

## DIGAMADULLA UNDER THE BRITISH COLONIAL RULE: AN HISTORICAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to make an historical study of the British colonial rule in Digamadulla in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which was later transformed into the Ampara District, under the delimitation act of 1961 with a view to launching there a more effective administration network. Digamadulla was popular as the granary that flourished in the rich alluvial plain of the southeastern Sri Lanka, during the Anuradapura period. Due to various invasions the irrigation system that was vital for the boost of agriculture got gradually dilapidated. The arable lands that used to be constantly irrigated by a network of reservoirs, dams, anicuts, and canals deteriorated and was in no time devoured by the wilderness. As their livelihoods were threatened the people abandoned their habitats in the area. Under the British colonial rule the inhabitants did not have any support to reorganize their livelihoods. So the remaining inhabitants fled to the upcountry. The Rebellion 1817-1818 aggravated the situation further. The remaining inhabitants joined the *vedda* community in the neighbouring jungles. As the land was under wilderness even the little support from the colonial rule could not reach the area because of the difficulty in transports. Modernization associated with westernization brought about by estate plantation ventures in the central hills in the wet zone had the least influence in these areas. Neither the trading activities of the Muslim and Tamil communities living in the eastern coastal areas of Sri Lanka had any impact on them. As such, Digamadulla remained a distant solitary area throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and up to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore this paper investigates where there was any administration there in this period.

**KEYWORDS:** Administration, Organization, Colonial Rule, Democratic Ruling, Village Council

### INTRODUCTION

Digamadulla is one of the ancient Aryan habitats.<sup>1</sup> As per the chronicles of the island, Prince Dighayu set up this habitat, wherein a mighty political leadership appeared in no time. Prince Pandukabaya, the son of Digagami captured Anuradapura and made it the capital of his new kingdom. Thence forward Digamadulla became one of the principedoms and the granary of the country. With the downfall of the Polonnaruwa Kingdom the political centre was shifted to the south-west regions resulting in the deterioration of the historical Digamadulla and consigning it to wilderness. Later the Kandy and Kings governed this area until the British subjugation in 1815.

Digamadulla attracted the least attention within the framework of the British Local Government mechanism. Therefore jungle invasion of the terrain became rapid. However, towards the end of the British rule more and more native leaders took to politics and the government made an effort to develop agriculture all over the island including the Digamadulla region. At last, under the independence of Sri Lanka, the first Sri Lankan national government established in 1948 launched in 1949 a huge multi-development project centered upon Digamadulla, under the name ‘Gal Oya

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<sup>1</sup> Mahavamsa 1959, P. 53

Development Board". This area was developed in a fairly a short time under a planned schedule and then it was made in to the new administrative district of Ampara.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter while re-naming the electorates under the 1978 constitution, the electoral division no 13 was renamed as Digamadulla.

Until 1815 when Sri Lanka was totally subjugated by Britain, Digamadulla was ruled by the Dissave of Uva and Bintenn a who had been appointed by the King of Sri Lanka.<sup>3</sup> Disave was authorized to organize and implement local development activities, maintain law and order, and collect taxes. He acted as the area commander in chief of the army in times of wars. In civil administration he was assisted by Korale, Atukorale Mohottala, Vidane and several other officials who helped to maintain communication from the top administration to the community. The Mudaliyar looks after the armed forces and he was assisted by officials named as Mohottala and Arachchila. The British annexed the Kandyan kingdom in 1815 and as per the Kandyan convention proclaimed the King's powers existed hitherto were transferred to the British Governor. The Governor's powers were then transferred to the Resident General of Kandy. John Doyly was appointed as the first "Resident General in the Kandyan region. The local administration continued to be under the Dissaves.

After the suppression of the great rebellion of the Kandy during 1817-1818, a council of commissioners was appointed to rule the Kandy territory and this council supervised the local rule. Under this four government agents for Badulla, Ruwanwala, Kurunagala, and Rathnapura respectively had been appointed and the Badulla government agent looked after Digamadulla. The Dissaweap pointed for the area carried out the local administration under the supervision by the government agent in Badulla.

