

Demographic changes

**in the Tamil homeland
in the island of Sri Lanka
over the last century**

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LTTE Peace Secretariat

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1. Introduction

Land is an inherent part of a people. The relationship between land and people are complex. Beyond the need for food and living space, land has mysterious psychological pull on a people. The existence of a people is strongly tied to the existence of their land. It is therefore no secret that one of the major weapons that will destroy a people is to deny them their land. Land can be denied to a people in several ways,

1. by taking control of the governance of the people and their land,
2. by rewriting history in order to wipe the memory of their land from the people,
3. by chasing the people away from their land, and
4. by settling “others” in their land and give these “others” a special treatment.

This document presents data that shows how the last two of the four techniques, chasing people away and settling “others”, mentioned above were used in the Tamil areas over the decades.

The dramatic demographic changes, in the Tamil areas of the island of Sri Lanka over the decades, are clearly proved by the data of the statistics department of the Government of Sri Lanka. This data is perhaps the most readily available and easily digested evidence of the application of the last two techniques mentioned above. Having determined that such techniques were indeed used, the rest of the document describes the various “legal” and illegal methods used to achieve this end result. Even the term “legal” is contested because some of the methods that may be viewed as “legal” are carried out by a government that certainly did not represent the people in that land.

2. The Land ownership

The ownership of land is regulated by the laws of a country. As a rule there are private land, crown land, and long term land leasing arrangements from the crown. Unlike in the African and North American countries, the centuries of colonization in the island of Sri Lanka did not result in the loss of land to the outsiders. The land continued to belong to the local people once the colonizers left the island.

The first of the many subsequent land problems started when the non-representative highly centralized Sinhala dominated post colonial governments converted all non-private land

into crown land. This gave all subsequent land related actions of the Sri Lanka Government a smoke screen of legitimacy.

Perhaps another concrete evidence of the acknowledgement of the existence of the traditional Tamil land and alienation felt by the Tamils as a result of this policy of Sinhalaization of this traditional Tamil land is two of the very early agreements reached between the Sinhala party in power at that time and the Tamil representatives. These are the Bandaranayake-Clelvanayagam pact of 1957 and the Dudley-Chelva pact of 1965. Both these agreements acknowledged that Tamils should be given preference in settlement schemes in the Tamil areas. Of course these agreements were unilaterally abrogated by the now notorious tradition of the Sri Lankan State.

The subsequent methods used to achieve the end result of dramatic demographic change included, chasing people away through large scale massacres, settling “others” through irrigation development schemes of which there have been many, and populating the land and survey office with people who are not the from that area and writing land deeds in contravention of traditional ownership.

3. The demographic change

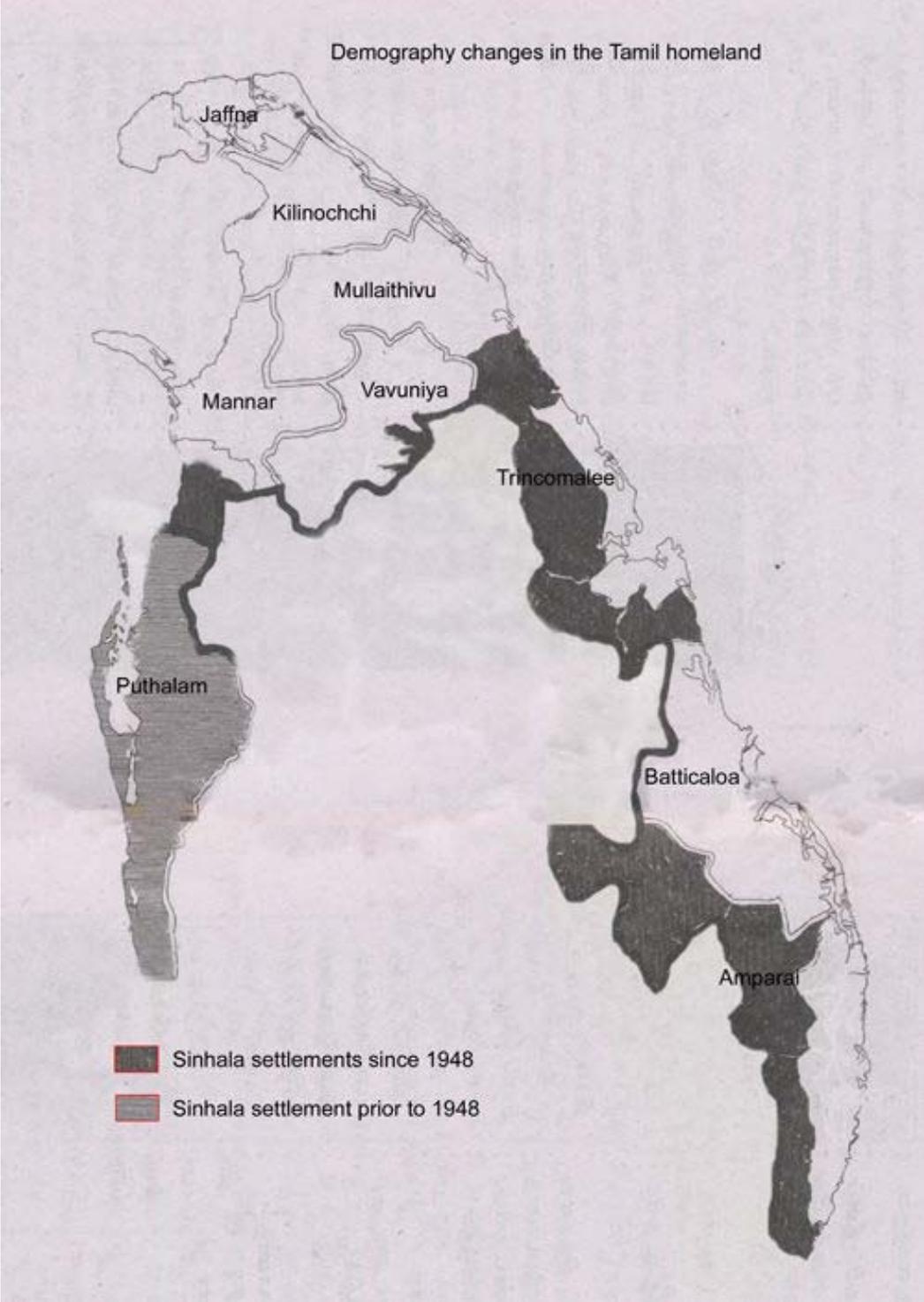
Statistical information was collected for the Tamil areas by the British colonial government and later by the Government of Sri Lanka. As the conflict intensified collection of population statistics was halted in the Tamil areas. Even if it had been taken the results would have been skewed due to massive displacements during this period. The population statistics data presented in this document was taken from the Statistical information 2003 - Provincial Planning Secretariat of the North-East province.

