

**GOVERNMENT AGENT, P. A. DYKE, AND RELIGION  
IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA,  
(CEYLON) 1829 - 1867**

**(A Study in British Imperial Policy towards Indigenous Religions)**

*by*

B. E. S. J. BASTIAMPILLAI

**The British and Christianity**

The Christian missionary enterprise got a good start quite early in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka (Ceylon). In 1818, Revd. Joseph Knight commenced his missionary activity in Nallur;<sup>1</sup> and Nallur was developed into the principal station of the Church Missionary Society, along with a church, a school and a printing press.<sup>2</sup> Soon after, from 1825 onwards, the Jaffna Auxiliary Religious Tract Society began distributing Tamil Christian literature among the people.<sup>3</sup> The Wesleyans too established a mission in Sri Lanka apportioning their activities to the Sinhalese and Tamil regions. By 1819, they enlarged their Northern mission with three additional ministers. A chapel and a school were also built in Jaffna.<sup>4</sup>

The American missionaries who arrived in 1816 laboured, especially in the countryside, which though well-inhabited was not under Protestant Christian influence.<sup>5</sup> There were also, in addition, the Presbyterians, Lutherans, Anglicans, and numerous Roman Catholics in North Sri Lanka.<sup>6</sup>

But the number of missionaries or converts gave no indication of the significance of Christianity in the lives of the people. At one time the religion appeared to be almost extinct. Churches were neglected, the clergy were forgotten, and there was only one Tamil catechist in charge of the province.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the missionaries persisted and eventually exerted a great influence on the people. The nature of their work linked them close to the people.

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1. Martyn, John H., *Notes on Jaffna—Chronological, Historical and Biographical, Etc. with an Appendix* (Tellipalai, 1923) p. 12.
  2. Martyn, John H., *op. cit.* pp. 13-14.
  3. *Ibid.*, p. 14; also see Casie Chitty, S. *Ceylon Gazetteer* (Colombo, 1834) p. 173.
  4. *Ibid.*, p. 13; also see De Silva, K.M. *Social Policy and Missionary Organizations in Ceylon, 1840-1855* (London, 1855) p. 27 for the division of regions between the Wesleyans and the Church Missionary Society.
  5. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
  6. Casie Chitty, S., *op. cit.* p. 57.
  7. See observations of Revd. Buchanan quoted from Emerson Tennent's *Christianity in Ceylon* (London, 1850) by Martyn, John, H., *op. cit.* p. 160.

Because of their enterprise the Christian missions grew powerful and later influenced not only the society but even the administration. At the end of the first quarter of the 19th century the missionaries had established themselves on a viable footing in the Jaffna peninsula, especially the Church Missionary Society, and the Wesleyan and the American missions.<sup>1</sup> The Roman Catholic church had been a force among a section of the populace from the days of the Portuguese.<sup>2</sup>

Conversion to Christianity, however, had taken place not merely because the inhabitants had been convinced of its moral excellence, but more because of the practical advantages that it conferred. Hence, it was no surprise that some of these converts later reverted to their original faith while others who, although apparently Christians, continued to observe rituals and customs of their ancestral religion. Numerous converts to Christianity in North Ceylon hailed particularly from those among the "lower" castes since the new religion offered to them a promise of an egalitarian status in society.<sup>3</sup>

The Government Agent of the province was frequently confronted with conflicts between the followers of the traditional indigenous religions and the newly introduced Christian sects. Also, to worsen matters there erupted at times differences between those who were adherents of the various sects of Christianity. On such occasions, as administrative head of the province, the Government Agent's duty was to effect reconciliations or settlements between the quarrelling parties.

In 1830 there erupted a dispute between the Hindus and American missionaries at Manipay regarding the siting of a temple. The administrative authorities acknowledged that the Hindus were building a temple on a land which belonged to them while the missionaries were opposed to it.<sup>4</sup> They opposed the erection of a temple so close to their church, and on land which they contended belonged to them. Furthermore, they argued that the temple was not an ancient one, that only a section of the people favoured its construction and that the head *maniager* (superior headman) did not countenance its construction. Moreover, a temple in close proximity to a church could lead to disturbances.<sup>5</sup>

The Government however decided that the land should be allocated to the manager of the temple who was permitted to build it. If the missionaries

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1. Martyn, John H., *op. cit.*; for brief reviews of the growth of these missions in North Ceylon see pp. 161-166.
  2. Grenier, Joseph, *Leaves from my life* (Colombo, 1923) p. 45.
  3. Ludowyk, E.F.C., *The Story of Ceylon* (London, 1962) pp. 218, 223.
  4. SLNA—20/1813—226—Chief Secy. to Collector, 10 June 1830; also see Collector to Chief Secy., 27 May 1830.
  5. SLNA—6/972B Collector to Chief Secy. 22 October 1830; also see enclosure, letter from Secy., American Mission to Collector, 21 October 1830.

disagreed they could go to a court of law but the Crown was inclined to defend the right of the Hindus to establish their temple.<sup>1</sup> The missionaries expected more favourable treatment and were not disposed to accept an unfavourable decision.

Faced with this missionary opposition, the Government wavered in imposing their ruling. The grant of the land to the temple was confined to an extent that had been occupied with governmental approval in 1821. Encroachments beyond that limit were to be recovered. To appease the American mission further, it was proclaimed that the government's intention was not to disturb the mission in the possession of their property.<sup>2</sup>

The missionaries had also earlier alleged in court that ceremonies of the temples, accompanied by the beating of tom-toms (drums) and the pealing of bells, disturbed their sleep. The authorities of the temple were punished by the local management but the Government had set aside the penalty as it did not wish to interfere with local customs, beliefs or rituals.<sup>3</sup>

The American missionaries went further and claimed even greater rights on the grounds that the proprietor of the temple, Swaminathan Mudaliyar, had agreed to give them the land, dismantle the temple and even dispose of the timber to the mission. But since the Mudaliyar had acted illegally the Government did not support the claims of the mission and it indicated the rights of the Hindus.<sup>4</sup>

In 1847, Government Agent, P. A. Dyke who was politic in managing local affairs obtained a governmental ruling which prohibited magistrates from interfering in local religious matters. The punishment that had been meted out to the management of the temple was construed to be contrary to the Government policy that there should be no restraint on the celebrations of indigenous rituals. Yet, despite the pronouncement of this prudent policy, conflicts between the Christian missionaries and the Hindus continued to occur sporadically till 1883.<sup>5</sup>

To understand the British settlement of this conflict in 1847 in this manner the significance of that year in Hindu revivalism should be recognised. In

1. SLNA—20/1815-226 Ch. Secy. to Collr., 10 June 1830.
2. SLNA—20/1815-226 Ch. Secy. to Collr., 3 November 1830; also see letters of Collector to Ch. Secy., 27 May 1830 and 22 August 1830.
3. For earlier details of this conflict between the American mission and the Hindus see Rasanayagam, C. *The British Period of the History of Jaffna*, (Colombo, 1934) p. 144; also SLNA—20/964-257—No. 218 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 25 August 1847 and Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 23 June 1847; also enclosure No. 1 and No. 2—Correspondence with the Collector, W. H. Hooper, and the Mission, 12 January 1821 and 13 January 1821.
4. Rasanayagam, C. *op. cit.*
5. Rasanayagam, C. *op. cit.*

December, Arumuga Navalar,<sup>1</sup> the leading Tamil savant and enthusiastic Saivite reformer, had commenced a series of lectures and sermons at the Sivan temple at Vannarponnai in Jaffna defending Hinduism and stimulating its renaissance. It had suffered from atrophy and ebbed under Western rule. Hindu preachers and stewards employed a circuit system as their *modus operandi*, modelled on the plan of the Methodists.<sup>2</sup> They recited passages from the Hindu sacred texts, delivered lectures or preached on Friday evenings at an out-house of the temple at Vannarponnai, and conducted meetings in villages like Chunnakam and Manipay. Along with Navalar, Carthigesu Aiyar notably contributed towards this revival of Hinduism.<sup>3</sup>

There were also instances when Hindus acted unfairly and posed problems to the English administration. In 1837, a temple was erected at Vadamaradchy on government land, which had been granted to the American missionaries. The Government Agent had already forbidden the Hindus from building this temple, and hence it was shifted.<sup>4</sup>

Differences between the Christian missionaries and Hindus arose over other questions, too. In 1829, the Church missionaries opposed the burial of "heathens" in the graveyard of St. John's church, Jaffna, and the Governor ordered this practice to be stopped.<sup>5</sup> In the next year the Hindus destroyed a church<sup>6</sup> resenting the growth of missionary influence.

