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“Conjuring Up Spirits of the Past”

Identifications in Public Ritual of Living Persons with Persons from the Past

Introduction

Karl Marx pointed out in the first chapter of *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (“The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon”) from 1852 that just as people seem to be occupied with revolutionising themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, it is precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis that they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language. Thus, Luther put on the mask of the Apostle Paul. (Marx 1972: 115.) Marx called this also *Totenbeschwörung* or *Totenerweckung*, “conjuring up spirits of the past”, and he saw two possible outcomes of it. It can serve the purpose of glorifying the new struggles, but it can also end up in just parodying the old. It can magnify the given task in the imagination, but it can also result in a recoil from its solution in reality. It can result in finding once more the spirit of revolution, but may also make its ghost walk again. (Marx 1972: 116.) There is a risk in repeating the past. It may just end up in comedy or even ridicule.

This putting on the mask of past generations or *Totenbeschwörung*, I refer to here as historical approximation/synchronisation. This historical approximation to, and synchronisation of, living persons with persons of the past is done as a conscious intellectual effort by ideologues to identify persons and events separated in space and time because of a similarity. The connecting with a special event of the past bestows status.

Approximation refers to milieu/space and synchronisation to time. Such approximation/synchronisation requires a special mode of expression, which makes the replacement of room and the reversal of time plausible to the spectator. This mode of expression is myth/ritual or theatre, or both. Here we face both. We face the imitation of an original symbolic act, the handing over of sovereignty, but on a theatre-like stage, the “Court” around the present President of Lanka in 1995. Here the sober borders between theatre and ritual become blurred.

These approximations and synchronisations by ideologues are usually performed in situations which are experienced as contingent, questionable or illegitimate. Marx spoke about revolutions. In our case, we face a war for annexation of territory.

Moral doubts or scruples about such situations are then reduced or eliminated by them. Ideologists may choose to identify living persons with outstanding characters known in the past, with characters of virtuous saints, martial heroes and victimised martyrs. To produce such an illusion of identity, the modern political scene must be transformed into a theatrical stage where modern politicians identify others or themselves with ideal historical models. Time is made reversible which is achieved by ritualising approximation and synchronisation. Ideologues exploit what is inherent in ritual, but also in myth, theatre and literary fiction, namely the ability to reverse time. Therefore, what we are going to face is difficult to classify: is it myth, theatre, literary fiction? I know only with certainty that it is not a historico-critical presentation of a past event.

I shall now give an example of a recent approximation/synchronisation by representatives of the PA Government of Lanka in the 1990s. The borders between present and past, between real and virtual, have been suspended in this example. The event is the conquering of Yalppanam (Jaffna) by the Lankan armed forces in November/December 1995. This event is approximated to, and synchronised with, the event of conquering of Yalppanam by the war hero Sapumal Kumaraya in the 15th century. On the modern political stage, the role of King was taken up by the President Chandra Kumaranatunga-Bandaranayka, and the role of Sapumal Kumaraya by her General Anuruddha Ratwatte (Anon. 1996a, 1996d, 1996e). The role of the conquered King Kanakacuriyan is by implication ascribed to the present leader of the Ilavar, to Veluppillai Pirapakaran, who also leads his military organisation known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamililam (LTTE). The Ilavar are those who go for independence or autonomy of Tamililam. Lankans are those who go for a unitary or united state of Lanka (Schalk 2002). The aim of the ritual public performance on the highest state level is to eliminate an experience of contingency surrounding war in a Buddhist country, killing to conquer an area, and establish a unitary state in a country that is already mentally fragmented.

Perpetuation of historical cultural elements

The main principle of the government, the Lankan People's Alliance (PA) already implemented during the 1990s, to reach peace through war against the Ilavar, i.e. against those striving for Tamililam, thereby categorically rejecting negotiation and mediation, has been criticised on the basis of

humanitarian, Hindu, Muslim and Christian values, and above all on the basis of Buddhist values. The Government's principle has, however, been celebrated and praised by Sinhala extremist nationalistic groups and individuals on whom the Government was dependent. Leading extremist Buddhist monks, who have transformed Buddhism into a nationalistic ideology and who have subordinated Buddhist values to political values, also supported the Government's strategy to win by war the competition for authority in the north and east. The Lankan Government, represented by Defence General Anuruddha Ratwatte, in a "Solemn Pledge to eliminate LTTE and Prabhakaran", spoke in glorifying terms about "the holy task of defending the integrity and sovereignty of our motherland" and about "the compelling and holy task of the heroic and patriotic members of the armed forces to destroy the Tigers" (Anon. 1996c). He evidently believed that he was conducting a "holy" war against the Ilavar. As he was a Buddhist and as he consciously played the Dutthagamani role of defender of the Buddhist state against Tamil invaders, I presume that he imagined his war to be a holy Buddhist war.