Under the new order of civil administration enforced in Sri Lanka on the recommendation by the Colebrook Commission in 1833, the Digamadulla area was divided between the Eastern and Central Provinces. This was the outcome of the effort made by Colebrook in order to dismantle the integrity of those Kandyan territories with the purpose of strengthening the British imperial power. As a result, until 1961, Digamadulla did not exist as a separate local entity until a new electorate appeared in the name of Digamadulla within the Ampara District, bringing together the relevant territories under the Government Agent of Ampara.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE UNDER THE GOVERNMENT AGENT**

The Government Agent headed administrative system was introduced into Sri Lanka during the early period of the British rule. When the local government administration was implemented in 1833, the Government Agent was entrusted with the power of law enforcement at the district level. According to the new local government administration that was meant to dislodge the regional integrity of Kandy, the Digamadulla area was subjected to the authority of the Government Agents of the Eastern and Central provinces and that of two Sub-Agents of Badulla. Along with the demarcation of the new Uva province, Digamadulla area was entrusted to the authority of the Government Agents of Badulla and Batticaloa and this position continued unchanged up to 1961.

Under the British administration the Government Agent's attention was not focused directly on this area. The region was divided between the Baulla and Batticaloa districts that socially and economically differed from each other. Hence the region escaped from the Government Agent's attention. As a result any foreign investments that flowed through

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<sup>2</sup> Ceylon Govt: Gazettee, 1961, April P. 322

<sup>3</sup> Doyly, 1929, P. 8-9

the British administration did not reach here. Thus the region was at a disadvantage due to the practical problems of geography faced in the expansion of the colonial transport network as well as the problem of the climatic condition that was unfavorable for cash crops such as coffee.

The governor was empowered as the head of the administration within the colonial rule set up by the British Empire. At the beginning the areas in the coastal belt the British captured from the Dutch had been divided into several divisions under "Revenue Officers". These divisions were called as collect or areas they were ruled under a collector appointed from the British Civil Service. This designation changed as the "Government Agents" were appointed in 1833, which represented the Governor and acted as the chief official of the area assigned to him with a share of the Governor's authority. This administrative system was gradually introduced into the Kandy a Kingdom after 1815 and it was legalized under the constitutional reforms introduced in 1833. These changes were extended to Digamadulla as well.

The office of the Government Agent of the Eastern Province was set up in Trincomalee and that of the Sub Agent, in Batticaloa and they remained so from 1833 to 1873. When Batticaloa was made the provincial capital of the Eastern Province in 1873, the Kachcheri was established in Batticaloa. As the agent was the chief executive who implemented the rules and regulation enacted by the central government his powers and orders fell directly into the social, economic and political sectors administered by the Kacheheri. As they had been organized with a view to improving and regulating efficiency, each section had a particular number of clerks.

The Government Agent represented the central government that enforced rules and regulations on the public, and the Sub-Agent was entrusted with the normal day to day work of the Kachcheri.<sup>4</sup> The Government Agent was in charge of income, expenditure, and the executive officers.<sup>5</sup> In 1921 the Batticaloakachcheri was manned by a government agent, a sub-agent, two office assistants and a large number of clerks to support them.

However, the kachcheri in Colombo was a large institutions consisting of a large staff working in various departments. In 1921, the Colombo kachchri was manned by a government agent, an assistant agent, an additional assistant agent, two office assistants, one chief clerk and thirty-eight (38) clerks who had been distributed among various sections. In additions, there was an engineer, as hr off and two assistant shroffs.<sup>6</sup> The administrative body consisted of a variety of departments such as land, license, internal auditing, and statistics. With the creation of the Ampara district in 1961, the constitution of the Amparakachcheri was widened to have various sections like land, license, social services, accounts, statistics, etc;

Day to day work at the kachcheri was done by the clerks. The chief clerk handled the cash book and prepared the daily budget sheet. At the end of every month the income and the expenditure reports had to be submitted to the Agent and he submitted such reports to the Secretary for Colonies.<sup>7</sup>