Ecclesiastical animosities were not only confined to disputes between Christians and Hindus. Controversies arose amongst the missionaries of the different Christian sects too. Then the Government Agent had to tackle an even more complicated problem. For instance, the Roman Catholics were harassed by the American missionaries in 1832<sup>7</sup> and Governor Wilmot Horton warned Revd. John Scudder not to offend those belonging to other denominations. It was the ".....earnest desire of this Government to afford full and perfect toleration to all His Majesty's Subjects."<sup>8</sup> Scudder was admonished to avoid anything acrimonious in religious controversy while the Roman Catholics were assured that they would not be subjected to annoyance.<sup>9</sup>

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1. For a brief account of Navalar's activities see de Silva, K.M. (ed.) *University of Ceylon-History of Ceylon, Vol. 3* (Col. 1973) pp. 208-211.
  2. Martyn, John H. *op. cit.* p. 194; also see the reference to "Hindu Pastors" by Revd. E. J. Robinson, late Wesleyan Missionary in Ceylon, 1867.
  3. *Ibid.*
  4. SLNA—6/1419—No. 139 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 25 July 1837.
  5. SLNA—20/879-225—Ch. Secy. to Collector, 11 November 1829.
  6. SLNA—20/11-54—Collector's Diaries—entry, 9 June 1830.
  7. SLNA—20/681-228—Chief Secy. to Collector, 15 October 1832.
  8. *Ibid.* see enclosed annex, Chief Secy. to Revd. John Scudder, 6 January 1832.
  9. *Ibid.* also see enclosure, copy of answer to petition from Roman Catholic inhabitants.

Generally, however, the British Government encouraged missionary enterprise so long as no controversial issues were involved. When the American mission wanted to utilise abandoned buildings at Chavakachcheri and in another village this was readily permitted in 1834.<sup>1</sup> In 1833 restraints imposed on this mission's activities were withdrawn.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the American mission established itself at the Vanni, in Navatkuli, Katchay and in Chavakachcheri with government help,<sup>3</sup> and by 1836 at Udupidy.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the Protestant inhabitants at Mannar were helped with government funds for repairing a damaged church<sup>5</sup> while in 1838 and 1839 the Dutch Consistory<sup>6</sup> church within the Jaffna Fort was repaired and equipped.<sup>7</sup> Erected in 1706, this was the oldest Dutch ecclesiastical building in Ceylon.

Again in 1850, the government spent £400 on repairing the Dutch Consistory church, but insisted that the Government should exercise a joint control over the management.<sup>8</sup> The Government Agent chose the chance to procure some alterations in the terms on which the church was being used by the Episcopal Congregation. Dyke wanted the government to be empowered to regulate certain matters, particularly in the practice of internment within the church<sup>9</sup>. Yet, since 1826 as the Government had made principal repairs<sup>10</sup> to the building without any qualification, to prescribe certain conditions now was embarrassing. In 1843 when the church was destroyed by lightning the government had assisted in repairing it without any restrictions.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, some differences in opinion between the members of the Consistory and the Episcopal Congregation created further complication for the government. For about forty years, the Episcopal Congregation had

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1. SLNA—20/1535-232—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent; also see enclosure Secy., American Mission, Jaffna, to P. Anstruther, Secy, to Govt., 30 November 1833; also Martyn, John, H., *op. cit.* p. 17.
  2. Martyn, John, H., *op. cit.* p. 16.
  3. SLNA 20/1873-230—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 8 November 1833. The Mission was granted permission to occupy premises of "old churches" (abandoned); also see request from Secy., American Mission to Col. Secy., 1 November 1833.
  4. SLNA—6/1354—No. 200 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 9 September 1836.
  5. SLNA—6/1354—No. 178 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 12 August 1836; also see Dyke's letter from Mannar to Col. Secy., 22 November 1836.
  6. SLNA—6/1420—Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 6 June 1838 (No number)—See request from members of Dutch Consistory and the officiating Clergyman's request for a reading desk etc.; also Dyke's estimate of the costs.
  7. *Governor's Address*, See address of 24 December 1839 to Legislative Council authorising the expenditure; Lewis, J. P. *Tombstones and Monuments in Ceylon*, (Colombo, 1913) p. 215.
  8. SLNA—6/2070B—No. 190 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 9 September 1850.
  9. *Ibid.*—See also enclosure.
  10. Rasanayagam, C. *op. cit.* p. 12—The Dutch Church was renovated in 1827 by the Government; also see p. 109.
  11. SLNA—6/2070B—No. 190 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 9 September 1850—See enclosures for earlier details.

occupied and used the Church freely. However, only the funds of the Dutch Consistory had been used to meet various expenses. No contributions were made by the Episcopalians.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the authorities of the church were now asked to terminate the practice of burying the dead within its premises since this was insanitary.<sup>2</sup> They were also required to abide by other conditions, which infringed on the government and the economy of the church and thus interfered with the wishes of the founders and their objectives.<sup>3</sup>

Following these stipulations, and over the joint control of the church, the Consistory authorities entertained misgivings. While they expected Government aid they could not agree to conditions which interfered with the proper discharge of their duties and militated against their conscience.

Revd. J. D. Palm hence submitted the terms on which the church at the Fort could be placed under the joint control of the Government and the Consistory.<sup>4</sup> The damaged building could not be repaired by the Consistory and the Jaffna Presbyterians had no minister for several years. It was a wonder that there was a congregation! He suggested that the Presbyterians should not alone exercise control over the Church and the Government Agent concurred that if the State were to effect improvements to the church there should be joint control.<sup>5</sup>

Government Agent, Dyke, proposed that the use of the church by the Episcopal Congregation should not rest merely upon sufferance<sup>6</sup> and the right given to the Episcopalians should not be withdrawn since public money could not be expended for the exclusive benefit of a single sect.<sup>7</sup> Any money spent on the church was to be regarded as rent and the Presbyterian community was not allowed to withdraw the permission for the use of the building by the Episcopalians without a settlement of accounts.<sup>8</sup> The Government agreed to repair the Dutch Church in the Fort only on the condition that Presbyterians and Episcopalians were granted equal and concurrent rights over its use. The Government Agent would negotiate these terms with the Consistory in Jaffna, advised by the Queen's Advocate.<sup>9</sup>

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1. *Ibid.*
  2. SLNA—6/2070B—No. 190 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 9 September 1850—See enclosure.
  3. *Ibid.*
  4. SLNA—20/1052-265—No. 206 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 24 November 1851; See letter and enclosures, J. D. Palm to Col. Secy., 19 November 1851.
  5. *Ibid.*
  6. SLNA—6/2097—No. 299 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 1 December 1851.
  7. SLNA—6/2097—No. 299 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 1 December 1851.
  8. *Ibid.*
  9. SLNA—20/209-262—No. 113 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 3 June 1850—See enclosure; SLNA—20/920-266—No. 92, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent., 27 May 1852 and No. 114 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 23 June 1852; also No. 159, Col. Secy. to Queen's Advocate, 9 June 1852.

Thus, a prescribed amount of Government control over the building was exercised. The Government Agent asserted this authority with the approval of the central administration in favour of the Episcopalians. The Government repaired the church and handed it back to the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians.<sup>1</sup> Similarly when the Jaffna Native Evangelical Society, which enjoyed the government's blessings, wanted to occupy two buildings, improved by it, the Government Agent allowed this.<sup>2</sup>

But, even by 1853, in spite of all efforts, the problems with the Church within the Fort remained unsolved. The Consistory refused to abandon the right of burial within the Church.<sup>3</sup> Faced with such an intransigent attitude, the Government could only refuse aid for repairs.<sup>4</sup>

In June 1865, the Government Agent pointed out that another old Dutch Church had been allowed years ago to be occupied on sufferance by different Ministers.<sup>5</sup> But with regard to the church at the Fort such a simple solution was not possible or practicable. The Presbyterians were the members of the Dutch Consistory church and the Consistory never consulted the Episcopalians on any matter pertaining to the management of the church but availed themselves of their assistance, whenever needed, complained Rev. Peter Percival, of the Wesleyan Mission.<sup>6</sup> J. Morphew a citizen also added that it was ".....a pity that a fine old church and good organ should be left to decay, in consequence of what appears to me to be an absurd stickling for rights on the part of the remnant of the old Consistory"<sup>7</sup> while even in 1843, the Government had to assist the Consistory to buy an organ.<sup>8</sup>

The Consistory was not financially viable to manage the church. Yet the conflict between Presbyterians and Episcopalians continued because the former were adamant about their rights over the church while the Episcopalians, as the established church of the government would not compromise

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1. SLNA—6/2070B—No. 190 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 9 September 1850—See enclosure; also see Rasanayagam, *C. op. cit.*, p. 109.
  2. Barrow, George, *Ceylon—Past and Present* (London, 1857) p. 166; also see SLNA—20/920-266—No. 48—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 17 March 1852 and Govt. Agent's No. 43 of 2 March 1852 to Col. Secy.
  3. SLNA—20/1946-269—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 15 June 1853 (no date).
  4. *Ibid.*
  5. SLNA—20/53-431—No. 181 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 23 June 1865.
  6. SLNA—20/989-293—Col. Secy. to Dyke 13 April 1866 (no number); See enclosure, private letter of P. Percival, 6 April 1866.
  7. SLNA—20/989-293—Col. Secy. to Dyke, 13 April 1866 (no number); see enclosure, private letter of J. Morphew—21 April 1866.
  8. *Ibid.*—See for correspondence about the organ, Consistory to Col. Secy., 11 March 1843; reply Col. Secy. to Consistory, 13 June 1843; Consistory to Col. Secy., 8 July 1843 and Col. Secy. to Consistory, 4 October 1843.

and wanted Government intervention on their behalf. A stalemate thereby occurred and constantly differences of opinion arose. Only in 1892 did the Government purchase the church for Rs. 6,000<sup>1</sup> and end this impasse.

