

POTTERY IN SRI LANKA

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The Potters at the village of Boralessa, Sri Lanka.

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INTRODUCTION

Pottery in Sri-Lanka has a long history. Initially, the craft of pottery may appear to have little importance as most people associate pottery with cooking utensils that are of low value. Moreover today these utensils are used by the people who are still cooking their meals on the open hearth using earthenware vessels. However the simple types of earthenware used by the Sri-Lankans for domestic, architectural and ceremonial purpose are more varied in shape, design and purpose than might appear at first sight. They are elegant in design, simple in shape and excellently suited to their purpose.

From its origins, Sri-Lanka has had the necessary raw material for the making of pots. The island has a tropical wet climate which resulted in a number of rivers that drain the hill slopes in the centre. The rivers deposit fine clay in the lowlands and these areas supply the clay for all types of earthenware. The clay utensils are fired in kilns that use wood as fuel. The tropical wet climate has resulted in the growth of thick forests that supply inexpensive wood which is a good source of fuel. Today the coconut tree also supplies fuel wood.

Early settlers in the island made use of clay and wood to make simple earthenware for cooking. In many ancient sites items of domestic pottery items have been found. At Sigiriya (5th B.C.) even glazed pottery items have been unearthed. Over the centuries this craft continued in existence in many parts of the country. This is an ongoing activity up to present times.

In tracing the history of pottery in Sri-Lanka one serious problem is the dearth of source material that gives information on the subject. No book has been published so far on this subject. Therefore information has to be obtained from literary and historical texts, supplemented by archeological evidence. This information however is not comprehensive. It does not give details about the

craft or craftsmen, their areas of activity, the tools used and their technology.

The only comprehensive account of the craft that has been published is found in Chapter XIII of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy's book called Medieval Sinhalese Art. In this work Dr. Coomaraswamy gives much information on the craft of pottery as practiced during the time of the Kandyan Kingdom. He discusses the state of the craft and the types of earthenware produced. He also discusses the influence of caste on the craft in detail which helps one to understand the place of the potter in the system that prevailed in Sri-Lanka at that time. However in this study the technology employed is not dealt with.

The more recent developments in the craft will be studied from papers published in Journals like *Spolia Zeylanica*, *Man*, *Times of Ceylon* annuals.

The craft as it is today will be studied by visits to villages primarily Kelaniya which is famous for pottery in Sri-Lanka. At Kelaniya the craft can be studied at more than one level.

- a) The village level of the craft where the potter uses the ancient traditional methods.
- b) More modern techniques using kick wheels, electric wheels and imported glazes as used at the Government Mechanised pottery centre.
- c) Centres run by private enterprise using traditional methods and designs which produce functional and non-functional items for export and also for the local market.

The study reveals that pottery as an art has a long way to go in Sri-Lanka. One reason for this state is the strong factor of casteism. Village potters who still form a strong backbone of the potter community in Sri-Lanka belong to the Badahala caste. The name itself in Sri-Lankan society denotes a group of people

of low socio-economic status. However among the members of this community craft skills are strongly preserved. These skills are not taught to members of other castes, who may have the aptitude to develop the craft.

This attitude has been a major setback in the development of this craft in recent times.

Apart from the caste factor the system of education in the country has been responsible for the lack of interest in pottery as a craft. Education in Sri-Lanka is still geared to examinations with an academic bias. Thus practical and vocational areas of education have been neglected.

Still another reason is that potters have to face competition from other areas like the metal industry which makes cooking utensils that are more durable.

In spite of these drawbacks the craft of pottery in Sri-Lanka has a future that is promising. Better technology can enhance the beauty and quality of the product. This has been proven beyond doubt by some of the products displayed by the salesrooms of the Department of Small Industries and also by a few craftsmen in the private sector.

CHAPTER 1

Sri-Lanka or Ceylon (as it was named by the British) is an island in the Indian Ocean. Situated between 5°55 and 9°51 North Latitude and 79°42 and 81°52 Eastern longitude, it has the pleasant weather of a tropical country (Fig 1). It is separated from the southern extremity of the peninsula of India by the Gulf of Mannar and the Palk Strait. The island is pear shaped and 270 miles from North to South and 140 miles from East to West.

Lying next to India this island was profoundly influenced by the Indian civilisation. But because of the Buddhism, Sri-Lanka has an identity in its culture.