The PA Government had to deal with problems concerning the moral justification and legitimacy of this principle, and of the war itself, that it had launched against Ilavar. The use of the word "holy" was only one way to eliminate doubts about the moral justification of this war. Another way was to demonise the enemy by using the word "terrorist". A third way was to isolate the LTTE from the Ilavar, which was like isolating the head from the rest of the body. Another reaction of the Government was to stop the flow of all information to national and international media to avoid further questions about the legitimacy of this war. Still another reaction, also aimed at reducing the experience of contingency regarding this war, was to show that what had been done so far was in line with the demands of tradition, of history, of a predetermined outcome. The Government exploited the past, however, a selected, constructed, subjectively interpreted and imagined past, to defend a questionable act.

The reference to tradition has become the main way to rationalise killing and being killed in the process of defending the unitary state. By "rationalise" I mean, "give reasons for", but of course, reasons of a special type that legitimise and motivate killing and being killed in armed struggle against Ilavar for the unitary state. A unitary state is in this case a state with centralised power and a state that is culturally homogenous, in this case a homogenous and island-wide Sinhala-Buddhist culture.

Perpetuation of historical cultural elements is a characteristic activity of political organisations with intensive contingency problems. To stop questions, the Government must enforce traditionalism. It must try to show that it *perpetuates* cultural elements, that what it brings is sanctioned by tradition. We usually speak of a perpetuation of the Dutthagamani syn-

drome of Sinhala extremist groups, the will of which is executed by the Government. The new President, having a distant past on the Sinhala left, which has criticised this syndrome because of its aggressive anti-Tamil Sinhala nationalism, could not perpetuate it under the same name. She could perpetuate it, however, under the cover of something else on which I confer the designation "Sapumal Kumaraya syndrome". This syndrome has the advantage of connecting the city of Kotte/Jayawardhanapura in the South with the city of Yalppanam/Jaffna in the North and is therefore more appropriate for ideological exploitation than the Dutthagamani syndrome that does not explicitly include Yalppanam. The Sapumal Kumaraya syndrome connects the Government with the Sinhala-tva or ethno-nationalist opposition, whose ideas about "the holy war" and "the Sinhala force" were expressed by Defence General Anuruddha Ratwatte. Sinhala-tva means "Sinhalaness" and refers to an ideology that is Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalistic.

I shall describe below a syndrome that involves the past, present and future of the Ilavar. As a syndrome, it points at a political condition characterised by a particular group of symptoms indicating intensive experiences of contingency about this war. It is quite certain that the Pali canon, which is regarded as normative on the island, has no place for a holy or for a just war. It is therefore not plausible to rationalise war by reference to the canon. References have to be selected instead from a section of the past that has already been idealised as heroic.

The events

In November/December 1995, the Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF) recaptured Yalppanam from the LTTE, who had taken it from the SLAF in 1990. On December 2, 1995, the Lankan army penetrated the Nallur kovil in Yalppanam. Pictures of the uniformed conquerors in the *kovil*, a Siva temple, were flashed all over the country and the rest of the world by the press affiliated to the Lankan Government. The conquerors had pierced the "heart" of the Ilavar. An eyewitness report of the exodus of the citizens from Yalppanam may be found in Emmanuel, 1997.

There followed a victory ceremony in Colombo on December 6, 1995, led by the President, who received from the hand of her Defence General, Anuruddha Ratwatte, a message dated 2939 in the Buddhist era, written on a scroll rolled up inside a red velvet container. The date refers to the number of years from the *nirvana* of the Buddha. The message said that in Yapa Patuna (Yalppanam) her authority and rule were established. The ceremony has been described in Pratap, 1995.

One first point is that Buddhist time reckoning was made the time reference for the military victory. I am not criticising the fact here that the Buddhist time reckoning used is an unhistorical fiction: I just wish to point out that Buddhism, by referring to the alleged date of the Buddha's *nirvana*, is made a dimension of a military victory that created 500,000 refugees and immense suffering. The use of this time reference indicated an alienation from Buddhism and a reversal of the spirit of Buddhism.

One second point is that the toponym "Yapa Patuna" was used for Yalppanam/Jaffna. This place name goes back to the time of the Lankan prince Sapumal Kumaraya (the later King of Kotte, Bhuvanekabahu VI [1469-77]). To Tamils, this King is known as Canpakap Perumal. He was the adopted son of Parakramabahu VI (1411-66), and he was installed in about 1450 as King in Yapa Patuna, at a time when the autonomous Kingdom of Yalppanam under the Tamil King Kanakacuriyan was weakened. The place name, Yapa Patuna, is connected with the establishment of Lankan rule in Yapa Patuna through Sapumal Kumaraya whose biological father was a known as Panical (Pannikkar). Pannikkar came to Kotte from a royal caste in South India and entered the service of the Lankan King. Sapumal Kumaraya can be regarded as of being of South Indian origin. He was Dravidian.

