

## **The Socio-economic Background of the Palipbothana**

*D.S.W. Gunawardane, T.G.D. Udayakanthi*

### **Introduction**

Palipbothana Megalithic Burial Site in Sri Lanka is a very valuable archaeological site which reveals the factors such as human settlements in the protohistoric era, technology, and the style of consumption on multi resources. When a broad study is done in this field, a great attention can be paid to the disciplines like history, archeology and existed human anthropology. In this archeological study, our focus lies on the study of socio-cultural background of the Palipbothana area which the Megalithic burial site was located.

When attention is paid to the rural society of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the Sri Lankan rural setting plays a prominent role. When it is taken in the view of socio-anthropology, the olden village of the ancient Sri Lanka had been studied by most of the local and foreign anthropologists. (Peiris, 1953., Obeyesekere, 1967., Hettige, 1984., Perera, 1985., Ryan, 1956., Leach, 1961., Yalman, 1967., Roberts, 1995., Spencer, 1985). Specially, in the examination of these socio-anthropological studies, it is possible to receive a broad understanding about the social structure and the organization in the traditional period. At present, in Sri Lankan society, when studies are carried out on the rural social structure and its organization, these pioneer studies and their theoretical frames are very important. Specially, this pre study will be so helpful to understand the socio-cultural background around Megalithic burial site.

When attention is paid to the ancient rural society, a broad study had been done by E.R. Leach, a famous anthropologist to understand its social structure and function. He made a study on the “Pul-Eliya” village which belongs to Anuradhapura district dry zone and a broad presentation has been put forward about a village and its socio-cultural background. (Leach, 1967) This study can be considered as a theoretical structure when studies are done on a socio-cultural background of a particular culture.

Palipbothana in relation to this study is situated in Anuradhapura District, Kahatagasdigiliya Divisional Secretariat and Palipbothana 224 Grama Niladari Division. According to dry environment, this region can be identified as an ancient social, economic, religious and cultural region. This study has done a broad presentation about socio cultural background near Palipbothana Megalithic burial site. As there had been no deep study on

archeological and historical values in the region, the basic study has focused on the identification of socio, economic, religious, political and cultural factors.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The fundamental objective of this study is to understand socio-cultural background in suburb of Palipbothana Megalithic burial site. However, in the view of broad meaning, there are a few other minor objectives as well.

1. To understand the traditional structure and the organization of a village situated in the dry zone.
2. To identify present socio cultural background of the Palipbothana area
3. To research the old and present socio-cultural background comparatively
4. To study the involvement of the governmental and non-governmental organizations for the development of the Palipbothana area.
5. To identify the effect of the above-mentioned organizations for the adaptations of the socio-culture in the Palipbothana area.

### **Research Methodology**

In researching anthropologically and sociologically, the socio-cultural background in the Palipbothana area, it was studied under the theory of qualitative research methodology. Accordingly, Ethnography Method, Historical Method, Comparative Method and Functional Method were used. From the Ethnography Method, human culture was widely studied. From Historical Method, the historical, social and cultural background and their gradual spread were studied. The historical socio cultural background and present socio- cultural background were studied through the comparative method. An assessment of the nature of the effect and the advantageous and disadvantageous results were studied from the functional method.

When selecting the sample, Simple Random Sampling was used and communities in relation to different layers in the village were joined. Accordingly, adults, youths, businessmen, government servants, religious leaders and Ayurvedic practitioners handed in the research. From the holistic approach, the whole area was studied and the people who represented above mentioned fields were connected with the research.

In presenting data collection technique, attention was paid to qualitative data collection. Interviews were mainly used as the primary data collection methodology and

interviews were held with key informants. In addition, information was taken from focused group discussions.

