

*Introduction of Printing to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) The Dutch Press in Ceylon (1736–1796)**

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After the Dutch East India Company captured the maritime areas of Ceylon from the Portuguese in 1656, it issued Plakkaten on paper as manuscript copies to be posted at various places for administrative purposes. The Dutch clergymen got the religious documents copied on palm leaves following the traditional method. Soon they found this system unsatisfactory and attempts were made since 1720s by the superintendent of the arsenal in the Fort at Colombo to cast Sinhala type in the first instance. By 1736, a press with movable Sinhala type was established in the Fort. It was a joint venture

by the Dutch Reformed Church and the Dutch East India Company. It printed plakkaten, religious, educational and non-educational books in Sinhala, Tamil and Dutch. The press was active from 1737 to 1796 until it was taken over by the British with the capitulation of Colombo. The introduction of printing to Ceylon had a major impact on learning, writing and communication in the Island. It paved the way for further developments in these fields during the British period.

History and objectives

The art of printing with movable type was introduced to India by the Portuguese and to Sri Lanka by the Dutch. The Portuguese established their first printing press at Goa on the West coast of India in 1556 and started printing Catholic theological literature in Portuguese and later both in Portuguese and Malabar (Tamil). Although they had occupied the maritime areas of Sri Lanka by that time, the Portuguese did not set up a printing press in the Island. It may have been due to several reasons: the population in the coastal region to be served with printed Catholic religious literature would have been small; technical matters such as the casting of Sinhala type also would have been a problem at the time; above all, the political situation may not have warranted such pursuits as the establishment of a printing press since the Portuguese were in constant conflict with the Sinhalese Kingdom. In any case, religious

literature in Tamil could easily have been made available from Goa.

The beginnings of printing in Ceylon with movable type can be traced to the establishment of a printery in the castle of Colombo by the Dutch in 1736. The establishment of this press was a combined undertaking of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Dutch East India Company, NVOC (Nederlandsche Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie). It would, therefore, be appropriate to begin this study with a general view of the structure of the Dutch Reformed Church in Ceylon. It was based more or less on the church structures that existed in Holland at the time (1).

The consistory or the Church Council (kerkeraad) was at the apex of this hierarchical structure. There were three such Councils in the Island, in Colombo, Galle, and Jaffna. These were established in 1659, very early during the Dutch occupation of the Island. Each Council consisted of all the European clergymen of the town, two or three

*Based on doctoral research by the author entitled "History of Printing and Publishing in Ceylon with Special Reference to Sinhalese books, 1737–1912", 1992.

lay elders and six deacons. Below the Church Council were the European ministers or chaplains (predikanten). They were selected by the "Classes" (groups of churches) of Holland and appointed by the Dutch East India Company with instructions to learn the native languages (2). Apart from the predikanten, there were those known as "krankenbezoekers" and "ziekentrousters" who looked after the sick and visited hospitals. They also acted as substitutes for clergymen where the latter were not available. These were natives of Holland and were appointed for the benefit of the Dutch inhabitants. Another category was the native proponents (unordained preachers/exhorters) trained and qualified for the most part at the Colombo Seminary established in 1696 (3).

Their work was to preach on Sundays at the places assigned to them; to catechise and examine candidates for admission into church membership; to visit the families and convert as many countrymen as they could by instruction, example and persuasion. These native proponents had under them a category called catechist-masters. A catechist-master had to oversee the system of instruction by the schoolmasters and examine the schools periodically. Thus the village schoolmasters were at the base of the educational hierarchy while the predikanten were at its apex (4).

The Dutch proselytizing programme for the natives was carried out through their educational establishment and the schools were the best means to achieve their goal. Towards this end they first established a school in a village attached to a church and that was a central meeting place for the populace of the surrounding area. At the school the children received instruction in reading, writing and Christianity; Christian religion was introduced to the adults and for their benefit divine service was held on Sundays by the schoolmaster, or, by a proponent. The annual initiation ceremony of the clergymen and the scholar (5) was made use of to examine the school, to preach a sermon to the people gathered for the occasion, to administer baptism to the children of the professing Christians and to solemnize the marriages of the parties whose banns had been already published by the schoolmaster or tombholder (6). The schoolmaster also acted as the registrar or notary. These schools for the natives had been

established in addition to those already in existence for European children.

It should, however, be remembered that at that time there were already the rudiments of literacy among a considerable number of people in Ceylon as a result of the educational activities of the village Buddhist temples although they had been long neglected. The people could read Sinhala which was advantageous to the Dutch in their mission. It is said that children in the Galle District in South Ceylon practised writing by drawing the characters on a board or a table strewn with fine sand emulating the old custom (7). There is also an illustration given in Baldaeus of Tamil children in Jaffna drawing characters on sand (8).

The need for a printery

As books in the native languages were needed to spread the faith as well as for instruction in the schools, the predikanten started learning Sinhala and Tamil and translating the required texts. Predikant Philippus Baldaeus, who arrived early in the Island (1651–1665), learnt Tamil; Simon Kat (1669–1704) learnt both Sinhala and Tamil while Joannes Ruell learnt Sinhala (1690–1701). Simon Kat is said to have "worked diligently day and night ... at producing Sinhalese books for the use of the Seminary" (9). It was Kat who translated a part of the Gospel of Matthew into Sinhala; and the Acts of Apostles into Sinhala with the help of two Sinhalese interpreters. He is said to have also compiled a Dutch-Sinhala and Sinhala-Dutch dictionary although no manuscript is known to be in existence (10). Ruell too was a diligent scholar and his was the first printed Sinhalese Grammar which was published in 1708 in Amsterdam with woodcut Sinhala type. The works of these two ministers who knew Sinhala were badly needed and considered important at the commencement of the Dutch religious activity in the Island.