The Table-1 shows the demographic change in the Trincomalee district and it demonstrates the effect of planned settlement of Sinhalese people in the traditional Tamil areas.

Similar massive demographic change was also forced on the Batticalo-Amparai district. The available statistical data does not bring this out for these two districts because of two reasons. The splitting of the older Batticaloa district into two districts, Batticaloa and Amparai and the redrawing of district boundary of Amparai further to include two

adjacent Sinhala areas, disrupts the consistency of district based statistical data over the decades.

Figure-1



There are further planned settlements of Sinhala people in the Vavuniya district, Puttalam district and even the Mullaithivu district as will be explained later.

The Figure-1 shows the areas of the Tamil homeland that have been subjected to planned demographic changes.

Table-1 - Demographic data over the years for the Trincomalee District							
Year	Total population	Sinhalese		Tamils		Muslims	
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1827	19158	250	1.3	15663	81.8	3245	16.9
1881	22197	935	4.2	14304	64.8	5746	25.9
1891	25745	1105	4.3	17117	66.4	6426	25.0
1901	28441	1203	4.2	17060	60.0	8258	29.0
1911	29755	1138	3.8	17233	57.9	19914	32.6
1921	34112	1501	4.4	18580	54.5	12846	37.7
1946	75926	11606	15.3	33795	44.5	23219	30.6
1953	83917	15296	18.2	37517	44.7	28616	34.1
1963	138220	40950	29.6	54050	39.1	42560	30.8
1971	188245	54744	29.1	71749	38.1	59924	31.8
1981	256790	86341	33.6	93510	36.4	74403	29.0
1987	273586	98435	36.0	97940	35.8	74756	27.3

4. Demographic history of Batti-Amparai district

The British colonial government inaugurated the development of the irrigation tanks in the eastern districts in 1881. However, these developments facilitated the agriculture of the local population of the area and did not create any demographic changes in the area. This is clearly seen in the Table-2 below for the older Batticaloa district. *Soon after independence from the British colonial power in 1948, the Sinhala population tripled in size while the Tamil and Muslim population size remained roughly the same.*

Table-2 - Demographic data over the years for the Batticaloa District							
Year	Total population	Sinhalese		Tamils		Muslims	
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1881	105558	5012	4.8	61014	57.9	37255	35.4
1891	122699	6403	5.2	69584	56.7	44780	36.4
1901	145161	7575	5.2	79857	55.0	54190	37.3
1911	153943	5771	3.7	83948	54.5	60695	39.4
1921	158709	7243	4.6	84665	53.3	63146	39.8
1946	203186	11850	5.8	102264	50.3	85805	42.2
1953	270493	31174	11.5	130381	48.2	106706	39.2

