



Review Paper

Economic structure of Sri Lankan *kolam* drama: a cultural reading

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Abstract

The study is related to a folk drama that is widely spread in low country locations in Sri Lanka. By this time, our study has revealed how the Kolam drama remains in various social structures. A well-structured study can be made by studying the way a certain practice operates in various cultural and political economic structures of a society. This method is based on Structural functionalism. Important social structures have been previously studied in the manner in which the Kolam drama operates in caste, religion and education. Here studies its function in the economic structures. Two main Kolam drama schools; Hiethawatte Juwanwadu family in Ambalangoda and Mirisse Amarasinghe family from Matara, were selected for the research. The economic history of these two regions was analyzed through literary sources. Group discussions were used to determine the relationship between the economic structure and the relevant groups, and in such discussions, the Ethnographic method was used significantly. A qualitative analysis was carried out. As such, it was found that a number of highly different economic strata were established in Sri Lanka when European feudal system and capitalistic elements were superimposed on earlier caste-based feudal system depended on subsistence agriculture. This new economic system is the reason for the existence of Kolam drama in two forms, i.e. as a folk drama and as a performing art. One group is developing Kolam as an industry (Juvanwadu) whereas another group is preserving it as a traditional heritage (Mirissa-Udupila) because of this different economic system.

Keywords: Kolam, folk drama, Sri Lankan economy, Juwanwadu clan, Mirissa-Udupila.

Introduction

No study pertaining to the economic structure of Sri Lanka has hitherto been done. After Vanden-Driesen's¹ study of Ceylon economic history in 19th century, the acceptable study in dynamics of the economy in the 20th century is the study of S.B.D. Silva². In these studies have been discussed questions below, what kind of economic system was there in Sri Lanka prior to the advent of the Europeans? Was it a feudal system? Or else is it sufficient to be labelled as the Asiatic mode of Production as it was called by Marx? On the other hand, was the economic system that was established by Europeans in Sri Lanka a feudal system or capitalism? If it is capitalism, was it agricultural capitalism? Why did not that capitalism give birth to developed industries? Instead of the creation of colossal cities and culturally refined being why was it driven to primeval racialism? There are many more ontological questions in this regard, is Sri Lanka still an underdeveloped country? What features of the third quarter of capitalism are visible in the Sri Lankan economy? Is it possible for a folk drama such as *Kolam* (a folk mask drama) to still exist in this unequal economic structure? If the answer to the above is in the affirmative, the reasons are discussed in this research paper.

Makes Malinowski's functionalism³ into Radcliffe-Brown structural functionalism⁴. Based on Brown's theoretical

standpoint, the use of the *Kolam* arts can be seen in various social structures. How it works in structures like caste, religion, education, media, politics and economics can be addressed accordingly. Previously I have studied how to connect *Kolam* with the caste structure and how it relates to the Education. Here, studying how the drama is changing according to the economic structure.

The relationship that exists between the mode of maintenance of *Kolam* drama by two generations at the different places and the economic structure is studied herein. One of these *Kolam* groups is the cluster led by *Martin Amarasinghe* of *Udupila*, *Mirissa*. It is connected with the traditional sport "Pora Pol" (a traditional coconut game) which is characteristic of that region. Sports *Pora Pol* is performed as an exorcism but some play it for fun. The other group involved in the two individuals *Manoshika Wijesooriya* and *Kanchana Wijesooriya* of *Bandu Wijesooriya* dancing school of *Juwan Wadu* family *Hirewatta*, *Ambalangoda*, who directed the stage play called "Karaliye *Kolama*".

This is a performance staged at theatres where the audience has to buy tickets to watch the show. What is dealt with in the chapter is to discuss the evolution of two families engaged in *Kolama* with reference to relevant two economic structures and how *Kolama* located in these two structures.

Research methodology

Collection of data is done in two ways. The economic history of two lowland localities called *Ambalangoda* and *Mirissa* is traced through literary sources. Evolution and the contemporary condition of *JuvanWadu* family up to “*KaraliyeKolam*” have been gathered out of interviews held with *Maheshika* and *Kanchana Wijesooriya*. History and the present state of *Udupila* group, *Mirissa* has been gathered out of conversations the present writer had with *Martin Amarasinghe* and *Lokuhettige Kularatne*.

A special attention is paid in the analysis to different economic opportunities these two groups had received. What impact the recognition of *Ambalangoda* had acquired as a cultural centre and *Mirissa* as a fishery centre had on *Kolam* drama is identified herein. Further, distinctions in economic conditions between the two regions and adaptation of *Kolam* drama to them are also discussed. This is a qualitative analysis and the ethnographic model has been very often used in this cultural reading.

