

THE GROWTH OF LIBRARIES IN SRI LANKA DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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The establishment of public Libraries in Sri Lanka in the modern sense is a result of western influence. Free voluntary subscription libraries as of the present cannot be traced to an era beyond the early nineteenth century, though ample evidence is available as regards the availability of reference library facilities in Buddhist temples from the very early times.

The basic function of a library is the collection and preservation of reading material and making them available for the benefit of the reading public. In the earliest times there was no distinction between a record room or an archive (both in the modern sense) and a library as such and in this sense it may be said that the preservation of written records marked the origin of the earliest libraries.¹ Thus, the stores of the Sumerian Cuneiform of the temples of Nippur of the 3rd millennium B.C. can be identified as the earliest libraries. The idea of book collecting, however, had its origin in the Greek temples. The Academies of Plato and the Epicureans of Athens in the 4th century B.C. possessed such libraries whose influence lasted for many centuries, while the more famous library of Aristotle founded systematically for scientific research formed the model for the advanced library of Alexandria housed in the temple of the MUSES called MOUSEION. It was intended to collect the whole body of the Greek literature and was staffed by many famous Greek writers and scholars who arranged the papyrus and vellum scrolls systematically.

The first ever public library planned to be established was by Julius Ceasar, who entrusted the task to scholar Marcus Terentius Varro. It was built only after five years of his death. Thus the concept of libraries meant for general reading and research was a product of the Western classical world.

Monastic Reference Libraries in Sri Lanka

Since the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, Buddhist monks were the principal custodians of educational activities. Elementary education was provided at the village temples while an advanced education was provided at the better equipped monastic complexes, some of them named Parivenas.² Almost every Buddhist Monastery had a Library which was regarded as its

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica Micropaedia 15th edition, Vol. 10 p. 856.

2. Parivena in Pali means a living quarter of the Buddhist priests. But during later stage the word Parivena was used to denote a monastic college. In present day usage Parivena or Pirivena means a higher Buddhist educational centre.

'*Sine qua non*'.³ Many famous libraries had emerged in and around Anuradhapura and Magama either attached to the Mahavihara or the Abhayagiri fraternity. Amidst ravages caused by sectarian rivalry, invasions warfare the monks managed to maintain only a part of this inheritance at the risk of their lives.

Before printing was introduced to Sri Lanka,⁴ duplication of books remained a laborious task and was expensive and beyond the means of all but a few influential and wealthy people. However, Buddhist monks the custodians of the sacred literature and of the education, spared no pains in editing and copying manuscripts. A scriptorium was, often a part of a Vihara where a congregation of learned monks were engaged in teaching and research pursuits.

Books were written on Ola leaf with an iron stylus. The olas were carefully prepared from the young leaf buds of the talipot palm, cut before they opened out. They were boiled under moderate temperature and laid out in the shade to dry. Leaves thus processed were smoothed and cut to size and punched so that a cord could run through them. Two decorated wooden strips formed the covers.⁵ The numbering of pages was by means of letters of the alphabet. The first page of a manuscript was often blank, and the second page had broad margins at both ends, but the subsequent pages had thinner uniform margins. Three different sizes of letters were in use, although pages of a particular manuscript was written by letters of uniform size.⁶ There were not many illustrations and diagrams, as it was difficult to draw them with the stylus against the grain of the Ola and they were often limited to works on medicine, astrology and fine arts.

Owing to the scarcity of books and the labour spent in writing, books were zealously preserved. These manuscripts were coated with resin oil, wrapped in fine cloth and kept in wooden boxes and almirahs. They were considered precious, and the keys of these repositories were retained by the chief monk. They were made available under strict supervision to the scholars after careful examination of their competency to handle such books. When Buddhaghosa, the commentator, visited Mahavihara to consult these sacred texts, he was given access to the library only after such an examination. His proficiency was proved by the compilation of *Visudhimagga*.⁷

3. Gunasekera H. M. *Catalogue of Pali, Sinhalese and Sanskrit manuscripts in the Colombo Museum Library* 1901 P.X.

4. The idea of establishing a printing press for the publication of Christian literature of the new converts was put forward by the Dutch Governor. Jacob Christian Pielat to the Batavian Authorities in 1734 and the first book was printed in 1737 in Sri Lanka in the press established as a result.

5. Vidyodaya, Vol. III Nos. 11—12 1929, p. 344.

6. Piyadasa T. G. *Libraries in Sri Lanka their origin and history from ancient times to the present times*. Dehli 1985 p. 22.

The free circulation of copies of a book, other than those of the Tripitaka was limited. The habit of reading leisurely was not in vogue. Mass listening to the recital of sacred books at a common place such as the temple itself was the current practice particularly on *uposatha* (or *poya*) days.

However, reading and the act of writing was common. The males were patronised by the village temple while the females received their education from their parents at home. This primary education was limited to reading, writing and acquiring of knowledge of cultural values. The first letter of the alphabet was taught to a child at an auspicious hour with particular stress on intonation. When the child had mastered the alphabet he was introduced to the *Valipilla*. (sand board) to learn the art of writing. He was later introduced to the palm leaf and *panhinda* or (stylus), where he initially wrote large letters. Experience made him write small letters and that with speed and artistry.⁸

A higher education, sought by a limited number of students, who aspired either to become Buddhist monks or to learn and take to professions such as Medicine and Astrology were provided by a monastery called Pirivena staffed by the experts in numerous fields of study. Such a monastery imparted religious cultural, scientific and medical training.

At elementary level, knowledge was passed down orally and retained through an arduous exercise of memory. Discussion between teacher and pupil was the popular technique which facilitated comprehension. At higher institutions such as Pirivenas a student developed his aptitudes by means of reading and debate too. This was broadly the situation in Sri Lanka as regards its educational centres and libraries for a greater part of its historic period upto about the end of the 15th century.

The libraries of the Pirivenas possessed the copies of existing manuscripts of Pali, Sanskrit and Sinhala texts available in the island and sometimes copies of texts and commentaries brought from the neighbouring countries. New creations were added either by joint efforts of the staff and students or by individuals. The scriptorium kept the library constantly improved with additions to its collection. Thus the facilities for research and advanced study were available in the pirivena libraries which served the institution as a reference library. However, its resources were made available for the outsiders only after proper investigation of their credentials.

The political turmoil that followed the death of king Parakramabahu VI (1413—1467) of Kotte, the advent of western powers with high proselytization spirit, the withdrawal of royal patronage to Buddhism, and the gradual

8. Rev. Indurwe Pannatissa 'Secular education in the Pirivena Schools' *Ceylon Historical Journal* (C.H.J.) Vol. 1 July 1951. pp. 39 ff.

consolidation of Christian Missionary education based on models from elsewhere had an extremely adverse bearing on the established system of Buddhist education with its reference library system.

Two centuries later a Buddhist revival took place in the Kandyan Kingdom during the reign of Keerti Sri Rajasinghe (1747—1781) due to the energetic and collective efforts of Valivita Saranakara and his Associates. The king supported this group by establishing several higher educational institutions starting with the Niyamakanda Pirivena. The brave and energetic monks trained under the pioneering priests of "Silvatsamagama"⁹ collected archival records and manuscripts hidden in unknown places, and brought them in original or in copied form to the newly established monastic educational institutions such as Niyamakanda, Malvatta, Asgiriya, Gadaladeniya, Lankatilaka and Suduhumpola Viharas, for careful and critical examination under the guidance of learned monks and laymen. These monastic Colleges also managed to build up valuable reference libraries of the Pali and Sanskrit tradition. These libraries expanded with new works compiled by the learned monks. Arrangements were also made with the Buddhist monks of South and South East Asia to obtain copies of their sacred texts and commentaries to Sri Lanka. Thus at the turn of the eighteenth century the Buddhist monastic library system was in a revitalised condition in the Kandyan Kingdom with a host of young monks from the coastal areas engaged in serious studies in the higher monastic educational institutions at Kandy.

Some of these monks brought back the rich educational heritage and the disciplined monastic life to the coastal areas then subjected to Christian influence. A few Siamese monks who were helping the 'Silvatsamagama' in their attempt to restore the Buddhist tradition finding the humid climate of Kandy inhospitable, joined the monks who returned to the seven Korales. They renovated the ancient temples of the seven Korales then in ruins and established new ones and later spread out to Nuwarakalaviya and Tamankaduwa areas. In due course notable monastic reference libraries had been formed in temples in and around the seven Korales such as Wariyapola, Medagama, Warawala, Tissava, Kobeigane, Torana, Kandavihara, Ridivihara, Miwewa, Gomagamuwa, Hiriya, Medapola, Dumbadeniya, Mutugala, Padeniya, Budumuttewa, Kandulawa and Ambanpola vihara.¹⁰

The group of associates and students of Ven. Valivita Saranankara who had come down to the Matara Disavany made the biggest impact on the changing political, social and economic order of the eighteenth century. Taking advantage of the weak surveillance of the Dutch Administration, they

9. Valivita Saranankara and his close associates and followers tried to bring back the *sanghahood* to the disciplined monastic life style. This group is commonly identified by the name "Silvatsamagama."