A similar problem had arisen in 1850 when the Wesleyans in Mannar had wanted to use the church within the Fort for conducting services.<sup>2</sup> The government had then prevented trouble by allowing the facility while cautioning the Presbyterians against interfering with the Episcopalian services.<sup>3</sup>

With missionaries of different sects working in the same area it was inevitable, especially when one sect vied with the other in aggressive competition, that the Government Agent should have been plagued by complaints about internal disputes.

In 1851 some Roman Catholic inhabitants of Kayts, complained that a certain section of their co-religionists had taken exclusive possession of a burial ground which had been used by all.<sup>4</sup> The quarrel was between the congregation of the mission under the patronage of the Queen of Portugal and those under the patronage of the Holy See.<sup>5</sup> Government Agent Dyke had witnessed the occurrence of such disputes between the adherents of these two missions. The magistrate and he were anxious about the likelihood of serious disturbances of the peace.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, as suggested by the Queen's Advocate, this dispute was referred for adjudication to the district court.<sup>7</sup>

From 1841 onwards an attitudinal change when granting premises for the American mission's use was evident. Decisions were not taken locally and the Secretary of State in England was consulted before approving the occupation of premises.<sup>8</sup> The Governor and the Secretary of State were reluctant to yield readily to requests and the Government Agent's report on the progress of the mission was sought.<sup>9</sup> In the next year too the Colonial office inquired about the American mission.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the Government Agent Dyke grew gradually more sympathetic towards the American mission-

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1. Rasanayagam, C., *op. cit.*, p. 24.
  2. SLNA—20/209-262—No. 113 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 3 June 1850.
  3. SLNA—20/209-262—Ibid.; also see enclosure Queen's Advocate to Col. Secy., 27 March 1850.
  4. SLNA—6/2097—No. 250 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 1 October 1851.
  5. *Ibid.*
  6. *Ibid.*
  7. SLNA—20/999-267—No. 190 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 20 November 1852; also see No. 292, Queen's Advocate to Col. Secy., 10 November 1852.
  8. SLNA—7/545—No. 324, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent—4 December 1841.
  9. *Ibid.*; also see SLNA—7/545—No. 331 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 30 November 1842 and enclosure, copy of despatch No. 136, Secretary of State to Governor, 16 September 1842.
  10. SLNA—7/574—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent—Memorandum of 12 October 1843; also see Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 19 April 1843 (no number).



naries. He permitted them to occupy an old church and premises at Atchuvely and Karaitivu in 1846<sup>1</sup> and £200 was granted as ecclesiastical charges in 1848.<sup>2</sup> The efforts and the success of the American mission in education and social activity were recognised and, in 1851, the Governor appreciated "the zeal and benevolent exertions displayed by them in the cause of humanity."<sup>3</sup> After this, the Mission's activity was not regarded with official suspicion.

The governmental attitude towards the English mission was, however, different. The Church Mission was expected to provide an efficient European ministry and the Archdeacon handed to it in 1842 St. John's Church at Chundikuli in Jaffna. Then the Government volunteered to repair this church since it was, "ungracious not to do so."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, since St. John's church suffered inconvenience and nuisance owing to its proximity to a road, the Government Agent even advised that the route taken by the road to be altered although it was expensive.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Colonial Secretary, P. Anstruther,<sup>6</sup> permitted provision of furniture at government expense while Dyke donated a piece of land to the Church Missionary Society at Kopay.<sup>7</sup> Again, in October 1857, the Government promptly responded to a request by building a new church in 1860 at Chundikuli.<sup>8</sup> The Church Missionary Society being connected to the established church received this "most favoured" treatment from the government.

The Wesleyan mission, too enjoyed official goodwill. It obtained, in 1844, funds for repairing a church at Puttur out of the grant allocated to "aid missions in Ceylon"<sup>9</sup> and was assisted again next year.<sup>10</sup> Similarly the "native" church mission,<sup>11</sup> which was assisted by the foreign missions was aided by the government. This mission was largely conducted and supported by local converts and later developed into another stable missionary institution.

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1. SLNA—6/1835—No. 362 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 25 November 1846.
  2. SLNA—6/1940A—No. 31 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 20 January 1848.
  3. SLNA—20/778-264—No. 29 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 25 February 1851.
  4. SLNA—8/133—No. 14 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 14 January 1843; SLNA—7/545—No. 209 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 July 1842.
  5. SLNA—8/133—No. 149 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 4 June 1844.
  6. SLNA—8/133—No. 216 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 13 August 1844; also see enclosure letter from Revd. J. T. Johnston to Govt. Agent, 10 August 1844.
  7. Martyn, John H., *op. cit.*, p. 19.
  8. Martyn, John H., *op. cit.* p. 29; also see Lewis, J.P., *Tombstones and Monuments in Ceylon* (Colombo, 1913) p. 231; also see SLNA—6/2386—No. 317 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 19 October 1857; Governor provides for expenditure in estimates for 1858; see No. 757—29 October 1857.
  9. SLNA—7/574—No. 98 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 25 April 1844.
  10. SLNA—7/638—No. 241 Col. Secy to Govt. Agent, 10 October 1845.
  11. Martyn, John H., *op. cit.* p. 18—the first Wesleyan Tamil Minister was J. P. Shanmugam.

The response to missionary enterprise in the Jaffna district was noteworthy. Quite early, by 1837, the first Wesleyan Tamil minister had been ordained and although the Christians were few their influence and importance in society was disproportionately large and Christianity remained a permanent legacy in North Ceylon bequeathed by the Colonial power.

### **The British and Buddhism**

Since the Sinhalese Buddhist district of Nuvarakalaviya became a part of the newly created predominantly Hindu Tamil Northern province in 1833 the Government Agent faced a new and unfamiliar problem. As early as 1834, Dyke was required to forward to the Government Agent, Central province an account of the Buddhist *devalas, vihares* and other details of these institutions.<sup>1</sup> Nuvarakalaviya had been earlier a part of the Kandyan kingdom which was now within the Central province. The government appeared to be anxious to ascertain whether the Buddhist temples were being properly maintained.<sup>2</sup> In dealing with Buddhist questions the Government was often hampered in pursuing a clear policy or practice for English opinion was generally opposed to any connection between a Christian Government and an indigenous religion.<sup>3</sup>

Since Dyke had now been given authority over the new Kandyan Sinhala Buddhist region that differed so much from the Tamil areas where his administrative experience had been gained, the Government briefed him on the peculiar problems he would have to tackle. A letter relating to appointments pertaining to the Buddhist temples, received from Government Agent, George Turnour of the Central province, in whose area lived most of the Kandyan Sinhala Buddhists was sent to Dyke for information.<sup>4</sup> Governor Robert Horton advised Dyke to avail himself of Turnour's knowledge whenever he encountered difficulties in selecting headmen for the districts that had been a part of the Kandyan province.<sup>5</sup> Turnour writing to the Colonial Secretary in September 1834, had adumbrated the practice and policy which would be feasible to be followed with respect to temples and Buddhism.<sup>6</sup> He prescribed a procedure to govern the appointment of headmen to villages situated in other provinces but who were yet attached to the principal temples in Kandy.

1. See Ievers, R.W. *Manual of the North Central Province, Ceylon* (Colombo, 1899).
2. SLNA—20/1535-232—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 26 April 1834.
3. Gordon Cumming, C.F. *Two Happy Years in Ceylon, Vol. I.* (Edinburgh and London, MDCCCXCII) pp. 89-90 for an expression of this view which seemed to have persisted from the beginning.
4. SLNA—20/1081-231—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 11 October 1834; also see enclosure, George Turnour, Govt. Agent, Kandy, to Col. Secy., 25 September 1834.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, see Turnour's letter.

Temples were neglected. Hardly anyone performed the duties necessary for maintaining them. Consequently, the Buddhists, who witnessed the discontinuance of the past state-aided ceremonies of their "church," grew discontented.<sup>1</sup> Petty headmen in Kandyan areas, apportioned to the Northern province, exacted fees from inhabitants illicitly and overlooked the evasion of their duties towards temples.<sup>2</sup>

According to the 17th clause of the Proclamation of 21 November 1818, petty headmen were appointed on the recommendations of the *Dewa* and *Basnayake Nilames* and appointments were annually renewed on a payment of fees to these *nilames*.<sup>3</sup> Petty headmen were permitting people to neglect the duties they owed to temples after obtaining various benefits and the chiefs in turn obtained bigger fees from headmen for tolerating the neglect of functions. Consequently, the duties due to temples remained unperformed since both petty headmen and chiefs benefited from such a situation and welcomed a continuance of this unsatisfactory state in their own interest.<sup>4</sup> To end this, the Central province Government Agent, Turnour, wanted to exercise a control over appointment of headmen in Kandyan areas annexed to the Northern province, especially where such headmen had to perform obligations to the principal temples in Kandy.<sup>5</sup> Governor Horton did not agree. He did not want the Government Agent, Central Province, to interfere in appointing headmen to another province, even to villages that owed services to temples. But, Dyke was enjoined to be careful and select suitable and responsible headmen for the Kandyan areas within his province.<sup>6</sup>