A short account on diachronic of Sri Lankan economy

With a view to systematizing production and distribution of goods and services in Sri Lanka, all the villages in the island were organized by King *Pandukabhaya* in his reign 437-367, B.C. *Mahavamsa* makes mention of this fact as follows:

“He set five hundred candles to the work of cleaning the (streets of the) town, two hundred candles to the work of cleaning the sewers, one hundred and fifty candles he employed to bear the dead and as many candles to be watchers in the cemetery. For these, he built a village north-west of the cemetery and they continually carried out their duty as it was appointed.”

Toward the north-east of the candela-village, he made the cemetery, called the Lower Cemetery, for the candle folk. North of this cemetery, between (it and) the Pasana-mountain, the line of huts for the huntsmen was built thenceforth. Northward from thence, as far as the Gamani-tank, a hermitage was made for many ascetics; eastward of that same cemetery, the ruler built a house for the Nigantha Jotiya. In that, the same region dwelt the Nigantha named Giri and many ascetics of various heretical sects. And there the lord of the land built also a chapel for the Nigantha Kumbhanda; it was named after him. Toward the west from thence and eastward of the street of the huntsmen lived five hundred families of heretical beliefs. On the further side of Jotiya's house and on this side of the Gamani-tank he likewise built a monastery for wandering mendicant monks, and a dwelling for the Ajevakas and a residence for the brahmins, and in this place and that he built a lying-in shelter and a hall 3 for those recovering from sickness.

Ten years after his consecration did Pandukabhaya the ruler of Lanka establish the village-boundaries over the whole of the island of Lanka.^{5”}

The organization thus established was named by later intellectuals as a caste feudal system⁶. In accordance with this economic system, both land and labour the two fundamental economic resources were king's responsibilities. The capital was centred around the king, officials working under him and the Buddhist and Hindu temples. The ordinary man inherited little or no excess of revenue. It was only the officials referred to above who owned permanent houses.

Goods in exchange for service or vice versa were the direct mode of exchange and money was used in case of the transaction with outsiders. Money was in circulation about trade centres situated by harbours along the seacoast⁶. Infrastructure was implemented through the feudal system by *Disave* (government agent), *Korale* (District officer), *Vidāne* (the rank above village headman), and *Mulādāni* (village headman) officers responsible for administration⁶. Major infrastructural facilities included construction of tanks, roads and highways, temples, canals, dams *etc.* Everybody was under the feudal system. While administration of lands was under *disāves* and their subordinate officers who were given their respective share of the income by the king when the former had paid the same to the latter.

It was *Kotte* the last kingdom under which the lowlands were. Localities in *Mirissa* and *Ambalangoda* did not come under the control of *Sitāvaka* and Kandyen kingdoms. The last Sinhalese ruler to govern these regions was king *Bhuvanekabāhu* (1534-1551). Next ruler, King *Don Juvan Dharmapala* who ascended the throne in *Kotte* (1551-1597) was just a nominal king. *Ambalangoda* was a maintenance village of *Dharmapala*⁷. “As Doily describes maintenance village is a hamlet with paddy fields called *Muttettu* cultivated in entirety free of wages. Villagers did so for it was they who enjoyed the land. They were further to perform some more duties⁷. During the period of *Dharmapala* Portuguese, territories in Sri Lanka were under the control of viceroy of *Goa*, *Noronnā* who was in Sri Lanka. Temples, Devalas and palace and houses were robbed by the Portuguese.

There was a semi-colonial rule in Sri Lanka from 1505 to 1815 and it was a full colony from 1815 to 1948. Many lowland regions were under the Portuguese rule from 1505 to 23 July 1658. Lowland regions, which were under the Dutch company since 1658, were handed over to the English East Indian Company under an agreement on 16 Feb 1796. After the transition period, 1796-1815, the whole country came under the control of the British.

The lowland region, which is the base geographical area of this study, becomes a colony in 1505. Residents of these localities had to undergo a lot of distress and pressure and influence under three invaders. Nevertheless, in these localities, no battles or anti-colonial activities against colonists occurred. Instead, residents of lowlands became participants in the socio-economic structure of the colonial rulers.

The Portuguese and both the Dutch went on with the old feudal system and made a profit as far as possible. The English who made the whole of the island their colony in 1815 adopted caste-based feudal economic system up to (1833) Colebrook – Cameron Reforms. Scholars believe that the changes of 1833 as the arrival of a capitalist economy.