In a letter to the seventeen directors (Heeren XVII) in Holland presumably by the Colombo Consistory it had been said of these two Predikants: "If it should please the Almighty to remove by death S. Kat and J. Ruel, no one would be left to do anything for the good of native Christianity" (11). Besides these two, Wilhelmus Konijn and H. P. Wetzelijs were two other predikanten who worked tirelessly to produce Sinhalese translations. Consequently,

In 1710 a series of five catechisms were in use,
1. On scripture history,
2. Infants' catechism,
3. On the principal doctrines of Christianity,
4. and 5. For the more advanced.

The three last mentioned catechisms were translations from the Dutch (12).

It was in 1711 that W. Konijn submitted to Governor Hendrik Becker (1707–1716) his new translation of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. This Sinhalese version was carefully examined with the help of Government interpreters and accepted as a good translation (13). "In 1722 a collection of prayers, the form of administration of the Sacraments and five sermons translated into Sinhalese were sent to remain in circulation" (14) among schools in selected areas of the Island. Also in 1722 a number of Portuguese Testaments, copies of the Heidelberg Catechism and the liturgy printed in Amsterdam and received from Java were offered by the Colombo Consistory to the clergy for distribution (15). A good number of texts were translated into Sinhala in 1724 and 1725 by Wetzeliuss and Konijn. In 1725 Wetzeliuss wrote a compendium of religious truths in Sinhala and submitted it to the Consistory of Colombo for revision and authorization (16). Two more ministers of the same calibre in a later generation, namely J.J. Fijbrands and Hendrik Philipsz, the latter a Sinhalese, produced religious works.

Until 1736 the supply of reading materials to the schools established by the Dutch had been very scanty. There were no printed books. The school books used by the masters were in manuscript form and were meant to be used solely by the teachers themselves. The teachers were supplied with a set of Catechisms, Prayer books and one or two Gospels in manuscript. These were meant to be kept in the schools. Even these manuscripts were not on paper, but were inscribed on palm leaves. Although the use of paper seems to have been introduced by the Portuguese in Ceylon, (17) stationery was either not available or not much in use.

The foregoing evidence shows the need that existed for printed books and the reason why the Dutch were so eager to establish a printing press in Colombo. It was also the main tool for the spread of their faith.

The principal reason for the printing press was the desire to facilitate the spread of Christianity as widely as possible among the local population (18).

A further advantage in having a printing press at that time would have been the indirect benefit it would have brought to the administration in the Island. They would have found it much easier to print the plakATEN as single sheets than to write and copy them to be posted at various places.

PlakATEN and other ordinances were necessary "for the prevention of irregularities ... and for the control of the schoolmasters, who especially in the lands of Galle and Mature, fell into all kinds of extravagances and greatly oppressed and harassed the poor natives" (19). PlakATEN were also required for revenue collecting and all administrative and legal purposes – regarding imports and exports, slavery, ownership of fire arms, tools, and taverns and arrack shops.

Beginnings at Colombo

It was also becoming increasingly important to have school books printed in the vernacular. Yet it was difficult to find someone with a sufficient knowledge of and also enthusiasm for the Sinhala and Tamil languages to undertake the task of making Sinhala and Tamil type. There was hardly anyone to be found in Ceylon with a knowledge of printing and printing machinery to take on the responsibility for setting up a press. However, there was one person in the company's armoury in Colombo – "baas" Gabriel Schade who was prepared to do his best to bring into fruition the ambitious plans of the Government (20).

A former Government Archivist has stated in one of his administration reports how Schade was struggling with the arduous task of cutting the Sinhala type:

Many attempts had been made from about 1720 onwards to set up a printing press for books in Sinhala language; but the technical problems could not at first be overcome. However, about 1725, the Superintendent of the Company's armoury Gabriel Schade set to work again on experiments in casting the Sinhala types and moulding the required machine parts (21).

Goor says:

In 1723 it almost looked for a while as though a printing press was going to be established but as a result of Rumph's death, the whole project came to fall into oblivion (22).

The reasons which motivated Schade to cut Sinhala type do not seem to have been much discussed. It is possible that it was suggested to him by the superior officers in the Dutch administration in order to print the plakaten and other government documents and also by the predikanten for the printing of Christian religious literature.

It is interesting to note a striking similarity between an English type founder of the 18th century, William Caslon and "baas" Gabriel Schade. Both had been contemporaries and had more or less been doing or overseeing the same type of work. Writing about Caslon, Warren Chappell says:

A decorator of gun locks and barrels would have invaluable knowledge about working with steel. In addition to experience with the necessary tools, he would have been required to make small punches for striking names and dates into lock plates (23).

In addition to this type of experience, Schade was already an inheritor of a tradition established by great printers such as Plantin, Elzevier and Bleau. It is also stated that

he must have been a man of intelligence and a fine craftsman with an exceptional interest in mechanics, otherwise he would never have succeeded in preparing the tools and moulds for fourteen large Sinhalese letters and another fourteen of a medium size, as he is recorded to have done in the first instance (24).

These revelations give us some idea of the man and the times. Schade would also have seen the shape of the Sinhalese letters in Ruell's book "Grammatica of Singaleesche Taal-kunst..." printed in Amsterdam in 1708 and probably was influenced by the Sinhala script as found in palm leaf manuscripts. Above all, there must have been skilled Sinhalese scribes and silversmiths who helped Schade in his work.

Schade would have been working on Sinhala type most probably between 1725 and 1729. Unfortunately he could not continue his efforts for long to achieve the desired goal because the infamous Dutch Governor Petrus Vyust thwarted his work by torturing him (25). He was one of the officers who was seized, imprisoned and tortured during Vyust's "reign of terror" apparently for no fault of his:

Governor Petrus Vyust (1726–1729) who afflicted with the tropical staggers saw enemies and conspiracies everywhere and showed scant consideration for local matters (26).

Vyust was apprehended and removed from office in 1729 after his tyrannical rule of three years. He was tried and executed in Batavia for treason, rebellion and murder (27).