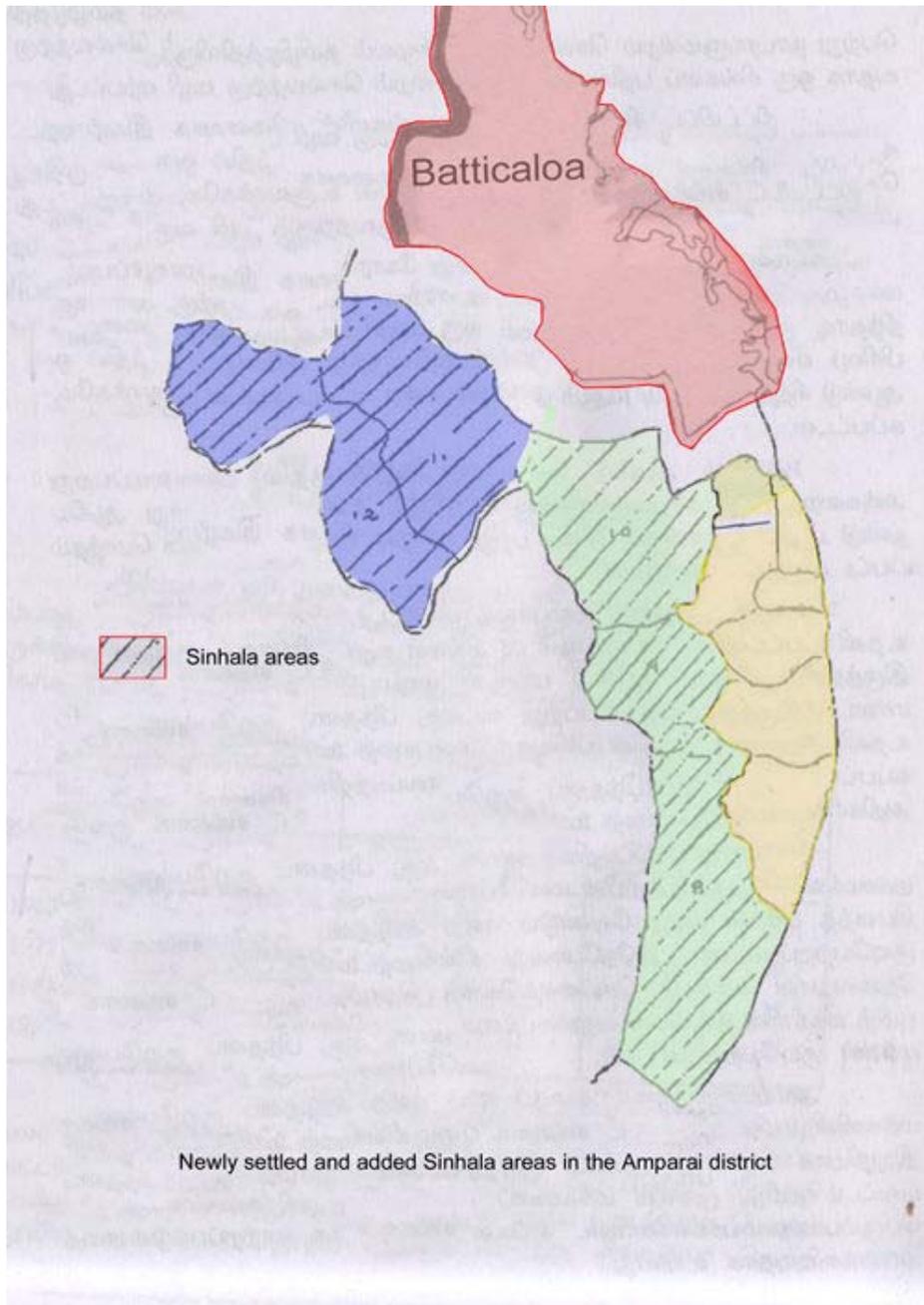
After 1953, before the next population census in 1963, the Batticaloa district was divided into two districts, the present Batticaloa (the pink area in Figure-2) and a new district Amparai. The old Batticaloa district was 7002 Square kilometers. Of this, 4500 square kilometers was taken out to create the new Amparai district (the yellow and green areas in Figure-2). More than 15,000 Sinhala families were settled in this carved out area, especially in the green area of Figure-2. Amparai district was further expanded with the addition of Sinhala areas (the blue area in Figure-2). Thus the census statistics after this period is of no use to demonstrate the demographic changes in these two districts. What can be studied are the two irrigation schemes that was used to settle Sinhala families in the Amparai district which effectively made the Amparai area, a traditional Tamil area, into a Sinhala majority area. Tamils have been pushed into a very narrow strip along the coast (the yellow area in Figure-2).

