (disturbance) arose from a row between a Sinhalese lady and a Moorish servant woman. In the course of their retaliation the Sinhalese who were involved even hurled pieces of pork. See CO 54/330, Ward to Labouchere Confid, of 14 and 27 September 1857. This correspondence is more significant in revealing the Government's tendency to rely on *divide et impera* in periods of pressure: Ward hinted to the Moors that they should watch their step lest the Sinhalese be turned loose on them by Government but also found comfort in his conviction that a combination of all the communities against the British was unlikely in Ceylon.

hand on the movement in Kandy. It will also concentrate on the occupation and social positions of the alleged ringleaders rather than on the individuals *per se*. In doing so, it will seek to distinguish between individuals who could be grouped within the national elite and those who formed part of the local elite.

The fullest and most comprehensive survey calls for an examination of kachcheri, police, district court and military records. Mine is not such a survey. It relies largely on the reports of administrators and on source materials that are easily available. It does not even rest on a comprehensive coverage of these sources. In brief, it is a sample. Mindful of the false testimony borne by vengeful Moors and the difficulties in sifting the true culprits from the falsely accused without case-studies, the appraisal is based on the following lines of reasoning : in some instances the authorities fixed responsibility on the right persons ; if the sample contains some individuals who have been wrongly accused of complicity, this does not matter if the picture it provides is clear ; therefore, compile a list with particular attention to the occupational roles of individuals, weed out those cases where the evidence at hand suggests strongly that the allegations were false, and then see in what direction (if any) the compilation points. The list can be presented in tabular form thus :

<i>Place of Riot</i>	<i>Alleged Ringleader¹²⁴ and available details on social position Allegations from Administrators and/or headmen</i>
Upper Dumbara ¹²⁵	.. 1. H. de A. Rajapakse : notary public, L.C.
Upper Dumbara	.. 2. ? ? ? : a korala, no doubt Kandyan
Lower Dumbara	.. 3. P. B. Ratnayake : a contractor ; Kandyan
Maturata Locality ¹²⁶	.. 4. Wickremasingha Mohottala : a headman; probably Kandyan

124. What constitutes a "ringleader?" By and large, I have left the decision to the individuals who have supplied the evidence on which this list rests. Where called upon to exercise some judgement, I have taken it to mean a person who either led a mob or attempted to incite a mob or acted as a spokesman for a mob or attempted to engineer an event which could provide a base for rioting.

In the details provided under this column the letters "LC" stand for "Low Country Sinhalese". In the case of towns and districts along the littoral it is probable that most of those named are Low Countrymen.

125. CO 54/782, Chalmers to Bonar Law, Confid., 16 July 1915; Encl. Wodeman to Col. Sec., 8 July 1915.

126. Blackton (1967)

- Kurunegala-Negombo District¹³⁴ 22. F. Dias Bandaranike : a man of influence in Ambagahalande ; L.C.
- Kurunegala-Negombo¹³⁵ .. 23-24. Peter & Paulis Perera : sons of an ex-Registrar ; probably L.C.
- Weuda¹³⁶ .. 25. Wijesinghe : ? ?
- Panadura¹³⁷ .. 26. Hendrick Appu : of Pinwatte L.C.
- Panadura .. 27. Manis Appu alias Miappi : of Pinwatta ; L.C.
- Panadura¹³⁸ .. 28-29. Harry & Arthur V. Dias : sons of a wealthy arrack renter and entrepreneur ; owners of cash crop plantations ; L.C.
- Panadura .. 30. P. Charles H. Dias : an up and coming arrack renter and entrepreneur ; L.C.
- Panadura .. 31. M. Abraham Perera : another arrack entrepreneur & owner of plantations ; L.C.
- Kamburupitiya S.P.¹³⁹ .. 32. Porolis Sepala Dahanayake : a n'er-do-well.
- Kamburupitiya .. 33. G. Podihamy : ? ?
- Galle town¹⁴⁰ .. 34. "Chandi" Thomas : a chandiya
- Galle town .. 35. H. de S. Amarasuriya : a plantation owner & entrepreneur ; L.C.
- Ambalangoda¹⁴¹ .. 36. ? ? : a habitual criminal from Balapitiya L.C.
- Alutgama¹⁴² .. 37. ? ? : brother of the police headman of Alutgama
- Allegations from M. Macan Markar & W. M. Abdul Rahiman¹⁴³**
- Kalutara .. 38. Durmabandu
- A tulugama, W.P. .. 39. James Appuhamy :

134. *Idem* & Blackton (1967)

135. *Idem* & Blackton (1967)

136. *Idem* and *SP XVI* of 1916, *op. cit.*, Evidence of C. R. Cumberland, p. 127.