Thus in 1729 the plans for the establishment of a press were dropped altogether and Schade's mould and the type were stored away somewhere in the armoury (28). And by the time the next Governor – Jacob Christiaan Pielat – arrived in 1732 Schade must have already retired from service. This is implied in the instructions from the Council at Castle Batavia to the two clergymen, W. Konijn and J.P. Wetzelijs, in Colombo as stated in the memoir of Pielat (29).

By this time Schade was said to have been physically weak though still "stout of heart". At the request of the Governor, the two clergymen accompanied by Schade inspected the moulds and the type lying in the armoury. The report submitted by them gives valuable information about the early history of the Colombo Press (30). It is recorded that the two scholarly ministers were well acquainted with the Sinhala language (31).

Schade who is the inventor of the above mentioned type and of the roughly made implements belonging thereto, when asked if he would be able to resume and complete the work he has started bravely replied that he deplored that this invention of his had not been successful, but agreed to carry on and complete the work of the establishment of the printing press on condition that he was supplied with the means (32).

Moreover, the necessity of a Sinhalese printing

press was noted by Governor Pielat when he wrote his memoir to his successor in 1734:

It is desirable to make stronger efforts for promoting Christianity among the natives; because, although the clergy who yearly inspect the schools report that the work has been carried on with sufficient zeal yet progress is but slow. This is partly due to the fact that the natives possess but a very small part of the Holy Scriptures in their own language... The translation of the Holy Bible commenced by the Rev. Mr. Konijn must be continued, and after revision and approbation in Batavia, it must be published and issued to the schools for better instruction of the blind Heathen ... I have often spoken on this subject both to the Rev. Mr. Konijn and to the Rev. Mr. Wetzeliu who know the language. They were unable to make much progress in this task since there had been certain obstacles in their way. They are also willing to see that the portion which has been revised and approved and all that will be ready hereafter are printed and published (33)..

Consequently, approval for the establishment of a press was granted by the Council at Castle Batavia:

... we approve the establishment of a Singhalese printing office ... so that the New Testament may be printed in that language and we hereby authorize Your Excellency to obtain all the necessary articles as stated in the report of the Rev. Messrs. Konijn and Wetzeliu and the late Baas of the arsenal, Gabriel Schade. The latter having offered his services again at the request of the Rev. Ministers, has been appointed to this work and as a greater encouragement has been granted the same salary and emoluments as he received as Baas of the arsenal, while his request that all necessities should be provided will also be complied with. We hope that the worthy divines will also according to their promise devote themselves with all zeal and diligence to this work in which we pray Heaven may grant its blessings (34).

And so the preliminary work went on as envisaged by the authorities in Batavia.

With the help of the two clergymen who trained

the required typesetters and mechanics in reading and arranging the Sinhala characters he [Schade] brought his work to the final stages, but his death about the middle of 1737 robbed him of the satisfaction of seeing the first Sinhalese book issued from the press a few months later (35).

Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the first Sinhala type in wood-cuts was made in Amsterdam for the printing of Joannes Ruell's "Grammatica of Singaleesche Taal-kunst ..." in 1708 and the first wood-cut engraving showing Tamil letters in 1672 in Amsterdam for Baldaeus' book on the Coromandel Coast and Ceylon. The first Tamil type was cast in South India at Cochin by a Jesuit lay-brother called Joao Goncalves in 1577 (36). However, the honour of casting the first movable Sinhala type goes to Schade.

Establishment of the press and the first printing

Although references have been made at several places to the casting of movable Sinhala type by Gabriel Scahde, there is very little mention of the press itself. It is said that the Government of Java (at Batavia) offered to procure a press and in 1736 it was reported to be in active operation under the government (37). This means that the company administration in Batavia purchased a press for Colombo most probably from The Netherlands.

It is important at this point to consider the type of press on which the Dutch printed their publications. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find an engraving or a drawing of the press, but from the works on European printing and historical bibliography we can fairly safely re-construct a model of this wooden press. This hand press from The Netherlands would, therefore, have been of Dutch origin. It would have been the low countries common press, (38) a prototype of which is found in the Plantin-Moretus shop in Antwerp (39). At that time the printing industry had reached a high standard in The Netherlands.

Paper for printing would certainly have come from Holland. In the 18th century Holland was a leading producer of hand-made paper. Printing ink too was obtained from Holland along with paper for printing.

The first publication from the press was a single sheet prayer. A copy was enclosed in a letter

dated 29th December 1738 from Tranquebar to the German Lutheran mission's headquarters at Halle: "The first specimen of the Sinhalese Press in Colombo, namely the Lord's Prayer printed on a single sheet, we are sending herewith. A copy of the first edited book will follow shortly" (40). There is no doubt that the Lord's Prayer in Sinhalese was the first publication put out by the Dutch press – a Government missionary press devoted to spreading the "Reformed Religion". The next extant document is a government plakkaat dated 5 April 1737 separately published in Dutch and Sinhala. It refers to pepper cultivation in the south of the Island and was to be in force during the period 1737–1740. This plakkaat might have been issued in relation to Imhoff's first official tour in which he had directed the headmen to set about the cultivation of pepper (41). The number of copies printed of this plakkaat is not known. It is also difficult to say whether it was the first printed official document of this press. The sheet is 60 cm. in width and 53.5 cm. in height and the print occupies a space of 47.5 cm. × 43.5 cm. The text consists of three headlines, fifty-six lines of type and colophon, printed in eleven paragraphs/sections. The end of a paragraph or a section is shown by the old Sinhala punctuation mark called "kundaliya" as found in the olas. This is clear evidence of manuscript tradition influencing the early printed form. The initial letter is set within a locally made metal frame which measures 42 mm × 42 mm.