Colebrook – Cameron Reforms of 1833

Under this system, the irregular administrative division hitherto existed as the Sinhalese and other administrative areas were divided into 5 provinces, i.e. North, East, West, South, and Central. They were governed by civil administrators. The modern Western Judiciary system and hierarchy were established. It was under this system that District Courts were introduced. The legislature was implemented by a council of representatives. Two councils called the Legislative council and Executive council was established. The legislative council comprised ten official members inclusive of the governor and six unofficial members. The executive council comprised inclusive of the governor six official members. Enactment and implementation of laws were carried out by those two councils since then. A system of English education capable of creating successors to the state structure was established. It was at this time that the Royal College in Colombo meant for the upper elite was founded.

In addition to these political changes, a few economic changes were also brought about. The state monopoly on cinnamon and other export goods was abolished. Customs duty was amended. State monitory shares of industries were sold to the private sector. Selling or transfer of state land to the private sector was encouraged. The feudal system was abolished in place of which procedure of payment of salary for labour was introduced. By this means an economic system towards capitalism was implemented.

Owing to this independent economic and political environment clusters of small-scale coconut and cinnamon landowners in the southern lowlands of Sri Lanka emerged and in areas such as *Ambalangoda* and *Mirissa* fishery began to flourish. At this period, there prevailed a rural middle class with a surplus income, a capitalist class of foreigners connected with estate economy and an Indian labour force engaged in estate plantation. Though this middle class was not involved in major scale plantation industry while either depending on paddy cultivation or traditional monks of livelihood gathered an additional income out of small-scale coffee, areca or cinnamon growth. *Ambalangoda* as a town developed due to the fishery. Even in *Ambalangoda* education developed and a middle class with a refined taste too emerged. It was in this context that a crowd of spectators for *Kolam* drama was created in *Ambalangoda*. *Kolam* drama came to prevail in *Mirissa* as a result of co-existence between the two castes *Durāva* and *Karāva* and the link of their traditional beliefs based on their trades, i.e. fishing and coconut produce.

To acquire land for plantation which commenced with the cultivation of coffee in 1835, under the ordinance of the wasteland of 1940 all those lands of which ownership could not be proved were taken over by the government and were sold at a very low cost such as 5 shilling per acre. One planter alone bought 30825 acres¹. A plant disease called blight which spread in 1868 destroyed the coffee cultivation and it was during this time that estate owners paid attention to cultivate tea. By 1877 even rubber cultivation had been commenced and by 1890 it was already one of the major cultivations in the island. Cultivation of rubber commenced from the *Kalutara District* and was later spread to other districts *Colombo*, *Kegalle*, *Galle*, *Matarata* etc. as well and abundant in the growth. With the decline of coffee cultivation, even the coconut cultivation in lowlands commenced. Coconut cultivation which was the second crop to be introduced became in 1871 about 37% out of the whole extent of farming. By 1890 it reached 41% which fact manifests the rapidity of this cultivation within a short span. Coconut cultivation spread in provinces such as Northwestern, western and South at a tremendous speed.

It was during this period that promotion of prisons, hospitals, asylums, and schools took place. The postal coach began to run between *Colombo* and *Negombo* in 1841. By 1833 the same service was extended between *Colombo* and *Galle*. This step very much widened individual relations. In 1844–45 police courts, request courts, and rural courts were established. It was during this period that the appointment of police court judges, Justices of the Peace and coroners occurred. In 1644 the slavery was totally banned. In 1843 *Royal Asiatic Society* which rendered a good number of benefits was established.

On account of *Colebrook - Cameron Economic - Politico reforms* capitalistic elements also were superimposed on the caste-based feudal system which had hitherto been there. Thus subsequent economic system simultaneous with the new economic system were in existence.

Economic changes brought about by the arrival of the English cannot be labelled absolutely as capitalistic. The economic system they developed was based on raw material products such as tea, coconut, and rubber. These products were taken as raw material to Europe where the market for products based on those raw materials and for products was created. Owing to this state of affairs various economic patterns such as caste-based feudal system, European feudal system, characteristics of agricultural capitalism, and commercial capitalism associated with the urban sector etc. coexisted in Sri Lanka. Purely due to the above varied contradictory economic spaces and conditions such as caste system, underdeveloped villages, underdeveloped estate economy, semi-urban areas, developed towns etc. were characteristic of that age. If capitalism was established by the English in Sri Lanka *Kolam* as a folk drama would not have survived by now. If caste based feudal system prevailed without break in popular performances such as "*Karaliye Kolam*" would not have emerged.