Duties about land was entrusted to clerk number two who attended to the tasks involved in issuance of land permits, allotment of lands to people, survey of land, and settlement of land disputes. The problems pertaining to lands were not as complex as those worked on in Colombo and Kandy kachcheries. The land act in 1840 found protection for the estate owner from the rights of villagers in the areas that had gone under the planters who had purchased lands from the

<sup>4</sup> Gregory to Kimberley, 31 January 1873, SLNA, 5/61/No. .... 31

<sup>5</sup> Dyke to Tennent, Octo, 1847, SLNA, 20/1450

<sup>6</sup> Ceylon Civil establishment 1921, P. 20

<sup>7</sup> Department order book, 18 November 1862 SLNA, 33/3884 (old)

government. Every forest land was supposed as belonged to the government. If anybody had a claim for any such land it was settled in the district court. The Agent was in charge of protection and sale of such land. Although there were large forests in Digamadulla these arose no demand for them. Act no 10 of 1896 was the relevant waste land act that was applied there.

Although the Digamadulla area was once a vast agriculture plain now those activities had degenerated due to irrigation works being decayed at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, steps were taken to develop the Island's agriculture with the introduction of the Irrigation Act of 1856 and Ordinance No 21 of 1867 on paddy cultivation. Nevertheless, the agent possessed the power to implement his desire in selecting a suitable land for the purpose. Accordingly, the Irrigation Act of 1856 was enforced only in the Panama and Nadukadu areas, resulting in the increase of the acreage under paddy cultivation up to an area of 42,000 acres. Clerk No Two handled such developed lands.

Chena cultivation was the main livelihood in Digamadula before the rehabilitation of Irrigation work. The British officials considered chena cultivation a wasting activity, and made rules and regulation to discourage the traditional farming methods. Anyhow such discouragements were effective only in a limited area that had a close relationship with the kachcheri.

Digamadulla was mainly covered with the thicket that contained valuable timber. The conservation of timber was done by native officers after 1840. Later on issuing of timber permits also performed by these officers. Mr. Douglas, the Secretary for colonies forwarded a new programme on forest controlling in 1871 due to the unsuitability of the existing forest conservation methods and corruption of the native officials. By then the Northern Province had been the foremost producer of timber in the Island. The production of timber in the eastern province happened on a very small scale due to transport difficulties that existed there. Following the proposal made by Mr: John Douglas, Governor Gregory appointed two major forest officers for the Southern and Eastern Provinces in 1847.<sup>8</sup> The Government Agent held the supervision of forest conservation work in his area. In 1883 Mr. D. Vincent put forward the idea to set up the Department of Forest Conservation of the island for the first time. That effort ended in a failure after which a Forest Conservation Act was passed in 1885 in order to regularize forest conservation work. A Forest Superintendent was appointed for all provinces on the island in 1898. It was named as "Mandala" (Board) Later on an Assistant Forest Superintendent was appointed for the eastern Board.<sup>9</sup>

The Forest Conservation Department established under the Forest Conservation Act no:16 of 1907 was administered by the Superintendent of Forest, two Deputy Superintendents and seven Assistant Superintendents. The forest conservation work in Digamadulla was done by the office of the Assistant Superintendent of Forestry, Batticaloa. The office of the Forest Superintendent of the Eastern Province was set up in Batticaloa in 1910.<sup>10</sup> Digamadulla was under the control of the Batticaloa office. Thereafter no change was made in regard to forest conservation until the commencement of Gal Oya Development Scheme.

Within the area of Gal Oya Development Authority, some 430 square miles of land was allocated to forestry. Another 150 acres of land allocated to forest reservation from Badullawela, Nilgala and Mullegama, areas situated near to Senanayaka Reservoir, and from Buddama, and Wadinagala belonging to the Pallanoya project. Forest conservation offices

<sup>8</sup> Administration Report (Batticaloa) 1871, PI P. E7

<sup>9</sup> Administration Report (Batticaloa) 1898, PI, P. E7

<sup>10</sup> Ceylon Manual 1911-1913, P. 128-129

were set up at Malwatte, Rupaskulam, Kohobana, Kotelinda, Mahakandiya, Tottama and Galapitagala.<sup>11</sup>