10. *Secessional paper* (S P) xi 1874.

established small scale educational institutions attached to the existing and renovated monasteries such as those at Mulgirigala, Kahandamodara, Weligama, Pelmadulla, Totagamuwa and Bentota and established new centres particularly around Matara, Pattangahawatta, Weheragampita, Hittetiya, Godapitiya, Pallawala and Wehella, often with the patronage of the nominal Christian Mudaliyars of the area and the emerging wealthy entrepreneurial groups. Some of these temples rose to eminence due to the presence of many learned monks. The founding of a host of pirivenas in the south western coastal belt during the latter part of the nineteenth century culminated with the establishment of the two great pirivenas in and around Colombo, Vidyodaya in 1873, and Vidyalandara in 1875, both were transformed into two independent Universities in 1958.

These energetic Buddhist monks carried alive the Pali and Sanskrit tradition in the South and Southwest coastland and managed to bring back to light some copies of the old manuscripts, which were subsequently subject to serious examination at the new education institutes. Some of these editions which were becoming popular came out of the press by the middle of the nineteenth century.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century literary awareness in the coastal belt was conspicuous. Temples were founded in practically every village. Advent of the Christian Missionaries¹¹ during the first two decades of the century further accelerated the educational and proselytization interests. This was the period of the highest evangelical enthusiasm in Great Britain and the schools were looked upon as a positive instrument of conversion. Supported by the Governors, the Chief Justices, and other principal officials of the Government the Missionaries started schools in villages and seminaries of higher education at the chief towns to convert the "heathens" and "papists" to christianity and to train the more enthusiastic youths for pastoral purposes and government jobs. W. Knighton, wrote in his historical survey that 'it is rare indeed to see a Ceylonese even of the poorest class who cannot read and write his own language'¹² and questioned whether the most civilized nations of Europe could make the same boasting. Though the literacy was high the habit of reading at leisure seems to have been very limited, except among the Buddhist monks and laymen who had access to the monastic reference libraries.

The social stratification in the coastal areas had been disturbed due to the socio-economic changes that had taken place during the preceding centuries. The caste based feudal institutions were either weakened or changed by the forces of emerging merchantalism and capitalism. A wealthy westernized

11. London Missionary Society (1804) the Baptist Missionary Society (1812) Wesleyan Missionary Society (1814) and the Church Missionary Society (1817) started their evangelical movements in Sri Lanka in the same area where the Catholic Church and the Dutch Reformed church had a hold.

12. Knighton W. *History of Ceylon from the earliest period to the present time* (1845) p. 178.

proprietary class wielding considerable social status who functioned as junior partners to foreign dominance had arisen. A division in the sangha of the Matara dissavany was seen with the emergence of several 'sub-sects' such as the Mulgirigala fraternity, the Vehella fraternity and the Veva Siyanegama fraternity.

The majority of the pioneering Buddhist monks of the Southern coastal belt who were instrumental in the Buddhist revival were of the non-goyigama caste, and had their higher education and higher ordination in the Kandyan areas. A subsequent Royal Decree¹³ issued by King Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe, with the consent of Walivita Saranankara, reserved higher ordination only to those of the *goigama* caste and that too had to be performed only at the Malvatta and Asgiriya *Sima*. This had a profound effect on the emerging sangha organization of the coastal belt.

With the demise of Ven. Valivita Saranankara and his associates the zeal and vigour of the preceding years began to decline in the Kandyan areas. The rich endowments and grants conferred on the *Sangha* by the Nayakkar kings and the nobility had made the leading Buddhist temples proprietors of vast stretches of land. "Caste feudalism" and stabilized social inequalities of Kandyan society under the Nayakkar influence, and these differences, dovetailed into the *Sangha*. Thus, the disciplined monastic life restored by the '*Silvatsamagama*' had only a brief survival and the conditions of the monasteries deteriorated so rapidly with the expansion of capitalistic plantation economy in the interior that in 1876 the Diyavadana Nilame of the Temple of the Tooth, C.B. Dunuwilla, reported before the Buddhist Temporalities Commission that 'the studying and teaching religion both to the priests and laity a duty of the priests is now being neglected and disregarded. The priests employ their time in other pursuits such as trade, and the management of temporal affairs of the temples.'¹⁴ The neglect was so greivous that Malvatta and Asgiriya, the two leading Buddhist institutions of the Kandyan areas, had only six and three monks. respectively who knew Pali out of a total of twenty residing in these temples.¹⁵ The valuable libraries that had emerged during the past decades in the Kandyan areas obviously passed on to a group of custodians who were ignorant of the rich resources they held. Incidentally the valuable manuscripts were either kept locked under the boxes and almirahs or became the prey of the European soildiers, planters or the civil servants who took an active interest in collecting them.

While Kandyan monasteries witnessed a deterioration in the academic and spiritual standards, the Buddhist monasteries of the Matara district were rapidly expanding inspite of the sectarianism to which they were subjected.

13. Labugama Lankananda thero ed. *Mandarampura Puwatha* 1958, pp. xiii-xv.

14. SP., xvii 1876.

15. SP., xvii 1876.

Notable rich reference libraries were being built up in the main temples occupied by the associates and disciples of the Ven. Valivita Saranankara. The temple at Pelmadulla, situated halfway between the Kandyan monasteries and the emerging coastal temples, became a convenient meeting place for the monks on either side during the early stages of the Buddhist renaissance i.e. late eighteenth century. The Pelmadulla temple also became the abode of the high priest of Sripada, and the Sanghanayake of the low country, a title conferred mainly on a low country monk by the Kandayan King. The higher education institution which came into existence at Rajamaha Vihara, Pelmadulla produced a group of eminent Buddhist scholars of the nineteenth century. George Turnour the outstanding civil servant received his Pali education at Pelmadulla while serving as the Agent of Sabaragamuwa. In 1868, the revision of the Tripitaka¹⁶ too was undertaken at the Pelmadulla temple and the revised copies were deposited in the temple library.

Mulgirigala, one of the earliest Buddhist educational institutes which met destruction at the hands of the Portuguese, received new life under the guidance of these enthusiastic Buddhist monks of the eighteenth century and was a flourishing institution when the British gained control over the coastal belt. Sir Thomas Maitland (1805—1811) the British Governor, made an unsuccessful attempt to create a separate title of the low country *Sanghanayake* and confer it on the chief prelate of Mulgirigala, in order to undermine the influence of Kandyan monks and to establish a British backed low country *sangha* organization. The British Civil Servants Edward Upham and George Turnour found the manuscripts of the Mahavamsa for translation at the Mulgirigala temple library, and the majority of early British Civil Servants learned their Sinhala and Pali at this monastery under Bowala Dhammananda, the teacher of the leading personalities who led the revolt by violating the caste-oriented Royal Decree of Keerti Sri Rajasinghe.¹⁷ The reference library at Mulgirigala was supposed to have been one of the finest monastic libraries of nineteenth century Sri Lanka. However, with the decline of the spirit of its custodians during the latter part of the century much of its intellectual property was removed either by antique hunters or others interested in ancient literature.

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16. The revision of the Tripitaka was undertaken by the prominent priests of the Siamese and Amarapura sects at Pelmadulla under the patronage of Iddamalgoda Abeykoon atapattu Mudiyanse the Rate Mahatmaya of Navadum and Kukul Korales and the Basnayake of Maha Saman Devalaya Ratnapura. Hikkaduwe Sumangala, Walane Siddhatta, Puwakdandawe Sumangala, Mullertiyana Gunaratne and six other priests of the Siamese sect participated at the revision with Lankagoda Dheernanda, Weligama Sumangala, Welitara Dhammalankara, Bulatgama Dhammalankara, Dodanduwe Piyaratana, Waskaduwe Subhuti and Kosgoda Pannasekera of the Amarapura sect and Pandita Batuwantudawe participated in this revision.
17. Ambagahapitiye Gnanawimala, Kataluwe Gunaratana and Attudawe Dhammarakkita established the three different sections of the Sangha which was subsequently identified as the Amarapura fraternity at Balapitiya, Dodanduwa and Dondra respectively which in due course came to be patronised largely by the *Salagama*, *Karawa*, and *Durawa* Communities.