In 1837, further advice was tendered to Dyke, enclosing for his use a letter from the Government Agent, Central province, along with the Colonial Secretary's reply.<sup>7</sup> The Government Agent, had examined the accounts relating to receipts and expenditure of temples when chiefs of temples were appointed. A considerable amount of money and grain was missing. Since chiefs had not been instructed to check periodically the accounts to verify their correctness, and as there had been frequent changes of petty headmen responsible for the performances of obligations to temples, no individuals could be blamed.<sup>8</sup>

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1. SLNA—20/1081-231—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 11 October 1834; also see enclosure George Turnour, Govt. Agent, Kandy to Col. Secy., 25 September 1834.
  2. *Ibid.*
  3. *Ibid.*
  4. *Ibid.*
  5. SLNA—20/1081-231—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 11 October 1834; also see enclosure George Turnour, Govt. Agent, Kandy to Col. Secy., 25 September 1834.
  6. *Ibid.*
  7. SLNA—20/683-236—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent (no number); also see enclosures No. 52, Govt. Agent, Central province (George Turnour) to Col. Secy., 7 February 1837 and Col. Secy's. reply to Govt. Agent, Central province.
  8. *Ibid.*

The Government Agent hence concluded that the government should sever connection with indigenous religious institutions in the Kandyan provinces.<sup>1</sup> But whether the Government should bear no responsibility in respect of the revenues of temples was, however, a problem so long as the lands of temples were exempted from grain tax and the Chiefs and headmen connected with these institutions were appointed by Government. The Government could avoid inexpedient interference in detailed affairs of temple management: yet, it was still necessary to ensure that the revenues of temples were not squandered by parties appointed by the Government to protect them.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, when appointing chiefs of temples they were to be informed that they would be responsible for a proper management of revenues. Additionally, since petty headmen were appointed on the recommendation of chiefs, chiefs were to ensure through periodical inspections that the revenues due to the temples collected by headmen were duly accounted.<sup>3</sup> The Government accepted this suggestion of Turnour, and Dyke too was instructed to appoint chiefs to temples in the Kandyan areas under his surveillance similarly.<sup>4</sup>

The Government saw that the practice of granting lands freely for the use of Buddhist temples was extending and feared that the consequences could be an evil. It hence believed that a law, like the proclamation of 1819 September, for the regulation of land grants within the Kandyan areas, would be a feasible measure.<sup>5</sup> Initially, therefore, the Government Agent was required to report how far this practice was extending in his area and also to suggest remedial measures to stem possible ill-effects.

Much of the time and correspondence of the various assistant agents, Anuradhapura, from 1840 onwards were also spent on the management of the affairs of the "bo-tree *vihare* (the "Mahavihare" or "Udamaluwa"). The election of an *Anunayake* and the appropriation of the offerings to the shrines were frequently troublesome occasions.<sup>6</sup>

The *Anunayake* was the chief monk of the *Atamasthana* (the eight sacred places)—the Udamaluwa, Jetawanarama, Lankarama, Abhayagiriya, Sela—

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1. SLNA—20/683-236—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent (no number); also see enclosures No. 52, Govt. Agent, Central province (George Turnour) to Col. Secy., 7 February 1837 and Col. Secy's reply to Govt. Agent, Central province.
  2. *Ibid.*
  3. *Ibid.*
  4. *Ibid.* see especially enclosure Col. Secy to Govt. Agent, Central Province, 20 February 1837.
  5. SLNA—20/471-238. Circular—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 18 June 1838.
  6. See Ievers, R. W., *op. cit.*, A, p. 42.

Chaitya, Thuparama, Mirisawatiya and Lowamaprasada. The electors of the *Anunayake* were usually the head of the important and influential Nuwarawewa family, the three *ratemahatmayas* of Nuvarakalaviya, and the seventeen *korales* of the district. But, at one time, the "Malvatta fraternity" claimed a right to interfere in the election and this claim generated a lot of trouble.<sup>1</sup>

The supervision of these newly annexed areas entailed attention to problems of a novel nature. The *Anunayake Unnanse* was not even normally permitted to leave Anuradhapura without the assistant agent's approval. In April 1842, the *Mahanayake* (Head of the Malwatte *vihare*) along with some other dignitaries wanted the Government Agent to direct the *Anunayake Unnanse* of Anuradhapura to appear before them to answer certain "ecclesiastical charges."<sup>2</sup> Thus, when internal discord arose even in religious affairs, the civil authority's intervention was solicited.

In 1842, the *Anunayake* of the *Atamasthana* was deposed from office and declared to be a layman by the assembly of the Malwatta monastery. But he challenged this action and the right to interfere in the election of a successor to the office of *Anunayake* which was being claimed by the Malwatte monastery. The regular electors from Nuvarakalaviya too opposed such a move.<sup>3</sup>

For many years there had been constant disputes between the *bhikkus* (monks), the tenants of the temple ("padaviya people") and the Nuwarawewa chief over the disposal of the offerings from devotees. These disputes had occasioned voluminous minutes, entries in diaries, and correspondence between assistant agents and the Government Agent. Dyke, however, did not settle these disputes and his non-interference only served to worsen the acrimony over the offerings, and elections to religious offices.

In May 1851 a dispute arose between the priests and the peasants of Padaviya about the appropriation of the offerings to the Anuradhapura temple during Poson (the anniversary of the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka) festival. Dyke held that the *Anunayake* had been properly chosen and defended his right to settle this dispute. He suspected that the trouble over the distribution of the offerings had been provoked by the *bhikkus* from Kandy who wanted to eject the present *Anunayake*. The Government, however, argued that it could not intervene in this controversy. The dispute was left to be settled by arbitration or arrangement among the disputants. Even-

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1. *Ibid.*

2. SLNA—7/545—No. 124 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 28 April 1842.

3. Ievers, R. W., *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

tually Brodie, the assistant agent, effected a temporary settlement, but this did not eradicate the causes for these controversies.<sup>1</sup>

There were also other solely religious matters where the assistance of the government was sought. When a branch of the sacred bo-tree in the premises of the *vihare* at Anuradhapura was wrenched off by a gale in June 1842, the government was requested to contribute towards a ceremony for burning this branch. The incumbent of the *vihare* petitioned to the assistant agent<sup>2</sup> that the tree was planted in the reign of king Devanampiyatissa by two great missionaries from India, Mahinda and Sanghamitta, who had introduced Buddhism into the island. Hence, it was a venerated tree, and whenever similar misfortunes had occurred earlier, the royal store had provided cloth, oil, sandalwood and a flag for use in ceremonially burning the dismembered branch.<sup>3</sup>

Since the British Government had now succeeded the kings of Kandy it was their duty to provide the required donations. Furthermore, John D'Oyly, the British Resident in the Kandyan areas, had, on an earlier occasion, provided cloth and other articles at state expense when a branch of the sacred tree had given way. But the Governor refused to authorise the Government Agent to grant any assistance for performing the ceremony.<sup>4</sup>

The action of the British administration was, however, in religious matters ambivalent. In July 1843, the government authorised necessary measures for electing the *Anunayake* at Anuradhapura,<sup>5</sup> through instructions despatched from the Colonial Secretary to the Government Agent.<sup>6</sup> The dignitary was to be selected by the Nuwarawewa family and there the three *ratemahatmayas* in charge of the three divisions, and the sixteen *korales* of the sixteen *korale* subdivisions in Nuwarakalaviya were to signify their assent and report whether the people assented to the selection.<sup>7</sup> Then the Government would recognise the elected *Anunayake*.

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1. Ievers, R.W., *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43; also see about this dispute in particular SLNA—6/2096 Pt. II—No. 140 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 31 May 1851; SLNA—20/778-264. No. 114—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 27 June 1851 and references to Govt. Agent's despatches No. 140 and 156 of 31 May 1851 and 13 June 1851.
  2. SLNA—8/119—No. 134 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 13 June 1842; also see enclosures—No. 93, Assistant Govt. Agent, 8 June 1842 and petition from Ipologama Dharmakirti Anunayake Unnanse, incumbent of the Mahavihare of Anuradhapura, 6 June 1842 translated by D. G. Abeyratne, 7 June, 1842.
  3. *Ibid.*
  4. *Ibid.* See especially Governor's Minute on Dyke's covering letter; also see SLNA—7/545—No. 182 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 23 June 1842; Govt. Agent, 23 June 1842; No. 253, Govt. Agent, Kandy, to Col. Secy, 18 June 1842 and Report to *Mahanayake* of Malwatta—16 June 1842.
  5. SLNA—8/133, No. 218 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy. 13 August 1844; especially see No. 168, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 24 July 1843.
  6. SLNA—8/133—No. 218 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 13 August 1844; especially see No. 168, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 24 July 1843.
  7. *Ibid.*; See for Act of appointment from Governor—SLNA—7/638—No. 22 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 22 January 1845 and No. 182 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 22 August 1844.