Collection of taxes from the province was the main task of the agent. Land tax, Toddy and arrack tavern tax, Custom duty, Issuing of Licenses, sale of stamps and the monopoly of salt were conducted under the agent's office. There was a clerk in the kachcheri to handle tax matters. Act No 14 of 1840 regularized the collection of taxes. The clerk had the authority to collect taxes by an auction sale.<sup>12</sup> Cereal Tax Act of 1886 had caused much trouble to the farmer community of Digamadulla. This had empowered the agent to enter the land and to recover the tax or to take over the land. Accordingly, in 1886, 2725 acres of land from Digamadulla were under the government.<sup>13</sup>

Implementation of the authority on salt production too was handled by the agent who supervised storing and issuing matters. A separate unit for salt was set up in the Trincomalee Kachcheri by 1921, but the kachcheri had no such unit due to the insignificant production of salt.<sup>14</sup> Two salt pans situated at Potuvil and Kalmunai belonging to Digamadulla region were administered by the agent in Batticaloa.<sup>15</sup>

There were some pearl bunks too in the coastal areas of Digamadulla. The Government earned a substantial income from pearl fishing. The agent's duty was to supply the requirements of the pearl harvesting divers and the facilities needed to them such as boats.

The sale of alcohol was under the government. The Agent had the necessary powers to open up the taverns apprehending illicit alcohol makers and supervising the activities of sales of arrack etc. By Act No. 14 of 1844 formalized the wholesale and retailing of arrack.<sup>16</sup> The Chief Clerk of the Batticaloa kachcheri looked after that work.

The Kachcheri took steps to recover the loans accorded to farmers by the government for the up keeping of the irrigation works. The Government loan act no 14 of 1843 stipulated that the properties of the default borrowers of loans were liable to run the risk of sale by agent in order to recover the damages. However, this Act did not seem to have been fully operated in the Digamadulla area.

The Kachcheri had the authority to issue various permits and licenses which was the main source of income. Farmers badly needed fire-arms to protect their cultivation from wild animals. As Digamadulla was abounded with jungles the people who lived there had to undergo enormous difficulties for which they were allowed to kill wild animals within a stipulated period. Several Acts had controlled the protection of animals.

Various institutions and departments were created from time to time for the smooth functioning of the government activities and tasks. At the beginning of the British rule the Public Works Department was established for construction and maintenance of government work. Its office of the Eastern Province was set up in Trincomalee and the district office at Batticaloa. As the capital city of the Eastern Province was transferred to Batticaloa. The Regional office was transferred to Batticaloa and the district office went to Kalmunai.<sup>17</sup> Two engineers were appointed by the government to look after the work. The construction work was carried on under the supervision of the agent. Works undertaken by the Public Works

<sup>11</sup> Administration Report, Gal Oya Development Board 1962 – 1963 Cha 3, P. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Sken Vol. 2, P. II - 113

<sup>13</sup> Administration Report (Eastern Province) 1921, P E 5

<sup>14</sup> Ceylon Civil Establishment 1921, P. 22

<sup>15</sup> Administration Report (Western Province) 1921, P E 5

<sup>16</sup> Ordinance No. 1844 sken Vol 2, P. 201-213

<sup>17</sup> Administration Report 1873, P1 P. E 77

Department in Digamadulla was very little.

The Road Act No: 8 of 1848 was an attempt to extract native labours free of charge for the building of roads. The opportunity of finding free labour was suspended with the repealing with the repealing of “Rajakari” system in 1832. With the spread of plantation economy, arose the necessity of road building, requiring enormous expenditure for the purpose. A Road Act provided provision to obtain compulsory service or to change the amount of money being paid instead as an alternative way to get away from the financial crisis encountered by the government in 1848. Accordingly every native in the 18 -35 age-group was required to perform six (6) days mandatory service able to pay three(3) shillings instead under this act. Two thirds of such income was spent on the building of main roads and the balance one third was spent on minor roads. The provincial road committee and the district agent, the sub-agent as vice chairman, and the office assistant of the Batticoloakachcheri as the secretary functioned at this committee. Anyhow the Road Act of 1848 effected much little in Digamadulla.