In countries such as China and Japan Noh and Kabuki shows still survive and they have developed by undergoing topical modifications in keeping with new technological progress⁸. Every art tradition has developed on an equal footing and great differences such as one found among various traditions in Sri Lanka cannot be found in that countries⁹. Kind of differences pertaining to Folk traditions found even in India are not so much as in Sri Lanka.

Ambalangoda and Juvan Wadu clan

“Aablangodde, a considerable village, rest house, and post station, about 15 miles south of Bentota, and 19 north of Golle. It has a great number of houses covered with tiles, and is lamer than most of the villages in this part of the country, and was once the station of s magistrate. The inhabitants are exclusively fishermen, and a great portion of them are engaged in a coasting trade between the Island and the coast of Coromandel. Here there is a remarkably splendid Wihare, as well as a school belonging to the Wesleyan Missionaries”¹⁰.

As Casie Chitty described Ambalangoda was like that in 1834. It must be mentioned that no similar account of *Mirissais* given by him. During the colonial regime, it was the *Halāgama* caste which was referred to as *Mahabadda* (great tax). That caste was known as *Mahabadda* (great tax) because it was by the people of *Halagama* caste who were engaged in cinnamon peeling out of which commodity the government earned the highest income. Locality called *Balapitiya* was their hometown. As the closest commercial town to *Balapitiya* Ambalangoda had already acquired recognition as a developed town according to *Casie Chetty*.

Ambalangoda is located between the latitudes 6°14'07N and longitude 80°3'13"E. It belongs to Southern Province and Galle District. Colombo–Galle highway and the coastal railway run through *Ambalangoda*. Ferguson says that the coastal line was extended from Colombo to *Ambalangoda* in January 1894. (1893:128) Though *Ambalangoda* is famous for masks its major sources of income are fish, cinnamon, and coconut etc. *Ambalangoda* is famous as a tourist resort because of its masks. As Ferguson says by 1893 *Ambalangoda* was famous for swimming. Many a resident of the area depends on one state sector or other employment. A good number of residents living in the town is engaged in various services for livelihood. Those who are involved in business and in-between work are higher in rate. Majority of the ethnic group consists of *Karava* caste. Towards interior other castes are also found.

Juvanwadu clan: As present-day members of the clan claim *JuvanWadu* clan of *Hirewatta, Ambalangoda* has a long history. Names of chiefs of this clan are as follows: i. Juvan Wadu Edoris de Silva Wijesooriya, 1798–1868, ii. Juvan Wadu Endoris de Silva Wijesooriya, 1830–1895, iii. Juvan Wadu Ondiris de Silva Wijesooriya, 1860–1929, iv. Juvan VaduMathes de Silva Wijesooriya, 1883–1927, v. Juvan Wadu

Ariyapala Wijesooriya, 1901–1995, vi. Juvan Wadu Bandu Wijesooriya, 1939–2005 (Mask Museum of Juvan Wadu Clan, Ambalangoda).

Chandradasa Wijesooriya, Mahindapala Wijesooriya, Bhadranaanda Wijesooriya etc. who are the brothers of *Bandu Wijesooriya* themselves are artists.

Contemporary artists of Juvan Wadu Clan: i. Manoshika Wijesooriya - from 1971 to date, ii. Kanchana Wijesooriya - from 1973 to date, iii. Amalka Wijesooriya, iv. Rukmal Wijesooriya (According to information supplied by Manoshika and Kanchana in Ambalangoda on 14.01.2015).

Studies on JuvanWadu Clan: *M.D. Raghavan* in his study of *Karava* Caste examined *Kolam* as an art of the *Karava*. It was from *Ariyapala Gurunnanse* (Master *Ariyapala*) that he had obtained details experience pertaining to *Kolam*. He describes the *Kolam* group as follows:

“The actors belong to different walks of life. In a show at Ambalangoda, the AnaberaKolama was played by S.M. Samuel Silva, a building contractor. The role of his partner Nonci Akka was enacted by K.M. Agris Silva, truly old, a mason baas of eighty years of age. The two Héwarilas were S.H. Kulasiri, a student of the H.S.C. class and T.W. Wijesiri, a trader. Maru Raksasa and Gurulu Raksasa were impersonated by G.H. Tillakaratne and J.W. Banduséna. The Naga Raksasa was T.W. Wijisiri. J.W. Ariyapala of Hirewatta, Ambalangoda, was the Gurunanse, proficient in the art of dancing, and a very skilled craftsman in mask making”¹¹.