The other notable reference library of the south at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the Veheragampita temple at Matara. It came into prominence during the time of the Ven. Karatota Dhammarama (1735—1827), another literary figure of the time. When the Dutch government was making arrangements for the codification and compilation of the ancient laws of the Sinhalese the Tamils and the Muslims, Karatota Dhammarama helped in the codification of the traditional laws of the Sinhalese. However, the '*Lakrajalosirita*'¹⁸ compiled in reply to a series of questions they raised did not receive the same attention of the administrators as the '*Tesa Valamai* and the Mohammedan code. The Ven. Karatota Dhammarama was closely associated with the Dutch and British Governors, and taught Sinhala and Pali to many civil servants of the early British administration. John Doyly the politically astute Civil Servant, who was instrumental in the down fall of the Kandyan Kingdom studied Sinhala and Pali under him. Both these monks Karatota Dhammarama and Bowala Dhammananda helped the Colombo Auxilliary Bible Society in the task of translating the Bible to Sinhala begun in 1812 under the supervision of William Tolfrey. The library that developed at Veheragampita under the Ven. Dhammarama was one of the best reference libraries at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The three institutions of Palmadulla, Mulgirigala and Veheragampita were instrumental in the resurgence of literary and religious activity in the low country at the turn of the eighteenth century and the disciples of these three institutions played a key role in the cultural revival that took place subsequently in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka.

The Buddhist monastic library system was further strengthened with the establishment of the Amarapura fraternity in 1803. The new fraternity merged on account of the struggle of the monks of the non-Goyigama castes for the due recognition of their claims for higher ordination. Supported by the emerging moneyed class of the coastal belt, four groups of non-Goyigama monks¹⁹ left the island within a short space of a decade to various parts of Burma with the intention of resuscitating the doctrine of Buddha by disentangling it from caste considerations theistic ritual practices etc., to which it had been subjected for several centuries. Each group having studied the Buddhist scriptures under eminent monks and having received higher ordination, returned to Sri Lanka to establish different sects of the Amarapura fraternity at Balapitimodara, Dodanduwa, Dadalla and Devinuwara, the last mentioned being later shifted to Mihiripanna. They also managed to collect and bring back many originals or translations of the sacred texts taken to Burma from

18. Rt. Rev. Edmon Peiris (ed.) *Lakraja Lo Sirit a* Published by Historical Manuscript Commission of Ceylon, 1973.

19. Ambagahapitiye Gnanawimala, Kataluwe Gunaratna, Attudawe Dhammarakkhita and Kapugama Dhammarakkhenda founded the four major sections of the sangha who did not adhere to the accepted norms of the Kandyan court patronized by the Siamese sect.

Sri Lanka itself during the preceding centuries and the Burmese commentaries. Such collections were further enriched by subsequent donations from the Burmese royalty and leading devotees. In course of time the headquarters of these different sects built up impressive reference libraries even surpassing the Kandyan ones.

Amarapura turned out to be a 'rebellious' fraternity functioning in an area supposed to be a stronghold of the Christian Missionaries. They were serving a community subjected to a 'wave of cultural infiltration leading to a linguistic, cultural, religious and spiritual alienation'²⁰ for centuries. Its members were quite aware of the external threats to their course of activity and were more dynamic and systematic in their endeavours. A greater emphasis was laid on the study of the doctrine and the *Vinaya* rules and also of Christian philosophy. This in turn gave rise to various controversies between monks within as well as outside the fraternity and also with the Christian Missionaries. They closely followed the missionary line of attack and used the printing press in bringing out religious tracts attacking the Christian publications. These multifarious religious tracts which came out of the press in attacking and supporting the religious observances and the monks further encouraged the habit of reading that spread fast among the masses.

Within a few years of the emergence of the Amarapura fraternity, four major educational centres with rich reference libraries grew up at Velitara, Dodanduwa, Dadalla and Mihiripanna, each having its own supporting institutions around them. All these managed to train a team of disciplined and intellectually alert monks who had a thorough and analytical grasp of the teachings of the Buddha and had mastered not only Pali, Sanskrit and Classical Sinhala but also some of the South Asian languages such as Burmese, Siamese and Cambodian. The majority of them studied English, Christianity, Western Philosophy and Science too.

Therefore, unlike the monastic libraries of the past, the majority of the Amarapura fraternity libraries possessed works on Christianity, Western Philosophy, Science and technology. The Christian Missionaries attacked the mythical belief and associated customs of the natives often bringing them into direct confrontation with modern Science and Mathematics. They also publicly converted some of the prominent Buddhist monks to Christianity and made them instruments of their criticism at public meetings. However, the new "order" of Buddhist monks too read about Christianity, modern science and technology. Laymen purchased copies of the Bible and other christian publications and handed them to the monks to "criticise and refute" as reported by the Baptist Missionary James Charter,²¹ These too enriched

20. Jayatilake D. B., *The Message of Buddhism—The Buddhist Review*, Vol. II 1910 p. 313.

21. James Charter Manuscripts 1823 Baptist Missionary Society London (BMS), Vol. 1.

the temple library collections. As early as 1817, Robert Newstead, a Methodist Missionary visiting the Dadalla temple, found two copies of the New Testament among the books and Manuscripts of the temple library.²²

A majority of these Amarapura fraternity monastic libraries were examined by Maha Mudaliyar Louis de Zoysa in 1878²³ for the compilation of a catalogue, and noted that some of the manuscripts mentioned in James de Alwis catalogue were missing in the temples. However, he managed to examine a large amount of manuscripts on many subjects ranging from religion to literature, and on professions such as medicine and astrology in Pali, Sanskrit, Sinhala and other South and South East Asian languages.²⁴

The advent of Christian Missionaries during the first two decades of British rule and their virtual hold over the educational systems of the island, the consolidation of the status of the English language as the medium of administration and the expansion of the printing press each contributed to effect far reaching changes in the reading habits of the Sri Lankans. A new literary style had come into vogue in Sinhala very much different from the classical style due to long associations with Tamils, Portuguese and Dutch. Elementary education was imparted to the natives through the medium of this new style. Higher education, which assured job opportunities in the government and mercantile sectors, and was hence held in esteem was imparted in the English Language. Furthermore, this English education assured the youth a position and lifestyle quite different from that of the ordinary man.

On the other hand, the higher oriental education imparted in the the Buddhist monasteries was left to those who aspired to become monks, native physicians and astrologers. None of them stood at par with the lowest scale professions held by an English educated youth. Thus the long preserved treatises on astronomy, mathematics, physical sciences, cosmography, medicine, surgery, astrology, music, painting and fine arts in Pali, Sanskrit or classical Sinhala—the rich resource of knowledge from which the oriental scholars (draw their strength) began to bear a relationship with a few who did not care for social position.

Oriental Library

However, these changes took place in Sri Lanka at a time when western scholars were allured by the rich oriental literature of India and the rest of the South and South East Asian region. These Orientalists formed themselves into various study circles such as the Royal Asiatic Society, which started local

22. Extract of the Journal of Robert Newstead May 27 1817 ; Methodist Missionary Archives now deposited in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. (MMS) 443.

23. *SP XXV* 1879.

24. *ibid.*

branches in many parts of Asia, were exploring and evaluating the rich heritage of the culture of that region. Caught up by this enthusiasm the missionaries, civil servants, military officers, planters and businessmen joined those intending to collect the ancient manuscripts to be carried back home. The simultaneous declining spirit of a section of the Buddhist clergy of Sri Lanka which, due to some unexplained factors, seen as a contemporary phenomenon, made it easy for these treasure hunters to pursue their task. Their rich collections were shipped to their homelands to be perused by the growing band of European oriental scholars. Thus, museums and libraries of the main cities of Europe profited by what the Sri Lankan temple libraries lost.