Yet, soon after, problems arose because different parties had tried to evade the governmental instructions. The Nuwarawewa family did not initially obtain the assent of the other parties. Later, the family and the principal headmen failed to obtain the assent of the people. Moreover, to complicate matters some headmen endeavoured to impose a new condition and seek the assent of the *bhikkhus* of Malwatte in Kandy before the appointment.<sup>1</sup>

By August 1847, however, the Government formulated a clearer policy embodying its attitude towards Buddhism and Buddhist institutions. Governor Collin Campbell had resolved "...to withdraw from all concern with the religious affairs of the Natives."<sup>2</sup> Governor Torrington reiterated this, "...determination to prevent any interference with the inhabitants, in the free choice of the former Basnayake Nilleme and other officers of their temples..."<sup>3</sup> and he emphasised that, "...henceforth no interference will be permitted with their selection of their own officers to manage their temple property."<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, even though the central administration wanted to withdraw itself from intervening in Buddhist affairs, in 1848 it was confronted with a problem concerning the appointment of the *bhikku* to be in charge of the temple at Anuradhapura. The *bhikkus* of Kandy wanted to replace the *bhikku*, appointed in 1843, with their nominee<sup>5</sup> but the Assistant Agent, Anuradhapura, disallowed this since the right to elect a *bhikku* to the office of that temple lay with the members of the Nuwarawewa family and the headmen of the district. The *bhikkus* from Kandy had no right to interfere.<sup>6</sup> This controversy had arisen when a *bhikku* from Malwatte produced a letter from the *Mahanayake thera* in Kandy, conferring the office on him, given by the *Mahanayake* of Malwatte and some headmen from Kandy who claimed to be members of a Committee set up to attend to matters connected with Buddhism.<sup>7</sup> But the Government ignored it.

The government faced yet another problem once again in 1849. A petition was presented by Peiligama Raiwatte *Anunayake Unnanse*, an auxiliary

1. *Ibid.* See No. 182 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 23 June 1842.
2. SLNA—20/964-257. No. 208 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 9 August 1847; also see enclosure, copy of letter, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agents, Central and Southern Provinces, 19 July 1847.
3. SLNA—20/964-257—No. 208 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 9 August 1847; also see enclosure, copy of letter, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agents, Central and Southern Provinces, 19 July 1847.
4. *Ibid.*
5. SLNA—6/1940B—No. 334 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 2 December 1848; also see enclosure No. 129, Asst. Govt. Agent, Anuradhapura to Govt. Agent, 7 September 1848.
6. *Ibid.* Also see reference to earlier correspondence on the election. No. 168, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 24 July 1843; No. 218 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 13 August 1844 and No. 182 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 22 August 1844.
7. *Ibid.*; See enclosure No. 103 Asst. Govt. Agent, Anuradhapura to Govt. Agent, Jaffna, 7 October 1848.

under the *Nayake Thera* of Anuradhapura to Governor Torrington.<sup>1</sup> This priest had been appointed by Governor Colin Campbell to his office and he was in charge of the ruined temples and dagobas.<sup>2</sup> He now informed the Government of an example of the wrongs done to Buddhism and its followers. Initially he indicated the importance and sanctity of the religious edifices in Anuradhapura, where Buddhism had been first introduced. During a reign of several kings these buildings had been protected and improved. Even after the advent of the European powers these buildings had been in a state of preservation.<sup>3</sup>

Of these sacred edifices, the *Thuparama* was once the principal building of the *Atamasthanas*, or the eight *vihares* of Anuradhapura. Nevertheless, Mudaliyar Samuel Jayatilleke of the Anuradhapura kachcheri had entered the Thuparama, without the priest's consent and removed an engraved stone to Kandy on instructions from Emerson Tennent, the Colonial Secretary.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, a stone image of a deity was destroyed and other damage too had been caused. According to the priests and the Buddhists such ancient works were invaluable. These acts had not been reported earlier owing to the rebellion of 1848<sup>5</sup> but now the complainant drew the government's attention to the claims of the "treaty" entered into between the British and the Kandyan chiefs and inhabitants at the Convention of March 1815,<sup>6</sup> which provided that "The Religion of Buddhoo, professed by the Chiefs and inhabitants of these Provinces are declared inviolate, and its Rights, Ministers and Places of Worship are to be maintained and protected."<sup>7</sup> This solemn pledge had been violated, an injustice had been done and the votaries of the Buddha and Buddhism itself had been insulted. Therefore, the complainant wanted the stone replaced at the *Mudaliyar's* cost "to restore confidence and satisfaction to a respectable but insulted body of believers."<sup>8</sup>

The Governor wanted the explanation of Jayatilleke.<sup>9</sup> Jayatilleke explained that the complainant Peiliagame Unnanse had been superseded by Timbiriwewe Unnanse who had been appointed in June 1848, as the *Anunayake* of the temple by the Maha Nayake of Kandy,<sup>10</sup> and he maintained

1. SLNA—6/1995—No. 70 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 18 May 1849; also see enclosed petition.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*; See enclosure.
4. *Ibid.*
5. SLNA—6/1995—No. 70 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 18 May 1849; also see enclosed petition.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Samuel Jayatilleke was later *Modaliyar* at Kurunegala Kachcheri—See SLNA—6/1995—No. 70 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy. 18 May 1849, especially enclosure, Governor's order—15 February 1849.
10. *Ibid.* See enclosure letter of 19 February 1849 sent by Jayatilleke Modaliyar, late Kachcheri *Mudaliyar*, from Kandy.



that Anuradhapura came under the supervision of the Malwatte establishment. The petitioner had been discontinued from office because of misconduct with the consent of the principal headmen of the Central province.

Jayatilleke also admitted that he removed a "stepstone" from a ruined temple, the *Dalada Maligawa*, the ancient repository of the *Dātu* (tooth) relic, at Anuradhapura. Since the relic was presently at the *Dalada Maligawa* in Kandy, the "stepstone" had also been placed there. Permission to remove it had been given by Timbiriwewe Nayake Unnanse, the present Anunayake, and the Nuwarawewa family.<sup>1</sup>

Jayatilleke alleged that this complaint had been lodged by Peiliagame Unnanse who really wanted to regain his rank and right. The *Mahanayake Thera* of Malwatta had now selected instead the new appointee by virtue of the powers vested in him by the Governor since the government had severed its connection with Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> The government, however, ordered Jayatilleke to return the stepstone to Anuradhapura at his expense<sup>3</sup>, and this settled the matter.

The government at this time also decided to grant certificates of tax-exemption for the lands of temples, registered in the commutation lists that had been prepared by Turnour. Certain priests then wanted unregistered lands, too, to be untaxed. The priests had learned from the *Mahanayakes* at Kandy that the British government had exempted from taxes, lands that had not been registered when John D'Oyly had been the Resident of Kandy. They now wanted all lands similarly exempted from taxes. The government, however, granted a concession in respect of lands, registered in the time of Turnour. With regard to any other lands, inquiries were to be made to ascertain ownership before exempting them from taxes.<sup>4</sup>

As a temporary expedient, to enable the rights and properties of temples to be protected, the Governor also agreed to appoint Chiefs of temples. But the Government Agent had to inform Governor George Anderson of the vacant positions and recommend suitable candidates for appointment. This plan was adopted in 1851. But in April, 1853, the government issued once again fresh instructions to the Government Agent, Central province, regarding the election of *bhikkus* to be in charge of *vihares*, and *Basnayake Nilames* for

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1. *Ibid.*; See enclosure original and translation of Timbirewewa Weepassee Unnanse's letter from Malwatta *vihare*, 17 February 1849.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*; See letter from Colonial Secretary's office of 24 April 1849 signed by W.C. Gibson and also letter No. 67, Col. Secy. to Commissioner of Roads, 23 April 1849. The Commissioner of Roads was to arrange for the removal of the stepstone from Kandy to Anuradhapura while Jayatilleke defrayed costs; for Dyke's attitude, see Rasanayagam, C. op. cit. p. 154.

4. SLNA—20/1052—265—No. 154 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 4 September 1831; and enclosure, copy of letter No. 267, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, Kandy, 28 May 1851.

*devales*, where appointments hitherto had been made by the government.<sup>1</sup> The Government Agent, Northern province, was also asked to observe these instructions, wherever it had been the practice earlier for government to make appointments to offices at any temples or *devales*.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime, the Secretary of State, the Duke of Newcastle, issued to the Governor instructions for a final settlement of the vexed questions connected with Buddhist temporalities.<sup>3</sup> Where the Chief Priest had hitherto been appointed directly by the Governor, hereafter the *bhikkus* of the temple were to elect a successor as in the past before British arrival. When the Government Agent notified the result of the election a certificate would be issued by Government to the elected office-holder.<sup>4</sup> The government merely recognized the duly elected candidate as the office holder, but did not appoint him. The *Nayaks* thus elected were to be considered because of their office to be invested with all the temporal rights of their temples.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, the office of *Basnayake Nilame* was to be purely elective although the British administration had hitherto appointed one.<sup>6</sup> The *ratemahatmayas* and *korales* of districts wherein the *devales* existed would elect the *Basnayake Nilame*. Likewise, the *Dewa Nilames* were to be elected. The electorate comprised the *ratemahatmayas* of Udunuwara, Yatinuwara, Tumpane, Harris-pattu, Udapalata, Dumbara, lower Hewaheta and upper Bulatgama and the *Basnayake Nilames* of the *devales*.<sup>7</sup>

