

DOM JOÃO PERIYA PANDARA'S DEED OF GIFT: CONFIRMED BY THE COLOMBO COUNCIL

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Abstract

Following the death of King Dharmapala, also known as Dom João Periya Pandara of the Kotte Kingdom, the Portuguese emerged as the dominant power in Sri Lanka. They became the rulers of the ancient Kotte Kingdom, which extended from the Kala Oya to the Walawe River, and later asserted control over the Jaffna Kingdom. Rather than conquering the Kotte Kingdom through military means, the Portuguese employed diplomacy to persuade the last King of Kotte to cede the kingdom to them. After the death of King Seethawaka Rajasinghe, the entire Kotte region fell under Portuguese control. Additionally, a deed was secured from Dharmapala that stipulated that if he died without an heir, his kingdom would be transferred to the Portuguese. This document significantly boosted Portuguese authority over the administration and territory of the kingdom. Their power was further solidified through a council convened in Colombo shortly after Dharmapala's death. This article examines the confirmation of their power and the process by which the Portuguese came to control Sri Lanka, using a historical research approach.

Keywords: Dom João Periya Pandara, Dharmapala, Portuguese, Deed of Gift, Colombo Council

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Introduction

The Portuguese imperialist agenda aimed to extract wealth from Sri Lanka and convert the local population to Christianity. They believed that this conversion would ensure greater loyalty to the Portuguese Crown than to the Sinhala kings of the country. Historical accounts confirm that Buwanekabahu had to rely entirely on foreign allies for his kingdom's survival. Dharmapala became his successor, and in exchange for being recognised as the heir to the throne, Dharmapala seized the opportunity to preach the Christian gospel throughout the Sinhala king's dominions. Under the influence of Christianity, he abandoned Buddhism, which was the state religion of Sri Lanka, and took the name Dom João Periya Bandara. The Rajavaliya describes the events: "The son-in-law of Visure, known as Don Jeevan Arikku, and a pastor named Wilponsi Aponsu.² Left Goa and landed at the port of Colombo. They travelled to Kotte, met King Dharmapala, presented the Christian message to him, and baptised him with the name Don Jeevan Periyapandara. Following the King's baptism, the chiefs of the auspicious city of Kotte were also baptised" (Rajavaliya, 1997). Additionally, his queen was baptised as Dona Catherine.

Between 1527 and 1538, fierce battles took place between the Portuguese, the defenders of Kotte, and Mayadunne. In 1538, the Portuguese, aided by Bhuwanekabahu, defeated King Mayadunne. In the same year, Bhuwanekabahu granted the throne to Dharmapala, the son of his daughter, Samudradevi. The dispatch of a golden statue of Dharmapala to Lisbon in 1542 marked a turning point in Sri Lanka's political history. In 1543, João III was crowned and anointed the golden image of Dharmapala, and he was baptised in 1557 using the name Dom Juan (Silva, 2017). In 1542 and 43, due to Portuguese influence, Buwanekabahu became a nominal king. Bhuwanekabahu died on 29 December 1550, after serving as a puppet king for Dharmapala from 1551 to 1597 (විමලරත්න, 2014). Due to the local opposition to King Dharmapala and the inability to defend both the Kotte Kingdom and Colombo Fort simultaneously, the Portuguese abandoned the Kotte Kingdom in 1565 and moved to Colombo Fort. Mayadunne and Rajasinha, I annexed the area of the Kotte Kingdom that the Portuguese had vacated to Sitawaka, marking the historical end of the Kotte Kingdom. Dharmapala was reduced to a stateless king, and his conversion to Catholicism severed the traditional bond between the Sri Lankan ruler and Buddhism. This change also benefited the Sithawaka kings. Meaning, upon his conversion to Catholicism, the people followed him and converted to Catholicism. As a result, many of the chiefs in Kotte went to Sitawaka (සීමාවක හටන, 1999).