British civil servants who had to learn native languages as part fulfilment of their proficiency first came across the rich monastic libraries. Doyly, Turnour and Upham were among those who studied Sinhala and Pali at the monastic colleges around Matara managed to consult some of the rare manuscripts. George Turnour, the Agent of the Central Province who had closely moved with the Buddhist monks of Malvatta and Asgiriya published a series of articles in the journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Bengal Branch), under the heading 'the Pali Buddhistical Annals,²⁵ at a time when the Indian civil servants were hunting for the rich literature of India. Subsequently, Rev. Spence Hardy, a missionary who resided in Sri Lanka for over twenty five years, read a paper before the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) on the books in Sri Lanka on religion, grammar, history and medicine in the Pali Language.²⁶ A few years later P. Grimbolt, Vice Consul in Sri Lanka for France, and the librarian of the Royal Asiatic Society, (Ceylon Branch), despatched a valuable load of Buddhist manuscripts to France, collected during a period of over six years in Sri Lanka. A review of them appeared in the Saturday Review, London, on July 28, 1866, which also spotlighted the neglect of the monastic libraries in Sri Lanka and the further availability in them of rich manuscripts in Pali, Sanskrit and Sinhala Languages. In the same year John Murdoch addressed the Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), on the need for the preparation of a catalogue of Pali and Sinhala books found in the pansala (i.e. temple) libraries, and in the possession of individuals, and stressed the need for legislation as in India²⁷ compelling the publisher to submit three copies of any publication to the authorities mentioned in the law²⁸. In the following year the British Government of India took steps to make a record of Sanskrit books found in Indian libraries to which the Government Agent of the Northern Province, (Sri Lanka), H.S.O. Russell drew the attention of the government. Thereupon, the government issued a circular to the Government Agents and their assistants to collect such

25. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Bengal Branch), (JARSBB) Vol. v.p. 521 Vol. vi, pp. 299 799, 1049.

26. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Ceylon Branch) (JRASCB) Vol. 1 No. 3 pp. 189ff.

27. Indian Act No. XXV, of 1867.

28. John Murdoch *Classified catalogue of Printed Tracts and Books in Sinhalese* Madras, 1868.

information on manuscripts available in the temple libraries and individuals through the village headmen.²⁹ James de Alwis an unofficial member of the Legislative Council and a lawyer, who took a keen interest in oriental literature was entrusted with the task of preparing a catalogue of such manuscripts through the information thus collected and by personal observations. Having found many duplicate copies in temple libraries, and seen the threat of destruction that these valuable manuscripts faced by white ants and treasure seekers, de Alwis stressed the need of creating an Oriental manuscripts library attached to the Government Record Office.³⁰ He recommended the feasibility of purchasing the duplicate copies from their custodians or transcribing the manuscripts through the Government Agents.

This suggestion was accepted by the government and funds were voted for by the Legislative Council. An Oriental Library Committee was formed at a meeting held in the Colombo Kachcheri on July 27, 1870 to administer the library.³¹ The rules and regulations for the management of the library were drafted and gazetted for general information.³² Regional committees were appointed under the Government Agents to secure the necessary manuscripts from the Sabaragamuwa, Galle and Matara districts³³. A copy of the Tripitaka revised at Pelmadulla was procured. The copy of the Tripitaka presented by the King of Burma to the Sri Lankan Government was also deposited in the Oriental library.

Thus in Sri Lanka a palm leaf manuscript library was born on lines of a modern reference library for the first time in 1870. This Oriental library was placed under the immediate control and supervision of the Colonial Secretary. A paid librarian³⁴ was appointed to look after the management of the library. The library was kept open for the readers from 11.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m on week days and 11.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. on Saturdays. The manuscripts were allowed to be consulted within a prescribed area in the presence of the librarian and the readers could obtain extracts of the documents on payment.³⁵

29. Robinson to Earl of Granville January 11, 1870, Sri Lanka National Archives (SLNA) 5, 57 No. 20.

30. Robinson to Earl of Kimberley, October 11, 1871, SLNA 57 58 No. 250.

31. Oriental Library Committee members elected are R. F. Morgan, Chairman James de Alwis, Secretary-C. P. Loyard Louis de Zoysa, Andiris de Silva.

32. *Ceylon Government Gazette*, October, 1870.

33. Local Committees for,

Matara District

A.G.A.

Keerti Sumangala

Dodampahala Dheepankara

Bambaranda

Kachcheri Mudaliyar of
Matara

Abraham T. Obysekera

Interpreter to Police

Court

James de Alwis to Colonial Secretary, 10 January, 1870; SLNA, 6, 3434.

Galle District

G.A.S.P.

Bulathgama Terunnanse

Weragoda Medhantha of

Kachchiwatta

A.R. Karunaratne

Edmund Rowland

Gunaratne

Sabaragamuwa District

A.G.A.

Hikkaduwa Sumangala

Waskaduwe Subhuti

Morapitiye Attadessi

Don Adrian de Silva

Batuwantudawe

Eddamaligoda Basnaike

Nilame

L.C. Wijesinghe

34. Louis de Zoysa, the Maha Mudaliyar, was the first librarian.

35. James de Alwis to Colonial Secretary, 20 September 1870 ; SLNA 6/3436.

Within a short time of the establishment of the Government Oriental Library in Colombo, steps were taken to establish such libraries on voluntary contributions in Kandy and Matara. At a meeting convened by the Government Agent of the Central province on November 29, 1875, it was resolved to establish an Oriental library at the Octagon in Kandy. Twenty four members including the Government Agent, District Judge, Assistant Agent, the Diyavadana Nilame and the Rate Mahatmayas of the districts assembled and each member promised to pay a subscription fee of Rs. 40.³⁶ Lists for the collection of voluntary contributions from the respective divisions were distributed among the Presidents of the Village Tribunals and the Rate Mahatmayas. Special donations were received from the king of Burma in 1875,³⁷ and the Prince of Wales reception committee of 1897.

The management of the library was entrusted to a committee³⁸ which decided on all important matters. A librarian was appointed³⁹ to administer the matters of the library. The library was kept open every day from 7.00 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m and on Poya days as long as it was necessary because the devotees to the Dalada Maligawa kept on contributing money to the library.⁴⁰

The attempt made at Matara to form an Oriental library in 1875 with the ultimate aim of opening up of a high class Oriental school attached to it did not materialize due to financial and other restraints.⁴¹ Thus it is evident that the government was compelled to take a lead in the collection and preservation of the monastic literature and make them available for the readers at convenient places.

Meanwhile James de Alwis had completed his catalogue of ancient literary manuscripts in 1871, a voluntary contribution which he completed in twelve months⁴². The catalogue brought to light many works in Pali and Sinhala which till then had escaped notice beyond a small circle of Buddhist Priests and native physicians. The examination and compilation of a list of manuscripts available in the Buddhist temples was found urgently necessary and the Government appointed Maha Mudaliyar Louis de Zoysa for the purpose.

36. SLNA 18, 3423.

37. James Swan to Government Agent of Central Province, 23 February 1875, SLNA 18 3423.

38. The Library Committee was composed of GACP. AGA (Secretary) Diyawadana Nilame Ratamahatmayas of Udunuwars, Yatinuwars, Tumpane, Harispattuwa, Lower Dumbara, Hewaheta, Udapalatha, and Bulathgama.

39. Suriyagoda Sonuttara of Malvatta Viahara was the librarian till 1896.

40. Secretary of the library to the Colonial Secretary, 27 February 1879, SLNA, 18, 342.3

41. District Judge of Matara to Colonial Secretary, 7 May 1875 SLNA, 6, 5081.

42. Robinson to Kimberley, 11 October 1871 ; SLNA 5, 58, No. 250.

De Zoysa, a Christian by birth, managed to survey the major part of the Buddhist temples in the North Western Province,⁴³ Southern and Central Provinces.⁴⁴ However, due to 'Jealousy and ignorance of the custodians,' De Zoysa was not given access to a majority of temples in the Matara district.⁴⁵

Subsequently De Zoysa compiled a catalogue of palm leaf Manuscripts in Pali, Sanskrit and Sinhala languages in 1876 which he came across in his surveys and those consulted by James de Alwis. In submitting a copy of this catalogue to the Secretary of state for colonies, William Gregory, the Governor of Sri Lanka, (1872—77), admitted the long neglect of a duty of the Government thus.

"It is most unfortunate that this investigation was not conducted at an early period of the British rule when the Buddhist monasteries were presided over by men of learning or at all events by men who highly valued their literary stores. Since we occupied the Kandyan Country and more especially of late since we dissociated ourselves altogether from Buddhism and in my opinion, very improperly allowed temple property to become the prey of every spoliator, the old class of learned priests has generally disappeared and has been replaced in too many instances by men whose only object is to enrich themselves as fast as they can, leaving the temple and all belonging to it to go to rack and ruin. From this cause thousands of valuable manuscripts are supposed to have perished, either by the devastation of white ants or by the climate. It is therefore, fortunate that we have received even the small remnant which we now possess."