Today, 60% of the people in the Amparai district, the Tamil speaking Tamils and Muslims, own just 30% of the land, whereas the Sinhala people who form 40% of the Amparai population own 70% of the land which rightfully belonged to the Tamil speaking communities of this area who have lived here for millenniums.

4.1 Gal-Oya settlement scheme

This scheme was launched in 1949, a year after Sri Lanka gained independence from Britain. The ancient Tamil name for the area designated for this scheme is Paddippalai. This was the first of many large scale settlement schemes to be implemented by the Sri Lankan Government. The scheme was opened in a place called Inginiyagala.

Figure-2



Before the start of this settlement scheme there were only a handful of Sinhala families in this area. On 13 July 1952, hundreds of poor Tamil families living in the area designated for the settlement scheme were ordered out by the armed forces and their humble homes were burnt down by them. They have not been given any alternate land. At the same time Sinhala families were settled in this land and they were assisted with LKR 10,000 for each family, a huge sum fifty years ago.

It is indeed no coincidence that the very first of the numerous large scale massacres of Tamils by the Sinhala thugs and the Sri Lankan Armed forces occurred in exactly this spot at Inginiyakala on 5 June 1956. The massacre took place as the assaults in Colombo on Tamil parliamentarians who were staging a protest in front of the old parliament building against the introduction of the Sinhala Only language Act spread further into attacks against Tamils. The recently settled Sinhala thugs in Inginiyakala started violent attacks against the Tamils. One hundred and fifty (150) Tamils working in a sugar cane farm and factory in Inginiyakala under the Galoya scheme were killed and the bodies of the dead and injured were thrown on a fire. This incident is recorded in the book “Emergency 58” by Tarzi Vittachi.

4.2 Mahavali river scheme

Following the development of the above mentioned Gal-Oya scheme in Amparai, the Sinhala regime started the plan to use the long Mahavali river for irrigation, creating new settlements, and power generation projects.

Mahavali, 300 Kilometers long, is the longest river in the island of Sri Lanka with a catchments area that covers one sixteenth of the area of the island. This river starts in the hilly areas of the central parts and runs through the city of Kandy, runs north, and enters the seas in the Trincomalee district. Its water has been used since ancient times by the Sinhalese kings for irrigation.

The implementation of the Mahavali scheme began in the 1970s. Many senior Sri Lankan Government officials, including a President, are on record saying that the settlements created under this scheme will destroy the concept of the Tamil homeland by splitting it up with Sinhala settlements. As this scheme moved north towards Trincomalee the demography of the Tamil areas from Amparai to Trincomalee consistently changed making the Tamils a minority in these areas.

The Mathuru Oya settlement scheme was one of the three major settlement schemes under the overall Mahavali scheme that were designed to destroy the Tamil homeland concept. Thousands of hectares of land in Valaichenai, Vaharai and Kathiraveli area in Batticaloa were part of this designated land. The estimated number of families who were to be settled under this scheme was 25,000. However, following the island wide pogrom against the Tamils in 1983, 30,000 Sinhala men were brought in buses from the south of the island and were settled in this land. Also 900 Tamil families in this area were evicted from their land by the Sri Lankan armed forces and Sinhalese were settled.

Another large scale settlement took place in the Welikande area on the border of Batticaloa and Polonaruwa districts. More than 3000 Sinhala families were settled in this area and provided with irrigation for their farms from the Gal-Oya scheme.

Further lands, in Thampalai, Manickappiddi, Pallithidal etc, belonging to Muslims, and in Puthuveli, Mannampiddi, Muthukkal etc, belonging to the Tamils of this area were forcefully taken away by the Sri Lanka Government under the pretext of establishing a milk farm. Sinhala people are now settled in these areas too.

The Manalaru area was then declared the so called “High Security Zone” and the name was officially changed to Welioya. The new Sinhala settlers in this area were given very special treatment. Every family continued to receive LKR 800.00 per month from 1984. This was a huge sum at that time and settlers in no other areas received this kind of money from the Sri Lanka Government.

More than 50,000 Sinhalese settled in this area before the end of the 1980’s. The area was taken away from the districts to which it belonged and was joined with Anuradhapuram district. Extensive road network was built at the expense of 70 million LKR. Tamil people have observed and noted the striking difference between this Sinhala settlement with its extensive infrastructure and the poor conditions in the adjacent areas where Tamils continue to live. This is distinctly visible even in the satellite pictures shown by Google map.

5. Demographic history of Weli-Oya

Weli-Oya is the direct Sinhala translation of the name “Manalaru” which is the traditional Tamil name of an area that includes parts of the present Mullaithivu, Trincomalee and Vavuniya districts (see red line in Figure-3).