137. *SP XVI* of 1916, *op. cit.*, Evidence of P. N. Banks (A.S.P.) p. 70.

138. CO 54/782 *op. cit.*, Encl. Report of the Special Commissioner, R. A. G. Festing, from Kalutara, 12 July 1915

139. *SP XVI* of 1916, *op. cit.*, Evidence of William Ludovici (A.S.P., Matara). p. 157.

140. *Ibid.*, Evidence of A. G. Gottelier (S. P., Galle), pp. 133-35.

141. *Ibid.*, Evidence of H. J. V. Ekanayake (P. M. Balapitiya), p. 146.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

143. CO 54/782, Chalmers to Bonar Law, Confid., 8 July 1915, Encl. 11, W. M. Abdul Rahiman to H. E. The Governor, 1 July 1915 ; and Cd. Paper 8167, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-11.

Allegations from the Ratemahatmaya of Beligal Korale¹⁴⁴

Kongoda Niyadandupola ..	40.	Chandrasekera Mudiyanseelage Allis Appu; of Niyandandupola (Rs. 1,000)
Warakapola & Pilandua ..	41.	Jatiannige Simian Appua : ? ; of Warakapola (Rs. 1,000).
Ballapane & Kallapola ..	42.	Karunagoda Appuhamilage Marthelis Appu of Yateagoda (Rs. 1,000)
Ballapane & Kallapola ..	43.	Ranasingha Araccige Hendrick Perera : ? ; of Ballapana (Rs. 300)
Ballapane & Kallapola ..	44.	Rasaiyah : ? ; of Ambanpitiya. ¹⁴⁵
Ballapone, Egalla & Anhandiya	45.	Basnakarallage Kiri Banda : ? ; of Siyambalapatiya ; (Rs. 500)
Bihowela ..	46.	Dionis Appuhami : ? ; of Bihowela (Rs. 75)
Dewalegama ..	47.	Kankanamalage Kusalhami : ? ; of Dewalegama (Rs. 300)
Warakapola ..	48.	Dahanekaachchillege Kiri Bandi Appu of Warakapola (Rs. 2,000)
Imbulugasdeniya & Wat-tarena	49.	Handunpatirage Don Dinaris : of Ambrangala (Rs. 50,000)
Ampekohikakumbure ..	50.	Upaneris Kankanama : of Maboda in Pendeniya Wasama (Rs. 1,100)
Warakapola ..	51.	D. Albert Senanayake : of Botale, ¹⁴⁶ L.C.

144. E. A. P. Wijeyeratne MSS, Memorandum No. 88 from the Ratemahatmaya of Beligal Korale to the A. G. A. Kegalle, 30 July 1915. As the writing is not clear I cannot guarantee that either the place names or proper names have been reproduced correctly. No attempt has been made to provide correct present-day renderings of the villages mentioned. The R. M.'s list is provided in columns under the following heads: Wasama Residing Village of Ringleader; Name of Ringleader; Place of Disturbance; Arrested or not; Result of trial; Value of Property of Ringleader; Remarks. Our figures in brackets indicate the figures noted under the column for "value of Property", (where it has been filled). My numbers 40-47 inclusive refer to individuals who were arrested and convicted (by the 30th July); the numbers 48-60 refer to individuals who had been arrested and whose cases were pending; the numbers 61-70 refer to individuals who had not been arrested as yet. In some cases I have supplemented details (e.g. initials) on the individuals from data gathered from other files in the E. A. P. Wijeyeratne MSS.

145. Obviously an Indian Tamil labourer from Ambanpitiya locality (or estate). Rasaiyah's name also appears (together with one Sinna Dorai) in the list of ringleaders provided by another R. M. which is used below. He was convicted and sent for two years rigorous imprisonment.