Museum Library

This was a time of much literary activity in Europe and in India. Advanced research on Oriental culture was a theme of the day and much interest was shown on the collection and editing of Oriental manuscripts, restoration and curing of archaeological monuments and studying of social customs and behavioral patterns of Asian Societies. Meanwhile due to the increasing agitation the local intellectuals⁴⁷ and the energetic and enthusiastic support of the civil servants steps were taken to preserve and maintain the various aspects of the culture of the Sri Lankan people by the establishment of the Museum of Colombo by Ordinance Number 11 of 1873.

43. *SP XI* of 1874.

44. *SP XXV* of 1879.

45. *Governor's Address*, Vol. 11 p. 409.

46. Gregory to Carnavon, 26, October 1876, *SLNA* 5, 63 No. 331.

47. Gregory to Kimberley, 5 April 1873 ; *SNLA*, 5,60 No. 251.

A museum library was created by the amalgamation of the Government Oriental Library with the library of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), formed in 1845. The Museum library thus established was opened to the public in January 1877. This was the first free public library that came into existence in Sri Lanka with books on many subjects except fiction. A Librarian⁴⁸ under the Director of the Museum was appointed to manage its affairs. A Committee of management presided over by the Governor of Sri Lanka however, decided on all important matters. It met once a year in January unless a special need arose till 1 May 1889, and later on monthly on the second Friday of every month.⁴⁹ The committee inspected the books newly received and the lists to be purchased and considered the monthly reports, applications for admission to the reading room etc. The reading room was kept open from 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. from Monday to Thursday and on Saturdays from 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. except on Christmas and New Year days. The admission to the reading room was granted on request by a written application to the committee of management accompanied by the recommendation of two respectable persons if the applicant was not personally known to the Director of National Museums. The readers were expected to sign the register before they commenced reading.

The conception of library activities as a science is of recent growth. The administration of a library providing for the full exploitation of its resources to a reader as by providing indexes etc. was not in vogue. The librarian was looked upon as a mere custodian of books and was entrusted with other duties which had no connection with the management of the library. In keeping line with this trend the Librarian of the Museum was expected to perform the duties of the Office Assistant to the Director of the Museum in his non-technical duties, to act in his capacity in his absence and to perform the duties of the accountant in addition to being the custodian of the records and books.⁵⁰

Governor Gregory kept high hopes of collecting whatever manuscripts that had escaped destruction by the weather at the hands of man and by insects for the Museum library, either by outright purchase or in copied form.⁵¹ Rupees 13,250 was voted by the Legislative Council between 1877 to 1885 for the same purpose. However, only Rs. 6,688.27 was spent on the purchases and the balance was either diverted to other work of the Museum or allowed to revert to the Government revenue.⁵²

48. Richard Van Cuylenburg was appointed in 1875 as the first librarian of the Museum library.

49. *Administration Report of the Museum (ARM)* 1889 pp. 1—7.

50. *Ferguson's Directory* for 1893.

51. *Governor's addresses* Vol. II pp. 384-85.

52. *ARM* 1889.

In 1887, there were 188 volumes classified into six categories by Mudaliyar Louis de Zoysa in the following manner. (a) Buddhist canonical texts 27 in Burmese characters presented by the Burmese King, and 14 in Sinhala characters copied at the expense of the government or presented by individuals (b) Religious works of a miscellaneous nature 71 in number. (c) Historical works, legendary tales etc. 25 in number. (d) Philosophical works 29 in number. (e) Poetry, 16 in number. (f) Scientific and medical works 6 in number. The library proper contained about 450 volumes on history, languages archaeology, ethnology, astronomy, geography and other miscellaneous works.⁵³ Even as late as 1901 there were only 411 volumes of manuscripts available in the Museum library, of which 372 were in Sinhala, 35 in Burmese and 4 in Cambodian.⁵⁴ The failure to procure copies or the originals of the manuscripts according to the librarian was due partly to the ignorance and jealousy of the custodians and partly to the fear of losing them in such transactions.⁵⁵ In this context he suggested that a competent person be appointed by the Government for such transactions and that he should carefully work out on hearsay, and build up goodwill with the owners before any transactions on purchases or copying was made.

With the enactment of the Ordinance No. 1 of 1885, making the publisher or the printer liable to supply three copies of any publication to the Registrar of Books and Newspapers, of which a copy was sent to the Museum library for the use of the general reader, the number of books accrued to the library improved. However, the reading facilities thus provided were hardly been made use of by the average reader. Till 1886 only 226 visits were recorded per year, and thus 'the existence of a free public library' seems to be unknown to the majority of the residents of Colombo.⁵⁶ According to the librarian "even the educated man who had been living in Colombo for more than a decade knew nothing about the library."⁵⁷

With the widening of courses at the newly established Vidyodaya Pirivena and the improvement of the knowledge of English among the young monks the attendance of the Museum library improved.⁵⁸ Regional Stephen Copleston, the Bishop of Calcutta, had noted this change and wrote in his book in 1908, that 'in the Oriental library at the Museum you will see the yellow-robed students at work with pen and notebook on Pali manuscripts in Sinhalese or Burmese characters they are students at the Buddhist College. On the table you may find a copy of the Buddhist, an English newspaper as modern in tone

53. John Ferguson, *Ceylon in the Jubilee year*, 1887, Colombo, p. 413.

54. H. M. Gunasekera, *Catalogue of Pali Sinhalese and Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Colombo Museum Library*, 1901 P.X.

55. *ARM* 1889.

56. *ARM* 1887.

57. *ARM* 1887.

58. In 1887 five Buddhist monks of Vidyodaya were permitted to enter the library, 10 in 1888, 30 in 1889 and by 1889 the average visits rose to 2,198.

as the Daily News, full of reports of Buddhist schools, meetings, ceremonies and conversions mingle here and there with a paragraph of abuse of Christianity. The old system is boldly thrown overboard and Buddhism claims to be in alliance with modern discoveries and the Philosophy of the West.⁵⁹

On the whole, towards the end of the nineteenth century the reference libraries of the Buddhist monasteries were partly explored and their materials were thrown open to the Western scholars while the Buddhist monastic educational system and then Buddhist priests themselves transformed from their isolate existence were heavily involved with the western scientific methods and Philosophy. The Ven. Migettuwatte Gunananda the orator of the great debates with the missioneries in eighteen sixties and early seventies, challenged Sir Isaac Newton's theory by quoting the 'New Principia' of R. J. Morison in the famous Panadura debate of 1872,⁶⁰ and Hikkaduwa Sumangala, the Principal of the Vidyodaya Pirivena, calling the attention of a Christian priest to a passage in Dr. Louis Buchner's work on 'Matter and Force'.⁶¹ These are two examples of the change that was taking place in Sri Lanka during the nineteenth century due to the expansion of the Buddhist monastic reference library system.

Subscription Libraries

The establishment of voluntary subscription libraries in Sri Lanka seems to have taken place in the early decades of the nineteenth century in the principal towns where a mixed and westernized population was concentrated. However, due to the paucity of material, it is however difficult to build up with accuracy a chronological account of the emergence of such institutions. The first such reference available is to the Ceylon United Service Library which was formed in 1812 in Colombo. Its membership was open to the members of the armed forces of the government while outsiders were admitted by ballot as honorary members. The latter were mostly European merchants, who had no voice in the management of the library and the disposal of funds.⁶² The library was managed by a librarian placed under the direction of an Executive Committee of which the Governor and the Major General Commanding the Forces acted as the Patron and the Vice-Patron.⁶³

59. Colpeston, R. S. *Buddhism Primitive and Present in Ceylon*, London, 1908, p. 275.

60. The Great Debate, *Buddhism and Christianity, Face to Face*, ed. Peebles, J.M. Colombo 1955, p. 153.

61. *Ibid.* p. 155.

62. Pridham, C., *An Historical Political and Statistical Account of Ceylon and its Dependence* (Pridham), Vol. II, 1849, p. 632.

63. *Ceylon Calender* 1825.

In the eighteen forties a large body of members of the European mercantile community left the library to join an institution presumably the Pettah Library newly created for the reunion of the professional and commercial classes.⁶⁴ The membership of the Ceylon United Service Library did not improve over the years and in 1851 the library had only 142 subscribing members.⁶⁵ However, during the same period the expenditure increased while the subscription dwindled and the institution was running bankrupt.