At the beginning of the British rule native officials headed by the agent took steps to popularize eradication of local treatment methods of the diseases and vaccination methods. Health Councils set up under Act No: 10 of 1852 were entrusted with the Department of Public Health Affairs, whereas in Digamadulla, Medical Councils were set up in the Kalmunai and Samanturei areas only in 1898.<sup>18</sup>The chairmanship of these councils was held by the agent, while the sub agent worked as the vice chairman and the Office Assistant as the security officer. Later on the Department of Health was created to regularize the health service of the Island. The agent became the pioneer in popularizing the western medical system in his district. Due to the handing over of health affairs to the local board in 1876, health councils weakened gradually. The local boards operated in Samanturei and Kalmunai but did not reach the whole of Digamadulla.

During the Sinhalese rule the village headmen under the supervision of Dissaves maintained the law and order but the newly founded system was insufficient with the British rule under which urbanization was combined with people mixing about freely that made it difficult to protect public property. As such, there arose a necessity to begin a separate police force. Accordingly, police battalions were stationed in the city centers as and when the situation property was spent on police service. These police service stations established in various cities were regularized under the police service Act No: 17 of 1844.

There was a Police station in Batticaloa established in 1868, but its influence did not reach Digamadulla. The necessity of such a service was not felt until the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Where there was no police unit present native headmen took charge under the supervision of Agent. Act No: 17 of 1844 had empowered ‘Korala’ with police judiciary powers enabling him to make enquiries on criminal offences, apprehend the culprit and produce them before the courts. Rural constables looked after rural police duties. They were entrusted with the furnishing of reports concerning the security situation of the area and to inspect the duties of native police officials.

The need to establish police stations at Akkareipattu and Kalmunai was felt long agoas those areas were strictly prohibited. Accordingly the Kalmunai police station was set up in 1885<sup>19</sup> and another in Akkaraipattu in 1892.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Administration Report 1898, PI, P. E5

<sup>19</sup> Administration Report (Batticaloa) 1885, PI, P. E5

<sup>20</sup> Administration Report (Batticaloa) 1892, PI, P. E7

## INTRODUCTION OF BRITISH COURT SYSTEM

Since at the beginning the British judicial system was not functioning within the whole of the Digamadulla area. Rural Gamsaba Courts looked after the matters of justice. Administration reforms introduced in 1833 made the provision to set up district courts in every district of the Island. Accordingly, a district court was set up in Batticaloa. Any how this was not effected in Digamadulla. A request court with a view to settle minor civil cases was set up in Kalmunai only in 1889.<sup>21</sup> A Police court was set up for the first time in Kalmunai in 1843 for the purpose of settling minor criminal cases.

However people who lived in remote areas like Bintinna and Panama were unable to utilize the opportunity for settling their judicial matters through these request courts or police courts. As the courts were situated in towns, the people resident in the remote areas of Digamadulla had to start their journey to the court much in advance of the schedule to appear in a court session. On their way they often had to encounter attacks by wild animals. Besides they were used to settle their cases within their village itself. All of these hardships caused unpopularity of the British court system. In the undeveloped areas the British court system had been connected with the agent and the kachcheri. The Agent acted as the unofficial police magistrate. In addition, an office Assistant acted in the capacity of an additional police magistrate. The village tribunal which was established in 1871 with a view to settling disputes without delay and much expenses became thus popular. The following chart depicting the cases examined in the Rural Tribunals and Request Court at Kalmunai provides an understanding about the people's attitude to British courts.

**Table 1**

Year	Village Tribunal		Request Court	
	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal
1872	2870	744	-	-
1880	1913	533	-	-
1889	1211	548	1002	275
1893	6728	2313	3121	1213

**Administration Report 1872, 1880, 1889, 1893**

At the inception, the British rulers did not pay much attention to the Village Council Tribunes System. Along with the 1833 reforms, favorable surroundings needed for the well-being of the Village Councils too were faded away. As a result, there appeared many crises within the rural society and in the rural economy. The very first attempt in this connection was made in 1856. Village Councils thus re-structured under the British rule now functioned under the authority of the agent.