In collecting secondary data, the reports of Grama Niladari, Resource Profile of the Kahatagasdigiliya DSD village and the reports of the Development officer were used. The data collected from these were analyzed and a broad understanding on socio cultural background was taken.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Location of Palipbothana Megalithic Burial Site**

The Palipbothana Megalithic burial site, a historically important archaeological monument, which is situated at Palipbothana in Anuradhapura District, Kahatagasdigiliya Divisional Secretariat, Rathmal Gaha Wewa region and Palipbothana GS division is being devastated at the moment with the interference of the human activities. This site is limited to Wewelkattiya, Palipbothana and Rathmalgahawewa. Further, Rathmal Gaha wewa 225 GS division lies North to the site when the Mahakumbuk Wewa 222 to the South and Thamblaagollewa to the West. While Palipbothana GS division belongs to the Horowpothana electorate, the name of the village is used as Palipbothana or Palipbothana.

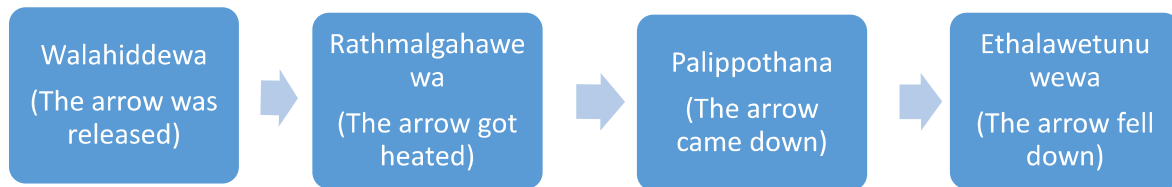
### **Access Roads to the Palipbothana Megalithic Burial Site**

Three identified entrance roads are available to the spot. When it is considered from the Anuradhapura town, the first entrance road goes along the A9 to the Rambewa and another 1km towards Medawachchiya. At the Welioya junction, a right turn should be taken and proceed further 21 kilometers along the Rathmalgahawewa road to enter the Palipbothana village. The second entrance road lies 20 km from Anuradhapura to Medawachchiya along the Rathmalgahawewa road. The third one is 12km from Kahatagasdigiliya along the Kahatagasdigiliya- Rathmalgahawewa road.

### **Historical Background of the Palipbothana Study Area**

When the historical background of the study area is concerned, basically it is the way the name of this village originated. The villagers stated that an arrow shot at a bear had come down in the area and the name came according to that.

“The name Palipbothana came into operation as an arrow came down in the area. This arrow was released at Walahiddewa and it got heated at Rathmalgahawewa.” (Male, 63 years Old)



*Chart 2-1 How the village got its name*

*(Source: Field data, 2021)*

### **The structure of the village**

According to the structure of the village, the features in relation to the dry zone villages still remain here. Upon the prototype tropical village with the concept of village, temple, lake and Dagaba, the main occupation of this is agriculture. It is clear that the village was self-sufficient from many components that have remained in the village. An ancient stereotypical village contained the component such as the Wewa (Lake), the temple, villagers' houses, the headman's house, the barn (Vee Bissa), Thiss Bambaya (Art gallery), the Chena, the Danduweta fence, the altar (Sanhinda), the thicket, the road which takes access to the other villages and the Birds' feeding paddy field (Kurulu paluwa).

From these features Palipbothana clearly contains the lake, the paddy field, the tank bund, the canal, the temple, the altar (Sanhinda), the thicket and the road which has accesses to the other villages. Further, the villagers stated that they had a little memory about the Kurulu Paluwa, Gam Mandiya and Thiss Bambaya.

### **Infrastructure facilities**

Due to the introduction of the infrastructure facilities such as roads, electricity, land fragmentation from the development projects, the prevailed rural atmosphere is changing but ancient rural features still exist there.

The nearest main city to the Palipbothana is Kahatagasdigiliya and the sub city is Rathmalgahe wewa. Three four decades ago, the villagers had come to the Rathmalgahawewa sub city to make their needs fulfilled.

The road bound to Anuradhapura was erected through Rathmalgahawewa 15 years ago. Only one bus is being operated now and it runs six turns in a day.

Electricity was given to the village in 1995 under the patronage of the Parliamentarian E. L. B. Hurella and internet facilities are available at the moment. Though the pipe born water has been supplied to the village, the villagers have tendency to drink fresh water. There is a water filter for this in the village.