The Manalaru land from Vavuniya district includes thousands of acres of land that were on long term lease to Tamil business people. These lands were developed by the Tamil business people and had names like Dollar-Farm, Ken-Farm, Ceylon-Theatre etc. It also includes large areas of private land belonging to the Tamil people. The Manalaru land from Trincomalee district includes Thennamaravadi, Paraiyanaru etc. The Manalaru land from Mullaithivu district includes Kokkilai, Kokkuthoduvai, Nayaru, Othiyamalai, and several other named areas.

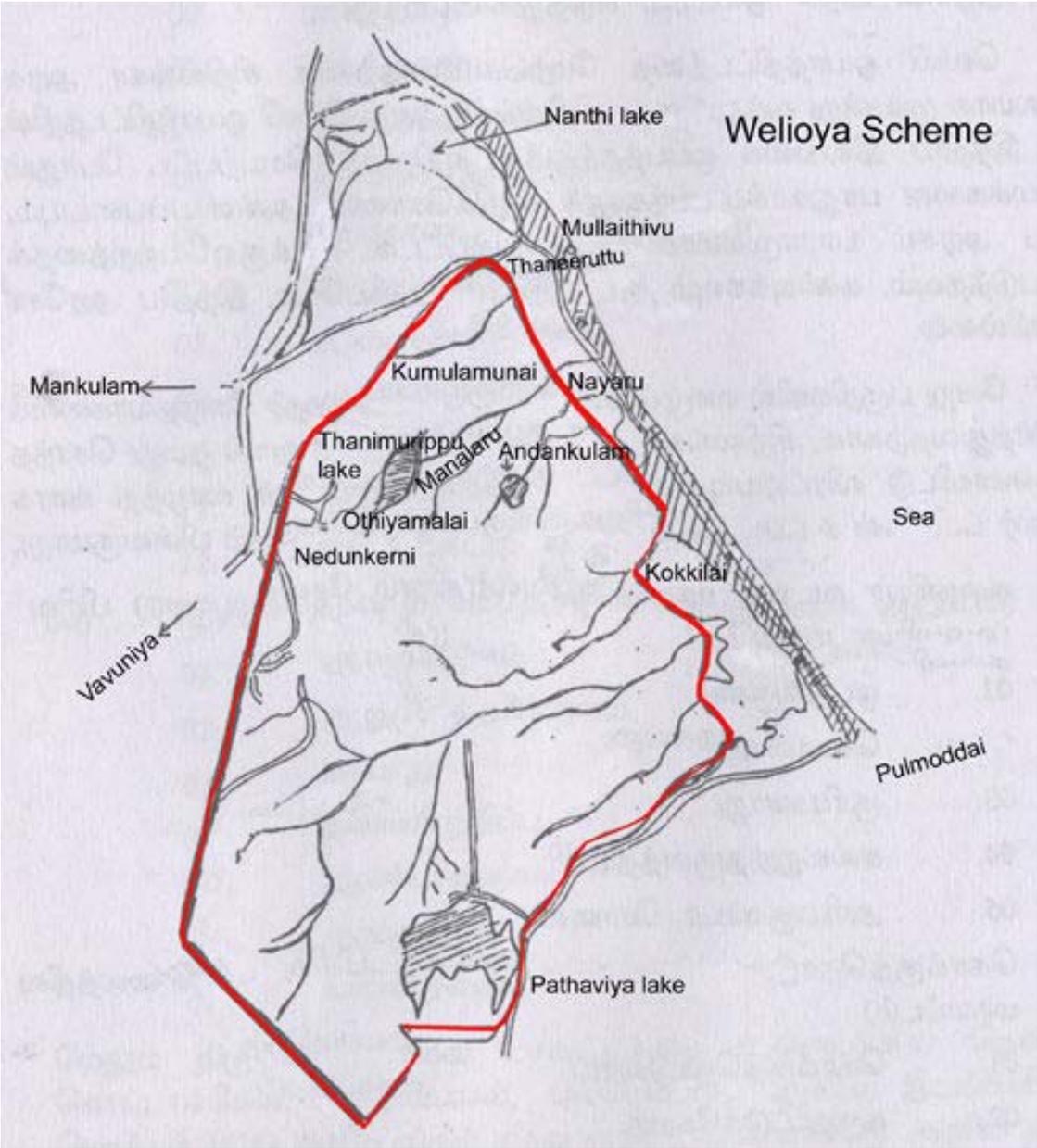
In the 1980’s, this area was designated as a special AGA division (a local government administrative division) of the Anuradhapuram district and a Sinhala AGA was appointed to take forward several projects with the view to develop and colonize the area with Sinhala people. After building up the infrastructure with bridges, hospitals and schools, 13,000 Tamil families from this area were evicted using sheer violence. Some of the well known massacres of Tamils took place in these areas in 1984.

