

An Anthropological survey of the extant Wannu People in Kukulewa and Thulawelliya

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The Anuradhapura Veddas, Gam veddas and Wannu veddas are inhabited in the Anuradhapura, Vavuniya, Polonnaruwa and Trincomalee districts. The current research aims to anthropologically study the belief, settlement system, economy, marriage system, language and caste of rural Wannu people. For this purpose, Kukulewa in Kahatagasdigiliya Divisional Secretariat and Thulawelliya in the Madawachchiya Divisional Secretariat were used as research areas. Data were collected through interviews (n=8 of each village), literary source studies and field exploration. The Wannu people of Thulawelliya and kukulewa were relied on hunting and chena cultivation in the past. Now they are engaged in various occupations including paddy cultivation. These people in general are Buddhists. In addition, the general beliefs of Nuwara-kalawiya and the Wannu people of Kukulewa are particularly devoted to the God Kataragama and the Valli Amma. Kukulewa and Thulawelliya people also celebrate the annual Pooja, *Mutti-namima* Festival and Annual Grand Ceremony at Katharagama and Pattini Devalayas. Former marriage system was highly adhered to the marriage between the cousins (ca.60%). However, due to recent social changes such as males were employed in the armed forces while the females were attracted by the apparel garment industries, the marriage taboos are shattered. Their language had its own dialectical attributes and was known as '*kale basa*' or the language of the forest. Other than its traces in the rituals, the language used by the people of Kukulewa and Thulawelliya in their daily activities is not very different from the Sinhala of the present day. In the social hierarchical systems such as the caste, these Wanniyas were considered to be in the top and the village such as Bulankulama, Morakewa were the village which they mostly preferred as their own kin. Also, the Kapumahaththaya, Vidanerala and Gamarala are considered the elite of the village and are specialized in certain religious rituals. Even though they possess higher recognition, the Devalayas and the houses of the related elites are wattle-and-daub built. Hence, it seems the property is not a denominator of the social status. However, the simple physical culture and traditional identity of the people of Kukulewa and Thulawelliya are rapidly becoming complicated.

Keywords- Wannu people, Kukulewa, Thulawelliya, Simple Societies

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