Dom João Dharmapala is a fascinating figure in Sri Lankan history, recognised as one of the few Christian monarchs in a primarily Buddhist society. His conversion to Christianity was heavily influenced by the Portuguese, which helped solidify his political ties with this colonial power but ultimately weakened his kingdom. The reign of Dharmapala and his conversion underscore the significant impact of European colonialism on Sri Lanka's history, particularly in how it interacted with and shaped local cultures and religions (Sri Lanka, 2025).

Transfer of Power in the Kingdom of Kotte as a Gift

According to Ribeiro, when Emperor Dom João Peria Pandar³ sensed that his end was near, he began to organise his affairs. He distributed his property among those who had served him. The will of "The Most High Prince Dom Joam, by the Grace of God King of Ceilam, Perea Pandar" is dated 12 August 1580. It was drawn up at the King's Palace in the City and Fort of Colombo by Antonio Ribeiro, a Notary Public. The witnesses included five Portuguese officials: Dom Estevão Modeliar, the King's

² Ponsi Perera (සීමාවක හටන, 1999)

³ In Sitawaka Hatane, known as Don Juan Prer (සීමාවක හටන, 1999)

Great Chamberlain and Governor of his realms; Dom Antam, a Fidalgo of the Palace; Andre Bajam; Dom Francisco Anriquez; and Dom Fernando Modeliar, along with Lourenço Fernandez, who served as the King's Secretary and a Judge in his realms (Ribeiro's History of Ceilão, 1836/1909). In this will, he declared that he had no son to succeed him in his kingdom and appointed the King of Portugal as his universal heir to all his possessions. As a result, the King of Portugal became the absolute Lord of all territories on the Island, except for the kingdoms of Kandy and Uva, which belonged to Dona Catherina. In contrast, the kingdom of Jafanapattam was ruled by its native King.

According to the deed, after the death of Dharmapala⁴ The Kingdom of Kotte, along with all its territories, was transferred to Don Hendrik. The deed indicates that he was handing over the kingdom of his grandfather, Bhuwanekabahu, which leads Abayasinghe to believe that only the Kotte kingdom belonged to this principality (අබයසිංහ, 2006). Peiris notes that on 12 August 1580, Dharmapala presented Colombo to King Don Hendrik through a deed of gift, as Rajasinghe and Mayadunne had usurped his rights (Peiris, 1913/1992). Peiris further asserts that this act was conspiratorial, with Manuel de Sousa accepting the gift on behalf of the Portuguese King. From that point on, the Portuguese shifted from being a group of irresponsible thieves to claiming Colombo as legal representatives of the Portuguese Crown (Pieris, 1913/1992).

Subsequently, a solemn assembly of the subjects of Kotte was convened within the precincts of the palace. After the donation was read and interpreted, the people elected representatives to State on their behalf that they accepted the donation and recognised the King of Portugal as their ruler, Dom João himself, along with the *Mohottalas* (village headmen), formally declared that the Kingdom of Kotte encompassed the regions known as *Kotte*, *Sitavaka*, *Rayigama*, *Kanda Udarata*, and *Jaffna*, as well as the provinces of the Four and Seven *Korales*, *Matara*, *Denavaka*, *Velevara*, *Kosgama*, *Palugama*, *Batticaloa*, *Kottiyar*, *Trincomalee*, and *Puttalam*. Finally, a clause was added stating that the donation would be considered null and void if an heir were born to Dom João. Thereby renouncing Sri Lanka's right to elect a king from her nation.