The South Central region of the island is formed by a variety of mountains of which the highest peak is Pidurutagela 8292 feet in height. This extensive and lofty mountain zone is commonly known as the up country. It has spring weather and is well watered by perennial streams and rivers. The rivers of the island generally have their head streams in the hill country (Fig. 2). With a supply of ample rain, the soil and alluvial deposits are found along most of the river beds. They provide fertile soil for rice cultivation. The rivers also supplies clay which enabled the people of the land to make their own clay utensils for cooking and everyday needs.

Throughout the low lying river beds are numerous villages which make pots. Of these villages, Kelaniya situated approximately five miles northeast of Colombo is the most famous of all.

Kelaniya village lies on the banks of the river Kelani which is the important river that flows through the western side of the island.

The South-Western wet zone had a forest cover which was similar to the tropical rain forests. Today unfortunately most of the forest cover is cleared as a

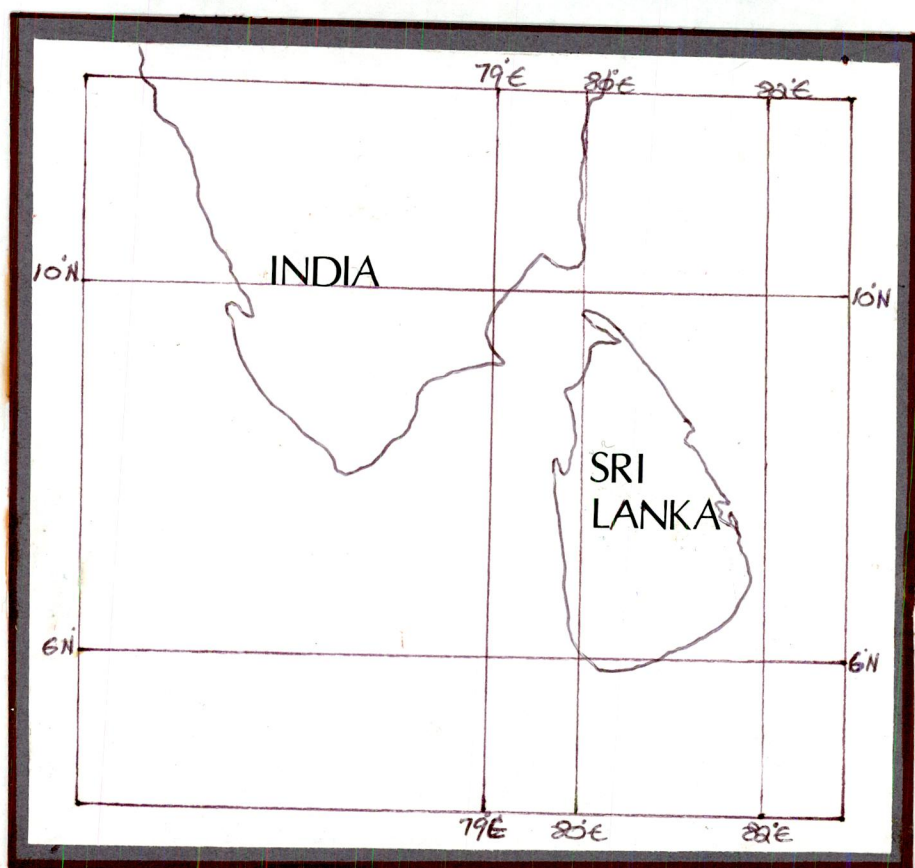


fig.1

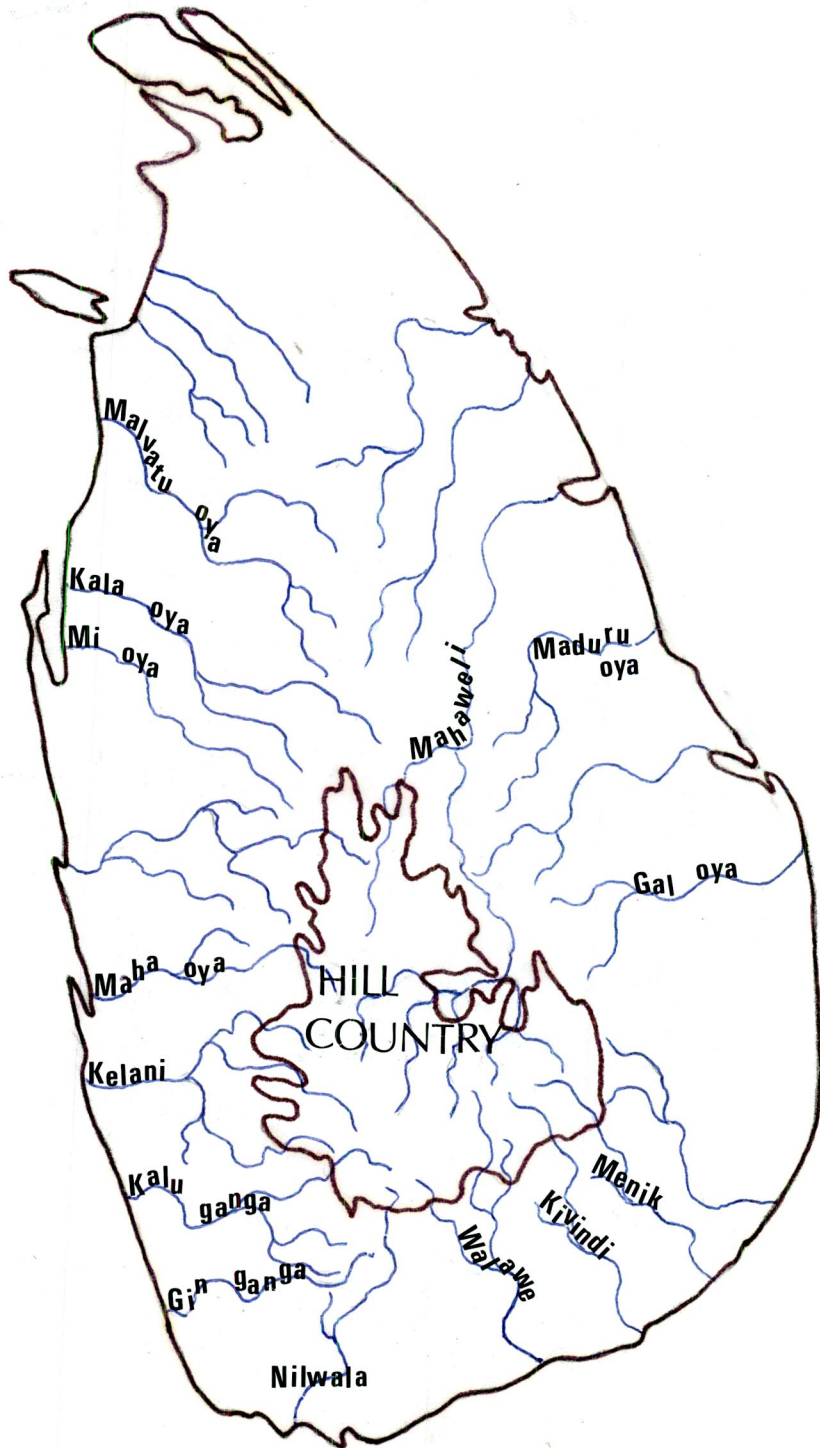


fig.2

result of growth of cash crops like coconut, rubber and tea. However there is a forest reserved at Sinharaja close to Rathnapura district which preserves the luxurious growth typical of rain forests. The eastern plains and the hill slopes have monsoon forests which get less rain. These forests supply village potters with supplies of wood for their kilns.

Legend merges into history in the chronicles of Sri-Lanka; the greatest of these is the Mahavansa. According to the legend the first visitor to the island was Adam, on his expulsion from paradise. In 543 B.C. on the day the Buddha gained enlightenment the North Indian prince Vijaya landed in Sri-Lanka and founded the Sinhalese race. Anthropologists believe that before the coming of the Sinhalese the indigenous people were related to the Australian aborigines. Their descendents were the Veddas, the bushmen of Sri-Lanka, who were driven more and more to becoming hunters in the remote parts of the island.

By about 400 B.C. Anuradhapura became the capital of the island. In 250 B.C. Mahinda the son of the Indian Emperor Asoka came to preach Buddhism. The Sinhalese King Devanampiyathissa became a Buddhist, the first of the builders of temples and monasteries. In the 12th century the capital was moved to Polonnaruwa because of the invasions of the Dravidian Tamil Kings. After this time the capital was frequently moved around to the western parts of the island (Fig. 3).