146. Under "Remarks", the following note occurs: "These men 51-54 are natives of Botale in Hapitigam Korale and the Hon'ble the Govt. Agent, W. P. may be asked to report on the value of their property".

- Warakapola ... 52. D. Henry Senanayake : of Botale ; L.C.
- Dorawaka Talliadde .. 53. D. Simon Senanayake : of Botale ; L.C.
- Dummaladeniya .. 54. D. John Senanayake : of Botale ; L.C.
- Welligalla .. 55. Aracci Appu : of Hallawa (Rs. 50)
- Udukumbure .. 56. Kuruppuachchillage Sacunddarahami : of Tolangama
- Ampekohikakumbure .. 57. Premachandra Piyasena : of Atale (Rs. 207.50)
- Ampekohikakumbure .. 58. Warnakulasuriya Bastian Appu : of Atale ; L.C.
- Ampekohikakumbure .. 59. John Karunaratne : of Pindeniya (Rs. 15)
- Ampekohikakumbure .. 60. Tunkoralegē - Pedro Appu : of Pindeniya (Rs. 425)
- Dorawaka Talliadda .. 61. Madai Lebbe Abdul Caffoor : of Warakapola (Rs. 1,000)
- Godawela .. 62. Rajapassalekamalagē-John Sinno : of Penihela (Rs. 2,000)
- Atale Kumugoda & Ampe 63. Wijekoon Mudiasselage-Pieris Vedarala : of Kohikakumbure Udagama in Pindeniya Wasama (Rs. 1,400)
- Dewalegama .. 64. Jayakodi Araccige-Don Daniel Appu : of Walagama (Rs. 1,000)
- Batuwatta .. 65. Liyanaatukorallage-Suaris Appuhami : of Batuwatta (Rs. 20,000)
- Pallewela .. 66. Galkaduwerallage-Loku Banda : of Galkadua (whose father Tilkiri Banda owned property worth Rs. 1,000)
- Panakawa .. 67. Kola Pamunuge-Hinni Appu : of Panakawa (Rs. 750)
- Panakawa .. 68. Naname Araccige Matthas Appu : of Panakawa (Rs. 150)
- Edurapola .. 69. Kalawanerallage Dingiri Banda : of Uniledeniya
- Egalla .. 70. Rajapassapedige Lapaya : of Talgama (father owns property worth Rs. 3,000)
- Egalla .. 71. Ratuwaduge Anga : of Wadukanda (Rs. 100).
- Nangalla .. 72. Arachchillage Mudiyanse : of Pinnagodakande (Rs. 600)
- Nangalla & Mangedera .. 73. Arachchillage Mudiyanse Punciappuhami : of Mangedera (Rs. 300)

Nangalla & Mangedera .. 74. Malawi Pahiannehelage Hendrick Sinno : of Nangalla.

Allegations from an Acting Ratemahatmaya in Kegalle District¹⁴⁷

Dippitiya, Mawalagoda & 75. Kalu Banda : conductor ; from Weraka Aranayake

Do. .. 76. Hettivediye-Mudiansele Galpottagedera Ukku Banda : from Paranagama

Do. .. 77. Oyagama Chrisandas Mudianselage-Mudiyanse : from Paranagama

Do. .. 78. Pinhamy ; Teacher, Paranagama School

Do. .. 79. ? ? : Fiscal's Officer, Meda Pattu ; from Alutnuwara

Hettimulla, Kehelwatta & 80. Kananagomuwe-Tikiri Banda : ?
Halmessa

Dippitiya, Mawalagoda & 81. Surawira Arachchillage-Appuhamy : from
Aranayaka Hathagampola. Convicted, 2 months R.I.
and Rs. 1,000-fine.

Do. .. 82. Ilandaridewayalage-Siriwediya : from Dippitiya

Do. .. 83. Hakurugamma Pulinguwa : ? ?