However, some Portuguese writers have contended that Dharmapala held dominion over the entirety of Sri Lanka, suggesting that his charter of grant made the whole Island a possession of the Portuguese. S.G. Perera mentions that after the death of Dom Juan Mahabandara, the kingdom of Kotte, along with all its appurtenances that he had transferred via a deed of gift, was acquired by King Philip I of Portugal. The Portuguese, it is argued, were not limited to the rights obtained through Dharmapala's deed and presented a misleading claim to the Kandyan territory (අබයසිංහ, 2006). The term "Reinos," meaning kingdom, is utilised in this deed (අබයසිංහ, 2006)

Additionally, according to Queros, written texts allegedly prepared on 12 November 1583 to amend the state grant deed from 1580 contain mentions of the Kandyan King Konappu Bandara. Abayasinghe asserts that these texts were likely prepared not in 1583 but after 1592, and it remains unclear whether Queros authored them himself or sourced them from other material (අබයසිංහ, 2006). K.D.G. Wimalaratne believes that the gift deed, which effectively erased the Kotte Kingdom from the map of Sri Lanka, granted the Portuguese control only over the areas surrounding Colombo. He argues that discussing the boundaries of the Kotte Kingdom is pointless as long as Seethawaka Rajasinghe remained a powerful figure (විමලරත්න, 2014).

⁴ Dom João's body was interred with all due honours in the Convent of St. Francisco at Colombo. According to Governor Schreuder's memoirs, his tombstone was located in the Dutch Church in 1762.

Renewal of the Deed of Gift

In late 1583, John Correa de Brito was appointed to Colombo to replace the war hero Manuel de Sousa. Dharmapala's deed, initially made on 12 August 1580, to Don Henrique, was renewed and ratified on 12 November 1583 (Ribeiro's History of Ceilão, 1836/1909; Abayasingha, 2006) after the death of that monarch, in favour of Philip I and his successors. On 4 November, King Dharmapala issued a proclamation that reaffirmed the deed he had given to the Portuguese King in 1580. This renewed Proclamation removed Dom João's relatives' claim to the throne after his death. Following de Brito's advice, the citizens were summoned to the palace, where the details of the deed of gift and the loss of Darnapala's relatives' rights to the throne were announced. After that, legal officials are invited to confirm the King's Proclamation. Don Estaio, Don Antão, and Don Aponso Makante were appointed for this purpose. At the same time, the right of the people to elect a king of their choosing after Dharmapala's death was abolished as well. The document was sealed with the King's seal and signed by Brito, Manuel de Sousa, as legal officers and several other Portuguese officials (Pieris, 1913/1992). Although this gift was granted initially to King Don Henrique in 1580, it was renewed and ratified in 1583 for Philip I and his successors following the King's death. This second deed transferred the rights to King Philip and his descendants. On both occasions, a solemn assembly was convened in the palace grounds, where the deed of gift was read and explained to the assembled citizens of Kotte Palace.

Finally, King João confirmed this deed again in 1595 before he died. Queyroz evidences referre to show the great delight where with Christendom heard the news of the conversion of D. João Perea Pandar who, as soon as he received Holy Baptism, at once tried to do away with the Pagodes, directing that all their revenues should go to the Colleges and Seminaries recently established in that Island by the Religious of St. Francis, thus applying to (the worship of) God what had been offered to the Demon, for St. Paul ordered that what had been dedicated to profanity should pay tribute to Heaven, setting right by this transfer the impropriety of the first application. This gift is shown in the following deed, which is already the third ratification.

"D. João, by the Grace of God, Perea Pandar, King of Ceylon. To all to whom this ratification shall come maketh known; That having regard to the great boon of the knowledge of the Holy Faith which I received by means of the Friars of St. Francis who co-operate with me for its increase and assist me in matters both Spiritual and Temporal, it hath seemed good to me to give as alms to the said Fathers, at the request of Friar João de Vila Conde, the Guardian, that was of my City of Cota (*Kotte*), the metropolis of my Realms, at whose hands I became a Christian, all the revenues of the Pagodes and the village of Calâne (*Kelaniya*) on the one side as well as on the other [of the river]; of the Pagode Deladasde, which was the Church of S. Salvador of the said Fathers; and likewise of all the Pagodes of my Realms, with all their revenues, lands, gardens, quitrents and service, to possess in the same way as my ancestors had gifted them to the Pagodes. Moreover, as I know that the said Fathers, by the rigour of their rule, cannot possess property, it hath seemed good to me that, just as I and my ancestors had offered and granted the aforesaid lands for the maintenance of the Ganezes and Jadacas, they be spent for the improvement of the Colleges that the Fathers shall set up, and that their revenues shall be collected by a person assigned by them. Moreover, as I know that the intention of the said Fathers is not, nor was, any other than the service of God and the salvation of souls without reserving anything for themselves, I ordained in the year 1562 at the request of the Father Friar Martinho da Guarda, Religious of the same Order, that the said alms made in 1557 be ratified. Now again at the request of Friar Manoel de Santos, Guardian of the College of S. Antonio of Colombo, I ratify the same gift as if it were made anew, with the special declaration that in case there come to this Island Bishops, Prelates or Fathers of any other Order whatsoever. They shall have nothing to do with the said Pagodes or revenues, or services or any of the aforesaid things, but only the said Fathers of St. Francis, for the