When the Portuguese landed in Sri-Lanka in 1505 the capital was Kotte, just inland from present day Colombo. In the 17th century the King of Kandy called the Dutch to get rid of the Portuguese. In 1796 the British ousted the Dutch. In 1815 the British exiled the last King Sri-Wikrama Rajasinha ending the Sinhalese Kingdom after 2,300 years.

Ceylon remained a British colony until 1948 when it became a Republic within the Commonwealth and the name changed to Sri-Lanka.

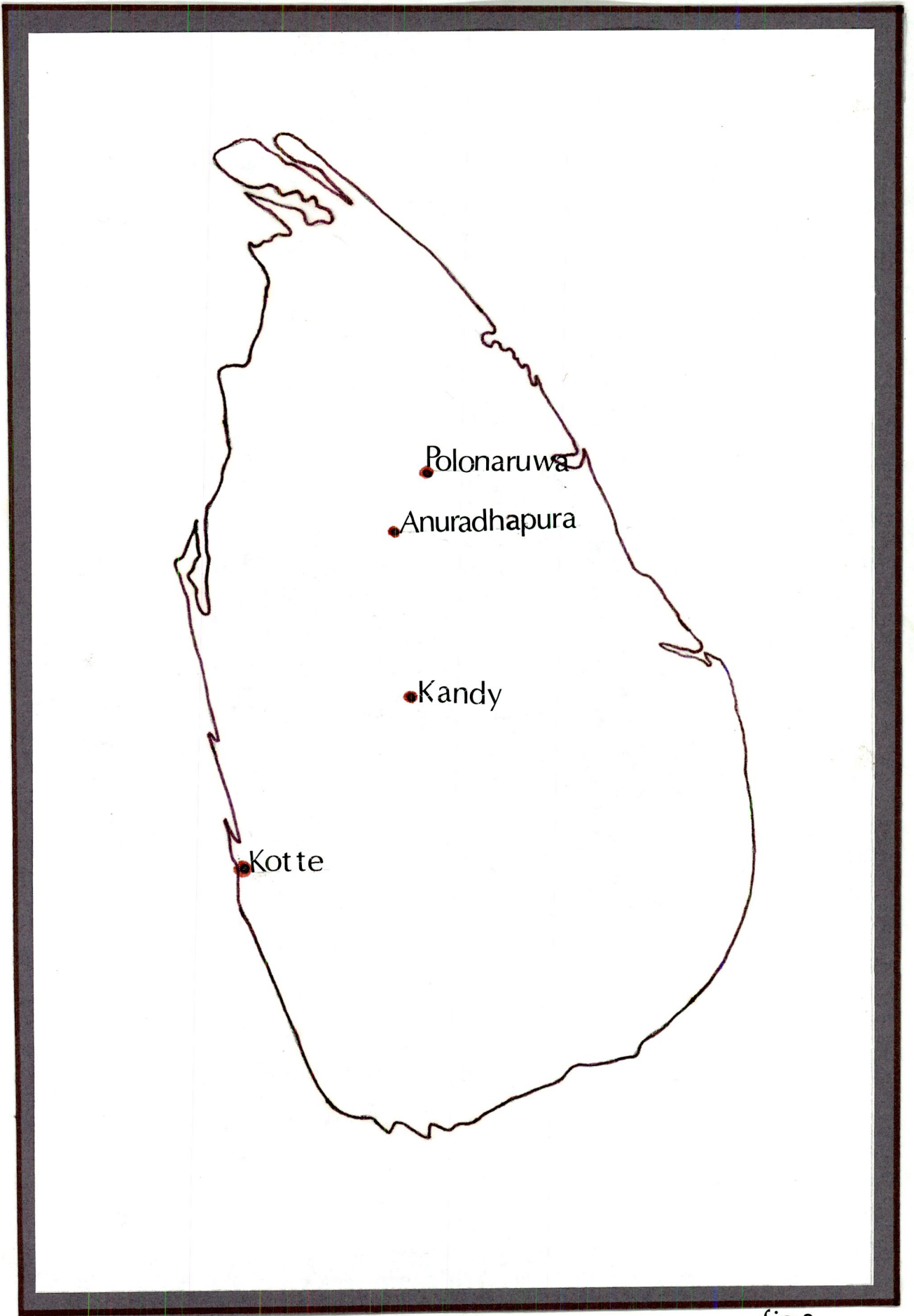


fig.3

CHAPTER 2

Sinhalese social organisation up to 1833 was feudal in structure and was based on the system of caste. The caste system was organised on the principle of function with the King as the central head. Therefore it was called the Rajakariya System (Service to the King). The King granted land to chieftains and they granted land to various castes in return for services rendered by them. The British abolished this system in 1833 on the recommendation of the Cole Brook Commission. The purpose of its abolition was the promotion of social mobility.