The first extant printed book in Sinhala would have come out of the press sometime between June and December 1737 (42). It was a little prayer book comprising 40 pages. The half-title page reads: "Singaleesch/Gebeede-Boek." Contents page on verso of half-title page: "Inhoud./ Het gebed des heeren./ Morgen en avond gebed/gebed voor, en na den/eeten./De XII. artykelen des Geloop./De X. Geboden Gods/." There is no Sinhala title page, but the list of contents on the opposite page serves as the Sinhala title: "Pradanavu yagnaval pahada a-/pe Kristiyani adahille/pangu dolaha saha Deviswa-/midu ruvanan-vahansema aha-/stalin devavadala ana-/gnaval dasayada mehi ata./". Then follows the NVOC vignette (42 mm × 47 mm) which includes the place name Colombo, closing with the imprint: "Diptimatvu companne venuven accugasuve/varsa

1737/" with the date according to an old Sinhalese system of numbering (astronomer's symbols).

This octavo booklet contained the Lord's prayer, prayer before and after meals, the twelve articles of the Creed and the Ten Commandments of God. The whole book is printed in large bold characters, with many ligatures. It has a maximum of only eleven lines to a page. This large size would have been to enable the native readers to read easily since they were used to writing large characters on sand while learning the language. Moreover, it was the commonly available medium size of type which was used to print plakkaaten. The last page ends with a decoration of ornaments of leaves and a flower (50 mm × 37 mm). The booklet is 19.5 cm in height and 12.5 cm in width.

It is clear from all the available evidence that it was Governor Pielat (1732–1734) who gave the necessary encouragement for the setting up of a press in Colombo. Nevertheless, it was during the time of his successor, Governor Gustaaf Willem Baron van Imhoff (1736–1740), that the work was accomplished.

As the setting up of the press was completed during his time, the Governor Imhoff seems to have been much involved in the activities of the press. A second press had also been added a little later, as stated in the memoir to his successor:

... the printing press established during my administration will be a useful instrument ... at length these difficulties were overcome. Although it was in May, 1737, that a commencement was made with the type, yet already have been published a Sinhalese prayer book, a booklet in the same language for the instruction of those who wish to partake of the Lord's supper, catechisms in Mallabar, and the four Gospels in Sinhalese; while a commencement has been made with the New Testament in Mallabar. A second press is being fitted up, which must be completed during Your Excellency's administration (43) ...

For the installation of the second press and to assist in technical matters, Michelsen, Jr. came from Tranquebar in September 1737 (44). The second press must have been in operation in 1740 or 1741:

Thus Ceylon saw the printing of books many

years earlier than anywhere in India, except for the Jesuit presses of Goa and a few small places in the South (45).

In a report sent by Governor Imhoff to the Chamber of Middleburg, Holland, dated 12th January, 1737, well before Schade's death, the following paragraph (extract) appears as translated:

The making of Sinhalese press letters is beneficial and useful work. It will be essential to train an energetic young soldier to make Sinhalese press letters under Gabriel Schade as the letters made in 1729 are hardly available and they have been damaged due to extensive use. Therefore, it is essential to cast new press letters. The selected young man should be given three to four months training in Sinhala language so that the Holy Scripture could be brought to the heathen in their own language (46).

Taking into consideration the subsequent state of affairs, it is possible to conclude that that suggestion by the Governor was never executed by the authorities in Holland. Nevertheless the above statement of the Governor indicates that the press was in active operation before January 1737 and that Schade must have been printing documents for the Dutch administration.

Shifting of the press to another location

Regarding Schade and the press, Katharine S. Diehl says:

How long Gabriel Schade continued at the Dutch East India Company's Colombo printing office is uncertain. His first book was printed within the arsenal, but the printery soon was removed to a more desirable business location not yet discovered (47).

It has been recorded that the work of the press housed in the arsenal was so good and reached such an advanced stage that Governor Imhoff decided to take it over. Accordingly, on 6 September, 1737, he was supposed to have announced in Council (Governor in Council) that three or four months earlier the press had been moved and given the status of a Government establishment

(48). The minutes of the political council of 29 August 1740 reveal that one Haans Bruuts was appointed as foreman to succeed Schade (49). It was noted earlier that Schade appeared to have died sometime in the middle of the year 1737 before his first book came out of the press. His death would probably have taken place in May 1737. According to the above statement, supposed to have been made by the Governor to the Council, the press must have been shifted soon after Schade's death. The original location of the press can be identified by the site of the arsenal about which there is a reference in a map drawn about 1732 (50). In the map the arsenal is in Block C within the Castle. This ought to be between the present Baillie Street (Koernade Straat) and Chatham Street (Bier Straat) in the Fort.

Reference has also been made to the arsenal by Christopher Scheweitzer in 1680: "There is likewise a very large arsenal, two strong cellars of gunpowder, and some magazines for the Merchants and a Church" (51). The press must have been shifted from there, as stated by the Governor, to the Dutch Secretariat (in Block A in map) which was opposite the present President's House (former Queen's House), where it remained until 1911, when it was again shifted to a place five kilometres north-east of Colombo (Borella) where it still stands today.

In a letter dated 1738 addressed to the Directors of the Dutch East India Company in Amsterdam by the Consistory of Colombo it was stated that the press was a useful instrument for the printing of translations of Christian literature from the Dutch into Sinhala and Malabar (i.e. Tamil):

At least this is the object in view, and we hope that satisfaction will be given in this respect for the building up of Jesus' Kingdom among the natives, on which we heartily wish Jehovah God may bestow his blessing – and to this end may the laudable work of the Sinhalese printing press be a fruitful means; which press has been brought to a sufficient stage of perfection by the virtuous and indefatigable care of our most noble Governor (52).

By this time the Tamil catechisms used in schools and by others were also in the press. Perhaps this was in consequence of the part played by the

Tranquebar Mission Press in India South of Madras:

In answer to a request from Imhoff, the son of Peter Michelsen, the Danish type founder at Tranquebar was sent to Colombo in September 1737 and to him can be attributed the perfection of the first Colombo Tamil types which were first used to print the Lord's Prayer in Tamil on 28 April, 1739 (53).