Steps had been taken to re-activate the traditional and time-honoured rituals and customs observed on up-keeping irrigation works and cultivation activities. Accordingly, the villagers of those districts gathered and observed olden-day rituals relevant to irrigation works and then submitted for approval by the government. The Council Members elected by the villagers and headed by the Government Agent took action to enforce the traditional laws and to take legal action against the law breakers. The Agent became the President of the Village Council set up in 1856.

The success of the Village Council encouraged the Government to improve it further by enacting relevant acts passed in 1861 and 1871. Under an act of 1861 irrigation officials were appointed to find farmers who disagree with the traditional procedures and to report such instances to the Village Councils.

<sup>21</sup> Administration Report (Batticaloa) 1889, PI, P. E14

There were two institutions established at the rural level to keep with the 1871 Act. The Village Council handled social affairs and irrigational works. The Village Tribunals so handled judicial cases at the village level. There functioned six Village Tribunal within the Batticoloa District. Village Tribunals at Eravur, walairavu, Kiranakulam, and Valachchanai belonged to Batticoloa North Division which was administered by a Wanniyar. The area under our study Digamadulla belonged to Batticoloa South Division. There functioned Rural Tribunals at Paddirippu, Akkaraipattu, Kalmunai and Potuvil which were ruled by an official called "Rate Mahathaya"

The Village Tribunals of Kalmunai and Akkareipattu were set up in 1875.<sup>22</sup> Before that people who lived in Digamadulla, Kalmunai and Akkareipattu had to travel up to the Village Tribunals at Potuvilor Paddirippu. Another village tribunal was set up at Bintna-South under the rule of "Rate-Mahattaya."<sup>23</sup> The village tribunals at Bintenna-North belonged to the Uva Province. By 1921 Padiyatalawa and Uhana Village tribunals were set up. Later on in 1931, a permanent court building was also built up at Padiyatalawa.<sup>24</sup> But the Village tribunal reforms introduced within the decade between 1920-1930 were not effected in Digamadulla area.

As the judge of the village tribunal was a native headman served under the Agent, the Government thereby got the opportunity to indirectly influence the verdicts. Rules and regulations promulgated by village tribunals were required to obtain the approval by the government before the enforcement of them. This tribunal found justice upon minor civil cases that included: damaging of property to the value of not more than Rs; 20/-; non-repayment of debts; breaking the rules and regulations issued by village tribunal; and on minor criminal offences like beating, making injuries and thefts.<sup>25</sup> The maximum punishment that could be imposed by these tribunals was a penalty of Rs.20/- and six weeks of imprisonment.. the court decrees were executed through the Fiscal and Police Court.

The Village Council had also been empowered to charge money. Penalties imposed by village tribunals taxes, charges payable on cattle breeding and grasslands, common charges and fees on various application receipts were collected as its income.

Reforms on village councils introduced since 1871 were not so effective in Digamadulla. Village councils that existed thus were transformed by the Act no: 60 of 1961. With this wider powers were given to village councils and now they were called as "Gam KaryaSaba".<sup>26</sup>

By Act no: 03 of 1946, Urban Councils had been instituted on the Island with effect from 01<sup>st</sup> January 1947. They were formed by amalgamating Health Councils. Accordingly, these Urban Councils had been established at Kalmunai, Samanthurai and Kathankudi areas that belonged to Digamadulla in 1947. Only two Urban Councils remained within the Digamadulla district by 1962.<sup>27</sup>

Several local government bodies that commenced by 1962 in order to regularize the Island's civil administration. They were the village councils for the rural areas, urban councils for urban areas, town councils for the towns and Municipal councils for more developed city areas.

<sup>22</sup> Administration Report (Eastern Province) 1875, P.I P. 93.

<sup>23</sup> Sessional Paper 1896, P.3

<sup>24</sup> Administration Report (Eastern Province) 1931, P1, PE7

<sup>25</sup> Ordinance No. 26, 1871, Sec, 20, 21

<sup>26</sup> Ceylon year book 1861, P. 66

<sup>27</sup> Ceylon year Book 1962, P. 60



## NATIVE OFFICIALS SYSTEM UNDER BRITISH RULE

Village headmen system which had been degenerated during the Portuguese and Dutch rule made the basic foundation of the district administration under the British rule. Numerous difficulties including absence of roads caused the administration of Digamadulla be entrusted to the class of native officials including “Rate Mahattaya”s. Agent and sub –agents toured the area from time to time amidst great difficulties. Hence the absence of direct rule by the agent. Therefore, it was unavoidable that “Rate Mahattaya” acquiring a special place in the local administration.