M.H. Goonatilleke in his literary work on *Kolam* Drama gives following details pertaining to *Juvan Wadu* Clan in 1968.

“J.W. Ariyapala Gurunnase of Hirewatta, Ambalangoda learned the *Kolam* dance (drama) and mask making also from his grandfather *Juvan Wadu Ondiris de Silva Wijesooriya*, *Wadu Arachchi Mahatmaya* (Mr Master Carpenter) and taught three of his sons the said drama and mask making.

Kolam drama group of *Ariyapala Gurunnanse* comprises the following: *J.W. Chandrasena Wijesooriya* (this name is incorrect. It should be *Bandusena*), *J.W. Chandradasa Wijesooriya, J.W. Mahindapala Wijesooriya, H. Wimalaratne, H. Karunasena, R.M. Chandradasa, H. Tillakaratne and R.S. Odiris de Silva*¹².

Karaliye Kolam: Discussion with Kanchana Wijesooriya and Manoshika Wijesooriya: The discussion was held at Mrs. *Kanchana Wijesooriya*'s *Ambalangoda* on 14.01.2015.

“It was my father *Mr. Bandu Wijesooriya* who made a contribution to the *Kolam* art following *Ariyapala Gurunnanse*. The art was not the livelihood of my father. He worked as a dancing master first at *Telijjawila* Central College and next at

Devananda College, Ambalangoda. In the meantime, he was engaged in paddy and coconut trade. My mother born in Batapola comes of a business family. We lived in *Matara. Tellijawala* when we were still children when *Bogoda* music clan was having close ties with my father. Then we came to live in *Batapola* when my father was teaching at *Devananda College, Ambalangoda.* He was a leftist and was disheartened due to facts such as lack of a regular timetable. By this time, he had already acquired a broad vision with regard to art following his close association with artists such as *Chitrasena.* It was at this time he was involved in the business.

My grandfather *Ariyapala Gurunnanse* lived in *Hirewatta* and by then he had already started making masks and selling them. *Mrs. Leela de Mel,* my grandmother had a skill in business and they had a walled house. *Master Ariyapala* was skilled not only in mask making but also in a number of other crafts and skills such as astrology, partitioning houses, exorcism, devil dance etc. At grandfather's there were always pots of curd, sweet meat, vegetables etc. he got as presents from his clients. As needs were few those days they led a posh life. Grandmother bent on business whereas grandfather's art was turned a business by herself. My grandfather and my father were engaged in art, not for money. But today we cannot do like that. Our lives have become highly complex and accordingly, our needs are also many and varied. Today we cannot go on with it free of charge.

During the period 1993-1994 my father held exhibitions at many campuses free of charge. My father who charged only the cost of travelling and food did not want to make money out of it. Even if a mask got damaged he did not claim anything and he spent his own money on it. Even at present many, a man expects free of charge we cannot do it.

My grandfather solely depended on mask making. However, it was because of my grandmother that he was able to commence a mask business and to buy a piece of land from *Ambalangoda* and to economically prosper. Accordingly, today one of my father's younger brothers (*Mahindapala Wijesooriya*) owns a supermarket and tea estates. His other brother (*Bhadrananda Wijesooriya*) is an owner of a filling station, a number of tea estates and cinnamon lands. There are two aunts. All of them are skilled in dancing. But they do not take part in the art. The mask factory was divided among all the children by grandmother. Each is given an equal share. I am also getting a share. It is enough for my expenses.

About 25 years ago, when my father was in paddy business one German professor called *Volfgen* who came to *Batapola* paid a visit to our house in *Batapola.* He had travelled throughout Sri Lanka and had studied *Kolam.* First, he visited my grandfather who directed him to my father. My father who had a discussion with this professor and his 25-member group deep into the night decided the following day morning to give up rice mill and other industries and devote his life to this art. With his decision to devote himself to mask making and once the German group

was convinced of the need of a mask museum he could get aid from them to establish one. Then there arose some obstacles. To overcome them they had to resort to trickery such as disguise themselves as some other party and then the German group was convinced of the true state of affairs. Subsequently, the museum was founded and then German government gave aid to acquire a building for a dancing school. As my mother, also comes from a business family she could manage father's business activities taking a correct approach.