For the future progress of the press, Governor Imhoff had appointed two good linguists, J.P. Wetzeliuſ – the Rector of the Colombo Seminary who worked with Konijn and Schade; and the Maha Madaliyar Louis de Saram – who was an elder of the Dutch Reformed Church in Kotte (Cotta) to supervise its publications. This Committee was to be responsible only to the Governor and it had to select other Sinhalese scholars to prepare translations of the required books. These books and others written by private individuals had to be scrutinized and approved by the full Church Council assisted by the Maha Mudaliyar and some other Christian Sinhalese scholars. The imprimatur of this Committee was to be printed on the back of every title-page. In later years this practice is said to have been changed to bring it into line with that of Batavia. Nevertheless, the earlier publications from the press indicate that the Governor's instructions were carried out (54). That statement of approval of the Committee appeared even in the first book published in 1737.

Konijn had died in 1736 in Colombo (55). The Governor would otherwise have appointed him as a supervisor of publications along with Wetzeliuſ. By 1736 Konijn had already translated the four Gospels into Sinhala, but they were later revised by Wetzeliuſ before printing.

The printing and publication programme

The Dutch Reformed Church gave an important place to psalm singing as they considered it a necessary part of the Divine Service. The first Sinhalese Hymn Booklet containing metrical arrangements of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, Psalms 23, 51st and second verse and the Canticle of Simeon, was prepared in 1723 by Mudaliyars Anthony Perera and Louis de Saram; verse and music was by Petrus Dathenus. This

was purified from spelling mistakes and enlarged by Mathias Wermelskircher and printed in Colombo in 1755 introducing graphic printing for musical notation. A second and enlarged edition printed in 1768 states that it was first prepared by Konijn in 1723 with the help of the two scholars mentioned above. Perhaps all this was the result of Governor Augustine Rumpf's suggestion "to train if possible the Sinhalese to psalm-singing" (56). On the printing of music Katharine Diehl observes:

... the music types were from Europe in the exact style of Netherland's hymnals: single notes set onto a small five-line bit of staff, plus intermediate staff blanks for spacing. All that was required for composition of the music was the ability to identify the note. Though the resulting staff lines are neither always continuous nor straight, the text and interlinear words are very legible (57).

She goes on:

It can be said, with little fear or contradiction, that these several Psalters with notes are the earliest examples of music with words in the local languages to have issued from any press east of the Indus River-as-far-East as the Philippines and Japan (58).

The Dutch press at Colombo had to its credit a considerable number of religious publications, proclamations and miscellaneous government documents. Nevertheless, there were only a few non-religious and non-educational publications in Sinhala. Out of the 22 publications listed by Murdoch only two were non-religious, one, a Sinhalese dictionary (1759), and the other a Sinhalese grammar (1783). This trend in publishing shows the keenness of the Dutch in spreading their faith rather than educating the natives. However, one uncommon publication has been found in the library of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. It is a little fiction book in Dutch entitled "De Wonderlycke historie van den wandelenden Jode" printed in 1791 at the Colombo Press. It consists of 18 leaves signed A12 B6 of 12 cm × 18 cm. This is supposed to have been privately printed during non-working hours (59).

Christnau's edition of *The Wandering Jew* in

Dutch from the German printed in Colombo in 1791 is (1) the earliest book, almost fiction, and certainly the earliest example of Western imaginative prose literature, (2) to be printed anywhere east of the Indus River, (3) to introduce Candia (Kandy, ...) to the literary community in a book acceptable to the churchmen and pleasant to all who read, besides having been (4) entirely edited, prepared for the press, printed, and published by private enterprise, and is thus (5) completely made in Ceylon (60).

The Colombo Press issued publications in Sinhalese, Tamil, Portuguese and Dutch during the period 1736–1791. This implies that the press had printing types in three scripts namely, roman, Sinhala and Tamil. It seems to have also reprinted texts first printed in Batavia, the Cape of Good Hope and Amsterdam (61).

The Dutch published their books mainly in Sinhala and Tamil because they wanted the Bible, religious tracts and other books to be read by the Buddhists, Hindus and the Muslims, for, their aim was to spread Calvinism as far as possible. It was believed "... that there is no better means of conviction than the hearing and reading of God's Holy Word in one's own language" (62). Hence the Dutch even established two seminaries, one at Nallur near Jaffna (1690–1723) and the other in Colombo (1696–1796) in order to provide ministers to Tamil and Sinhala speaking areas respectively (63). In addition to works in Sinhala and Tamil the Dutch published a few titles in Portuguese as it was still being used by the people in the maritime areas. Portuguese was indeed the "lingua franca" of coastal Asia for three centuries and thus had an economic value (64). Even in early British times Portuguese along with English and Sinhala was used in preaching. Portuguese was required to preach to the burghers (65). This is also evident from the number of religious publications put out in Portuguese by the Wesleyan missionaries in the 19th century. In contrast, Dutch as a colonial language did not have a strong foothold in Ceylon (66).

Sinhalese translations

The achievements of the Dutch in the field of printing in Ceylon culminated in the printing of the Bible in Sinhala. The Dutch administrators

thought that for proselytization, provision of religious works in the native languages was the best means, and, therefore, they gave unstinted support to translators to carry on their work. The translation of the Bible into Sinhala was completed over a period of 40 years between 1739 and 1780. The four Gospels were first translated and printed in 1739 and the new Testament in full was translated and printed in 1780. It must be noted that the predikant Simon Kat who arrived in Ceylon in 1669 was responsible for the first Sinhala translation of the Gospel according to St. Matthew and the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter I–XIV. He had translated these with the help of two Sinhalese interpreters.

Kat died in 1704 and we can safely presume, therefore, that he had finished the translation of the portion above-mentioned by that time. This means that these translations existed in manuscript from about 1700 to 1739. It was noted earlier that in 1711 Konijn submitted to Governor Hendrik Becker his translation of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (67). The statement, therefore, that Konijn came to Ceylon in 1717 attributed to Wetzeliuz by Diehl seems to be incorrect (68). The four Gospels were completely translated by Konijn before his death in 1736 and revised for printing in 1739 by Wetzeliuz. The basis for Konijn's translations may have been the earlier translation done by Kat (69). The works of the Apostles translated by Kat were revised by J. J. Fijbrands and H. Philipsz and printed in 1771. The translation of the New Testament of 1780 was, therefore, the result of the efforts of four Dutch predikants and one Sinhalese predikant, i.e. Philipsz. Philipsz was the son of Maha Mudaliyar Panditaratne. He was responsible for translating the whole of the New Testament except the four Gospels and the first Five Books of the Old Testament.

