

## **The Etymological Inherit**

Taking a synchronic point of view, Sinhala place names are more common in the Sinhala speaking areas in the South, whereas Tamil place names are more common in the Tamil speaking areas in the North and East. On a diachronic point of view, things are more complicated, and both Sinhala settlements in the North and Tamil settlements in the South have been claimed to have been more common in the past. The motivation behind such analyses is not always scientific; political goals also play a role in claiming a certain area for a certain language group, see the next section for more discussion of this. The following statements have to be interpreted with this caveat in mind.

Sinhalese place names are found throughout the island. As discussed by Sri Lankan historians such as Paul E Peiris, Karthigesu Indrapala, and others, pre-Christian stone inscriptions of Sri Lanka point to the extensive use of the Sinhala language in local administration. Much of the information for tracing the old place names comes from etymology,

written texts, many stone inscriptions which are in Sinhala and dating back to pre-Christian times, as well as the more recent colonial records.

Dutch and British records show that the language of the inhabitants of Vanni in the 17th and 18th centuries were Tamil, some of them considered Tamils to be 'strangers' (foreign) to the island.

According to M. Chelvadurai(a Tamil), only Tamil words were used for natural and human-made features in the Vanni region with no trace of Sinhalese words, while Vanni itself is a Sinhala word. According to Professor K. Kularatnam, when analyzing the regional distribution of place names in Sri Lanka, one not only comes across Tamil names in areas that are Sinhala-speaking, and vice versa, but also composite or hybrid place names which are part Sinhalese and part Tamil in composition, as well as Sinhalese and Tamil place names juxtaposed within small areas.

The great historian Mr. H.C.P.Bell puts in writing the etymological name of the city in his writing of ' Kagalu Record' as follows," King Walagamba was assembling the warrior cadres to win over the Tamil enemies. In this mission one day the king was en route from Dambulla to Salgala passing Danagirigala and Akiriyagala and waited to have respiration in one of the rock-strewn there. The king enjoyed a quid there and forgot the golden

quid lid there. Later by, as with the proceeding of the journey, the king looked for the quid for another time and remembered that it was there forgotten on the rock-strewn where he enjoyed the refreshment. So the king proclaimed that identified spot as 'Ke -Gala', which means to us in English as the rock-strewn where he ate the quid, to remind the place and that gradually followed its evolutionary name as 'Kegalle' to the modern-day name."