Meanwhile on June 30, 1874, an influential group of citizens decided to take over the library with its books, furniture, the liabilities and interests, and the reorganized library appeared in the name of Colombo Library with an enlarged membership.⁶⁴

The library housed earlier in a place opposite the Queen's House⁶⁷ moved into the General Post Office building on a concessionary rent to Government till the second decade of the twentieth century. It was also housed for a short time (1891—1896) in the Vestry of the St. Peter's Church.⁶⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century the Colombo Library had more than 10,000 books with two hundred subscribing members.⁶⁹ However, the library, maintained its exclusiveness until, it was absorbed into the Colombo Public Library in 1925 along with the Pettah Library. Till then its membership was limited to the civil servants and to the Ceylonese of higher walks of life.

On June 29, 1829, a group of Dutch and English descendents formed the second subscription library of the island.⁷⁰ the Colombo Pettah Library as it was called, fell into considerable pecuniary difficulties within a short period of its existence and faced the threat of being closed down, as a majority of its members had resigned. Meanwhile a group of natives expressed their desire to pay off the encumbrances provided that certain existing rules were modified. Instead a committee of influential persons⁷¹ was formed and public donations were collected to pay off the debt and steps were taken to purchase a new building for the library. The reorganized library was opened on, September 01, 1836, with the subscription fee lowered from three shillings to

64. *Pridham*, Vol. II p, 632.

65. *Ceylon Almanac*, 1851.

66. *SLNA*, 59, 2454.

67. *Pridham* Vol. p. 632.

68. *SLNA*, 59, 2454.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Observer*, 13 September 1836.

71. The committee consisted of the following members:-

P. L. Gratian

J. Swan

J. Wembeck

J. Carnic

J. C. Gotloff

P. Brohier

H. Rudd

J. Sansoni

W. Morgan

B. Thomaz

W. Taylor

R. J. Smith

K. R. Neys

six pennies a month with a proportionate entry fee.⁷² A section of the old guards objected to this new principle as they feared that the lowering of the subscription fee would lead to the entry of common people which would lower the respectability of the library so that the respectable group of members would be forced to leave it.⁷³ Later the subscription rate was increased to a shilling while the rich were asked to pay a higher subscription.

Due to the paucity of information very little is known about the working of these subscription libraries. From available sources it is safe to assume that the Secretary was the virtual Controller of the Colombo Pettah Library with an Executive Committee to advise him on policy matters.⁷⁴ There was the treasurer in charge of accounts and a Librarian designated under Librarian in charge of the library. A general idea of the working of the Colombo Pettah Library can be gained from the following extract of the Secretary's report submitted at the 8th annual meeting in 1844.

Membership

Number of subscribers in the list as on 30th June 1844	112
Number admitted during the year	26

	138
Number of Resignations and deaths during the year	21

Total number now standing	117

Receipts

	£	s.	d.
Balance of last year	45	03	11½
Subscriptions collected last year	63	16	06
Donations from the Government	50	00	00
Miscellaneous	09	09	09
	-----	-----	-----
Total receipts	168	09	05½

Expenditure

Expenditure of the year	129	06	27
	-----	-----	-----
Balance	39	03	02½
	-----	-----	-----

72. *Observer*, 13 September 1836.

73. *Observer*, 27 September, 1836.

74. Secretary of the pettah Library to the Colonial Secretary, 23 January 1875; SLNA,6, 5077.

Books

Number of Volumes received from England during the year	103
Number of Volumes purchased at Colombo	28
Number of Volumes now in the library	1,656 ⁷⁵

The Colombo Pettah Library was the only self-supporting institution which gave access to the members of the clerical service and also kept the subscription at a lower rate. Yet the annual increase of the membership remained very low. In 1831 there were 169 subscribers while in 1874 it had fallen to 160.⁷⁶ The total number of books in the library in 1851 was 2,611 and in 1901 it had risen to 4,000.⁷⁷ The pecuniary problems faced by these self-supporting subscription libraries were partly ceased by the grants extended by the government. The Colombo Pettah Library however, not only disseminated a knowledge of English literature among the citizens of Colombo, but also served as a meeting place for the politically awakening class in the city. Occasional meetings were held to discuss and debate on current problems in which the leading personalities of the day took part. Sometimes, funds were raised by means of public lectures for the improvement of the Library.⁷⁸

The Ceylon Temperance Society of Colombo made a public appeal for the donation of books and money for the expansion of the existing reading room to a library in 1836⁷⁹. The library thus established was controlled by the Executive Committee of the Temperance Society and was placed under a librarian. The membership of the library was however limited to the members of the Temperance movement.

In the mid thirties and forties of the nineteenth century, the urban settlements of Sri Lanka witnessed a drastic socio-economic change with the rapid expansion of the plantation industry and the stabilisation of capitalistic enterprises. Business and commercial establishments opened their local agencies in the principal collecting centres and in and around the plantation centres and the ports. The transport and communication system improved and the growing towns were connected to each other by principal roads and the social mobility was rampant. The newspapers have come to stay and the English educated middle class was gradually getting enlarged. A sizable section of the elites turned to liberal professions and the western ideals were fast moving into their social life in the urban centres.

75. *Observer*, 25 July 1844.

76. Secretary of the Pettah Library to Colonial secretary, 23 January 1875, SLNA 6, 50776

77. Secretary of the Pettah Library to Colonial Secretary, 2 September 1903, SLNA 59, 127.

78. In 1883 funds were raised for the construction of a new building for the Pettah Library by means of a public lecture for details Sir Ferguson John, *Early British Rule in Ceylon*, 1883 Colombo.

79. *Observer*, 20 September 1836.

In the context of these happenings voluntary subscription libraries were formed in the principal towns where a considerable European and Burgher population was concentrated and the reading habits were fast improving. However, at Trincomalee and Galle such libraries were first established and were patronized by the members of the armed services. Trincomalee Pettah library was started in November 1835 and within a short spell another library was formed in the Trincomalee Fort. Galle library was established by the Military Officers during the same period. Hardly any civilians were enrolled during the early stages.

In Kandy where the plantation industry was expanding and a large number of business houses had their agencies established and a larger European community was concentrated the Kandy Central Town Library was established in 1840 patronized mainly by the European and Burgher communities. In the following year the Kandy Library was formed with the official support, the Governor, Stewart Mackenzie (1837—1841) functioning as the patron.⁸⁰ In 1859 Kandy Youngmen's Library Association established its library and a few years later the Kandy United Service Library too was formed. Jaffna library was formed around this period with some of the natives in the committee of management.⁸¹

Thus it is evident that the growth of voluntary subscription libraries had taken place in the localities where the Western influence was high. However, except in Jaffna, no natives seem to have been admitted to the membership during the first half of the century. Pridham while reporting on the large and valuable collection of books of the Colombo libraries in 1848 remarked that 'it is a subject of regret that natives were not yet admitted to the library nor have they formed a library of their own.'⁸² In a majority of these libraries the exclusiveness of the European and Burgher communities was maintained while in some others a feeling of liberalization of admission was evident.⁸³

These subscription libraries were placed under the management of a librarian or an under librarian who was subjected to the overall supervision of the Committee of management. However, the Secretary, played a vital

80. Total number of subscribers and books for 1851 in the Kandy Libraries were as follows

	<i>No.</i> <i>Subscribers</i>	<i>No.</i> <i>of Books</i>
Kandy Central Library	70	1290
Kandy Library	161	4117

Source.—*Ceylon Almanac for 1851.*

81. *Ferguson directory* 1865.

82. *Pridham*, Vol. II p. 632.

83. In 1844 an attempt was made to introduce the system of ballot in recruiting new members to the Kandy Library. There emerged a strong protest to the move on the pretext that it will abandon the noble aims of the liberalization of the influence of literature *Ceylon Observer*, 22 July 1844.

role in the affairs of the institution. In many voluntary contributing libraries the government officials and the leading members of the law profession had a notable role to play. At the same time the majority of these libraries depended heavily on the government contribution for their existence.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the reading habits of the natives developed fast with the expansion of English education and the wide circulation of daily and weekly newspapers both in English and in the vernacular. An interest in the political affairs of the country was also growing among the native intelligentsia who with the support of the regional officials of the government started establishing libraries and reading rooms in the principal towns of the island. The government officials found that it was easy for them to feed the natives on government policy promptly and systematically through these associations, and also to understand public opinion through these associations. The government also extended its support by means of grants ranging from Rs. 100 to Rs 500 annually, from the funds of the Director of Public Instructions and also by sending the government publications such as the Government Gazette, Sessional Papers, Administration Reports, copies of the Ordinances, and other publication free of charge to these institutions.