At the time these translations were undertaken, Sinhalese education had declined due to the wars and strife which occurred in the 16th century in the Island. The institutions that imparted education to the people, namely the Buddhist temples and pirivenas (monastic colleges), were neglected and with that the standard of written language too must have fallen. "The prose and poetry of this era were lacking in full control of the classical idiom, and displayed little originality" (70).

It would appear that the Dutch translators' knowledge of the Sinhala language was more or

less limited. The translations of the Bible can give us some idea about the development of modern Sinhalese prose. The Christian religious concepts that the Bible introduced were totally different from those that existed among the Sinhalese for a number of centuries, and were quite foreign to those expressed in Buddhist literature. Not only the doctrinal terms and phrases in the Bible, but also the newly coined terms pertaining to the Dutch administrative organisation were foreign to the Sinhala language. This is seen in the words such as "Govarnadoru" for Governor and "Companne" for Company appearing in plakkatēn.

From the few religious translations available it can be seen that in all of them clarity and simplicity of expression are hard to come by, and the sentences are long. The translators had not made any attempts to find suitable terms in Sinhala for many of the foreign words, especially from the Portuguese that may have been used colloquially by the indigenous population, e.g. "bautisaru karanda", (baptise), "tempalaya" (temple) and "sinagova" (synagogue). There is also no agreement between some of the verbs and nouns e.g. singular verb with a plural noun and also direct case instead of the oblique.

The translations show a lack of command of the Sinhala language on the part of the translators in regard to grammar, morphology, orthography and idiomatic use; the spelling of the words point to the authors' lack of knowledge of the classical orthographic system of Sinhala. They had written Sinhala words as they were pronounced in ordinary speech and as received auditorily, attempting to spell them by ear. A few such examples are the words, "pradana" (chief), "adahille" (faith), "arambaya" (beginning), "Sinhale-ayeni" (Sinhalese people), and "accugasanda" (to print). Also many words which are neither strictly colloquial nor literary and categorised as having a "super colloquial texture" have been used in the translations. The prose of the religious literature, especially the Biblical translations, is termed "missionary colloquial" (71) and this prose style, which was different from earlier traditions of prose writing, paved the way towards later fiction writing.

All these points indicate that the translators were well aware of the spoken idiom, but had little knowledge of the literary language. Katharine S. Diehl says that unlike in Batavia the predikants in Ceylon had little interest in the "vernac-

ulars as languages in Ceylon" (72). If this was so it may be due to the fact that Sinhala was a language used only by a small minority of the people of South Asia. However, plakkatēn, books and other religious tracts published by the Dutch give us some idea of the language used by the ordinary Sinhalese people at that time, particularly in the maritime areas.

Technical aspects

Regarding the technical aspects of printing, the layout in the Sinhalese plakkatēn was similar to that in old Sinhalese olas. There was no paragraphing. This may have been due to the need to get all the information on to one sheet. Large type is found in the headlines. In the design of books, large and small type is scattered throughout the text for the purpose of textual subdivision. In both cases many ligatures can be seen as found in palm leaf manuscripts. In certain instances there is no indication of the long vowel sound at the end of words. The sign for long sound "e" is obliterated as in the palm leaf manuscripts. Schade seems to have cut many punches for ligatures as found in the early publications. The type, setting and ornamentation of the initial letter are artistic.

It has sometimes been assumed that since varying founts of type were found of the same language text in the Dutch documents there were a large number of compositors and a large number of presses in the printery (73). Contrary to this assumption the evidence shows that there were only two presses at the Dutch printing establishment (74). Nevertheless, it is not improbable that a few more presses were imported during the six decades of operation of the Dutch press.

After long use of types, Harvard in 1815 found that

whole founts of types were rendered unserviceable, by large masses of broken matter cast among them; and that the materials which were in use were so intermixed as to render correctness (to say nothing of neatness) utterly impossible (75).

It has to be assumed that roman types were not cut or cast in Colombo; they could have come either from Holland or Batavia. It is said that for the first printed documents in Dutch the cast came

from Batavia (76). The statement made by Diehl that varying founts of type were found in the Dutch documents printed in Colombo could then be applied to those roman types which would have come from abroad at various times and in different conditions. Regarding Sinhalese type, there appear to have been three different founts.

The large size was used for the title pages of books and pamphlets and the headlines of plak-katen, the medium size for the text of the books, pamphlets and plak-katen and the small size for the verses in hymn booklets and music printing. The small type had to correspond to the types of musical notation on each page.

It is interesting to note that the Dutch press had not made any impact on the native population to encourage them either to take to printing or to produce works for the press. It may have been due to several reasons: the Dutch used their press with limited resources for their work only; works written by the majority of Sinhalese writers were on Buddhist or Hindu themes; also the authors may have been reluctant to get their books printed on "flimsy paper" and preferred them to be written on substantial and durable palm leaves.

In that background, printing and publishing in the 18th century remained confined to the state and the Church more or less for their benefit (77).

However, the establishment of a printing press with movable type by the Dutch in Ceylon in 1736 had an important social impact: it gradually paved the way for the emergence of a reading public from a traditional listening public and also promoted the spread of literacy in the south-west and the north of the Island. This development was timely for the British and American missionaries who set up printing presses for religious purposes almost immediately after their arrival in the Island.

After Schade and foreman Haans Bruuts, Johann Frederik Christoph Dornheim (1768–1790) was for a long time the printer to the Colombo press. Others before him were Johann Bernhardt Arnhardt (1752–1755) and Pieter Bruwaart (1759–1763) (78).