Whenever the post of *Basnayake Nilame* of a *dewale* fell vacant within any of these divisions, the *Dewa Nilame* of the Maligawas in Kandy, the *ratemahatmayas*, *korales* and the other *Basnayake Nilames* of the *devales* in that division would elect a successor.<sup>8</sup> But for a vacancy of a *Basnayake Nilame* of a *dewale* in any other part of the Central province, the *ratemahatmayas* of that district, and the *Basnayake Nilames* and *korales* there were to elect a successor.<sup>9</sup>

A return of any such election was to be made to the Government Agent who in turn would inform the government. If there was no objection to the election, the government would then recognise the election by issuing a certificate to the Government Agent for transmission to the elected candidate.<sup>10</sup>

1. SLNA—20/1946-269—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 7 April 1853; also see earlier despatch SLNA—20/1052-265—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 22 August 1851.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*; also see enclosure No. 152 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, Central Province, 7 April 1853.
4. SLNA—20/1946-269—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 7 April 1853; also see earlier despatch SLNA—20/1052-265—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 22 August 1851.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. SLNA—20/1946-269—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 7 April 1853; also see earlier despatch SLNA—20/1052-265—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 22 August 1851.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*

The form of the certificate was to be similar to that to be issued to the "Chief Priests" and committed the government only to a mere recognition of the election; it was no act of appointment. The Government Agent was ordered to follow this procedure in dealing with existing vacancies for officers.<sup>1</sup>

As to the *dalada* (sacred tooth relic), the Government Agent, Central Province, was to hand it back to those who had been the custodians of it on October 1847, until it was taken over by the government in 1848.<sup>2</sup> The relic was to be restored to the *Mahanayake theras* of the Asgiriya and Malwatte *vihares*, and the *Dewa Nilame*, who were to be held responsible for its safekeeping. The government warned that if the *dalada* was used for other than religious purposes the government would immediately resume possession of it.<sup>3</sup> The British were apprehensive that the relic may be used for political purposes.

The British government also sanctioned a grant of Crown lands to Buddhist temples in lieu of the many allowances that the temples had been deprived of in 1847.<sup>4</sup> The Government Agent was asked to inform the amount of the allowances withdrawn to enable the government to calculate the compensation to be given.<sup>5</sup> The general policy of the British was to appease the Buddhists, but also to have no direct connection with Buddhism.

These instructions were applicable to Dyke's province in only one instance—the appointment of the *Anunayake* at Anuradhapura<sup>6</sup> which was governed by a declaration of 1843.<sup>7</sup> But unlike in other Kandyan areas, the right of electing the *Anunayake* was vested jointly in the head of a particular family and the people represented by their headmen. Therefore, Dyke thought, in view of the new directions, it was incumbent upon him to call upon the parties who had hitherto exercised the right of election to elect an *Anunayake* to office when a vacancy occurred according to the past practice.<sup>8</sup> Government Agent Dyke however wanted the Government to confirm this arrangement before he instructed the assistant agent of Nuwarakalaviya to follow it.<sup>9</sup>

The government affirmed in June 1853 that for the office of *Anunayake* or the temple at Anuradhapura, whenever it was vacant, parties who previously had the right of election were to elect a candidate.<sup>10</sup> The British

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1. *Ibid.*

2. *Ibid.*

3. SLNA—20/1946-269—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 7 April 1853; also see earlier despatch SLNA—20/1052-265—Circular, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 22 August 1851.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. SLNA—20/1946-269—No. 60 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 12 April, 1853.

7. *Ibid.* also see reference to No. 168 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 24 July 1843.

8. SLNA—20/1946-269—No. 60 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 12 April, 1853.

9. *Ibid.*

10. SLNA—20/1946-269—No. 66 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 7 June 1853.

government was clearly withdrawing involvement in Buddhism by resurrecting past practices and thereby avoiding intervention, as much as possible, in Buddhist affairs.

In 1855, however, the Government Agent had to tackle another problem connected with Buddhism. The Chief Priests, the Chiefs and the principal headmen, who were professing Buddhism in the Kandyan provinces, had complained that the assistant agent of Anuradhapura had interfered with the rights of the Chief monks.<sup>1</sup> The Governor ordered an immediate inquiry. It was added that the wish and intention of the British government was that the privileges allowed to the Kandyan people and priests when the province placed itself under British protection should be respected and any exemptions allowed to them were to be scrupulously observed.<sup>2</sup>

The priests, and the other parties in their complaint stated that of all the ancient places of worship, the *vihare* at Anuradhapura was much venerated not only by local Buddhists, but even by those from India and Burma.<sup>3</sup> This *vihare* contained monuments illustrating the history of the religion and the indigenous sovereigns. Even after the coming of the British, the Chief monks of the Anuradhapura *vihare* were permitted to enjoy almost all privileges, conferred on them by their kings, relating to the lands of the temples and the preservation of the ruined ancient *dagobas*, temples and public halls.<sup>4</sup>

The assistant agent, Nuwarakalaviya, had, however, now infringed the rights of the *Nayake thera* of Anuradhapura<sup>5</sup> by exacting a tax from the paddy lands of the *vihare*, which had been exempted from any exactions. Moreover, trees felled from the lands of the *vihare* for use of the building on which no taxes were imposed had been taxed. Also, some valuable stone pillars from a ruined but celebrated temple in the vicinity of the *Ruwanveliseya* had been broken and removed and a road had been traced through the compound of the *Ruwanveliseya* which, if constructed, would lead to the demolition of an ancient stone terrace of great value.<sup>6</sup> This representation from the Chief *bhikkus* to the *Asgiriya vihare* in Kandy and from others drew the government's attention to the treaty between the British and the Kandyans, wherein it was pledged that protection for the national religion would be accorded, and also to the government "Minute" that had exempted *vihare* and temple lands from taxes.<sup>7</sup>

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1. SLNA—20/1168-273—No. 222, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 October 1855.

2. SLNA—20/1168-273—No. 222 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 October 1855.

3. *Ibid.*; See enclosure, Memorial to Governor from the "Chief Priests" (*Mahanayakes*) Kandy, *Asgiri vihare*, Kandy etc. with a number of signatures, September 22nd 1855.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. SLNA—20/1168-273—No. 222, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 October 1855.

7. *Ibid.*

The Governor reacted to this complaint immediately and firmly. If the assistant agent had inadvertently or otherwise taxed lands, free from taxation in 1814, or had broken and removed stone pillars of any ancient temple, or had attempted to construct a road through the property of the temple that could damage the stone terraces without the consent of the *bhikkus*, the Governor disapproved his action.<sup>1</sup> The Governor's duty was to ensure that no just cause for complaint be given to this or any other class of Kandyan subjects without providing them with immediate redress. Therefore, the Government Agent was enjoined to take measures to avoid the possibility of any future differences between his assistant and the priests and others.<sup>2</sup>

Assistant Agent, Anuradhapura, however, denied that the projected roadway could damage the temple. Further taxes were not levied on the trees felled. Only some details of these were requested instead. J. L. Flanderka, the assistant agent, added that "nothing could be further from my desire than to interfere with rights of Buddhist priests and people or to adopt any line of conduct inconsistent with the obligations or injunctions of the Government."<sup>3</sup>

The government acknowledged that the privileges granted to the Kandyans and their *bhikkus*, under the British protection, should be preserved. At the same time it also discerned that the petitions from the Chief monks in Kandy was a renewed attempt to procure an indirect recognition of their right to meddle in the affairs at the temple at Anuradhapura.<sup>4</sup>

The first election of a *Nayake* as head of the *Atamasthana*, or the eight sacred places of Anuradhapura following the government's instructions of April 1853 took place on 29 May, 1863. The assistant agent reported the proceedings to the Government Agent for obtaining the necessary certificate of recognition to be given to the priest so elected.<sup>5</sup> The *ratemahatmayas*, the *korales*, the *lekams* and the Buddhist clergy had formed a committee and elected a monk from Anuradhapura for the vacant position.<sup>6</sup>

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1. *Ibid.*

2. *Ibid.*

3. SLNA—6/2349—No. 13 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 7 January 1856; see enclosure, No. 1 Asst. Govt. Agent, Anuradhapura Kachcheri, to Govt. Agent, 2 January 1856 despatched from Mannar.

4. For evidence of this see SLNA—6/2096 Part II—No. 140 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 31 May 1851; and also see SLNA—6/2305—No. 333 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 7 December 1855 for a definite statement on interference.

5. SLNA-204243-429- Govt Agent to col. Secy. 24 September 1864 sent while on circuit; see Report of election on 30 May 1863 to assistant agent of Nuwara Kalaviya district.