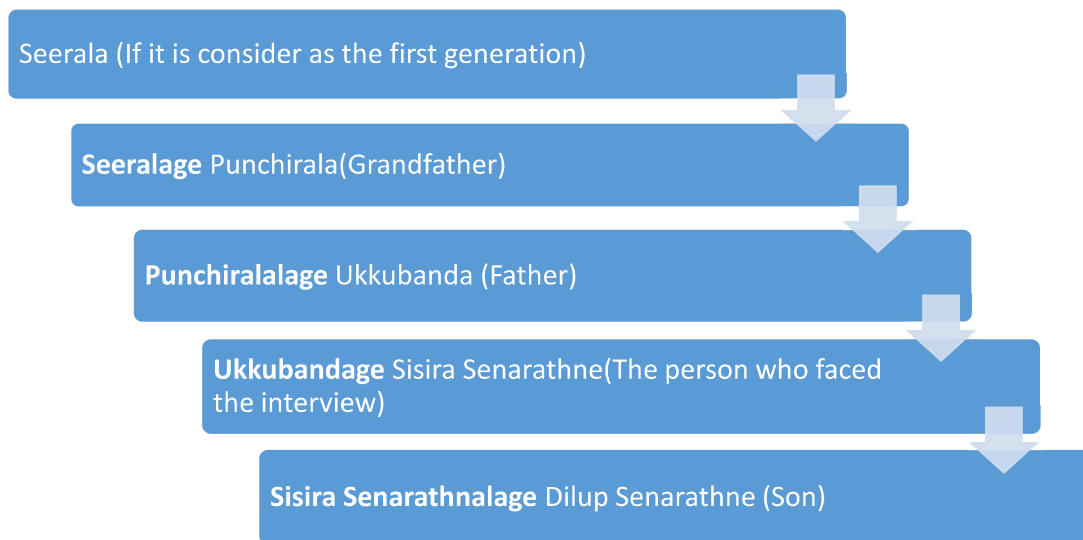
The Kahatagasdigiliya base hospital is used whenever the villagers fall ill and private medical centers in the areas like Rathmalgahawewa, Kahatagasdigiliya and Medawachchiya are used for the minor diseases. Access can be taken to Vauniya or Anuradhapura main cities within one hour. So, these infrastructure facilities have affected the development of the Palipothana a village.

### Family Marriage and Kinship

According to the existing family system in the village,

“We do not get married with anyone from this village or suburbs who is not tallied with the caste. Therefore, some marriages have taken place in far away places by today. There are some who got married from Galle, Kandy and Kurunegala.”  
(Female, 48 years old)

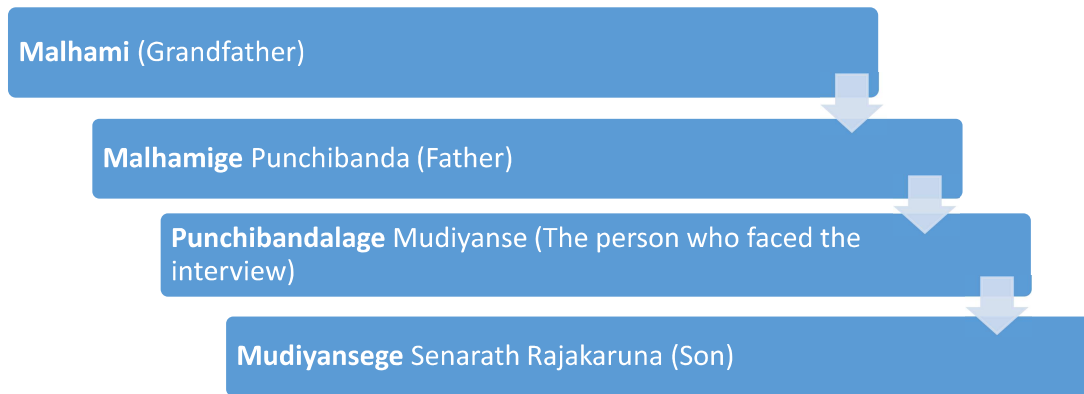
In the kinship analysis of the “Ukku Bandalage Sisira Senaratne”, the following note keeps records on five generations.