In our family, we are the only children, me and my elder sister. Generally, it is not the tradition for the female to act in *Kolam* drama. My father (breaking the tradition) gave us an opportunity to play the *Rāssa* in the *Kolam* drama. The incident led to an uproar. Thus, *Lenchina, Etanahāmy,* and *Surabāvalli* were such female roles played by us. My father did not fix a rate for tickets. In the year 1996 Hon. *Amarasiri Dodangoda,* the Minister intervened between the work and with the assistance of *Janakalā Kendra, Battaramulla,* throughout the country *Kolam* performances were held and it acquired a great popularity through these efforts.

Even at *Lionel Wendt, Colombo* a *Kolam* drama performance was held by my father. A *Vesatta* (pandol) was tied to tables placed on the stage. The performance was shortened to two hours. The drama consisted of "*pūrvaranga*" (pre-performance) and "*gamakatāva*" (folk story). For some characters, masks were not worn. I still remember one of the items I played at urban council Hall, *Ambalangoda* when I was studying in year five. The drama comprised many natural scenes. We also made performance in it.

Karaliye Kolam: It is monotonous for the audience to hear singing one and the same rhythm at a stretch for a long time. A characteristic feature of the *KaraliyaKolam* is to soften a rough singing. Though in case of performance of a "*KolamMaduva*" (structure erected and the performance itself) no regular lighting system is common. On the other hand, the *Karaliye Kolama* depends on a systematic lighting. In case of *Kolam* drama the artist enjoys much freedom but in *Karaliye Kolama* he/she has to depend on steps which are usually given by somebody. In the *Kolam,* artists use "*vesatta*" (pandol made by leaves) to hide themselves from others. However, here it is replaced by curtains. *Kolam* drama performed on stages erected in coconut groves by the coastal belt of southern and western Sri Lanka some people used to arrange a "*vībissa*" (heap of paddy) to suggest the rural environment but we removed that item or actually we replaced it by a canoe. Thus we created a seashore on the stage. In order to get blessings at the beginning, we only made the "*pahanpāla*". (Structure of oil lamps) The performance was reduced to two hours. Only the "*pūrvaranga*" (pre-performance) was held. No "*Kolam Katā*" (stories) were adopted. Old lyrics were used employing new rhythms. While the chorus participates in saying verse they also suggest by means of gestures the features of the ensuing cast. For *Karaliye Kolama* parts of pre-performance up to the arrival of the king was used.

A group which comprised *Amalka Wijesooriya, Manoshika, Chamara, Baddiya Liyanage, Samanta Karunaratne*, Chaturi took part. Chorus and both the dancing group comprised eight members each. To date, only two shows have been staged. The first show was held at Tower Hall, Colombo free of charge. Though a good number of those who are engaged in the field of arts and University only a handful of them were present. Ordinary spectators who watched the *Kolam* highly praised it. Traditional artists did not tolerate it. Intellectuals seem to have rejected *Karaliye Kolam* even without seeing it. We did not use loudspeakers. Just to produce the sound of the guitar a small loudspeaker was used. The day our *Kolam* was performed Air condition of *Tower Hall* was out of order. As a result, the cast had to speak louder in order to surpass the sound of fans.

The second performance of *Karaliye Kolama* was held at Town Hall *Ambalangoda* and at this occasion, tickets were sold. Though ordinary lovers watched it even artists of puppetry did not come.

If we are to play the *Karaliye Kolama* again it needs at least six-month training. Still, we receive requests for traditional *Kolam* performance. It costs 1.5 lakhs. Taking the *Kolama* to the theatre was initiated by my father *Bandu Wijesooriya*. As there were two daughters alone in the family my father had to break tradition if he were to continue the art. Accordingly, he had to take females even to the stage¹³.

The economy of *Mirissa* and *Udupila* clan

Mirissa is a town that lies between the two towns along the Galle, Matara highway. At present, it is popular as a tourist resort. It dates back to a distant past as a fishing village. Interior is abundant in coconut. Even cinnamon cultivation flourished during colonial days. *Weligama* is located between the latitudes 5°56'45" North and longitude 80°27'35" East.

Udupila Clan: In the village *Udupila* of which history goes back to a distant past such as 300 – 400 years in addition to mask making which is linked with *Kolam* drama there prevail to date Sinhalese traditional games such as ancient "*Pora Pol gāsīma*" (sport played with coconut), "*An Keliya*" (sport played with hones) *Pora Pol gāsīma* is played between two villages called *Udupila* and *Yatipila*. *Yatipila* is the village of *Karava* caste whose profession is fishing. *Udupila* is the village of *Durava* caste whose profession is based on industries connected with coconut. These two villages divided by the highway running through it. The folk sport called "*Pora Pol gāsīma* (playing coconut) survives to date at this village. At the place, called *Polpitiya* (ground of coconut game) situated in this village, this sport is held either as an annual event or on several occasions even at present.