6. *Ibid.*

This committee had also enacted a set of rules and those present had signed a document as having finally selected the Chief priest and requested the assistant agent to obtain formal recognition of the election from the government. A copy of the rules was submitted for the government's information and, according to the rules, they had now selected and appointed a *Maha Lekam Mahatmaya*. This letter to the assistant agent was signed by the three *ratamahatmayas*, nineteen other headmen and seventy eight *bhikkus*.<sup>1</sup>

### The British and Hinduism

Government Agent, Dyke was usually tactful when dealing with questions pertaining to Hindu temples in the areas inhabited by the Tamils. When the magistrates of Chavakachcheri and Manipay prohibited the performance of customary ceremonies at "heathen" temples, Dyke, however, realized that there was a risk in imposing restrictions upon local religious ceremonies which have hitherto been left undisturbed to avoid the eruption of any difficulties.<sup>2</sup> It was the practice of the people to visit temples; and to observe particular ceremonies was a tradition among the 200,000 Tamils around Jaffna.<sup>3</sup>

In 1847 the Chavakachcheri magistrate restricted the hours during which temples were to conduct ceremonies regarding them as noisy and disturbing. But the authorities of the temple did not comply with this injunction, and were fined. Dyke considered this an imprudent action and wanted the Deputy Queen's Advocate to restrain the magistrate from acting in such manner.<sup>4</sup> The Government Agent felt that to maintain peace and good order among people these religious ceremonies should not be curtailed. Moreover, the manager of the temple too had obtained his permission to continue the ceremonies till midnight and not until ten o'clock as ordered by the magistrate.<sup>5</sup>

The Governor upheld Dyke's view and the magistrate was required "...to suspend all further interference until instructed by Government."<sup>6</sup> Yet, although, the Government Agent and the government were against interference in religious ceremonies at Hindu temples,<sup>7</sup> the other officials did not rigidly adhere to this policy.

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1. *Ibid.*
  2. SLNA—6/1917B—No. 250 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 27 August 1847.
  3. *Ibid.*
  4. SLNA—6/1917B—No. 250 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 27 August 1847. See enclosure—Govt. Agent to Deputy Queen's Advocate, 21 August 1847.
  5. *Ibid.* See enclosure Petition from Manager of temple to Govt. Agent, 20 August 1847.
  6. SLNA—20/964-257—No. 236 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 14 September 1847; also see enclosure, copy of Governor's letter to Police Magistrate, Chavakachcheri, 14 September 1847.
  7. For evidence of this attitude of the Govt. Agent and Government see SLNA—6/194B—No. 352 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy. 16 December 1848, reference to No. 39 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy. 27 January 1848 and Col. Secy's reply No. 38, 15 February 1848.

In 1848, for instance, the police magistrate of Point Pedro ventured to decide in whose charge the property and affairs of a temple should be placed and as to who should be the dignitary to officiate at the performance of religious ceremonies.<sup>1</sup> The Government Agent reacted indignantly because the settlement of such issues was entirely beyond the jurisdiction of a magistrate. The different parties were competing to procure control over the temples, and especially in the Vadamaradchy division, where there were frequently acrimonious conflicts, the government had to be strictly neutral, whenever religious disputes occurred,<sup>2</sup> argued the government agent. Again, the central authorities concurred with Dyke. The Colonial Secretary instructed the police magistrate of Point Pedro not to interfere in the affairs of the temple.<sup>3</sup>

As a rule, Dyke refrained from intervening in disputes over religious affairs. Therefore, in March 1849 some inhabitants of Irupalai, Nallur and Kopay complained to the Governor of losses arising from the mismanagement of the lands of a temple.<sup>4</sup> They requested that the Government Agent of Jaffna should be asked to nominate a manager for such property since even the *Udaiyar* (headman) had also misappropriated the community's property and could not be trusted.<sup>5</sup>

The Governor, however, could afford no relief to the complainants without a report from the authority on the spot—the Government Agent. Thus, although against his wishes, Dyke was still compelled to intervene in this case<sup>6</sup> to afford relief to the aggrieved parties.

In December 1851, a fresh problem cropped up regarding the major Hindu temple of Jaffna—the *Kandasamy kovil* at Nallur. The manager of this temple protested to the Government Agent refuting the claims of certain brahmins to be appointed as priests.<sup>7</sup> The Governor, however, deemed it unnecessary to grant any acts of appointments for priests of such temples. They were granted only to Buddhist dignitaries principally for ensuring the security of the property of the temples in Kandyan areas and because of the Convention of 1815.<sup>8</sup> Therefore the government saw no need to intervene in the conflict connected with the temple at Nallur. The government did not have rights of its own: others were free to appeal to the Courts for protecting their rights. Moreover, already conflicting parties had taken legal action and hence the matter was *sub judice*.<sup>9</sup>

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1. SLNA—6/1940B—No. 352 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 16 December 1848.

2. SLNA—6/1940B—No. 352 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy. 16 December 1848.

3. SLNA—20/188-261—No. 17 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 31 January 1849.

4. SLNA—20/188-261—No. 39 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 12 March 1849.

5. *Ibid.*, See enclosure Petition of the inhabitants of "Irovale," Nallur and Kopay to Governor.

6. SLNA—20/188-261—No. 39 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 12 March 1849.

7. SLNA—6/2097—No. 319 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 27 December 1851—See also No. 297 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 1 December 1851.

8. SLNA—20/1052-265—No. 223—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 December 1851.

9. *Ibid.*

However, since this question had now been canvassed the government, in December 1851, clarified its position regarding indigenous religious institutions.<sup>1</sup> Some misapprehension regarding the decision of August 1851 concerning the appointment of temple officials had arisen. It had been misconstrued as one applicable to all temples, Buddhist or Hindu. Now, it was specifically stated that the government had issued the ruling in respect of only Buddhist temples, where it had been for sometime a governmental practice to grant acts of appointment and this decision had no bearing on any other religious institutions.<sup>2</sup>

The sole object in granting such acts of appointments had been to enable those who held them to sue in courts of justice whenever necessary for maintaining and protecting their rights as office-holders. In respect of temples, which hitherto had not needed acts of appointments for their dignitaries to maintain such rights, the government had no intention whatsoever of granting any new acts of appointments. Furthermore, even in regard to Buddhist temples, the governmental measure was only temporary.<sup>3</sup>

To emphasise the government's attitude towards the dispute over the priesthood of the Nallur temple, the Governor re-affirmed that it was not a matter in which the government should interfere. It was left to the district court to settle this dispute; especially, the question whether there was a hereditary right of succession to the office of temple manager.<sup>4</sup>

The Nallur temple dispute warrants more detailed treatment. It was an old temple and a popularly venerated shrine of the Hindus. In October 1851, Iragunathar Mapanar Mudaliyar of Jaffna petitioned to the Government Agent,<sup>5</sup> styling himself as the Proprietor and Superintendent of Kandasamy *kovil* at Nallur. He averred that his ancestors had built the temple on their land and had contributed endowments to it and for over hundred years, his ancestors had served as proprietors and managers; and had been so recognised by the inhabitants. His ancestors had enjoyed the right of appointing and nominating priests for performing rituals. The petitioner had now succeeded legally to the office of proprietor and superintendent, and, like his ancestors, he was now exercising the rights and privileges in and over the temple.<sup>6</sup>

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1. SLNA—20—1052-265—Circular of 18 December 1851, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent.

2. SLNA—20/1052-265—Circular of 18 December 1851, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent.

3. *Ibid.*

4. SLNA—20/920-266—No. 17 Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 21 January 1852; also see No. No. 319 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 27 December 1851.

5. SLNA—20/920-266—No. 29—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 February 1852; see enclosure No. 1 of 15 October 1851—"Petition to Govt. Agent, Northern Province from Iragunathar Mapanar Mudaliyar of Jaffna, Proprietor and Superintendent of Hindu temple—Kandasamy Kovil at Nallur."

6. *Ibid.*



Some inhabitants of Vannarponnai, however, had instigated certain brahmins to claim the right to be priests of the temple. Consequently, those brahmins had initiated an action contesting his rights in the district courts and since the court, he alleged, normally favoured the two lawyers, who were appearing on behalf of the brahmins, the petitioner feared an unfavourable decision. Hence, he requested the Governor and the administrator to intervene on his behalf.<sup>1</sup>

The petitioner also enclosed some earlier correspondence to prove that his ancestors had appointed and dismissed priests,<sup>2</sup> and he claimed that he could now perform these acts. The government had never participated formerly in appointing priests to the temple and such governmental interference was now unwarranted.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1807, Governor Thomas Maitland, however, had appointed a priest conferring on him the privileges of the office. People had been ordered to acknowledge, respect and obey the appointed priest by an act given under the Seal of Arms<sup>4</sup> and by a similar Act another priest too had been later appointed.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the petitioner adduced evidence to establish the propriety of his claims. J. W. Carrington, Collector of Jaffna, had informed the Chief Secretary in July 1810 that from the testimony of respectable persons the petitioner's father, Mapanar Mudaliyar had founded the Kandasamy temple on his property, mainly at his expense.<sup>6</sup> The right to the custody of the money and to the valuables of the temple and the responsibility of maintaining accounts were vested in the founder of the temple or in persons appointed by him. The High Priest was only responsible for conducting religious ceremonies.<sup>7</sup> But, following a dispute between the High Priest and the petitioner, the Collector had ordered that the room containing the valuables of the temple to be locked with two keys, with a key being entrusted to each party.<sup>8</sup> According to the petitioner this arrangement had encroached on his right. As son of the founder of the shrine he contended that he alone was entitled to manage any matters.<sup>9</sup>

The Collector had then concluded that the petitioner was the sole manager and custodian of all accounts and valuables as the representative of the