*Chart 2-2 Kinship Analysis number 01*

*(Source: Field data, 2021)*

In considering Punchi Bandalage Mudiyanse



*Chart 2-3 Kinship Analysis number 02*

*(Source: Field data, 2021)*

In analyzing the names of these two generations, it is clear that nomenclature happens upon male domination. Basically, son's name starts with latter part of the father's name. So, nomenclature had taken place emerging the possession. This system of nomenclature has avoided the history of the generation and they have tendency to add surnames by today. The main reason for this is the consideration of the surname in making the national identity card. Hence, the surname "Senaratne" has been used by Sisira Senaratne and the children of Punchibandalage Mudiyanse have used the surname of Rajakaruna. It is obvious that father-son nomenclature has been clearly changed.

The nucleus families can be sought in the village by now and the new generation has willingness to do so. The villagers stated that there was the feature of having a bunch of houses existed in the village of Palipbothana. They further said that there were marriages between Brothers in law and sisters in law (Nena and Massina) but with the spread of Thalassemia, this type of marriage has been rejected.

The upcountry marriage system is very popular in this area and this legal system was enacted when marriages were set.

The foundation of the relationships was patriarchal and it is apparent in the process of nomenclature. The family institution is also a patriarchal but equal rights are given to males and females in education.

### **Land consumption and cultivation of the village**

As far as land consumption is concerned in the village, lands are utilized not only for residence but paddy cultivation and chena cultivation. Lands are identified as sinnakkara, Deemana pathra (Swarna Boomi, Jayaboomi, Rathna Boomi and Ran Bima). There are a few Sinnakkara lands and there are no land reservations notified by the gazette.

At present, those who are out of the village have purchased lands with commercial purposes. They use these lands for animal husbandry and commercial cultivations. In Palipbothana, permanent land reservation for Chena cultivation was not available in the past but now they have permanent lands for this.

“Those days chena cultivation in forests was done by us not in the same place every year but in different places year by year. No serious deforestation happened in the history. Corn or finger millet was cultivated in the ‘Mas’ season and sesame was cultivated in the ‘Yala’ season.” (Male, 73 years old)

When paddy cultivation is done the ‘Mas’ season falls between October and February and ‘Yala’ season in the month of May. The rain water is used for the paddy cultivation and they are faced with heavy difficulties of water during the drought season. The farmers mentioned that they perform some rituals before the cultivation activities.

“In 2005 and 2006, corn cultivation was commercially introduced in the area. Now, corn, finger millet and vegetables are grown in the chenas. Weedicides and pesticides are used by the farmers as they do these types of cultivations with the commercial purpose. (Grama Niladari)”

### **Religious Beliefs and Witchcraft of Villagers**

In the studies of Religious Beliefs and Witchcraft of Villagers, the main religion was Buddhism. They mentioned that the ‘Deva Observations’ hailed from the past had become a reason to consider this village a historical one.

Veheramaniyan is a folklore in Palipbothana woven around a place with a historical value. The villagers have a respect blend with fear to this place and the place has been offered since ancient times. The villagers believe that there is a deity called Veheramanian in the place. The worshipping for the gods contributes to the social control by protecting the base of collaboration. Because of the fear that the villagers have towards this place, they prevent

from consuming alcohol and engaging in gambling. The first part of their harvest is offered to this Veheramanian. They believe that the deity stands for the protection of them.

“We make offerings to the Veheramanian from ancient times. People are afraid of Veheramanian. So, they don’t commit anything wrong. When the meritorious acts happen in the village, they start with beating the Daula. There are many miracles in the temple. When something is expected, it is received and wrong doers are punished by the Veheramaanian.” (Male, 53 years old)

On the Poya days, the villagers flock to this place to observe Sil. A monk is taken from the Mahakumbukwewa temple for religious observations. These villagers subscribe to Mahakumbukwewa temple and alms are given to this temple. In vice versa, the monks in this temple perform last rituals of the villagers. In addition to this, there are five important offering ceremonies in the village of Palipbothana.