The caste system in Sri-Lanka is similar to the Dravidian and it differs from the Aryan four-fold system of North India. The Aryan four-fold system of the Hindus of North India had as the main divisions in society the:

- 1 Brahmin (Priest)
- 2 Kshtria (Warrior-King)
- 3 Vaishya (Agriculturists, Artisans and Merchants)
- 4 Shudras (Menial Worker).

In Sri-Lanka it is the Dravidian system that prevails, maybe because of the proximity of South India to Sri-Lanka. The order of castes in Sri-Lanka were:

- 1 Brahmin
- 2 Raja (king)
- 3 Cultivator
- 4 Merchant.

But as there was no place for Brahmins in a Buddhist country the Royal Family formed a caste by itself. Also merchants were very few and therefore the farmer caste remained the most important next to the King.

Authorities differ somewhat as to the order of precedence of the

remaining castes (see Appendix I). They are given the following order in the Janavamsa a pali poem of the 15th Century, often regarded as an authoritative work especially by the craftsmen.

Some categories were considered essential. Kings, Brahmins, farmers, merchants and other house-holders obtained the services of those castes during weddings, funerals and festivals. Thus the carpenters made the necessary furniture, the tailors made the clothes, the washermen supplied the white cloth for canopies and for laying on the floors. The barbers and the shoemakers supplied the necessary footwear. These were also referred to as the five servant castes, In return for these services they were given land by the King, the Chieftain or by the temple. Land granted by the King or Chieftain is called a Nindagama, by the temple, a Viharagama and by a devale, a Devalagama.

The potter in the feudal system belonged to the Bادهලා caste (No. 10 in the appendix I). His services consisted of supplying the proprietor with all the necessary earthenware for his house, bath and lodgings on journeys, for cooking and soaking paddy (rice) for festivals, devil dancing ceremonies, weddings and funerals. They also had to supply tiles and bricks for the roofs of tiled buildings and make clay vases and lamps for the temples. They made presents of chatties (utensils for cooking curries) to the proprietor and petty officers in the Government. When large quantities of bricks, tiles and utensils had to be supplied, the proprietor provided the clay, kilns sheds and firewood to the potters. According to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy in his Medieval Sinhalese Art there was department for potters called the Bahadela Badda, which was one of fourteen departments of public works during the time of Sinhalese Kings of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The four Korales is described as follows:

In Galboda Korale and Paranakuru Korale are eight potters under the orders of a vidane (village headman) of their own caste appointed by

the Dissawa (chieftain). The potters of the first division attend on duty in Kandy during one month at the Maha Gabadawa (The King's Store House) and are then relieved by those of the second division, who serve one month more. During this period they are obliged to furnish as many earthen vessels as are required for the King, and to make tiles and bricks and platform as required for the King's service. At their departure from duty each division supplies one hundred earthen vessels to the King's Palace. This two months duty is performed in rotation with the potters of the upper districts, the Seven Korales Ura and Matale and recut once in ten months.

In the Dissavanaya (the Chieftains area) they are bound to furnish tiles, bricks and all types of pottery for the Dissava's use and earthen vessels to the different rest houses when the King or Ambassadors come to the Dissavanaya. (Coomaraswamy 1908, p.218).

The following are examples of potter's services due to the proprietors of a Nindagama, Devalagama or Viharagama owned Seven Ninda Pangu. The services due from three tenants were at the old New Year to give a pingo-load (yoke-load) of earthenware consisting of twelve small pots or proportional number of large pots and a separate service such as a goblet or jug if the potter is expert enough to make them, if not he supplies forty leaves of betel (tropical Asian plant whose leaf is chewed with betel-nuts). He repairs the roof of the Walauwa (the Chieftain's house) with tiles provided by the owner; on important occasions such as weddings, devil dancing ceremonies, he brings cooking vessels.