Sapumal Kumaraya is said to have broken the resistance of the fighters in Yapa Patuna, who were fighting from house to house, and to have made a triumphal entry into Kotte after the victory in Yapa Patuna. He was celebrated and remembered in a famous 15th century *kavi*, known in Sinhala as *Kovulsandesaya*, which was used as the literary and ideological basis for Her Excellency, when arranging the triumphant ceremony of the victory over Yapa Patuna in December 1995. The *kavi* describes the city, its prosperity, its crowds of dancing girls and mentions that the former Tamil King had escaped and gone into exile.

The *Kovulsandesaya* is known by many Lankans and is easily available in many bookshops. It was written by Irrugalcula Parivenadipati, a Buddhist monk from Mulgirigala. In the *Sandesaya*, Krisna is invoked to bless Sapumal in his war. In another *Sandesaya*, the *Selahinisandesaya*, we learn about the victorious return of Sapumal to Kotte. He is described as Indra-like. This is read in schools.

It was not far-fetched of the President to make this *kavi* a charter of her own "royal" performance. She knew how to use symbolic action to convey the message of the establishment of authority in Yalppanam. She does not deviate in that matter from former Presidents, from "King" J. R. Jayawardhana, who placed himself in an unbroken tradition of rulers, and "King" R. Premadasa, who on each 2nd January repeated the royal coronation ceremony in the Dalida Maligava in Nuvara (Kandy). Her Excellency has followed this royal pattern by reviving the 15th century court

ritual in Kotte. Her "court" was also a royal stage that gave her appearance of being traditional.

There is another source about Sapumal Kumaraya's conquest of Yalpanam. The *Rajavaliya*, a chronicle in Sinhala, finally compiled in the 18th century, gives a vivid picture. Parakramabahu VI thought it not right that there should be two seats of government in Lanka. Sapumal Kumaraya was sent to Yapa Patuna to do away with the King there. This is the only reason given for his expansion by military conquest. Sapumal Kumaraya attacked several villages belonging in this context and brought prisoners to Kotte, but did not evidently succeed in eliminating the King. He was sent again to Yapa Patuna. On this occasion, he forced the forts, which had been erected in different places, to surrender. When entering the town of Yapa Patuna, he rode upon a dark horse. He created such carnage that the streets of the city were deluged with blood. He slew the King [Kanakacuriyan], took his consort and children prisoner, brought them to Kotte, and presented himself before King Parakramabahu, who conferred many favours on him and sent him to Yapa Patuna. Finally, Sapumal Kumaraya succeeded Parakramabahu on the throne. So far, the *Rajavaliya* (1900: 68–70). The motive given for the war with the King of Yapa Patuna was to establish a unitary state, the same motive as is given today by successive Governments striving to preserve the integrity of the unitary state that was established not before 1833 by the British administration as a colonial product. The *Rajavaliya* precludes that the state was not unitary. Furthermore, the *Rajavaliya* depicts Sapumal Kumaraya as heroic, which evidently implies that he flooded the streets with blood in the carnage. That he "slew" the King is an exaggeration. The King escaped – and came back.

There is also a damaged Tamil inscription from Yalppanam found in 1968 on the stone threshold of a teashop known as the Central Café in Main Street. It had been part of the Nallur Fort that the Portuguese had destroyed. Its parts had been used in new buildings in Paranki (Portugese) street, present Main Street. The inscription has been dated to the 15th century on palaeographic grounds. It tells us that Cankapotivarmar, also named Ciri Parakiramapaku Tevan, did something... in the year... The text has illegible passages. This King has been identified as Sirisanghabodhi, which was a dynastic title, distributed to several Kings, and as Parakramabahu, VI, who through Sampumal Kumaraya, established his Sinhala suzerainty in Yalppanam during some time between 1448 and 1467 (Indrapala 1971). We may therefore conclude that there is solid historical material about the conquest of Yalppanam by Sapumal Kumaraya in the middle of the 15th century.

The monarchy in Lanka was abolished by the British in 1815. The President of the PA Government is therefore not *de facto* a Queen, but in spite of this social and political reality, she and other Presidents have taken up

royal roles in state rituals. To give one other example: in keeping with an ancient royal tradition in Lanka, when the king was formally appraised of the successful conduct and conclusion of the great Esala perahera by officials of the Dalada Maligawa and of the four devalas, the Diyawadana Nilame of the Dalada Maligawa and the Basnayake Nilames of the four devalas, called on President Chandrika Kumaratunga on August 19th, 1997 at the President's Pavilion in Kandy (formerly the King's Pavilion) to report to the Head of State that the *perahera* was successfully conducted and concluded (Ratnaweera 1997).