It is through these folk games that at village *Udupila Kolam* drama and mask making begin. Residents of the village who take part in a folk sport such as *Pora Pol gāsīma* and *An Keliya*

during the day very often do so in order to make an offering to gods and invoke their blessing. At this occasion in the name of the gods, a god dance is performed. It is held from sunset till sunrise. While this "god dance" is performed at a public place in the village from evening till morning even *Kolam* drama is also performed for spectators. According to the opinion of the native physician *P. Senaratne*, the present chief of this clan, it is owing to the above purpose that *Kolam* drama tradition and the art of mask making sprang up in the village *Udupila*. There were twelve owners of original *Kolam* masks. i.e. i. Mr. *Don Bastian alias Babun Vel Vidane*, ii. Mr. *Luvis Hāmi Amarasinghe*, iii. Mr. *Juwanis Appu Amarasinghe*, iv. Mr. *Bandara Watte Babun Appu*, v. Mr. *Kanturu Gewatte Babun Appu*, vi. Mr. *Bandanage Ruppe Kalu Appu*, vii. Mr. *Tundamulle Andiris Appu*, viii. Mr. *Polhenagewatte Themis Hāmi*, ix. Mr. *Kanankayagewatte Thediyas Appu*, x. *Addarawatte Mahā Ganinnaha Gurunnanse*, xi. *Addaragewatte Siriya Gurunnanse*, xii. *Addaragewatte Babuse Gurunnanse*.

The pair of masks first made and used for *Kolam* drama by this group was subsequently controlled by three individuals, *Dīna Appu Amarasinghe* "Police Officer Rālahāmi" the son of *Don Bastian alias Babun Vel Vidane, Pieris Appu Amarasinghe Veda Rālahāmi, and Charlis Appu Amarasinghe*.

As the painted surface of the pair of masks of *Udupila* turned bare and half destroyed when it was in the possession of the second generation the two individuals *Martin Amarasinghe* and *Charlis Senaratne* entrusted it to the artist *Diyonis* on 1 January 1959 for repair at the cost of Rs. 800/- on the agreement that it will be used for *Kolam* drama. In the meantime, a society called "*Udupila Kala sangamaya*" was founded at *PolhenaKade* at *Udupila* led by them. It was this society that raised Rs. 800/- to meet the cost of repair of the pair of masks of which sum was collected from eighty members at the rate of Rs. 10/- each.

Establishment of the society, "*Udupila Kalā Sangamaya*" (Art society of *Udupila*) in January 1959 can be regarded as a turning point of the *Udupila Kolam* drama clan. This organization undertook its maintenance. A number of decisive resolutions were taken so as to preserve this traditional heritage of *Udupila* village. Among the suggestions were entrusting *Pediris Gurunnanse* the responsibility of training the cast of *Kolam* drama and entrusting *P.G. Moudiyas Appu Gurunnanse* guiding dialogues. Further, this art association agreed to entrust Mr *Martin Amarasinghe* to keep all the repaired masks at his house. Even today at Mr. *Martin Amarasinghe's* residence there are about 100 masks of various kinds belonging to about 70 *Kolam* dramas which this clan owns. The most significant feature of the collection is that it contains the oldest and the rarest traditional mask called "*the panchanārighata*" (owe with five faces of women).

23rd of May 1959 is a memorable day of the *Kolam* art. It was the day when a highly colourful *Kolam* show during a period of five days was held with the assistance of the Venerable

Tiranagama Ratanasara Thero sponsored by the state and the artists trained by *Udupila Kala Sangamaya*. The *Ven. Ratanasara* says that it cost Rs. 15000.

“It was after a number of years that spending Rs. 15000/- and having erected huts and camps a national Kolam drama show was held with pomp and glory by the *Eksat Kalā Mandalaya* for five days.¹⁴”

To make the above account which is based on the article published by *Anura Gunawardana* in the *Divayina* more comprehensive I give facts I discussed with *Lokuhettige Kularatne* and *Martin Amarasinghe* at *Udupila* on 24.05.2014.