obligation is on them. Moreover, if perchance I have made any other gift to the contrary, I hereby declare that it is null and void of value and that this alone shall have value. Moreover, I earnestly beg His Majesty to be so pleased, and I notify the same to all his judges and others, not to call this in question. Given at Colombo on 19 January 1591. Thus done. Antonio Ribeyro, Secretary'' (Queyroz, 1930/1992).

Dom João seriously embraced the Holy Faith. According to Queyroz, as soon as he received it, the pagan ceremonies became odious to him. Though it was impossible for him not to give liberty of conscience, he favoured the Christians so publicly that he put the pagans to shame. His Christianity could not be dimmed by the malice and tyranny which the Captains of Colombo frequently showed to him, without the least reason, and against the declared wish of the most Serene and Catholic Kings of Portugal, things coming to such a pass, that many a day he had nothing else to eat than rice. Moreover, though he disguised his feelings before his foes, he did not fail to represent matters to his friends. Seeing however that no relief was given and that the Portuguese took all his revenues, dispossessing him in his lifetime, he made a public instrument wherein he named as his Procurators before the Viceroy of India, the Minister General of St. Francis and Friar Chrisostomo da Madre de Deos, Lecturer in Theology, Guardian and Commis-sary of Ceylon, before the King (of Portugal) the Provincial of Portugal and D. Frey Andre de S. Maria, Bishop of Cochim and Administrator of the Archbishopric of Goa, before His Holiness, Ruy Sobrinho de Mesquita, Inquisitor Apostolic of India and the Guardian of S. Thomé, giving them special instructions. However, the pity was that despite the diligence of so many and so solicitous Procurators, he received less profit than credit, as the Kings were far away. The needs of India and Ceylon always pressing, the Viceroys and Governors found justification for saying that they must not spend outside money on him and that more should be spent on Ceylon than Ceylon yielded (Queyroz, 1930/1992). Dom João bore it all with patience, a proof of his good nature and Christianity. He persevered in the Faith, which he protected in person, taking part in many of the battles fought during his time.

Dom João's legacy is both controversial and complex. He was the first and only Christian King in Sri Lankan history, and his conversion symbolised the intersection of two distinct cultural and religious worlds: the indigenous Sinhalese Buddhist culture and the European Christian colonial system. However, his reign also underscores the challenges local rulers faced while navigating the pressures of European colonialism. Dharmapala's political dependence on the Portuguese weakened his authority and contributed to the gradual decline of the Kotte kingdom's power. Although his reign was marked by religious conversion and political alliances, it ultimately did not secure lasting stability for his kingdom or his people (Sri Lanka, 2025).

The Colombo Council

According to Ribeiro, before the death of Dom João Periya Pandara, Dom Hieronimo de Azevedo served as the Captain General of the conquered territory (Ribeiro's History of Ceilão, 1836/1909). The Portuguese aimed to transform the Island into a New Portugal, administering it according to the laws and ordinances of Portugal. However, since the local population was known to be attached to their customs, it was decided, after some consultation, not to proceed without the formal consent of the people (Perera, n.d.).