It is evident from the "royal" ceremony on 6th December 1995 that Her Excellency takes on the role of Parakramabahu VI, and General Anuruddha Ratwatte the role of Sapumal Kumaraya. In the propaganda literature, Ratwatte was explicitly referred to as the modern day Prince Sapumal (Anon. 1997a). The ceremony was formed with help of certain historians who had evidently offered their services to the politicians. We learn on December 6th from the Government paper, *The Daily News*, that historians had already looked upon the liberation of "Yapa Patuna of ancient fame", as a historical parallel to its recapture by Prince Sapumal in the 15th century by vanquishing the forces of "rebel chief" Arya Cakkaravartti, which is a title of the royal dynasty of Yalppanam. The names of these "historians" are not given. The ceremony on December 6th was a projection of regressive and aggressive symbolic thinking. Later, the title of "General" was conferred on Ratwatte at the Wickrama Samana (Gallantry Awards) ceremony on Independence Day, 1996. We may recall the *Rajavaliya's* account of King Parakramabahu conferring many favours on Sapumal Kumaraya.

Velupillai Pirapakaran, the leader of the Ilavar and the LTTE, has been given by implication the role of the formerly conquered Tamil King Kanakacuriyan in exile. The homology breaks down, however, when we see what Sapumal Kumaraya II, Anuruddha Ratwatte, found in Yapa Patuna. He did not find prosperity and crowds of dancing girls, but ruins and some hundred elderly and sick people who could not escape from the war. From the point of view of the Ilavar, the final military establishment of Lankan authority is an establishment of Lankan hegemony. The other side of authority, is, as we all know, hegemony. The "royal" ritual did not express authority in the eyes of the Ilavar, but rather the arrogance of power which neglected the aspirations of the Ilavar and treated them with contempt. The arrogance of power counteracts confidence-building as expressed in the winning-of-hearts-and-minds-programme initiated by the Government after the military victory in Yalppanam (see below).

The implicit connection of Velupillai Pirapakaran with King Kanakacuriyan is explosive: Kanakacuriyan came back around 1467 from Indian exile with an army and re-established the Kingdom of Yalppanam. The

historical advisors of the President were evidently not well versed in history. Their historical paradigm to be repeated by the President includes its own destruction.

The question arises by itself: who will be the permanent Sapumal Kumaraya in Yapa Patuna who, like him, will establish a court model of Kotte, known as Jayavardhanapura, in today's Yalppanam? A Tamil, but not an Ilavar, a Tamil loyal to Her Excellency, is needed to satisfy the demands of the historical paradigm. As there was no fitting person, the paradigm had to be neglected and the Sinhala, Anuruddha Ratwatte, was forced to take up the role of Sapumal Kumaraya in December 1995. Douglas Devananda obtained the real power, however, by being made Minister of Development for the North. He is a Tamil, having his Ealam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) as a base. This Tamil party was loyal to the PA Government and acted as a military group against the Ilavar. (The webpage of the EPDP is <http://www.epdpnews.com/>) His situation and that of Sapumal Kumaraya show similarities. Both are Tamils loyal to the enemy of the Tamils, as indicated by the Ilavar. Furthermore, history shows that Sapumal Kumaraya had to abandon Yalppanam. Douglas Devananda lost his post when a new Government came to power after elections in 2002 and the Ilavar again established an office in Yalppanam in expectation of Kanakacuriyan II, Veluppillai Pirapakaran, returning triumphantly.

Academics' historicisation of Yapa Patuna

Now we come to the involvement of Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism in the event. The state controlled paper, *The Daily News*, reported on December 11, 1995, that the President had expressed her gratitude to the Mahasangha for their advice, support and blessings during the recent military offensive that established the writ of the Government in Jaffna. Visiting the Dalada Maligawa, she said that Sri Lankan leaders had always visited the Sri Dalada Maligawa to invoke the blessings of the triple gem on occasions of national importance. We were following that tradition by paying homage to the Sacred Tooth relic on this occasion when our security forces had liberated Jaffna. She did not say that the war to conquer Yalppanam was "holy", but her conscious connection of taking territory by military conquest with the veneration in the Dalada Maligawa is a very clear expression of an aggressive form of Buddhist ethno-nationalism or Sinhalatva.

It is an irony of history that Her Excellency symbolically established Lankan authority (hegemony) in Yapa Patuna by using a Tamil term for the Ilavar, *patuna*, *pattinam* in Tamil, referring to an emporion. The deep indulgence of some Lankans in Sinhalatva makes them blind to Tamil cog-

nates. It is commonly denied by Lankan scholars that *patuna* is *pattinam*, and so the word was allegedly “pure” and could be used in this victory ceremony by Her Excellency.

One important activity of modern Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists is to write a normative history that supports their own evaluation of the preservation of the unitary state as the ultimate aim. They anachronistically project their own contemporary Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism into the past and thus find what they are looking for, the unitary state that has allegedly always existed. This kind of circular reasoning about the existence of an imagined pre-colonial Sinhala-Buddhist unitary state is of importance in the “argumentation” for the preservation of the present unitary state. We cannot neglect the contemporary normative projections by Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists about their past.