“Kolam art of *Udupila* is linked with the sports *Pora Pol*. Before commencement of *Pora Pol* “*sanhindevatāvat*” (practices and duties in the small temple of God) are performed. *Pora Pol* is played by two teams *Udupila* and *Yatipila*. The coconut thrown by a player to his opponent must be broken by the latter by means of another coconut while it is held in his hand. For this purpose, it is not the average coconut which is used but a special kind of coconut, i.e. one with a stronger shell is used (pic.7). If the coconut is thrown or the one which is used to break the other one is broken the one whose coconut is broken has to leave the play. Like this, it goes on. The winning side always offers the win to the defeated side. Both sides then end the play and applaud with shouts saying “*Ho! Ho! We won Pora Pol!*” and they go in procession. After that at night, the Kolam drama is held. Kolam group of *Mirissa* is a one handed down from generation to generation. The son of the one who played the role of “*ārachchi*” has to undertake the same role as his father did after his father. Entrusting a role to someone else is considered as a disgrace to the one who is entitled to it. But today this tradition is no more in force. Anyone can perform any role now. In consequence, some families find fault with the new procedure.

The role “*Arachchi*” of the present *Kolam* group is played by *Selvin Vidānaārachchi* (72). *Justin Senaratne* (64) plays both *ārachchi* and *rāssa* roles. *Anil Amarasinghe* (52) *Rāssa Kolam* and *Gamini Senaratne* (54) play both *Karapita Kolama* and kind *Maname* Drum is played by *Jayalatgama Edwin*. Even for *Mirisse Kolam*, a drum is played by the people of *Berava* caste of village *Jayalatgama*. In the past, we held at several occasions Kolam dramas at Universities. Our object is just to change only what we incur and present a traditional Kolam drama. We do not think that we must sell this art¹⁵.”

Analysis

As information reveals *Ariyapala Gurunnanse*'s clan of *Ambalangoda* and *Udupila* clan both possess a long history. Both these groups must have begun this art simultaneous with each other. *Ambalangoda* group has made his art an industry within a short period. *Ariyapala Gurunnanse* and his successors were able to produce masks one of the major features of Kolam

which is and to develop it as a major industry and to gain authority of the *mask* market. *Juvan Wadu* clan has achieved such great prosperity, which owes to both commercial and cultural capital. *Ambalangoda* is a swiftly grown up a commercial town. Due to factors such as having been located in the town *Ambalangoda* and the economic security gained through their association with the process of commercial activities *Juvan Wadu* clan become one of the most prosperous families in that town. As soon as the arrival of tourism, they were also able to reap harvest out of it too. To do so the knowledge of English, business skill and political affiliations helped them. It is due to their economic stability that *Kanchana Wijesooriya* who had studied Indian dancing in *Kerala* province in India and *Manoshika Wijesooriya* having obtained a degree in aesthetic studies from Colombo and serving as a dancing teacher in St. Joseph College, Colombo were able to perform a research such as *Karaliye* Kolama by spending a capital of 6 lakhs. They seem to be taking an attempt at adapting this folk art to their surroundings. As education and aesthetic sense of Sri Lanka is based on feudal rural and peasantry discipline their attempt is rebuked. But if at all for a folk drama such as Kolam to survive in a capitalistic economic system set up it is of course in the form of a drama such as *Karaliye* Kolama.

However, the position in *Mirissa* is entirely different from this they are a people who still derive pleasure out of folk sports that prevailed in feudal days. Although Galle Road and coastal regions due to a rapid growth of tourism have been developed when one observes a place like *Udupila* that the rural areas continue to exist as they were in the past. They are not anxious to sell their art products. Instead, they intend to protect them. The mask which was conserved by *Mr. M. H. Goonatileke* in 1970 by nailing wooden strips to it and placed it in the office room of *Mr. Martin Amarasinghe*'s stands even today as it was. Compared this with Mask Museum of *Ariyapala Gurunnanse*, *Ambalangoda* is still looking very primitive. *Mirissa* group has not yet made art their livelihood. They refuse to give economic value to their art and as far as possible try to preserve its traditional value. Cultural values of traditional subsistence economy, which is not mixed up with capitalistic social changes, can still be seen in them. Factors such as *Mirissa* are a village and it is connected with the cultivation of coconut and paddy and traditional modes of production such as fishing are behind this difference.

Conclusion

In Sri Lanka, a number of highly different economic strata were established when European feudal system and capitalistic elements were superimposed on earlier caste-based feudal system depended on subsistence agriculture. This economic difference is seen in every field. This different economic system is the reason for the existence of *Kolam* drama in two forms, i.e. as a folk drama and as a performing art at one and the same time. One group is developing *Kolam* as an industry whereas another group is preserving it as a traditional heritage because of

this different economic system. It is due to their difference in the economy that *Ambalangoda Juvan Wadu* clan is trying to project modernism and *Udupila* clan of *Mirissa* is trying to preserve tradition.

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