On the 27th or 28th of May 1597, Dom João Perea Pandar, the Lord of the entire Island, passed away. After his burial and the completion of his funeral rites with the dignity befitting his position, the Captain-General summoned the Captain of Columbo and the other Counsellors to discuss how to encourage the people to acknowledge His Majesty as their Lord and King, without resorting to force.

After several discussions, they agreed to issue a notice to all the provinces, known as *Korles*, instructing them to send two delegates from each *Koral* to Colombo on a specified day. These delegates would be authorised to take oaths on behalf of the rest, swearing allegiance to the King of Portugal as their King and Lord. On the appointed day, the delegates gathered in response to the notice. It was then proposed that, as they would be vassals of His Majesty, it was only reasonable for them to receive the same laws as the Portuguese people and for the nobility to enjoy the same rights and privileges.

When the Sri Lankan representatives gathered, they were informed that they were all subjects of the Portuguese Crown and should therefore be governed by the same laws as those born in Portugal. Upon agreement to this, they were informed that their nobility could continue to enjoy the rights, privileges, and immunities that they had always enjoyed. The Singhalese deputies answered that an affair of so much importance demanded mature consideration and reflection; that they did not reject what was proposed to them, but they required time to deliberate and to reason on the subject; and that they had always in their mind what was due to the service of their King and master. Two days were given Sri Lankan to prepare their reply, and at the end of that time they showed in the following answer that, they were born Singhalese, and educated in principles to which they were firmly attached; that it would be difficult, and even dangerous, to force them to abandon those principles and to adopt others which were entirely unknown to them; that such rapid and sudden changes were always the forerunners of rebellion; that it would have to be feared that they would unlearn the old laws without becoming acquainted with the new ones, and that this would not be desirable for the interests of the King (Ribeiro, 1847). That they had no objection to acknowledge the King of Portugal for their Lord and master, and provided he and his ministers would maintain the rights, usages, customs and privileges in which they had been educated, and would promise not to alter the same, they would serve the King of Portugal with the same zeal and fidelity which they had evinced towards the kings and emperors born in the country, and who had breathed the same air as themselves. That they were ready to take the oath of allegiance, if the ministers of the King of Portugal would take an oath at the same time to maintain the rights and usages which they desired to have continued to them.

The Portuguese ministers, seeing that this was all they could prevail on the Singhalese to promise, had an act prepared in duplicate, by which, on the one hand, they solemnly promised, in the name of the King of Portugal, to maintain the rights, usages, customs and privileges, which the Singhalese had enjoyed under their own Kings, and not to suffer that any change should take place in the same. On the other hand, the Singhalese swore to serve well and faithfully the kings of Portugal, as they had served their own kings, and to be always ready to expose their lives and property in defence of their interests. Another article was added on the subject of religion, namely, that the priests and monks should at all times be at liberty openly to preach the Faith of Jesus Christ; that no person whatever should be hindered from professing that Faith; that fathers should not oppose the conversion of their children, nor children that of their fathers; that for faults committed afterwards on the subject of religion, the parties should be amenable to their lawful superiors; that no violence should be committed in respect of religious belief, but that every body should be free to embrace Christianity and to profess it openly, when it pleased God to enlighten him to acknowledge the truth.

When the Portuguese realised that there was no other option, a public document was drawn up and confirmed by solemn oaths from both sides. The Portuguese promised, in the name of His Majesty, to always preserve the laws, rights, and customs of the kingdoms and vassals of Sri Lanka without any changes or reductions. In turn, the natives took another oath to serve the Portuguese King faithfully, as if he were the rightful King of Sri Lanka, and to continue paying the same taxes, dues, and obligations that they had previously paid to their Sri Lankan Kings.