Evidently, some Lankan intellectuals felt that this new situation of conquering Yalppanam by violence had to be made plausible to the public. Shortly after the royal ceremony of victory in Yapa Patuna, in *Sunday Island*, 31 December, a Lankan professor, Abaya Aryasinghe, who had earlier published a Sinhala nationalistic article (Aryasinghe 1995), again published an article, this time on the conquest of Yalppanam. Here he stated that, the Nallur kovil in Yalppanam was originally a Buddhist *vihara* placed at the spot where the Buddha visited Lanka for the second time. He also stated that the word *nallur* is not Tamil but that it echoes the Pali word *unnaloma* meaning allegedly “hair grown on the forehead of the Buddha”. Such a hair relic of the Buddha was allegedly placed in the *stupa* that preceded the *kovil* at Nallur.

It is evident that the professor writing in *The Island*, which promoted the establishment of Lankan authority by military victory in Yapa Patuna, is a kind of ideological road-builder for General Ratwatte, who physically established the President’s authority in Yalppanam. It seems that this professor is not alone, that he represents a trend aimed at re-establishing Lankan authority (hegemony) in Yalppanam and elsewhere in projected Tamililam by manipulating history. He had, as we have seen above, the backing of Her Excellency and of her Government in Jayavardhanapura, the former Kotte. The new (diluted) version of the devolution package from January 16, issued on Taipponkal 1996, definitely established Her Excellency’s authority (hegemony) in Yalppanam by centralising power again instead of devolving power as in the original version.

There is no indication that the Buddha ever was among the Ilavar or the Lankans. The story of the Buddha’s (three) visits, one of them in Nagadipa, also referred to by the professor, is a migratory tale that we find in many parts of India in places of pilgrims who glorified their favourite place by making it a place where the Buddha or Asoka had allegedly been. One victim of such migratory tales was Mahanama in the 5th century A.D.,

who took pious folklore about the flying Buddha for history. He projected what he heard into the chronicle *Mahavamsa*. The professor is not only an intuitionist, he is also a maximalist in believing that even the folklore parts of the *Mahavamsa* are history. The professor neglects genre analysis of the *Mahavamsa* by simply making all genres sources of history. There is no division, partition, or classification of sources in his presentation. There is no text criticism and no history of redaction in his presentation. Although the *Mahavamsa* has no canonical status, it is treated by him as if it had this.

Another victim of dreaming was the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Xuanzang, from the 7th century A.D., who is quoted endlessly as a source for the Buddha's visits to Tamilakam and for Makentiran's visit to Lanka. Mahanama and Xuanzang have been exploited as sources of a religiously founded Lankan nationalism.

The word *nallur* meaning "good village" is a commonplace name in Tamilakam, and is regularly connected with Shaiva or Vaishnava temples and not with Buddhist monasteries. There is a statistically identifiable connection between *nallur* and *kovil*. A city named *nallur* is a city of a *kovil*, a Shaiva, or Vaishnava temple. There are many cities called *nallur* in Tamilakam. If each one really did "echo" *unnaloma*, there would be many Buddhist influences in Tamilakam.

Furthermore, the word *nallur* has nothing to do with the Pali word *unnaloma* and *nallur* does not imply the slightest reference to Buddhism. *Unna* in the word *unnaloma* with a cerebral n, better known in its Sanskrit form of *urna* (with long u and a and with a cerebral n), refers to a hairlock on the forehead of the Buddha, being one of the 32 marks of the Buddha, but *nallur* (Tamil) and *urna* (*unna*) (Sanskrit, Pali) have no connection at all.

The *urna* (*unna*) is often depicted as a small circular mark between the eyebrows, indicating originally a special wisp of hair that is popularly, but wrongly, interpreted as a beauty spot, or as a *pottu* (Tamil, Sanskrit *tilaka*). On sculptures of the Buddha made by imperial Cola artists from the 9th–12th century A.D., we can see that they strictly followed the literary prescriptive tradition by either incising or applying a hair lock that hangs down in the form of a curl on the forehead of the Buddha. Therefore, *nal* (*nar*) is a Dravidian (Tamil) root meaning "good" and *urna* (*unna*) is Indo-Aryan (Sanskrit, [Pali]) meaning lexically "wool". *loma* is Pali and means "hair"; *unnaloma* is woolly hair that is more precisely understood as hair lock.

ur in the compound *nal-l-ur* is also a Dravidian (Tamil) word meaning "village". It is used as a suffix in many place-names and has nothing to do with *unnaloma*, which belongs to another language family, the Indo-Aryan. It is a mystery how anyone can see in *nallur* an echo of *unnaloma*. I cannot follow the professor's presentation and argumentation, but I cannot ignore it either, because of its strong political implication and motivation. It

is a typical example of modern Lankan politico-historical writing, which politicises even phonology and morphology.