Do. .. 84. Balasuriyage-Mudiyanse : from Aranayaka

Do. .. 85. Balasuriyage-Ukku Banda : from Aranayaka

Do. .. 86. Mohottalage-Mudiyanse: an ex town arachchi from Pannala

Do. .. 87. Uman Baas : from Dippitiya : having no property

Do. .. 88. Mudiyanse : ex-arachchi of Dippitiya ; from Dippitiya

Hettimulla, Kehelwatta & 89. Tikiri Banda Wanigasekera : from Hettimulla
Halmessa etc. convicted 9 months R.I. and Rs. 100-fine

Do. .. 90. Dompege Marthelis Appu : ? ?

Kegalla town, Ranwala, Ga- 91. Sinna Dorai : from Ambanpitiya : convicted,
ligomuwa, Nelundeniya etc. 18 months R.I.

147. E. A. P. Wijeyeratne MSS, "List of Ringleaders of Riot at Dippitiya, Aranayaka, Kegalla Hettimulla, etcetera" by?, Acting R. M., 22 July 1915. Of those listed below, Nos. 75-80 had not been arrested yet.

- Kegalle town .. 92. Loku Banda Aturupana : aged about 45 ; a cultivator ; organiser of a society at Mipitiya ; general character bad ; described by Burden as being “more influential than a korala” in Kegalle¹⁴⁸

Some Individuals Convicted by Court-Martial in Kegalle District¹⁴⁹

- ? .. 93. R. James: Aged about 50; a cultivator; “vice-president of the Kumbaldiwala Society which was organised against actions of Government ; drinking ; bad character.
- ? .. 94. H. T. Gurusinghe : aged about 60 ; School master at Manikkawa ; no property ; character not good ; drinks, involved in stabbing affray seven years ago.¹⁵⁰
- ? .. 95. Sirimala : aged about 56; a cultivator ; bad character, charged with murder and acquitted about 15 years ago ; “does not drink”.
- ? .. 96. Sethuhamy : aged about 45 ; ex Buddhist priest ; Fiscal’s Officer, a cultivator and a dealer in plantains; vice-president of Abraham Silva’s society in Rambukkana ; revengeful character.
- ? .. 97. W. J. Fernando : aged about 35 ; a “sundry boutique trader & baker” and “a native of Panadura”.

From this sample the names of P. B. Ratnayake (3), the Dias brothers (28-29), P. C. H. Dias (30), M. Abraham Perera (31) and N. C. Guneratna (18) should be excluded, either because there were no charges preferred against them, or because they were acquitted in court or released subsequently, and because there is no other evidence which lays a finger of suspicion on them. Some names are retained though it is not clear whether charges were preferred

148. The details of Aturupana are derived from a letter from a R. M. to the A.G.A. Kegalla, No. 582 of 17 Nov. 1915 in the E.A.P. Wijeyeratne MSS (the signature of the R. M. is indecipherable ; the letter is addressed from Kunpitikada) Burden’s comments on Aturupana are in *SP XVI of 1916, op. cit.*, p. 144.

149. E. A. P. Wijeyeratne MSS Letters from an R. M. to A.G.A. Kegalla, No. 582, 17 Nov. 1915. Aturupana’s name is also in this list.

150. Gurusinghe’s initials and the fact that he was a teacher at Manikkawa are derived from other pages in the Wijeyeratne MSS.

against then (1, 21, 24, 40, 41). It would seem that neither the Gampola Lekama or H. de S. Amarasuriya faced charges, but their behaviour during the riots was suspicious.¹⁵¹ The Walgampaha case is controversial. Dowbiggin's report was proved inaccurate in a subsequent case before the district court, but Walgampaha was undoubtedly among a riotously-inclined crowd several miles from the Gadaladeniya temple and it is unlikely that he would have been there as a bystander or as rank and file.¹⁵² The P. H. Abraham Silva case is also, controversial.¹⁵³ Since the list is really that of possible *crowd-leaders* the names of these four individuals could, however, be retained.

Among the ninety one individuals remaining in the sample, only Henry de Silva Amarasuriya of Galle¹⁵⁴ could be grouped within the national elite. On the whole, the list contains an assorted collection of individuals. It suggests that a few cultivators and thugs were among the leading activists in some places. It also suggests very strongly that some members of local elite groups were among those who bore the mantle of provocateurs and ringleaders.¹⁵⁵ The latter suggestion is supported by the general statements of officials as well as the reports supplied by Macan Markar and Abdul Rahiman. The latter noted : "it has struck me that everywhere Low-Country boutique-keepers, Buddhist schoolmasters and village headmen have been directing the mob".¹⁵⁶ According to Thaine, the gang which troops repulsed at Kahawatta was led by local

151. *SP XVI of 1916, op. cit.*, Evidence of W. R. M. Nugegoda Kiri Banda and of A. G. Gottelier (S.P., Galle) pp. 106 & 135.