The exclusiveness maintained by the European and Burgher communities the former associations were not carried through in these new libraries and the reading rooms. All persons of respectability without distinction of caste or creed were admitted on the accepted principle of the payment of an admission and subscription fee. By the end of the century libraries and reading rooms had been opened up in the towns of Colombo, Negombo, Chilaw, Puttalam, Mannar, Jaffna, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Hambantota, Matara, Galle, Kalutara, Ratnapura, Badulla, Nuwara Eliya, Dikoya, Kandy, Matale, Kegalle, Kurunegala and Anuradhapura. However, the number of subscribers in many of these associations were less than 100. Organisation wise they followed the same old system where a committee of management with a Secretary and a librarian looked after the affairs of the library. An overall picture of such an institution can be gained from the following details of the Kurunegala library and the reading room in the year 1879.

Receipts	<i>Rs.</i>
Balance in hand as at 31st December 1877	120.00
Government donation for 1876	150.00
Private subscriptions	820.00
Miscellaneous receipts	192.78
	<hr/>
Total receipts	1,292,78
	<hr/>

Expenditure

Salaries	267.00
Petty expenses	30.45
Newspapers and periodicals	831.54
Repair of building	120.67
Balance in hand	43.11
	<hr/>
Total expenses	1,292.78
	<hr/>
Number of subscribers	51
Number of subscribers as at last 31st December	54
Rate of monthly subscription—ordinary members	Rs. 1.50
Rate of monthly subscription—Registered members	Rs. 2.00
Number of volumes in the library	700

Name of Newspapers—Local

Ceylon Observer
Ceylon Times
Examiner
Ceylon Catholic Messenger

Foreign

The Graphic
Illustrated London News
Punch
Overland Mail
The Mail
Saturday Review
Public Opinion⁸⁴

Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) Library

The library of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society founded on 7th September 1845 was the premier library among the subscription libraries. Unlike the other corresponding institutions of the day it was wide open to any member of the intelligensia.⁸⁵ However, the membership was grouped into resident or ordinary, honorary and corresponding members, all elected by ballot at a general meeting of the society. Members residing in any part of the island whether foreign born, Burgher or indigeneous were considered residential members, while persons contributing to the objects of the society in an eminent and distinguished manner were elected as honorary members. The honorary and corresponding members were not subject

84. Director Public Instructions to Colonial secretary, 25 November 1879, SLNA 6, 5779 No. 414.

85. The Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch was formed in a meeting held on 7 February 1845 in Colombo and its office bearers were selected on 28 February 1845. The first General Meeting was held on 1 May 1845. The new Society was incorporated as a branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. The founder members feared the entry of 'Village Politics, the little party spirit of the place' and the train of evils which party spirit engenders and tried to keep the Society wide open to the enlightened researches.

to any fee on entrance or any annual contribution and were admitted to meetings of the society and the library without the voting rights. The ordinary members were expected to pay an admission fee of half a guinea and an annual subscription of one guinea.⁸⁶

The library of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) was managed by a committee and was immediately under a librarian.⁸⁷ The librarian was expected to table a catalogue of books,⁸⁸ and the list of new accessions for the year at the annual general meeting. The members were privileged to borrow books and periodicals for a prescribed period, but the dictionaries and other works of reference were not allowed to be removed out of the library.⁸⁹

Patronised and often chaired by the Governor, and supported by the Colonial Secretary, the Chief Justice, and the other leading members of the administration, and the Bar and the Bench the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch), like the Royal Asiatic Societies in other parts of the world, became the forum of discussion for the intelligent on the major aspects of the country's ancient past in a systematic and scientific manner. Individual findings at district level by the British Civil Servants were often shared with the local intelligentsia at the discussions held at the Royal Asiatic Society. The society thus played a dual role in the exploration and interpretation of the past as well as the sharing of benefits of individual findings of the intellectuals with others. The Royal Asiatic Society journal shared these experiences with the outside world.

The library was geared to the needs of the research scholars and was readily provided with the latest publications of the day. Unlike the other associations the Royal Asiatic Society had direct contacts with the leading associations of other countries and shared their publications mainly through an exchange basis. In recognition of such laborious and pioneering work. Sir Henry Ward (1855-1860), Governor of Sri Lanka, assigned a public building to house the Museum and the library of the Royal Asiatic Society, (Ceylon Branch) and a grant of public money of £ 200 annually as aid.⁹⁰

With the establishment of the Colombo Museum in 1877, the library of the Royal Asiatic Society, (Ceylon Branch), was removed to the Museum library. Though the books were kept separate from those of the Museum library there was constant disputes over the privileges enjoyed by its members. The authorities of the Museum attempted to follow a policy of uniform rights and privileges to its members to which the members of the Royal Asiatic Society objected.

86. *JRASC* 1855, p. C VII.

87. I. Clapper was the first Librarian of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) Library.

88.

89.

90. *JRASC*, 1858—59, p.x.

EDUCATIONAL AND SERVICE LIBRARIES

School Libraries

The establishment of higher educational institutions by the Missionary Organizations in the early nineteenth century was to bring together the more enterprising students selected from their elementary schools to be trained for ecclesiastical positions. They were given a sound training of the English language which opened the door to a knowledge of European science, literature and Christianity. Sizeable school libraries were established in these colleges to provide the scholars with reading material on Christianity and subjects such as geography, natural history, education, philosophy, physiology, mathematics, algebra, geometry, physics, chemistry, astronomy, natural sciences, English literature, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Special periods were allocated in the timetables for the students to use the library facilities.

The Baticotta Seminary started by the American Mission in 1823 in Vadukkodai, Jaffna, was a higher college of unique importance. It gave the native youth a thorough knowledge of English Language, Tamil Literature and composition, Sanskrit, a knowledge of Hebrew, Latin and Greek and Science usually studied in the colleges of Europe and America.⁹¹ As this seminary was considered to be a nucleus of a higher College for training youths for public service and the Missionary fields, it was provided with a library which was supposed to be the best school library of the day. The researches made into the traditional medical field by the Missionary doctors such as Dr. John Scudder, Dr. Nathan Ward and Dr. Green and the Tamil translations they carried out of the standard American and British medical treatises further enriched the collection in the library.

The Kotte Seminary later named the Christian College started in 1827 and the Chundukkuli Seminary started in 1841 by the Church Missionary Society, St. Thomas college started in 1849 by the Society for the Propagation of Gospel in Colombo were a few such leading high schools started for the training of Christian priests from among the natives. However, the majority of students who completed their education in these institutions joined the more lucrative services of government or the mercantile sector. As these institutions were centered around the fast developing towns their influence was felt in every school around them and those who joined the various occupations tend to develop the taste of leisurely reading. Of the libraries of these institutions, the one established at Baticotta, was of outstanding importance as it was one of the best school libraries in Asia in the nineteenth century.

91. *Missionary Register*, 1824 p. 71.

The Colombo Academy was the primer school run by the Government with its higher educational unit called the Queen's College, where Library facilities were provided for the children from the very early days. However, unlike those higher educational institutes run by the Missionaries, where a sizable portion of the library collection was on Christianity, the library of the Colombo Academy had books on secular subjects like education, philosophy, history, geography, physiology, natural history, English literature, religion and biography and other miscellaneous works.⁹²

The attention of the Buddhist leaders were drawn to the necessity of establishing higher English schools for their congregation in the European model.... during the latter part of the nineteenth century. As the majority of the leading Buddhist priests who engaged in the controversies with the missionaries in the sixties and the early seventies of the nineteenth century had mastered the English language and were freely corresponding with the 'Orientalists' of the west and the 'Theosophists', of United States, they felt the need of reorientation of the Buddhist system of education. While continuing the traditional *pirivena* system of education for the Buddhist priests they started establishing English schools for the boys and girls in the model of missionary and government schools disseminating the knowledge on modern scientific and technological lines. Laboratories were provided for scientific education, libraries were provided for further reading and Headmasters and masters were recruited from foreign countries to conduct courses and the curriculum was geared to the needs of the day within a Buddhist cultural framework. A pioneering attempt was made at the Buddhist English School started at the Maliban Street, Colombo, the forerunner of the present day Ananda College, Colombo, which was later extended to Kandy, Galle, Pannipitiya and other important towns. They also made use of the government facilities of 'Grant in aid' system of the day with heavy constraints and also extended the system due to the energetic and resourceful dedication of their founders and the organizers. In the curriculum special emphasis was made on the retention of Buddhist cultural outlook with the inclusion of oriental languages, Buddhist culture, Buddhism along with modern science and English literature.