Nachspiel

In March, 1997, a famous place-name, Parayanankulam, on the Metavacciya-Mannar road in the Tamil area was to be renamed Sapumalpura, "city of Sapumal". It was reported that a large army camp was being established there (*Colombo Calling* 1997). Tamil organisations, the TULF, the PLOTE, the EPRLF, and the TELO, warned in their protest that such renaming of roads and vehicles had been one of the original causes of the ethnic conflict. The Government now appeared to be dabbling again in such delicate issues. Ajit Rupesinghe also said such moves would make the Tamil people feel they were losing their rights and identity under an army of occupation (Selvanayagam 1997a–b). The leadership of the Ilavar used the incident to show that the move formed part of a colonisation programme for the Sinhalas, implying the displacement of many Tamils and the loss of acres of the finest vegetation. It was a programme of expansion into Tamil territory and therefore directed not only against the LTTE, but also against the Tamils (LTTE 1997d).

In May, 1997, we learned that 220 police officers stationed in the newly established Sapumalpura police station were reported to have deserted the service. They had surrendered their weapons to the Assistant Superintendent of Police and reached Vavuniya. The struggle for Sapumalpura goes on (Anon. 1997a). From the Ilavar side, the capture of Yalppanam and the renaming of Sapumalpura are incidents indicating an intensified programme of Sinhala colonisation by military force.

Following this contribution by Professor Abhaya Ariyasinghe, in a letter dated 10 January 1996, eighteen Sinhala Buddhist organisations urged the Sri Lankan President to pave the way for the families of landless Sri Lankan Army and Police personnel to be settled in the captured Tamil areas. The General himself, Anuruddha Ratwatte, speaking to ex-servicemen, praised them for their willingness to offer their services for the defence of the country and promised to give them Mahaveli land from Aralakanvila belonging to his ministry, regretting that he could not distribute land to them that belonged to other ministries (Anon. 1996b). The point is that Aralakanvila is within the projected area of Tamililam.

In September, 1997, an Ilavar report tells us that a Sinhala priest wished to declare Yalppanam a holy Buddhist city. The priest in question, Dhammaloka Nanasiha, demanded of the Government that the grounds of the recently built *vihara* at Aryakulam junction in Yalppanam should be expanded. It should be designated a holy Buddhist reservation and only Sinhala Buddhists should be exclusively settled there (LTTE 1997d).

In December, 1997, The Government paper *The Daily News* in a long article used the research into family lore of a Lankan called Quintus Jayatileka for political ends. Quintus Jayatileka could trace himself to Ambulugala Kumaraya, brother of Sapumal Kumaraya. Sapumal Kumaraya is depicted by the paper as "the 15th Century conqueror of Jaffna, from foreign invaders" and as the person who "restored the country as a unitary state" (Edirisinghe 1997). The reader is not informed that Sapumal's reign was broken by the return from exile of the Tamil King, Kanakacuriyan, and that the "foreign invaders" were indigenous Tamils. We can also study the use of the concept of the unitary state being used anachronistically for the political purpose of historicising this form.

To win heart and mind

After the conquest of Yalppanam in December, 1995, by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces, the Government developed a strategy for winning the hearts and minds of the Tamils in the conquered areas. The main strategy was and naturally remains relief, rehabilitation, and the starting of development projects: *Sudu Nelum*.

However, the Government seems sometimes to have misunderstood the mentality and value system of the Tamils, as on New Year 1997. Tamils felt insensitivity of the Government when the Government organised a weeping contest and a beauty pageant in Yalppanam in the grounds of Jaffna Central College itself at New Year, 1997. Tamil parties, including even the pro-government EPDP and PLOTE, boycotted the festival saying it was ugly and insulting to the people. TULF leader M. Civacittamparam said that the weeping contest in particular had hurt the feelings of the Yalppanam people. It was terribly insensitive to have such a contest when in the nearby streets people were really weeping for their loved ones and other losses. Tamil Congress leader Kumar Ponnampalam and TELO General Secretary M. K. Civajilinkam accused the government of acting callously and fraudulently, when thousands were going through agony and heartbreak. Tamil Party sources said there eventually was no weeping contest as no contestants showed up, while the beauty pageant was also a farce because the girls were chosen arbitrarily (Selvanayagam 1997b). Another eyewitness reports a detailed and somewhat different version. It also mentioned that the EPDP objected to this arrangement and called on the public to boycott the festivities (Anon. 1997b). It adds, however, that Yalppanam's only functioning newspaper, *Utayan*, was pressurised by the security authorities not to carry the EPDP statement. The PLOTE and the EPRLF issued statements in Colombo criticising the so-called New Year celebrations (Anon. 1997b). In Yalppanam, however, the same groups co-oper-

ated fully with the army in staging the function while the EPDP was left in the cold. The *tamasha* went off well with seven damsels participating at the beauty contest, according to the eyewitness. The first three were given gold chains as prizes. Lucky draw winners among the public received 25 radios and five bicycles as prizes. The highlight was the open *baila* session where the public and the military mingled together in dancing. People who a few years ago under the LTTE dispensation were dancing to Tamil songs ridiculing the soldiers were now hurrying along with the garrison to the beat of Sinhala *baila* songs. Melodies may change, but the eternal dance of life goes on (Anon. 1997b), commented the reporter.