There was a separate section in the Kachcheri functioned about the affairs of native officials. In the beginning the chief that unit was Atapattumudaliyar. As Digamadulla was consisting all the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim national, native officials section had been widened. There were two translators and four clerks for the Sinhala and Tamil Languages served in the kachcheri. There was a clerk appointed to work on the lands belonging to native official's unit.

At the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century Digamadulla consisted of four divisions. Namely Bintenna, Samanturai, Nadukadu, Ninthevur, Akkarei, Panama. These were ruled by native official known in low country areas as “Mudli” in up country “Ratemahattya” and in Tamil areas as “waniyar” and “Maniyagar.” these political entities were not subjected to any charges during the whole of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Following chart reveals the information on Wanniyar divisions included in to Diamadulla division.

**Table 2**

Wanniyar Division	Designation Used
BintennaPattu	Rate Mahattaya
Ssmanthurai&NadukaduPattu	Wanniyar
Ninthavan&Akkarapatthu	Wanniyar
Panama Pattu	Wanniyar

**Census, 1871 – P. 72-80**

Administration divisions existed in this manner subjected to change in 1921 when the wanniyar divisions increased up to x is, Samanturaipattu and Akkareipattu were declared as two separate administrative units.<sup>28</sup>

Eruvil, Porathive and Karavakupattu of Batticaloa district had been joined with Karawakupattu, Ninthaurpattu of Wanniyar division to make a separate administration unit called as Ninthavur and Karawaku in 1921, which had been a Wanniyar division belonging to Batticaloa district.

Administrative unit consisting one large village or several villagers were called as “Gam wasama”. Accordingly, Karawakupattu and Ninthavurpattu contained 27 Gamwasames in 1871.<sup>29</sup> 35 Gamwasams in 1921,<sup>30</sup> 34 Gamwasams in 1931.<sup>31</sup> Arachchiwasms numbering 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, belonging to Akkareipattu; Arachchiwasms nos: 86, 87, 88, belonging to Samantureipattu; Arachchiwasmsnos: 100, 100A, 102, 103, 104, of Porativupattu belonging to Batticaloa district had been combined to make Wewgampattuwa.<sup>32</sup> Below mentioned are the main headmen divisions and the relevant officer in charge them in the district by the year 1931.

<sup>28</sup> Sensus of Ceylon 1871, P. 240 - 246

<sup>29</sup> Sensus of Ceylon 1871, P. 77 - 80

<sup>30</sup> Sensus of Ceylon 1871, P. 241

<sup>31</sup> Sensus of Ceylon 1931, P. 316

<sup>32</sup> Administration Report (Eastern Province) 1921, PI, P.3

Table 3

Wanniyar Division	Designation Used
Karawaka&NinthavarPathu	Wanniyar
SamanthuraiPattu	Wanniyar
AkkaraiPattu	Wanniyar
Panama Pattu	Wanniyar
BintennaPattu	Rate Mahatenaya
WewgamPattu	Wanniyar

#### Census of Ceylon

Issuing of Chena permits and limiting them, restoring agriculture introducing new cultivation methods and animal farming etc, performed by Wanniar under the supervision of the agent. In additions conduct of village councils implementation of rules and regulations forwarded by the government were effected under his supervision, Wanniyar became the judge of the rural courts by virtue of the same Act. Wanniyar was a member of the district road committee-1848, BoardofHealthno:10 of 1882, and the local board no: 09 of1876 of all these institution which had been formulated to fulfill various needs of the administration.