During the second part of the nineteenth century some of the leading higher colleges were affiliated to foreign universities. Batticotta Seminary and the Colombo Academy were the two premier institutions which prepared students for the British University Degree Examinations. Later, St. Thomas College which outstripped the Colombo Academy from the prominent position in higher education affiliated itself to Calcutta University in 1863. The Jaffna Central School of the Wesleyan Mission was affiliated to the Madras University in 1867, the Trinity College of Kandy of the Church Missionary Society

92. Director of Public Instructions to the Colonial Secretary, 2 November 1872 ; SLNA 6 3631 No. 359.

was affiliated to the Calcutta University in 1872, and the Wesley College of Colombo and Richmond College, Galle of the Wesleyan Mission were affiliated to the University of Calcutta in 1876 and 1883 respectively. The library facilities for advance studies were provided in these institutions.

On the whole the interest generated within the schools for further reading had a very salutary effect on the average citizen. They stepped into a society which was fast getting westernized. By then the printing press had come to stay and vernacular papers too had started their circulation. Religious and other controversies on languages, caste etc., brought forth a host of publications within a short spell. Subscription libraries and reading rooms were beginning to appear in the major towns which accelerated the reading habits. The English educated youths, who stepped out of these higher colleges, were looked upon by the majority of their countrymen as their natural leaders and their influence in turn had a salutary effect on the average citizen. Yet, the majority of these English speaking personalities were cut off from the masses in their cultural outlook, behavior and life styles, E. B. Denham, the Director of Census in his review of 1911 census, pointed out that over 2000 natives who could read and write the English Language could not read and write their own mother tongue. Of these 1700 were low country Sinhalese of whom 1500 were Christians. Most of them were from the wealthier families of the emerging towns. Though they were practically de-nationalised they had been educated to meet a demand.⁹³

Medical Libraries

Institutions of specialized services were beginning to appear during the period under review. One such field was the Western medical service. Indigenous medicine had not kept up its development and had fallen to oblivion through centuries of neglect. A large section of the people still believed that the diseases were caused by supernatural agencies and resorted to ritualistic ceremonies performed by 'kapuralas' or spiritual attendants to god and demons made offerings to their ancestral gods. Little was done by way of actual treatment, except to call in the family *vedamahatmaya* or native physician who normally administered herbal medicine or oil of all kinds. The diagnosis element was heavily underdeveloped in the system.

Under the western powers specialized medical services were provided for the armed forces. During epidemics the army medical groups were, called in to assist the victims. As the epidemics occurred frequently the British administrators took steps to train youths for elementary health duties such as vaccination in the military hospitals. A Military medical library and a Museum were part of this service which was housed in the hospital

93. E. B. Dehnam, *Ceylon at the census of 1911*, Colombo, Government Press, p. 441.

street of the Fort of Colombo.⁹⁴ Subsequently, with the gradual expansion of the library and its services it was placed under the control of the Principal Civil Medical Officer and was managed by a secretary cum librarian.⁹⁵

The Government Medical College was started in 1870 in Colombo with higher grade courses leading to a licentiate examination after a study of four to five years. The successful candidates of this course were appointed to government hospitals and a lower grade course of two years duration was introduced to train dispensers. The library of the Medical College was provided with reference books on all aspects of medical science for the use of the staff and the students.

Meanwhile the American Mission, functioning in the North of Sri Lanka, entered the medical field as some of their missionaries were medical men. Dr. John Scudder, who broke the ground for this new venture, started training a few local youths in Western Medicine as early as the second decade of the nineteenth century in the missionary hospitals of Panditarippu and Chavacachcheri. He thought that such youths could be profitably used in the lower ranks of the medical service. Dr. Nathan Ward, who succeeded Dr. Scudder in 1834, made this training a regular one, and started a practising school for them at Vadukkodai in 1841. Dr. Green who succeeded Ward in 1847, upgraded the experiment by translating himself aided by the medical students the latest and the best treatises on Medicine, Hygiene and Physiology into Tamil. He also studied the Ayurvedic Medical system that was in vogue at Jaffna peninsula and made glossaries and dictionaries in English and Tamil on Anatomy, Medicine, Surgery, Chemistry, Physiology, and Hygiene.⁹⁶ These endeavours ultimately brought a rich systematic scientific and medical literature in Tamil. On the other hand the Medical library was provided with the latest treatises published in America, Britain and in the continent of Europe which no other library in Sri Lanka possessed.

P. A. Dyke (1831—1868), the Government Agent of the Northern Province who closely followed these developments and witnessed the improvement of the health services of the Jaffna district, recommended to the Government for an annual grant of £. 50 per year to be conferred on the Jaffna Medical College. This grant was raised to £. 100 in 1862, £. 150 in 1867 and £. 200 in 1870. When the government Medical College was started in 1870 special provision was made for the admission of six students nominated from the Jaffna Medical College, who could attend courses, with certain exemptions, at the Government Medical College.

94. *Pridham*, Vol. II p. 632.

95. *Ceylon Almanac* 1851.

96. *American Board Annual Report* ; 1871, p. 68.

Thus it is evident that the libraries on medical science too had their origins in the nineteenth century in Sri Lanka. Apart from the two libraries of the above mentioned medical colleges there were the Colonial Medical Library, Military Medical Library and Museum, and the De Soysa Museum and library in the field of medicine.

Law Libraries

The legal profession was another popular field where many Sri Lankans excelled. With the stabilization of the Statutory Law and the British judicial system a majority of the up and coming youths took to law. The Law College established for the training of youths in Law and the Law library established on February 21, 1855, ultimately became the nerve centre of Sri Lankan politics. The law library was administered by a committee of lawyers chaired by the Chief Justice at the turn of the century.⁹⁷

Printing Press Libraries

Among the service libraries that emerged during the nineteenth century the libraries of the various printing establishments played a vital role. The premier newspapers, The Observer, The Times of Ceylon and The Examine began to build up excellent reference libraries in their offices. Ferguson's library attached to the Observer press was one of the finest libraries on Sri Lankan History and biographical data. Ferguson's Library which is now a part of D. R. Wijewardene's Library deposited in the University of Peradeniya was gradually built up over the years by the Ferguson's family who were the editors and proprietors of the Ceylon Observer. The rich collection of books, pamphlets, maps and manuscripts collected by his father was further enriched by Donald Ferguson (1853—1910) who made many contributions in the Portuguese and Dutch rule in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka. He also collected every book and the periodical published on Sri Lanka during his lifetime.⁹⁸ In the latter part of the nineteenth century when the Sinhala and Tamil newspapers came into circulation they also started building up their own libraries. Thus at the turn of the century most of the printing houses were provided with rich libraries.

Mission Libraries

The religious organisations had their own separate libraries attached to their headquarters. Very often these libraries were open to the priests and devotees who made extensive use of them. When the missionaries started their printing presses these libraries played a vital role as supporting institutions. The Roman Catholic Library at Wolfendal was managed by the

97. *Ferguson Directory* 1891.

98. Paulusz, J. H. O. *The Ferguson section of Mr. D. R. Wijewardana Library*, *Daily News* press, 1948.

trustees of the church⁹⁹ and was made open to the scholars on request. Catholics also built up a fine library attached to their newspaper *Gannartapradeepa*. The Wesleyan mission, as early as 1820, had an excellent library in Colombo. It contained some of the books on Protestant Christianity in different languages such as Latin, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Tamil and Sinhala. This collection also included the pioneer works of the Westerners, especially early dictionaries and works in Sanskrit grammar, Hinduism and Bengali literature. Apart from these the collection also included works on philosophy, languages, lexicons, history, etc.¹⁰⁰

Government Records

The official records of the Dutch government handed over to the British during the conquest of their possessions by the British in 1796 were kept under the care of the Colonial Secretary in Colombo. Later these records were kept under the care of a keeper of records, whose designation was changed to that of the Archivist, at the turn of the century. These records along with the dead files of the British administration were kept preserved, and often consulted by the intelligentsia. Of these the Dutch records became a very useful source for the Burgher and up and coming native intelligentsia in their research studies, the fruits of which were placed for discussions with the others at the forums of the Royal Asiatic Society or Dutch Burgher Union. The British records specially the Correspondence between the Governors and the Secretaries of State, Colonial Secretary and the local officials, the administration reports, Blue Books, etc., became the reference material of the leading Ceylon Civil Servants, Judicial Officers, The Governors and the native intellectuals. With the passage of time more and more native intellectuals managed to explore these materials. However, its resources were not properly laid before the research scholar till about the middle of the twentieth century and hence their consultation was limited to a handful.

99. *Examiner*, 12/03/1870.

100. A list of the book available in the library in 1820 is found in MMs. 443, 28.