The Dollar-Farm, Kent-Farm and other long lease lands in the Vavuniya district were used to settle upcountry Tamils who displaced from upcountry areas due to violence directed against them. The first step of the Sri Lanka Government to evict Tamils from Manalaru was to chase these displaced upcountry Tamils from these long lease lands in the early 1980’s. Sinhala settlers, especially prisoners, were settled in these lands. This was followed during the month of December 1984 with a series of massacres directed against the people of Manalaru.

Sri Lanka military stationed in Pathavia would regularly round up the villagers of this area and torment them. From 29th November 1984 until 2nd December 1984 a Sri Lanka military regiment declared a curfew and it moved into Othiyamalai. It rounded up the people of Othiyamalai village. It told the adult males to gather in the local hall and massacred all 32 of them on 1 Dec 1984. On 2 Dec 1984 the Kumulamunai village was rounded up and seven men were killed. On 3 Dec 1984, Manalaru area was rounded up and civilians were randomly fired at. When the people ran away, their homes were set on fire. Civilians, including women and children were killed. On 15 Dec 1984, the Sri Lanka

military entered the villages of Kokkilai, Kokkuthoduvai, Karunaddukerni, Nayar, Kumulamunai, and Alampil in the Mullaitivu district and killed 131 civilians and destroyed property. Among those killed were 21 children. The people who displaced as a result of these massacres remain displaced to date.

Figure - 3



6. Demographic history of Trincomalee

Trincomalee connects the northern and the southern parts of the Tamil areas. It has functioned as the capital city of the Tamil homeland. This city has a very ancient Hindu temple that has received devotional songs from Hindu saints 800 years ago. Trincomalee also has the second biggest natural harbour in the world and for this reason has attracted the interest of many of the world's military powers. As Table-1 shows this city has been continuously subjected by Sri Lankan State assisted Sinhala colonization since the 1940's. Over the years numerous tactics were used by the Sri Lankan State to increase the number of Sinhalese in this area. Settlements under irrigation schemes played a major role and the three major schemes used to settle Sinhalese in Trincomalee are, Allai, Kantalai and Pathaviya irrigation schemes. Irrigation schemes were not the only tactic, other tactics were also used. Settlement of Sinhala fishing communities; creating Land Secretariat and issuing land ownership certificates through this to the Sinhalese; and creating Sinhala settlement in between Tamil areas and forcing the Tamils to sell their land at low costs out of fear were some of the other tactics that were extensively used.

The plan to change the demography of Trincomalee is also clearly demonstrated by the fact that despite being a Tamil majority district this district has had neither a Tamil nor a Muslim Governor.

6.1 Irrigation schemes

Allai irrigation scheme: The Allai irrigation scheme begun in 1949 and eight ancient Tamil villages, Sanguveli, Kiliveddi, Menkamam, Pallaththadichenai, Peruveli, Mallikaithivu, Pachchainool and Nilaapalai, were selected for settlement. Processing of this land distribution was carried out in the Sinhala areas and large Sinhala settlements were created in these villages. The Tamils in these villages, the rightful owners of this land, were later in the 1980's subjected to constant and well planned violence assisted by the Sri Lanka state forces to evict them from these villages.

For example,

On 01.01.1985, the Sri Lankan military, its home guards, and Sinhala thugs entered the *Kiliveddi* village. On that day ten Tamils were killed including four women. One hundred

and twenty five houses were burnt. A further thirteen people, eight men and five women, were taken to the neighbouring Sinhala village and the men were murdered and the women were raped and murdered. A Tamil Member of Parliament Thangathurai who made a statement about the incident to the Daily Mirror paper was ordered to be arrested by the then Minister of Defense and Thangathurai was forced to leave the country.

On 18.07.1986, Sri Lankan military conducted a cordon and search operation in village of *Peruveli* in Trincomalee. Forty four civilians were arrested and taken away and shot dead. Most of those killed were displaced people from the villages of *Menkamam and Mallikaitivu*.

On 15.07.1986, the home guards and the Sri Lankan military surrounded the *Peruveli* refugee camp at night and were lying in waiting. Since the adjacent Tamil villages to the refugee camp had already been destroyed by the military, and since the refugees did not move out at night due to fear, no one knew about the military and home guards lying in waiting. As early morning light started to appear the military and home guards entered the refugee camps and started to shoot at random. Some of the refugees who have gone to their homes to check were also attacked. In total, 48 people were shot dead and more 20 were injured. Many women were raped during this mayhem. The attack on the refugees lasted till mid-day.

Kantalai irrigation scheme: This was an ancient tank in the Tamil area. An irrigation settlement scheme in this area distributed almost 25,000 acres of land; 80% Sinhalese and 20% to Tamils and Muslims. As in the case of the Allai scheme above, in later years, the Tamils in this area were attacked with the view to evict them from their village. For example,

Over two days on 04 and 05.06. 1986 the near the 4th Milepost situated in Kantalai, Sri Lankan Air Force and home-guards armed by them, stopped the buses and identified the Tamils and attacked them. Many were killed, disappeared and injured. Over the two days, more than 50 civilians were killed and the fate of more than 35 civilians is not known.