152. *Cd. Paper 8167, op. cit.*, Dowbiggin to Col. Sec., 28 October 1915 ; and E. W. Perera MSS, Appendix containing extracts of a judgement in a district court enclosed in a printed letter from E. W. Perera to Walter Long, n.d. However, also see *SP XVI of 1916, Evidence of H. L. Dowbiggin*, p. 64 where he asserted that Walgampaha "was leading his gang".

153. On the one hand : *Ibid.*, Evidence of H. A. Burden & G. F. Forrest, p. 112, 118. Also refer to f.n. 2, *infra*, p. 96. On the other hand Roberts OHP, Interviews with the Revd. Bhikkhu Sasana Sobhana alias P. H. Abraham Silva, 20 & 22 July 1968.

154. For some details on his family see Wright (1907), pp. 759-62, and the *Amarasuriya Charithaya*(Galle : Edystone Press, 1954).

155. On a rough estimate aimed at distinguishing those who could be placed among the local Sinhalese elite, I came up with the following figures :

A. Local Sinhalese Elite	— 44
B. Not Part of the Elite, i.e. A	— 28
C. Cannot be Placed Yet	— 15
D. Non-Sinhalese	— 3

The chandiyas were placed in B and those with property over Rs. 1,000/- in A. Obviously, this sort of criteria has shortcomings.

Also see Blackton (1970) p. 251 & *supra*, p. 42.

156. CO 54/782, *op. cit.*

boutique owners and headmen.¹⁵⁷ Cumberland reported that the riots in Galgamuwa (in the N.W.P.) were led by "some bakers and people of that sort" who resided in Galgamuwa itself.¹⁵⁸ Wodeman alleged that headmen, schoolmasters, estate tea-makers and Low-Country Sinhalese traders were among the ringleaders in Lower Dumbara.¹⁵⁹ Again, headmen were thought to have taken a leading part in Upper Dumbara and in the Hanguranketa locality (besides individuals named).¹⁶⁰ Among the individuals named by Macan Markar as leaders of the riots in the littoral (and its immediate hinterland) extending from Colombo to Matara are : a tax collector, a registrar, a deputy coroner, a police officer, 3 "officers", 3 sons of headmen and 6 headmen.¹⁶¹ In the locality of Galle he alleged that "most of the leading movers were the headmen and influential class of Sinhalese". His statement is supported by the Atapattu Mudaliyar, E. V. J. Gooneratne's remark that the Labuduwa police officer and five headmen were among those who participated in the riots and were cast into jail.¹⁶² On the other hand, there is little doubt that in the environs of Panadura the toughs of Pinwatte played a leading role.¹⁶³

On this evidence the middle and lower echelon headmen and their kin would appear to have provided significant degree of leadership in the disturbances in most districts, with those in the North Western Province an apparent and notable, exception. This does not mean that the majority of headmen were actively involved in the riots or that assistance was not provided to the authorities in maintaining order.¹⁶⁴ But there would also seem to have been a large measure of acquiescence on the part of many headmen who did not actively participate in the rioting.

Again, it would have been noticed that officials were adamant that Low-Country Sinhalese took a prominent part in originating and directing the disturbances in the Kandyan territories. On this question it is important to

157. Blackton (1967)

158. *SP XVI of 1916, op. cit.*, Evidence of C. R. Cumberland, (G.A.) p. 127.

159. CO 54/782, *op cit.*, He also felt that bhikkhus were among those involved in promoting the riots.

160. Blackton (1967) : and *SP XVI of 1916, op. cit.*, Evidence of T. A. Hodson (D. J. & P. M. Nuwara Eliya), p. 170.

161. *Cd. Paper 8167, op. cit.*, pp. 8-11.

162. *SP XVI of 1916, op. cit.*, p. 139.

163. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-70. Also supported by Roberts OHP, Interview with D. R. de Silva, 17 July 1968.

164. See Blackton (1967) and the report of the Police Inquiry Commission for evidence on their performance.

distinguish the Matale and Kandy Districts and parts of Ratnapura on the one hand, and the Kandyan borderlands, including Kurunegala and Kegalle Districts and parts of Ratnapura District, on the other. In the former regions some Low Countrymen would appear to have been involved, but they may have been personnel who had been settled in Kandyan villages from a long time back. H.D. Keppitipola's efforts to throw the main weight of responsibility on the Low-Countrymen was clearly a case of special pleading.¹⁶⁵ The alleged complicity of headmen in Dumbara suggests that Kandyans took on leadership roles as well. In the borderlands, the extent to which Low-Country Sinhalese took a leading part would appear to have been greater than in the Kandyan heartland. Many bands of rioters would seem to have participated in the disturbances in a roving capacity. Colombo and the coastal areas were among the centres from which some roving bands originated. A group from Negombo District under the Perera brothers is even alleged to have advanced into Kurunegala District in a pinzer movement and revealed "a certain amount of system" in the manner in which they 'worked'.¹⁶⁶

In Conclusion

One is now in a position to make a final survey of the interpretations that have not been discarded. That thugs and criminal elements participated actively in the riots one would expect, but in the face of the evidence presented one can hardly maintain that the riots were largely the work of such elements, as members of the Ceylonese elite were prone to argue.¹⁶⁷ In most areas of rioting large numbers of villagers turned out in support of the ringleaders, ringleaders who were clearly not confined to the allegedly 'disreputable' sections of society. As Kumari Jayawardena has noted, conservative historians tend to fix the responsibility for violent social upheavals on the so-called "criminal classes".¹⁶⁸ Similarly, such elements provided a convenient scapegoat for Ceylonese authors who valued their respectability and social position, and were unwilling to look beyond their own (upturned) noses.

Nor can Blackton's hypothesis be sustained.¹⁶⁹ Blackton believes that there is too much coincidence to entirely eliminate the theory of a national conspiracy (limited or otherwise). He himself does not think that there was a nation-wide conspiracy, but favours the theory of "a regional plot.... encouraged by

165. *Ibid.*, pp. 187-88.

166. *AR* 1915., North/Western Province, C.R. Cumberland, 19 June 1916. p. F. 6.

167. Ramanathan (1916), pp. 16, 24-26. (D.C. Vijayavardhana) *The Revolt in the Temple*, (Colombo : Sinha Publications, 1953), p. 122.

168. Jayawardena (1970) p. 227 & *supra*,

169. Blackton, (1967). Also see Blackton (1970) p. 252.

Colombo groups, centering on Low-Country Sinhalese of Buddhist nationalist identity, and affiliated with Buddhist schools, *samagamas* (*sic*) and Temperance bodies". In brief he suggests that there was a limited and partial conspiracy¹⁷⁰ and absolves "leaders in the Temperance Movement and proponents of greater Ceylonese participation in political affairs" as well as "the Kandyan feudal leaders" from any involvement in the plot, while seeming to imply that the Batuwantudawes, the Walgampahes, the Rajapakses and Ratnaikes (*sic*) the 'Arthur Mahatmayas', the Hewavitaranes" participated in the riots.¹⁷¹ His interpretation is marred by vagueness as well as by contradictions. It also betrays an unfamiliarity with Ceylonese elites. Since the leadership in the temperance movement was centred in Colombo, one is left wondering as to what elements constituted his "Colombo group". His views cannot be reconciled with the fact that the Hewavitaranes of Colombo, Charles Batuwantudawe of Colombo, Arthur V. Dias of Panadura and P. B. Ratnayake of Kandy and Dumbara were among the leaders of the temperance movement and part of the westernised elite who sought greater Ceylonese political participation. Neither is he aware of the distinction between the national elite and the local elite, the difference between such individuals as Arthur Dias on the one hand and N. C. Guneratna on the other. Nor has he taken into consideration the possibility that the similarity in the social and political background of several riotleaders as well as the common causal sentiments leading to the disturbances could explain the coincidences to which he is attracted.