Rate Mahmtaya or the Wanniyar functioned under the full authorize of agent who made the appointment, gave promotions decreed punishment for misbehavior. Whenever a wanniyar was appointed for his post; the qualification required were the ability to read and write, be a wealthy personage of the area be descendant from a well- to-do family clam. At the appointment of Wanniyars and Korales the decision by the agent was prominent. As the selection were done in the same Villages people had availed the opportunity to their protesting over any shortcomings.<sup>33</sup>

Whenever an appointment is made to select a "korale" or such like post, the officials of the unit summoned to find their will on which the agent agreed finally. At the beginning appointments like that of "Korale" were given extensions annually.<sup>34</sup> The commission appointed by the state council to inquire and report on hitherto existed native official's system recommended recruiting, after a written that, Divisional Revenue officers (D.R.O) under this new designation.

Wanniyar divisions had been divided in to "Korala" units and kept under "Korale" officer, Digamadulla consisted of korales in 1871. By 1901 this number risen to eight korales and by 1931 risen to eleven Korales. This official called as "Korale" in Sinhalese areas, and as Udeyyar in tamils areas, acted as an agent Wanniyar. As the defender of government property in the area, he should have been vigilant about forest and timber resources there. He should furnish the reports concerning the request, asking for cultivation of barren lands,<sup>35</sup> inspection of timber felling, recommending chena permits etc. He performed the duties of the judge of rural court occasionally in accordance with the village council Act of 1871. He was the unofficial member in health council, rural education committees and such like bodies. Korale was entrusted with the safeguarding of peace in his area, in addition to the attention paid in all the fields of land, agriculture, and animal farming, public health, and education.

Table 4

Wanniyar Division	Designation of the Official
Panama Pattu	Panama PattuKoralagedivision
Kanawaku and NinthavarPattu	KanawakuKoralage division NinthavarKoralage division

<sup>33</sup> Diary A.G.A. NuwaraKalawiya, 7 May 1846, SLNA 41/154.

<sup>34</sup> Brodie to GA, North Prvince, 11 Oct, 1851/SLNA 41/154 No. 267

<sup>35</sup> Diary, GA, North Central Province 19 July 1874, SLNA 41/154 No. 267

SamanthuraiPatta	SamanthuraiKoralagedivision NadukaduKoralagedivision
BintennaPattu	Bintenna (North) Koralage division Bintenna (South)
WewgamPattu	UdaPalathaKoralage division MedaPalathaKoralage division YatiPalathaKoralage division
Akkarapatthu	AkkarapatthuKoralage division

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Village Head mans divisions continued one large village or several small villages Arachchi who was in charge of village became the lowest ranking person of the native officers. Basically they acted as assistants of Korales in collecting revenue.<sup>36</sup> Agents and subagent when conducting official tours, held interviews, listened to public opinion and appointed suitable persons to the post of Arachchi.

Arachchi performed the multifarious duties of handing over summons issued by the rural courts, encouraging villagers for vaccination against diseases, reporting to Rate Mahathmaya about births and death, settlement of village disputes, permits for cattle breeding, collecting of road tax and such like tasks. The assistance rendered by the villagers to village headman helped greatly to perform his duties effectively. However this village headman system had been change to another set of official "Grama Sevaka"s.

Number of Gam was amsexited in1833 was 42 which was increased to 114 in 1921, 184 in 1953. Population in the area was reduced due to epidemics like malaria spread during the decade of 1921-1931. This resulted the decrease of the number of gamwasams. Following chart shows the pattern of changing of gamsabaws in Digamadulla area from 1833to 1962.

**Table 5**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Wasams</b>
1833	42
1843	45
1853	49
1863	60
1873	89
1883	96
1903	101
1913	106
1923	114
1933	111
1943	144
1953	184
1962	224

**From Census**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

With the annexation of the up country by the British in 1815, British rule was introduced to Digamadulla wherein the administration rested on the native official's system for most of the period. Digamadulla was situated of many isolated villages thereby little influence of the British rules and regulations caused than they ought to be. For all that, a substantial

<sup>36</sup> Braybrook to GA. NP, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1849: SLNA, 41/151 No. 153 and Circular to the Headmen.

development could be seen in. where the direct observation of the government agent focused to areas like Kalmunai, Akkareipattu, Samanturei, Nadukadu and Potuvil. Among these areas a sort of reformation and modernization could be grasped by the change of traditional socio- economic structure through administration reformation of brought by the British rule.

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