Bibliographies of publications

As far as it could be traced the Dutch press in Ceylon had put out 61 books/booklets in Sinhala, Tamil, Portuguese and Dutch from 1737 to 1791

(79). This shows that for fifty-five years only 61 works had come out of the press at the rate of almost one book per year, besides the many plak-katen issued during the same period. The production of books seems to have gone on at a slow pace, with the press facing intermittent set backs:

In spite of the great zeal and enthusiasm displayed by various persons for the task of preparing all sorts of Christian manuscripts for the press, the actual execution of such work did not always proceed with commensurate speed. Practical difficulties sometimes caused delays for months on end. If it was not a question of the unavailability of particular types, then it would be a shortage of paper of the required size. Once the press remained idle for almost six months because the Sinhalese silver smiths refused to enter the precincts of the castle for the casting of types owing to an outbreak of smallpox there (80).

There is no complete list of publications put out by the Dutch press in Colombo. There are several lists though, and all seem to be incomplete because they had been compiled from what information was available to the compilers from several sources. The most comprehensive list is the latest one compiled by Graham Shaw for SABREB, stage I. All the other lists include only books and pamphlets. The following are some of the important listings (arranged chronologically):

Palm, J. D. Rev. "List of Translations and Publications at Colombo". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*. 1846; 1: 132 (25 entries).

Ondaatje, Matthew P. J. "Tabulated List of Original Works and Translations, Published by the Late Dutch Government of Ceylon at Their Printing Press at Colombo". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Great Britain and Ireland*, New series, 1865: 141–144. Reprinted in *Ceylon Literary Register*, 2(14) (Nov. 4, 1887): 109–111 (52 entries).

Murdoch, John and Nicholson, James. *Classified Catalogue of Printed Tracts and Books in Sinhalese*. Madras, 1868: 3 (22 entries).

McMurtrie, Douglas C. *Memorandum on the First Printing in Ceylon, with a Bibliography of Ceylonese Imprints of 1737–1760*. Chicago, Privately printed, 1931: 7–10 (34 entries).

Deschamps, P. *L'Imprimerie hors l'Europe*. Nouvelle Edition Revue, Reprint. Paris, 1964: 47–48 (20 entries); 1st ed. 1902: 42–43 and supplement, p.180.

Rhodes, Dennis E. *The Spread of Printing: Eastern Hemi-*

Shaw, Graham. The South Asia and Burma Retrospective Bibliography. (SABREB) Stage I: 1556–1800. London, 1986: 61 entries of books and pamphlets.

1. Boxer, C. R. *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600–1800*. London, 1965: 118 foll.
2. Peiris, Edmund. "Sinhalese Christian Literature of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1943; 35: 166; also, Goor, J. van. *Jan Kompenie as Schoolmaster: Dutch Education in Ceylon, 1690–1795*, Groningen, 1978: 72.
3. Boxer, C. R. *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600–1800*. London, 1965: 148.
4. Wickramasuriya, Sarathchandra: "The Beginnings of the Sinhalese Printing Press". In *Senarat Paranavitana Commemoration Volume*. Leiden, 1978: 285.
5. Scholarch was a layman who visited the school-stations together with a clergyman and drew up the annual report.
6. Palm, J. D. "An Account of the Dutch Church in Ceylon..." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1846–47; 1: 138.
7. Palm, J. D. "The Education Establishments of the Dutch in Ceylon". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1846–47; 1: 124.
8. Baldaeus, Philip. *Nauwkeurige Beschryvinge van Malabar en Choromandel ... en het machtige Eyland Ceylon...* Amsterdam, 1672: 193.
9. Peiris, Edmund. "Sinhalese Christian Literature of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1943; 35: 167.
10. Diehl, Katharine S. "Simon Kat, Translator, 1624–1704". *Ceylon Historical Journal*, 1978; 25: 194.
11. Palm, J. D. "An Account of the Dutch Church in Ceylon..." Part 2. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1847–48; 25: 41.
12. Palm, J. D. "The Education Establishments of the Dutch in Ceylon". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1846–47; 1: 124.
13. Palm, J. D. "An Account of the Dutch Church in Ceylon..." Part 2. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1847–48; 1: 45.
14. Palm, J. D. "The Education Establishments of the Dutch in Ceylon". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1846–47; 1: 124.
15. Palm, J. D. "The Education Establishments of the Dutch in Ceylon". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1846–47; 1: 124.
16. Palm, J. D. "The Education Establishments of the

Dutch in Ceylon". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch*, 1846–47; 1: 125.