Pathaviya irrigation scheme: This Tamil name for this lake is Pathavilkulam and its name was changed into the Sinhala name Pathaviya. Though this lake is situated in the Anuradhapuram district near the border with Trincomalee, its water was used to create another settlement scheme in Trincomalee.

Though the Sri Lanka Government announced that Tamils will be settled under this scheme in the end even the Tamils who were living in the area were forcefully evicted and the area was converted to 100% Sinhala area. This newly settled area is called Pathavi Sripura. Although it belonged to the Trincomalee district, during the Sinhala settlement period it was administered as part of the Anuradhpura district and later in the 1980's it was added again to the Trincomalee district.

6.2 Trincomalee town & market

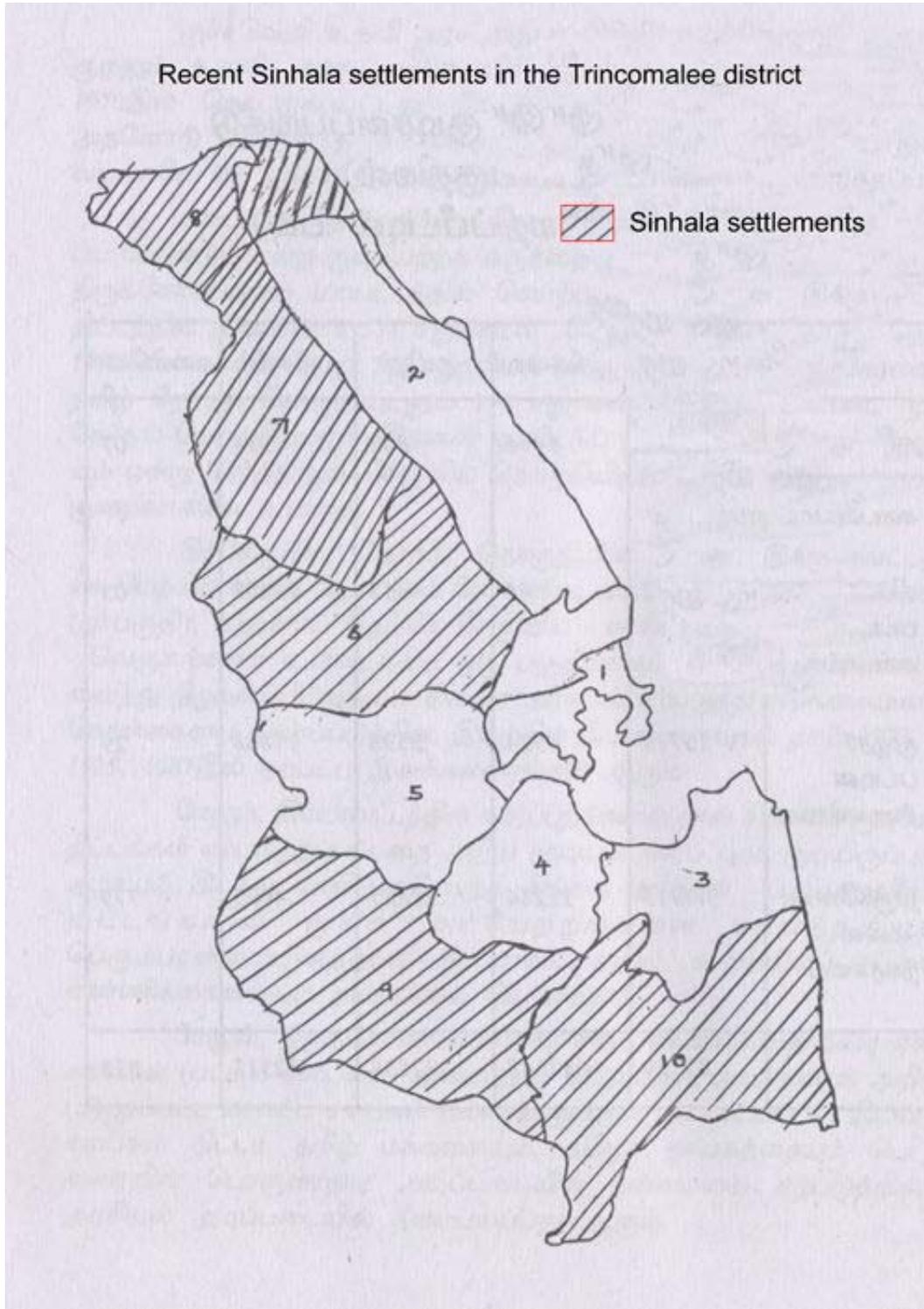
Trincomalee town & market inside the Trincomalee town was a Tamil area which was gradually encroached by Sinhala settlement which started as fishermen settlement along the town's coastal area. As far back as 1957, a Tamil nationalist angered by the confiscation of Tamil land attempted to hoist a black flag on the clock tower in the town. He was shot dead by the settled Sinhalese. Violence against Tamils in Trincomalee town is frequent. The Trincomalee town council built a new market because the Tamils did not have security in the old town that has now become dominated by the Sinhalese with the support of the military. However, this new market building remains closed due to non-cooperation from the Sri Lanka Government and its military.