Liberty was granted to religious orders to publicly preach whenever and wherever the people of Sri Lanka desired in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who wished to embrace this doctrine were not to be obstructed in any way, even if it caused conflict between parents and children. Anyone who ignored this agreement would face punishment at the discretion of the authorised individual. Furthermore, no one was to be subjected to violence or persecution. Anyone who willingly chooses to become a Christian would be free to embrace the Faith without hindrance.⁵

After a speech from the Ouvidor, João Homem de Costa, the Sinhala nobles nominated Dom Antão, Dom Constantino, Dom Jorge, Dom João, Dom Pedro Homem Pereira, Fidalgos da Cassa, Belchior Botelho Modeliar, Domingos da Costa Arache, and Thomé Rodrigues Patangatim to take the oath of allegiance on behalf of all. The nominated nobles knelt around a table, placed their hands on a Missal, and swore by the Holy Evangelists to recognise the King of Portugal as their lawful King, in accordance with the will of Dom João Perea Pandar. They pledged to render him fealty, homage, and obedience as if he were their native sovereign.

Upon concluding the oath, the Captain-General took a standard featuring the Royal Arms of Portugal and handed it to Dom Antão. The entire assembly then proceeded through the principal streets, led by the Royal Standard. At designated locations, Dom Antão proclaimed himself the King of Portugal. A record of the oath was documented by Manoel Correa da Costa, Notary Public, to be preserved among the Archives of Portugal. The first five nobles, all of whom held the title of "Dom," are described as *fidalgos* of the palace; Botelho was a *Mudaliyar*, de Costa an *Arachchi*, and Rodrigues a *Patangatim*, likely representing the *Karawa* converts.

This act was published in many copies, which were signed and attested by the captain-general and officers and commissaries of the King on the one part, and by the deputies from the several provinces on the other part. Each deputy took home with him one copy to be read, published and kept in his province: and the original remained in possession of the captain-general who placed it among the public archives of the emperor, where were kept all the acts, and contracts of sales, purchases and rents, not only of each province, but of each village and even every private house, with the specification of the payments and dues owing each year to the King. All these things were translated into Portuguese, and then the assembly was dissolved; the Sinhalese being highly pleased to find themselves under the powerful protection of the King of Portugal, and the Portuguese being overjoyed in becoming thus quietly masters of so powerful an island, the possession of which was a very desirable affair for them.

With the conclusion of this agreement, the council officially ended its proceedings. The documents were copied, and each delegate took a copy back to their province, where the people were delighted, especially knowing they would have such brave defenders. The Captain-General immediately requested the Emperor's Archives, which included the Tombo detailing the dues and services owed not only by each kingdom and province but also by every village and household, along with any additional

⁵ The Portuguese promised that, in the name of His Majesty, they would always preserve for the kingdoms and vassals of Ceylon all their laws, rights, and customs without any change or diminution whatsoever. The natives similarly took another oath to serve the King, our Lord, well and faithfully as if he were their natural King, and to render to him the same taxes, dues, and other obligations that they had rendered to their Kings in times past. Liberty was secured for the religious orders to preach in public whenever and wherever they pleased the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ; all who wished to receive their doctrine would not be hindered in any way, and there would be no opposition even between parents and children; if anyone disregarded this condition, they would be liable to punishment at the discretion of the authorised person, and from that point on, no one was to be exposed to violence or persecution. However, anyone who voluntarily desired to be a Christian was to be free to embrace the Faith.

responsibilities they were liable for. This information was translated into our language with the same level of detail(Ribeiro's History of Ceilão, 1836/1909).

Peiris notes that a public meeting was held at Malwana⁶ on 29 May to elect a new king for the country. This meeting was attended not only by the leading elite but also by the ordinary people. The Portuguese were represented by various officials and prominent clergy (Pieris, 1920). However, he also mentions that another meeting organised by Acevedo at Malwana aimed to determine how laws should be upheld under Portuguese rule (Pieris, 1920). It was decided at this meeting to maintain control according to indigenous laws, which were seen as humane and kind.

The opening words of a petition presented in 1636 to Diogo de Melo by the Sinhalese stated, "With the aid of these laws, our kings have ruled us and fostered our well-being for 2,200 years or more during which our native princes governed this island" (Pieris, 1920). Abayasinghe asserts that the Captain-General possessed most of the powers that the kings of Kotte held, except the rights to inherit the kingdom by legal succession and to transfer the kingdom to his heirs (අබයසිංහ, 1966).