“They are

1. Bulath Yahan offering ceremony
2. Mutti offering ceremony
3. Patti ceremony
4. Kovil alms giving
5. Pullyar alms giving” (Wedamahatha)

The altar (Yahana) is made by the Kapu in the village before the new year day known as old new year day. The deity is invited to the Yahana by offering beetles and three arecas with the scented smelly fumigation. The deity is kindly requested to make villagers’ needs fulfilled and this offering of beetle leaves is annually performed.

Mutti Mangalya (ceremony of offering clay pots) is a very popular witch practice that is performed once in seven years. This is organized by the chief farmer (Gamarala) and the representative of the god (Kapurala) with the support of the astrologist (Nekathrala) in the village. After seven years, the date is determined by the astrologist, there with practice is performed in a Devala erected on the village’s tank bund. All the villagers in the village carry rice and coconut to the spot and the Kapurala casts a pleading oration (Yathika). The clay pots are settled at about 3 a.m. on a specially selected tree on the tank bund pleading that the villagers expect prosperity and protection for their crops. This is very special ceremony to the village and they do it with a special preparation.



Patti Danaya is also considered a special ceremony for the gods. This Dana is offered with the contribution of all the inhabitants in the village. Two forms can be identified from this ritual. The first one is Rjahaliya known as preparing the milk rice whereas the second one is the Danaya for Walliamma. There are three special curries that are prepared with rice for this. They are Angunukola Melluma, Cucumber and Kiri Hodi.

The Dana known as Kovil Dana is specially prepared for the Sathpattini deity in order to receive blessings to get rid of epidemics. In addition, well known Dana called Pullyar Dana is offered soon after the harvesting is over.

As far as witch practices are concerned, all the activities in relation to the farming are performed at the auspicious time by worshipping at the Lord Buddha and the gods.

Before harvesting the paddy fields in the village, the Kapurala makes a Gok (an immature Cadjan) altar and offerings are made to it. Then, the first soil sod is cut at the auspicious time and later seed paddy is sown again at the auspicious time.

Those days, medication is done to a cut in weir (Wakkada) to chase the harmful pests from the paddy field. Chosen herbal leaves are set in the Wakkada to melt with the water that flows through it. The liquid herbal then touches with the paddy saplings in the field and different pests are killed. In addition to these, witch practices such as lighting Hulu Athu (a bundle of dries coconut leaflets that are easily inflammable) and setting threads (Nool Adeema) are done.

“In these villages, all the cultivating activities are done at the auspicious times by offering the gods. On Fridays, seed paddy is sown while finger millet is sown on Tuesdays. Those days people were with sound practices and good qualities. All the work was done after the observances of Lord Buddha and the gods. So, the cultivation was fruitful. Now the people are not the same. So, the production was not as fruitful as it was” (Wedamahatha).

In the village of Palipbothana, olden chenas were cultivated on a good day and at a right time. All these happen on a collaborative basis. The grains that were cultivated were finger millet, corn, Kaupea, Thana, Meneri, Sesame and mustard while the vegetables were pumpkin, peas, ladies finger, brinjal, bitter gourd and luffa. Even the green leaves are grown in the chenas.

According to that, most of the rituals, offerings and the witch practices are performed in order to get rid of the diseases and receive prosperity. Though there is a Buddhist religious background, the villagers have a strong belief on the concept of gods. There are many customs and rituals for this and the collaborative basis and the social control also happen because of this.

### **Food Culture of the Villagers**

As dietary habits are concerned, in the village of Palipbothana, they have a common pattern for this. They make rice from the paddy taken from the paddy fields and vegetables, and green leaves are taken from the chena. In addition to these the yams that are taken from the chena and the fruits grown in the village are consumed by them. They stated that they consumed herbal food those days.

They visit Kahatagasdigiya fair once a week to buy things that are not available in the village. By today they have tendency to buy food and vegetables brought from Dambulla and the olden food pattern has completely changed. Apart from that they buy what they want from the mobile vehicles and from small shops in the area.