6.3 Confiscation of institutions' land

As part of this process of creating Sinhala domination of the market the Sri Lanka Government created Sinhala settlements in the already crowded Tamil town. Land Secretariat was created on recommendation from the Commissioner of Land and through this secretariat private land, temple land, other land were handed to Sinhala settlers. Sinnathoduvai Sithivinayagar temple, Thambalakamam Athikanesar temple, Sivanantha thabovanam, and Shamuga children's home in Trincomalee are among the institutions that lost their land to forced Sinhala settlements.

Thambalakamam is one area which had vast lands belonging to temples that were cultivated by Tamils. These lands were forcefully bought or confiscated for Sinhala settlement. Some of the massacres of Tamils resulting from this demonstrate the end result.

Figure - 4



On 12.11.1985, Sri Lankan military rounded up Thampalakamam and nine people were shot dead. On 26.11.1985, three farmers were shot dead and their bodies were burnt by the military. In another incident near the temple five people were shut in shop and burnt. One died, the other three were rescued with severe burns. On 25.05.1986, three refugees, a mother and two sons, who went to check on their homes, were shot dead. On 30.05.1986, military in black uniform entered the home in Thampalakamam and killed the father, mother and two children. On 17.06.1986, eight farmers disappeared from their fields in Puthukkudiyiruppu in Thampalakamam. On 20.06.86, the Sri Lankan Air Force and the Sri Lankan Army, stationed at the Thampalakamam junction, made a joint attack on the Thampalakamam village. People were forced to displace. More than 25 of the displaced villagers took refuge in the Potkerni rice mill in the village. The military that arrived at the rice mill arrested all the people in the rice mill and took them. The owner was spared. The bodies of those taken were recovered in the forest nearby; 34 people died in this incident. On 01.02.1998, in the early morning, the military shot and killed 8 civilians from this village after ordering them to stand around their camp. Four of those killed were school children.

7. Land taken for Sinhala settlements in the North

The Pavatkulam Sinhala settlement in the Vavuniya district, the confiscation of land developed by Tamils in the Mannar district for grapes plantation and the redistribution of this land to retired Sinhala military officers, and the confiscation of land from Tamils in the Puthalam district for prawn farming and the settling of Sinhalese in this land have all sharply increased the number of Sinhala settlers in these three northern Tamil districts

Vavuniya-Pavatkulam: The Pavatkulam settlement scheme was initiated in 1956 and land was distributed to both Tamils and Sinhalese. In due course the Tamil people in this settlement were evicted through violence. (see Figure-1 black area in the Vavuniya district)

In the Mannar district, 1700 acres of land were given to 300 families to begin grape cultivation in the areas of Silavathurai, Kondachi, Marichukaddi, Pandivirichan and Madhu. These Tamil invested large sums of money and intensive labour to ready the land for cultivation. These developed lands were confiscated by the Sri Lanka Government and were given to Sinhala retired military personnel as a gift. Using this Sinhala ownership as

the nucleus more Sinhala settlements were created in Mannar district. These Sinhala settlers are involved in agriculture and fishing. Kadjuwaththa area is a large Sinhala settlement in Mannar created for grape cultivation after evicting the Tamils who started this project (see Figure-1 black area in the Mannar district).

Tamils have lived in the Udappu area in the Puthalam district as far back as the people can remember. These people have lost land and are in danger of losing their remaining land as a result of yet another well planned scheme implemented by the Sri Lanka Government. Land was confiscated from Tamils for prawn farming. More than 10,000 Tamils who lived in this area fishing and farming were badly affected by this project. The 15 feet bund built for prawn farming has disrupted their traditional fishing activities. The cemetery used by the Hindu Tamils of this area was also confiscated denying the people their ancestral cemetery. The Tamils, though they continue to live in this area are severely disadvantaged and are in danger of losing their traditional land entirely as Sinhala settler numbers increase.

8. Conclusion

This document has recorded some of the large scale Sri Lankan State sponsored Sinhala settlements in the traditional Tamil areas. There are many other smaller scale attempts by the Sri Lankan State to settle Sinhalese in the Tamil areas. The rigorous data collection and recording of these has not been attempted in this document.

9. References

All three references used for writing this report are written in Tamil.

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