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37. Palm, J. D. "The Education Establishments of the Dutch in Ceylon". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch* 1846-47; 1: 125.
38. So called without Blaeu's modifications. See Moran, James: *Printing Presses: History and Development from the Fifteenth Century to Modern Times*. London, 1973: 31; also, *Printing and the Mind of Man ...* London, 1963: 51 and plate 6.
39. Gaskell, P. *A New Introduction to Bibliography*. Oxford, 1972: 120; also, an engraving of a print maker in the Northern Netherlands at the end of the 17th century. In Boxer, C. R. *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*, London, 1965: plate 16.
40. Shaw, Graham. "Some Observations on the Colombo Plakkaten as Printed Ephemera". (unpublished manuscript), p.4.
41. Goor, J. van. *Jan Kompenie as Schoolmaster: Dutch Education in Ceylon, 1690-1795*. Groningen, 1978: 75.
42. Statement made by Diehl that this booklet came out of the Dutch press in May 1737 does not seem plausible. Diehl, Katharine S. "The Dutch Press in Ceylon, 1734-1796". *The Library Quarterly* 1972; 42: 344; See Ceylon. Department of the Govt. Archivist. *Administration Report, 1956: M 12*. It observes that Schade died "about the middle of 1737" without seeing the first Sinhalese book issued from the press a few months later.
43. Imhoff, Gustaaf Willem Baron van. *Memoir left by Gustaaf Willem Baron van Imhoff, Governor and Director of Ceylon to His Successor Willem Maurits Bruynink, 1740; tr. by Sophia Pieters*. Colombo, 1911: 59.
44. *Sechs und Vierzigste Continuation des Berichts der Konigl. Danischen Missionarien in Ost-Indien*. (Halle, 1740), foreword, Section VIII.
45. Rhodes, Dennis E. *The Spread of Printing, Eastern Hemisphere: India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and Thailand*. Amsterdam, 1969: 67.
46. Ceylon National Archives. *Dutch Records, No.905 of 12.01.1737; tr. of the relevant portion by K.D. Paranavitana, Asst. Government Archivist, Colombo*.
47. Diehl, Katharine S. "The Dutch Press in Ceylon. 1734-1796". *The Library Quarterly* 1972; 42: 344.
48. Jurriaanse, M. W. "Gabriel Schade and His Invention of the Sinhalese Type". *Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon* 1943; 32: 138.
49. Ceylon National Archives. *Dutch Records, No.79; cited by Hemapala, Nuwaraliye, in Sinhala Mudra-naya ha Puwatpat (Sinhalese Printing and Newspapers)*. Maharagama, Sri Lanka, 1987: 11.
50. Brohier, R. L. *Changing Face of Colombo, Colombo, 1984: maps opposite pp.22 and 58*.
51. Schweitzer, Christopher. *Journal and Tagebuch seine sechs jahriger Ost Indianischer reise*. Tuebingen, 1680. Quoted in *Germans in Dutch Ceylon; tr. with notes by R. Raven Hart*. Colombo, 1953: 78.
52. Letter from Potken, G. and Wetzelius, J. P. Reproduced in English in Palm, J. D.: "An Account of the Dutch Church in Ceylon..." Part 2. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch* 1847-48; 1: 145.
53. Shaw, Graham. *The South Asia and Burma Retrospective Bibliography (SABREB). Stage I: 1556-1800*, London, 1986: 8.
54. Jurriaanse, M. W. "Gabriel Schade and His Invention of the Sinhalese Type". *Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon* 1943; 32: 138.
55. Goor, J. van. *Jan Kompenie as Schoolmaster: Dutch Education in Ceylon, 1690-1795*. Groningen, 1978: 73.
56. Peiris, Edmund. "Sinhalese Christian Literature of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch* 1943; 35: 171.
57. Diehl, Katharine S. "The Dutch Press in Ceylon, 1734-1796". *The Library Quarterly* 1972; 42: 337-338. These notes have a very close resemblance to Elsevier's "Mediaen Nooten" music types. See Updike, D. B. *Printing Types: Their History, Forms and Use: a Study in Survivals*. 3rd ed. London, 1962; 2: plate 207.
58. Diehl, Katharine S. "The Dutch Press in Ceylon, 1734-1796". *The Library Quarterly* 1972; 42: 339.
59. Diehl, Katherine S. "The Dutch Press in Ceylon, 1734-1796". *The Library Quarterly* 1972; 42: 341.
60. Diehl, Katherine S. "The Dutch Press in Ceylon, 1734-1796". *The Library Quarterly* 1972; 42: 341.
61. Diehl, Katherine S. "The Dutch Press in Ceylon, 1734-1796". *The Library Quarterly* 1972; 42: 338.
62. Pielat, Jacob Christiaan. *Memoir Left by Jacob Christiaan Pielat to His Successor Diederik van Domburg, 1734; tr. by Sophia Pieters*. Colombo, 1905: 38.
63. Boxer, C. R. *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*. London, 1965: 148.
64. Boxer, C. R. *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*. London, 1965: 217.
65. *A History of Methodist Church in Ceylon*. Colombo, 1971: 59.
66. Diehl, Katharine S. "Ceylon Students Abroad in the Eighteenth Century". In *Historical Essays*. Colombo, 1976: 26.
67. Palm, J. D. "An Account of the Dutch Church in Ceylon..." Part 2. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch* 1847-48; 1: 45.
68. Diehl, Katharine S. "Simon Kat, Translator, 1624-1704". *Ceylon Historical Journal* 1978; 25: 197.
69. By 1696 Kat had completed a few catechisms, prayers, parts of the Bible and a dictionary. See Goor, J. van. *Jan Kompenie as Schoolmaster: Dutch Education in Ceylon, 1690-1795*. Groningen, 1978: 59.
70. De Silva, K. M. *A History of Sri Lanka*. Delhi, 1981: 205.
71. Wickramasuriya Sarathchandra. "The Beginnings of the Sinhalese Printing Press". In *Senarat Paranavitana Commemoration Volume*. Leiden, 1978: 298.
72. Diehl, Katharine S. "Ceylon Students Abroad in the Eighteenth Century". In *Historical Essays*. Colombo, 1976: 26.

73. Diehl, Katharine S. "The Dutch Press in Ceylon, 1734–1796". *The Library Quarterly* 1972; 42: 334.
74. Imhoff, Gustaaf Willem Baron van. *Memoir Left by Gustaaf Willem Baron van Imhoff, Governor and Director of Ceylon to His Successor Willem Maurits Bruynink, 1740*; tr. by Sophia Pieters. Colombo, 1911: 59.
75. Harvard, W. M. *A Narrative of the Establishment and Progress of the Mission to Ceylon and India ...* London, 1823: 267.
76. Jurriaanse, M. W. *Catalogue of the Archives of the Dutch Central Government of Coastal Ceylon, 1640–1796*. Colombo, 1943: 127.
77. De Silva, Harischandra. *Printing and Publishing in Ceylon*. Colombo, 1972: 13.
78. Shaw, Graham. *The South Asia and Burma Retrospective Bibliography (SABREB). Stage 1: 1556–1800*. London, 1986.
79. Shaw, Graham. *The South Asia and Burma Retrospective Bibliography (SABREB). Stage 1: 1556–1800*. London, 1986.
80. Goor, J. van. *Jan Kompenie as Schoolmaster: Dutch Education in Ceylon, 1690–1795*. Groningen, 1978: 85, and notes thereon.