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1. *Ibid.*
  2. SLNA—20/920-266—No. 29—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 February 1852; see enclosures.
  3. *Ibid.*
  4. *Ibid.* see enclosures—copy of Governor's letter, 5 January 1807.
  5. *Ibid.* see enclosures—copy of Governor's other letter.
  6. *Ibid.* see enclosures - Carrington, collector, Jaffna, to chief secy. 20 July 1810.
  7. SLNA—20/920-266—No. 29—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 February 1852.
  8. *Ibid.*
  9. *Ibid.*

founder, Mapanar Mudaliyar.<sup>1</sup> The High Priest could not interfere with managerial functions and was only responsible for maintaining the paraphernalia required for rituals. Therefore, the Collector had wanted the High Priest to return the key to the owner of the temple, and the Governor confirmed this arrangement in 1810.<sup>2</sup>

When Dyke now inquired into his controversy, he also learned that, during the early years of British rule, the government had given warrants to the Mudaliyar and priests of the temple.<sup>3</sup> The petitioner contended, on the other hand, that the actual power of appointing and dismissing priests had been with his ancestors, and, therefore, was with him now. The government warrants, he argued, had not given authority to the priests to claim a right to office, but only confirmed the selection made by his ancestors to the priesthood. He added that earlier investigations by other authorities too confirmed his contentions.<sup>4</sup>

The brahmins of Nallur, in November 1851 averred that they were the priests of the Kandasamy temple<sup>5</sup> and stated that their claims had never been disputed from the time of their ancestors. The former managers of the shrine had never interfered with them as their functions differed. Nor were they paid by managers. The Acts of Power issued to the priests by Governor Maitland, they held, had made these facts clear. But neither the present manager nor his advisers, they further alleged, were fit to perform their functions. They added that the present manager was indebted to a priest and had unfairly tried to compel the priests to pay off the sum and dismissed them when they could not do so. They maintained that the manager could not assert any authority over them.<sup>6</sup>

Commenting on these representations from the priests, Dyke stated that similar warrants had not been granted to priests of other temples in Jaffna.<sup>7</sup> The Governor, when visiting the temple in 1806, was informed of its unique

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1. *Ibid.*
  2. *Ibid.* See enclosure—Copy of letter from Governor to Acting Collector, Jaffna, 18 December 1810 signed by Actg. Deputy Secy. 18 December 1810.
  3. *Ibid.* See enclosure, To Dyke from Irangunathar Mapanar Mudaliyar, replies to questions—22 October 1851.
  4. SLNA—20/920-266—No. 29—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 February 1852; see enclosures—Report of Committee appointed by Collector and Comptroller of Revenue, Jaffna, submitted to Charles Lusignan, Collector and Comptroller of Revenue—1 July 1805; Petition to Governor Robert Brownrigg from Mapana Mudaliyar, Maniagar of Kandasamy temple at "Nalloor;" Collector of Jaffna, William Montgomery's observations, 16 January 1807; Petition and inquiry of report of 17 July 1819 are all documents which furnish details of this dispute and its earlier history.
  5. *Ibid.* See enclosure—Petition to Dyke from Brahmins of Nallur—5 November 1851.
  6. *Ibid.*
  7. SLNA—20/920-266 No. 29—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 February 1852; see enclosure Dyke's Notes—Jaffna, 15 November 1851; and statement of 24 November 1851 of Karthigaser Aiyer and Kandapady Aiyer.

sancity and in response to an application, had granted mere acts of appointment to the priests.<sup>1</sup> He added that the manager of the temple had clearly shown that the acts had not really conferred any appointment on the priests, and that they had really been appointed before the governor had issued them and had actually performed their functions. The Governor's action had granted them only a mere distinction.<sup>2</sup>

The priests admitted that the acts were granted to them, while they were already holding office. Moreover, since then such acts had not been issued. Nor had anyone applied for such acts after those who had received them had died. The Government Agent, hence, concluded that the government never intended to appoint the priests to this temple.<sup>3</sup>

He added that the government should contradict any statement implying that it had a right to grant acts of appointment. Furthermore, he felt that the government should take steps against the risk of a legal decision to the effect, particularly because the government was not participating in judicial proceedings, that this right was vested in the government and that it alone could appoint priests to this temple.<sup>4</sup> He wanted the authority to deny all government claims to any right to appoint the dignitaries.<sup>5</sup> The government, however, decided that it need not interfere in the legal dispute, that had arisen, and allow the courts to take a decision<sup>6</sup> although it asserted that it shall not have anything to do with the appointment of Hindu priests.

Between the government and the Hindu temples in the North, problems also arose whenever state officials acted indiscreetly. Elliott, Kelly and another European were stoned as they had proceeded past an Hindu temple.<sup>7</sup> Immediately, Elliott and Kelly had wanted the temple officials to produce the culprits and, as they had failed to do so, these magistrates had prevented the progress of the procession.<sup>8</sup>

Dyke considered that the magistrates had been imprudent and were ill-advised.<sup>9</sup> Although "...it used to be the custom to invite them (Europeans) to be present at the annual ceremony of a neighbouring temple... that custom ceased by the invitations being habitually declined as

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1. *Ibid.*

2. *Ibid.* See enclosure No. 60 of 1 December 1851 in reply to Government Agent's letter of 27 October 1851 to the Brahmin priests.

3. *Ibid.*

4. SLNA—20/920-266—No. 29—Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 16 February 1852.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. SLNA—20/725-432—Govt. Agent to Governor, 23 April 1866 (no number); also see No. 80, Governor to Govt. Agent, 14 April 1866.

8. SLNA—20/725-432—Govt. Agent to Governor, 29 April 1866 (no number).

9. SLNA—20/725-432—Govt. Agent to Governor, 29 April 1866 (no number).

Europeans in general got to entertain doubts of the propriety of their so formally attending at Heathen Ceremonies,"<sup>1</sup> he explained. He hence, felt that the officials should not have attended the ceremony, and concluded that there was nothing to exonerate the officials of blame. They had received their deserts. They should have avoided involvement and conducted themselves in a more politic manner.

The Governor Hercules Robinson concurred with the Government Agent that the proceedings of Elliott and Kelly had indeed been imprudent.<sup>2</sup> Dyke's timely and tactful intervention had prevented the eruption of further public disturbance. Therefore, the government had no alternative but to conclude that the Mallakam and Chavakachcheri magistrates had interfered wrongly and impolitically in the celebrations at the Vannarp-onnai Sivan *kovil* (temple) religious ceremony. Dyke conveyed the Governor's views to the temple authorities so that they would be assured that there would be non-intervention in their ceremonies thereafter.<sup>3</sup>

### Conclusion

Towards the end of Dyke's Government Agency the Wesleyans and Presbyterians had grown to be the most powerful among Protestant Christian missions in North Sri Lanka.<sup>4</sup> The Roman Catholic Church too, however, retained its influence in Jaffna<sup>5</sup>, and in 1865 a new group of missionaries strengthened their position. The Wesleyan mission had also evolved into an aggressive educational organisation, and with a network of chapels at important centres it was active in evangelisation. The American mission ranged next in importance, grew so vigorously, and soon eclipsed other Protestant establishments.<sup>6</sup> Within a short period, its tentacles spread into Uduvil, Pandateruppu and other village centres where it flourished,<sup>7</sup> spreading Christianity among the rural populace. The official jealousy with which the American mission had been initially regarded now disappeared following its success.<sup>8</sup>

Summing up the attitude and policy followed by the British government in regard to local religions, particularly Buddhism, clearly the administration's attitude was that a Christian government should not afford protection to Buddhism. The Christians indeed regretted that the government

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1. *Ibid.*

2. For details see Rasanayagam, C. *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

3. SLNA—20/989-293—No. 107, Col. Secy. to Govt. Agent, 18 May 1866; also see SLNA—20/725—432—No. 156 Govt. Agent to Col. Secy., 16 June 1866.

4. Grenier, Joseph, *op. cit.*, p. 466.

5. *Ibid.* p. 45; The Congregation of the Native Sisters of St. Peter was founded in Jaffna. see Martyn, John H., *op. cit.*, p. 31.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 466.

7. Casie Chitty, S. *op. cit.* pp. 173, 180-181.

8. Bennett, J.W. *Ceylon and its Capabilities* (London, 1843) p. 60.

should have anything whatsoever to do with the local religion<sup>1</sup>, which even embarrassed the administrators.<sup>2</sup> However, some connection with Buddhism was still maintained because the government was apprehensive of the influence of the Buddhist priests over the people and the risk of rebellion if no heed was paid to the demands of the Buddhists and their dignitaries. Furthermore, dire consequences could occur if the rulers professing an alien religion only concerned themselves with the new and alien forms of faith.<sup>3</sup> Although Dyke's administration ended in 1867, problems connected with Buddhism continued to be a source of serious concern and embarrassment to the government. It was only by 1881 when Nuwarakalaviya was removed from the Northern province and formed into a separate province that J. F. Dickson, the Government Agent, made a careful analysis of the Buddhist question and provided a fairly satisfactory solution.<sup>4</sup>

In general, during the early half of the 19th century, the British tried to keep their hands off Buddhism and Hinduism and lent their support to Protestant Christianity. They intervened in Buddhist and Hindu matters only when it was absolutely necessary to do so. This was a policy that appeased their conscience and articulate Christians.

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1. Steuart, J., *Observations on Colonel Forbes' Pamphlet on the Recent Rebellion in Ceylon in a Letter Addressed to a Friend.* (Colombo, 1850), p. 3.
  2. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
  3. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
  4. Ievers, R.W., *op. cit.*, p. 43 and