How a beauty contest is performed we know, but how a weeping contest is performed is not so evident. There is no weeping contest in Tamil culture. What is probably meant is what in Tamil is called *oppari* that may be derived from *oppu + ar + i* meaning, "declaring the likeness (of the deceased with an ideal person)". It refers to a lamentation by women making doleful reference to the personal appearance and good qualities of a deceased. Sometimes the word is shortened to *oppu*, "resemblance (of the dead to an eminent person)". It is also called *alukaippattu*, "song of grief", during which *alukaikkanninkal*, "tears of grief", are shed. Sometimes routinised lamenting women are hired who perform *kulikku maratittal*, "breast-beating for hire". The meaning of this lamenting, weeping, wailing, and breast-beating is to protect endangered members against a hostile force by means of aggressive threats. In a situation of powerlessness, this aggression returns upon the wailing person. The hand raised to strike comes down upon her as expressed in breast-beating. In no way, however, is there a contest between lamenting women. To the Lankan outsider, however, it may generate pleasure to hear some women lamenting louder than others and making a public show of their grief – and above all to enjoy the powerlessness that is expressed in breast-beating. We learn from the reports that no female lamenters had made themselves available to satisfy these expectations of the Lankans. Had the Lankan outsider known the additional meaning of lamentation as an aggressive reaction of defence, he would probably have thought twice before arranging a weeping contest.

Another incident in August, 1997, also counteracted the winning of the minds and hearts of the Tamils of Yalppanam. The incident was reported worldwide over Internet by the LTTE (1997b). A senior Sinhalese military officer told a meeting of Tamil headmasters and teachers in Yalppanam that he was ready to close down any or all of Yalppanam's schools if teachers ignored his tough new directives. Warning that "disobedience would not be tolerated", he gave out the military's new instructions: "Due homage must be paid to the Sri Lankan lion flag, and the Sinhalese national anthem must be sung daily in classrooms by both students and teachers" (LTTE 1997b). He added that Tamil teachers and students must bare their

heads in respect when passing Sinhalese military camps or sentry points and that registers of students attendance must be submitted by hand to the nearest military camp for their perusal; students absent for three days must be reported to military officials; no school functions could take place without permission from the military, or without military officials as guests to "grace the occasion". If these orders were not followed, he said, "punishment [would] be drastic, and [would] been an example to others". The officer ended his speech by asking his audience to go home and think about these points very carefully (LTTE 1997b).

These incidents seem to be minor to the outsider, but for the insider, who may have lost a child or a relative and/or property in the war, this kind of demonstration of power by the enemy can be used by the LTTE to mobilise resistance against the Sri Lankan Armed Forces.

The Ilavar reaction

The Sapumal Kumaraya event made the LTTE recall past attempts to colonise the North (LTTE 1995, 1997a-d). It referred in August, 1997, to the attempts by former minister of national security Mr Athulathmudali. He allegedly had a three-pronged strategy to decimate Tamils: to allow the Sinhala military to take control of the Vavuniya-Jaffna road; to create a vast Sinhala colony extending from Anuradhapura to the Mullaitivu coast (to bifurcate the north/east); and to snatch away the fishing rights of Tamils in the north/east (LTTE 1997b). According to the LTTE, the PA, or Chandrika government, followed this up in August 1997. The LTTE then drew attention to the re-naming of Tamil villages with Sinhalese names. Parayanalamkulam was renamed as Sapumalpurapura after the Sapumal Kumaraya event in December, 1995 (LTTE 1997b).

The actual capture of Yalppanam, with the subsequent victory ceremony, has left a deep scar in the memory of many Ilavar. They remembered and discussed the incident repeatedly, until it became a part of their state of mind, a humiliated mind calling for revenge. The ceremony was taken up as a human rights' violation in 1997 in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 53rd Session, Geneva, March-April, 1997 (Anon. 1997c).

On November 27, 1995, Velupillai Pirapakaran made a speech in connection with Great Heroes' Day. At that time, the Lankan lion flag had already been hoisted over Yalppanam. He reacted very emotionally, as might be expected. The following is an official translation by the LTTE of a part of his speech.