The question arises as to why the Portuguese, who had the power to convert the King to Catholicism, chose to comply with the demands of the Sinhalese officials after Dharmapala's death. Once they had gained power, adopting a neutral policy seemed unnecessary. However, the reality was that despite the King's conversion to Christianity and the formal registration of the kingdom under the Portuguese King, effective governance could not be achieved without the support of Sri Lankan officials.

The indifference shown by the Portuguese rulers towards Sri Lankan perspectives can be understood in this context. With Dharmapala's conversion, his gift of land, and the council established in Colombo, the Portuguese accomplished their primary objective for coming to Asia and solidified their legal claims. Couto highlights that "The Kings of Portugal always aimed in this conquest of the East at so uniting the two powers, spiritual and temporal, that the one should never be exercised without the other" (Weeraratna, 2023). This illustrates the close cooperation between the Church and the State in promoting Christian missionary activities in conquered territories.

Table 01: Official Representatives and the incidents that occurred at the Colombo Summit.

No.	Name	Function	
01	João Homem de Costa	The Uvidor gave a long speech.	
02	Dom Antão	These are the ones who were nominated to take the oath on behalf of everyone.	Sinhala nobles(Number 2 to 6)
03	Dom Constantino		
04	Dom Jorge	They knelt around the table, placed their hands on the prayer book, and swore in the name of the author of the Holy Gospel that they would serve the King of Portugal as their lawful King, and, according to the	The nobles of King Dharmapa's palace
05	Dom João		
06	Dom Pedro Homem Pereira		

⁶ The main Portuguese stronghold was Colombo, but from 1591 to 1630, the Portuguese governor, or Viceroy, was in Malwane (ලැනරොල්, 1960)

07	Belchior Botelho Modeliar	will of Don João Peria Pandara, the King of Portugal as the King of their country, with devotion, soul, and obedience.	
08	Dominigos da Costa Arache		
09	Thomé Rodrigues Patanatim		
	Dom Antão	After the oath, the Captain General presented Dom Antão with the Royal Military Flag of Portugal. Everyone marched through the streets carrying the flag, and at a certain point, Antão declared his King the King of Portugal.	
	Manuel de Correa Costa (Public Notary)	Preparation of the affidavit for deposit in the Portuguese State Archives	

This Proclamation is also referred to as an Act (Ribeiro, 1847). The act was published in many copies, which were signed and attested by the captain-general and officers, as well as commissaries of the King, on the one part, and by deputies from the several provinces on the other part. Each deputy took home with him one copy to be read, published and kept in his province: and the original remained in possession of the captain-general who placed it among the public archives of the emperor, where were kept all the acts, and contracts of sales, purchases and rents, not only of each province, but of each village and even every private house, with the specification of the payments and dues owing each year to the King. All these things were translated into Portuguese, and then the assembly was dissolved; the Sinhalese being highly pleased to find themselves under the powerful protection of the King of Portugal, and the Portuguese being overjoyed in becoming thus quietly masters of so powerful an island, the possession of which was a very desirable affair for them.

Rights of the Portuguese

Dom Hieronimo de Azevedo became the Captain General of the conquered territory (Ribeiro's History of Ceilão, 1836/1909). By mid-1594, both the Kingdoms of Sithawaka and Kotte had come under Portuguese rule. After the death of Dharmapala in 1597, the legal inheritance of the Kingdom of Kotte was also transferred to the Portuguese (අබයසිංහ, 2006). Following the death of Sithawaka Rajasinghe in 1593, the Low Country was left depopulated. Consequently, the Portuguese deployed their army and brought the Low Countries under their control in the name of Dharmapala. Therefore, by 1597, the Portuguese had exercised political power in Sri Lanka for two to three years (අබයසිංහ, 2006). In addition to the previously mentioned deeds of donation, he left a will declaring the King of Portugal as his heir, and Azevedo took prompt action to ensure possession on behalf of his royal master (Pieris, 1920).