The latter criticism applies equally to the theory of an anti-Moor plot and the civil servants' contention that the disturbances were a pre-arranged affair.¹⁷² Some recapitulation is called for here. Among the pieces of evidence assembled in support of these views perhaps the strongest were the seeming simultaneity of the disturbances and the information which I have designated with the letters, f, g, and h: viz: the agitation and incitement of street preachers, the fact that such preachers and the alleged leaders of the disturbances were members

170. In suggesting that his interpretation describes "events in the Western, North-Western and Southern Provinces as well as in many pockets of Sabaragamuwa and Central Provinces," he makes nonsense out of the term "regional plot". For, in effect he includes virtually all the territory in which disturbances occurred. There were no disturbances worth speaking of in Uva.

171. Blackton (1967). Also see Blackton (1970) p. 252.

172. *Supra*, pp. 66 ff.

of *samagam*, and the contention that some of these leaders had mobilised and prepared the people for trouble several days before the outbreak in Kandy. I have already argued that the simultaneity of the riot proves little. It has also been noted that the complicity of members of the *samagam* is a feature that one would expect, in other words, that it is a natural coincidence and does not necessarily prove that there was coordinated pre-arrangement among the *samagam*. Nevertheless some of the evidence, particularly the categories f and h, suggests some sort of pre-arrangement. Now, the difference between the sixth hypothesis and the theory of an anti-Moor plot lies in their assessment of the nature of such pre-arrangement. The sixth hypothesis postulates that there was uncoordinated pre-planning from either the national elite, or the local elite, or both. The theory of an anti-Moor plot predicates a widely and centrally planned movement. As such, the latter necessarily implies the participation of at least some members of the national elite, for only such personnel were likely to have had the capacity to organise a coordinated and centrally-planned series of disturbances. My sample-study of individuals against whom suspicion of leadership and incitement is attached indicates that members of the national elite were not involved. It is possible, of course, that there existed an elusive group who took care to engineer the disturbances from behind the scenes. But in the light of what we know of the political philosophy and methodology of the various political segments of the national elite, this is improbable. In other words, the theory of an anti-Moor plot is an improbability.

Sixth Hypothesis or Seventh Hypothesis ?

This leaves us with the sixth and seventh hypotheses, the one favouring the influence of uncoordinated pre-planning, the other supporting the theory of an unplanned and spontaneous series of anti-Moorish riots which were largely promoted by segments of the local elite. At the initial stages of this research venture, my bias was strongly rooted in the seventh hypothesis. Such a hypothesis, however, has to meet and overwhelm the following pieces of evidence that in the period preceding the 28th-29th May there was agitation which sought positive retaliation against the Moors. Dowbiggin's evidence against the Attanagalla *samagama*,¹⁷³ the allegation that one of the individuals who is said to have instigated the riots in Rambukkana, P. H. Abraham Silva, "had sent the whole of his property" down to Galle (near where he lived) "two

173. *Supra*, pp. 82.

days before May 31",¹⁷⁴ and Burden's assessment of the nature of the disturbances in Rambukkana and Kegalla.¹⁷⁵ In short, such evidence has pulled me away from the seventh hypothesis and left me hovering between the sixth and seventh hypotheses. Could someone, *please*, undertake the necessary case studies and resolve my dilemma ?

174. *SP XVI of 1916*, Police Inquiry Commission, evidence of G. F. Forrest (D. I. G. P.) p. 118. Forrest does not name the alleged ringleader but I would identify the person he is referring to with certainty as P. H. Abraham Silva on the basis of details supplied by Forrest and my knowledge of Silva's career through W. M. Punchi Banda's publication *Kruthugniatheva* (*op. cit.*) and interviews with Revd. Sasana Sobhana alias P.H. Abraham, Silva.

No description of the property is provided by Forrest, except for the remark that it contained a large number of Sinhalese pamphlets signed by Silva. "These pamphlets were full of articles which exhibited animosity towards the Moors. They called upon the Sinhalese to have no dealings with the Moors, who were said to be causing the downfall and ruin of the Sinhalese, and things of that sort. I also found among his papers a sort of autobiography, in which he used the same sort of expressions, and it also contained abuse of Government officials and the Government generally."

175. *Supra*, p. 68.