The Sinhala military devils may hoist victory flags in depopulated Jaffna which has been reduced to rubble. The Sinhala chauvinistic gangs in the

South may light crackers in jubilation assuming that they have captured the kingdom of Jaffna. Chandrika may send peace signals believing that military hegemony has been achieved. In these circumstances we wish to make it absolutely clear that as long as the Sinhala army is occupying Jaffna the doors for peace will be firmly closed. The LTTE will not participate in the peace negotiations imposed at the point of a gun subjecting itself to military pressure. This is the message we wish to address to Chandrika regime. It will be nothing other than political stupidity if Chandrika government thinks that it can bring about peace and political settlement by occupying Jaffna and uprooting hundreds of thousands of people. The invasion of Jaffna is a gigantic historical blunder made by Chandrika regime. As a consequence of this act the Colombo government has closed all avenues for peace and plunged the entire island into grave conflictual situation. (LTTE 1995.)

Revenge the Ilavar got, indeed, in a Tamil *kuttu*, which refers to a droll, ludicrous event, a dramatic performance given on "Great Heroes Day" in Paris in November, 1996. The *kuttu* was performed on November 24th, 1996, as part of the of the Great Heroes' Day celebration in Paris, St Denis. A group of actors then enacted the solemn ceremony from December 6th again on the stage, but this time as a farce. This recalls the beginning of Karl Marx's "Eighteenth Brumaire" where he says that Hegel remarked somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. So much for Karl Marx. In the case of the performance in Paris in 1996, we have a third appearance, a farce on a farce on a real historical event.

Young Ilavar who had gained an intimate knowledge of the personal characteristics of the two Sinhala leaders' public verbal and bodily performance staged the roles of the President and the General. The *kuttu* ended with the arrival of the Tamil freedom fighters and their struggle against the brutalising Sinhala army. The freedom fighters were victorious, of course. History repeats itself not only for the benefit of Sapumal Kumaraya, but also for the benefit of King Kanakacuriyan, who came back from exile with an army and re-established the Kingdom of Yalppanam. The young Ilavar on the stage made the President and her General prisoners and ordered them to do heavy labour consisting of carrying tombstones to the graves of the *tiyakikkal*, "martyrs", of the Ilavar. Parts of the public in the theatre became so emotionally involved that they rose from the seats, raising their fists, shouting and berating the two "prisoners". The Ilavar journal *Hot Spring*, issued in London, had on its front page a picture from the *kuttu* showing "the President" in a rage, and her "General". The *kuttu* was intended by Ilavar actors as a comedy and as a ridiculing of the Lankan President's retrieval of the past. They made a farce of what they regarded

as being a farce. The Ilavar took a political stand in doing so. The President, of course, did not regard her retrieval of the past as a farce. On the contrary, she thought it was meaningful to use a glorified past as a charter for an evaluation of the present. For her, approximations and synchronisation served the purpose of glorifying new struggles, but for the Ilavar it was nothing but a parody of the old. For her, it magnified the given task in the imagination, but for the Ilavar it was a recoiling from a solution in reality. For her, it was a rediscovery of the spirit of Sinhala glory, but for the Ilavar it was nothing but a ghost walking again.

Conclusion: Reversal of values through approximation/synchronisation

The reversal of values that the Lankan PA Government has demonstrated, by giving priority to war in a Buddhist country, has created intense feelings of doubt with regard to this war. The Government tried to reduce them by references to concepts that are both "old" and unquestioned, to concepts that bring the Government's actions in relation to a long tradition that makes an anomaly part of a tradition. This reversal of values is transformed from appearing as arbitrary and idiosyncratic, or in any case questionable, to belonging to an old glorified Sinhala tradition concerning the defence of the unitary state. The President took the opportunity to publicly display her authority with a theatrical ritual show. Politicians, the military, and Sinhala nationalists are the main actors on the stage. There was a concious blurring of borders between categories such as myth, fiction and history, as well as between theatre and ritual.

The PA Government has projected a historical paradigm, the aspirations of which it yearns to fulfil. The key words for this activity are *approximation/synchronisation*. Both are ideological constructions in order to relate the present "defeat" of the Ilavar to the victory of Sapumal Kumaraya over the Tamil king, Kanakacuriyan. The specific is made to appear as part of the general, the unique is made to appear as a repetition of history, but above all, the reversal of values is legitimised by synchronising it with an ideal event from the past. Lankan political historiography is full of examples of such synchronisations, the most famous of which is the synchronisation of Vijaya with the Buddha. This conscious and artificial synchronisation of events, inclusive of the synchronisation produced by Her Excellency, of General Ratwatte with Sapumal Kumaraya, is of course an indication that there is no moral argument for the war against the Ilavar, that this war has no basis in humanitarian, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian values, and above all not in Buddhist values. This war against the Ilavar is a demonstration that aims at rationalising the bringing of the

north and east under the administration of the Lankans in a unitary state. The President had closed the doors to reconciliation in the 1990s. After the defeat of her PA Government in the elections from 2002, a new development has started under the guidance of Norwegian mediators, who receive full support from the Ilavar and from the new Government, which however, has a weak position in Parliament. The outcome of this new development could not be foreseen in August 2002.

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