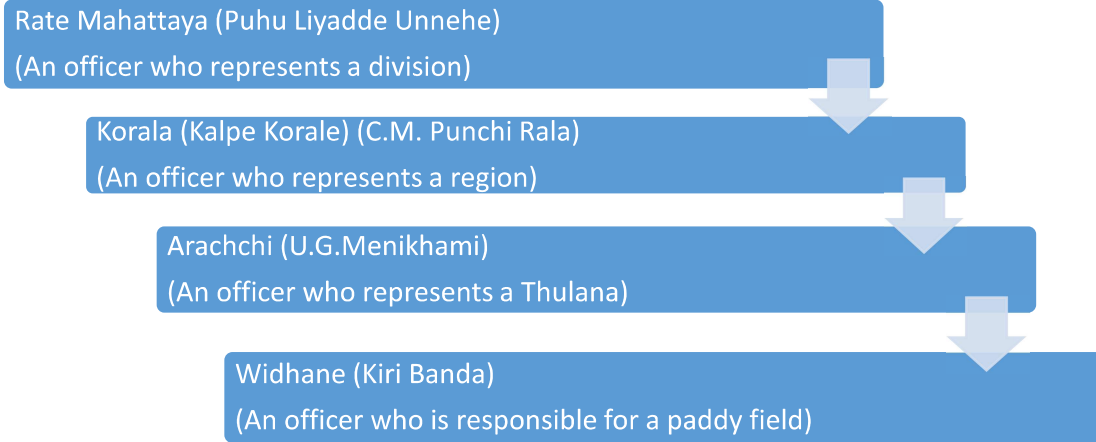
### **Indigenous Medicine**

In the village of Palipbothana, there is a clever indigenous medical generation which is related to snake bites and tumour and they heal them using medicinal plants and casting spells with many superstitious. Mr. Ranasinghe, who is very famous indigenous medical practitioner, works even as the chief Kapu (A representative or link person with the god).

“I hail from a medicinal generation and my father also healed the patients. The medicinal recipes were stated in the Olas and this healing method is called recipe-medicine. This can heal the patient physically and mentally. There are beliefs and practices in relation to this healing system and theacts like casting spells to coconut oil, casting Buddhist spells and hanging a tread round the neck are done.”  
(Wedamahatha)

### **Administration Structure of the village**

As the administration of the village Palipbothana is in accordance with the main administration structure, the village owns the officers like Grama Niladari, Development Officer, Samurdhi Officer, Agricultural Office and the midwife. When analyzing the ancient administration structure, it is as follows.



*Chart 2-4 Ancients Administration Structure*

*(Source: Field data, 2021)*

It can be identified that the citizens in the villagers of Palipbothana are amidst the main political parties, UNP and Freedom Party. The first minister who was elected in 1971 representing Kahatagasdigiliya electorate was ELB Hurulle and the next presentation went to Themiya Hurulle whose father was ELB Hurulle. ELB Hurulle pioneered to offer the ownership of lands to the residents.

### **Present Issues in the village**

During the war-torn period, it was adversely affected to the development of the village. It was stated that the collaboration of the village lead to the protection of the village. At present the Farmers' Association and the death Donation society are very active and the collaborative base of the village is protected by them.

According to the residents of village Palipbothana, the main issues they are faced with are wild elephants and renal failure disease. Neither of these issues have received solution and not receiving a reasonable price to their crops, lack of knowledge on crop management and the damages that happen to their crops are the other issues they have with them.

In the past, rushing the wild elephants to the villages was not a problem but it has become a problem at present as elephant corridors are restricted by the constructions. The reasons for this issue depend on the decrease of elephants' feeding areas, the changes of wild elephants' life style and the effect of the human activities.

## **Conclusion**

When analyzing above facts it is clear that the village Palipbothana had a self-sufficient economic system which was a feature of the dry zone. The process of changing the social structure that took place lately, the rural atmosphere was also changed and at the moment urban qualities are also available in the village. But this ancient village which has very long history that traces 369 BC contains archeological monuments that put forward the uniqueness and the identity of Sri Lankan civilization.

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