Although the King of Portugal became the heir to all the territories of Kotte, only the areas already held by force of arms came under effective Portuguese control. This controlled territory consisted of a coastal strip stretching from Puttalam to the Valave River, extending from the sea coast to the edges of the central highlands. It was divided into four divisions (*disavanis*), excluding Colombo, which was a royal

city with its rights, privileges, and administration. Colombo had a chamber (camara), consisting of elected members, judges, and aldermen responsible for its civil administration, as well as a captain overseeing military governance.

The four *disavanis* were Matara, Sabaragamuwa, the Four Korales, and the Seven Korales. Each of these began just outside the walls of Colombo. The disavani of Matara extended from what is now Galle Face to the Valave River. The disavani of the Seven Korales spanned from Kaymans Gate to Puttalam. The inland regions were divided into the disavani of the Four Korales, roughly corresponding to the present district of Kegalle and parts of the adjoining districts in the Western Province. Sabaragamuwa encompassed approximately the modern Ratnapura district and parts of the Kalutara district. However, Ribeiro noted that, aside from the Kingdom of Kandy, Uva, and Jaffnapattam, the Portuguese claimed an indisputable right to the entire Island (Ribeiro, 1847).

The country which the King of Sri Lanka bequeathed to the Crown of Portugal was 52 miles in length, extending from Chilaw, by the seaside, and towards the interior of the Island, from the seaside to the kingdoms of Kandy and Uwa. This tract contains 21,869 villages or hamlets, over all of which governors-general had the same authority as the late Kings. The King of Portugal, to please the Singhalese, gave to the governor-general the title of King of Malwana, and his jurisdiction extended as far as Bengal, his authority being that of a viceroy. The natives of Sri Lanka, even including the King of Kandy, address him as "Your Highness." However, the Portuguese do not even style him "Your Lordship," as in India, the latter title is only given to persons who have been governors, that of "Your Excellency" to vice-roys. As soon as King João died, the Religious were relieved of this anxiety by the Ministers of the King, who wrote to the Catholic King that these revenues amounted to 70,000 cruzados, which could furnish a suitable (stipend) for the Bishop of Cochim, maintain the Colleges, and provide fleets. Queyroz notes that, though from the lands of the whole of Ceylon, excluding Jafanapatao and Kandy, such a large sum was never obtained (Queyroz, 1930/1992).

Councilution

The Portuguese appeared in the Indian Seas with threefold identities: as merchants, missionaries, and pirates. Their stated motto was "friendship, commerce, and religion." The 1580 deed of gift transferred the right of Sri Lanka to the royal succession to the King of Portugal. The 1583 renewal resulted in the loss of the right of a Sri Lankan to ascend the throne of Kotte again. In 1595, a significant amount of resources from Buddhist religious sites were transferred due to the strong influence of Christian power. It is important to note that the Kingdom of Kotte and its villages were reconfirmed through a council after being granted by a deed of gift. Since the King had transferred power through a deed of gift, the Portuguese did not need to confirm this through a treaty. A meeting was held to confirm the way the Portuguese rulers and the Sri Lankans would govern in the future. This is evidenced by the fact that copies of the Proclamation related to this meeting were issued to inform the people about this. The Portuguese aimed to establish a new Portugal on the Island of Sri Lanka, governed by Portuguese laws and regulations. However, the challenge to this goal was that the people of Sri Lanka were still subject to their traditional laws and customs. To address this, the General summoned a group of representatives from the local population to obtain their consent. The Portuguese informed these representatives that they should accept the Portuguese King as their sovereign and that the country should be governed according to Portuguese law. Although the Sri Lankan representatives agreed to recognise the Portuguese King, they preferred to be governed by their own local laws and regulations. At the Colombo council, the Portuguese obtained the right to govern Sri Lanka and the freedom to propagate their religion. At the same time, the Sri Lankans were not completely subjugated to Portuguese rule and were able to achieve many of their demands.

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