In Kotagepitiya village a potter named Panditage owned the following services to the Hanguranketa Pattini Devala (the Temple fo God Pattini) in return for two pelas of padyland (a pelais is small extent of paddyland).

Yearly to give two pingo loads of pottery, one for the Perahera (the annual procession) and the other for the Alutsal festival (the festival to celebrate the bringing in of the harvest), to present a pingo load to the Basnayake Nilame (chief incumbent of the temple) at the perahera, to make tiles when required, to shift the tiles of Devale. (Coomeraswamy 1908, p.219). (see footnotes).

To the Kundasale Vihare the potters had to supply for the four festivals, 8 pingo loads of earthenware, 2 for each festival. Each pingo load had to contain 2 Tali (utensil for cooking curries), 2 Kalagedi (water pot), 2 Koras (utensil for washing rice), 2pot-valan (utensil for eating rice), 3 Loku appalla (big pot for cooking rice), 6 podi Appalla (small pot for cooking), 1 Etiliya (pot for cooking curry) and 1 Dummala Kabala (incense burner).

These extracts will show what services were rendered by the potters in respect of the lands held by them. They worked for themselves and their neighbours receiving payment from the latter.

After the abolition of Rajakariya or the feudal system of land tenure in 1833 it was no longer necessary for the potters to supply services to the chiefs or the temples. From this period onwards they began to make pottery utensils for sale in the open market. However the prices of pottery items were low and potters only managed to make a frugal living on their sales.

Caroline Corner in the Monthly Literary Register of 1899 describes the abject poverty of the Sinhalese potters.

Potters are considered low caste and poor, but they have an instinct of the beautiful alive in them. They live in mud huts. Women wear a mere rag to cover their bodies from neck to bosom and another round their waist. The Sinhalese potter is conservative and primitive. (Corner 1899, p.98) (see footnotes).

In the 20th century with the advancement of education which gave rise to social mobility potters entered other fields of activity like the Government clerical service, the banking services, the teaching profession and various trades. With the advance of modernisation cooking utensils, pots and pans made of metal (mainly aluminium) began to be increasingly used in kitchens. They are more durable and people were prepared to spend more money to buy metal pots because of this advantage. As a result many potters have given up their traditional craft and their sons and daughters have entered into fields of economic activity. This has resulted in their being socially accepted as the stigma of caste has been removed. Therefore many villages that were once famous for pottery are no longer engaged in this craft.

CHAPTER 3

Vishvakarma is the great craftsman of the universe, the Architect of the Gods (Fig. 4). He revealed the Sthapatya Veda or the Science of Architecture and Mechanics. The Mahabharatha describes him as 'The Lord of the Arts, the Technician of the goldsmiths, designer of all ornamentals. He made the celestial chariots of the Gods. He is continually worshipped as a great and immortal God. In India he is referred to as a technician, carpenter and architect of the Gods'.

In the Mahavansa, the Great Chronicle of Sri-Lanka (Chapter XXVIII) he is referred to as assisting human undertakings at the command of the Gods. By his aid bricks have miraculously produced. In Chapter XXX the King asked the master builder 'In what form wilt thou make the Cetiya? (Dageba)'. At that moment Visvakarma entered into him (possessed by him) when the master builder had a golden bowl, filled with water, he took water in his hand and let it fall on the surface of the water in the bowl. A great bubble rose up like unto a half-globe of crystal. He said 'Thus will I make it and the well pleased King bestowed on him a pair of garments worth a thousand (pieces of money) and ornamental shoes and twelve thousand Kahapanas (a unit of money).

The craftsman conceives of his art not as accumulated knowledge of ages, but originating in the divine skill of Vishvakarma and revealed by him. Beauty, rythm, idea and proportion have an absolute existence or an ideal plane, where all who seek may find. The reality of things exist in the mind, not in the detail of their appearance to the eye. This inward inspiration upon which the artist is taught to rely appears like the voice of God. That God was conceived of Vishvakarma. He may be thought of that part of divinity, which is conditioned by the spiritual relation to artistic expression. In another way he may be conceived of as the sum total of consciousness of individual craftsmen of all ages and places composing a 'group soul', of a higher order of consciousness.

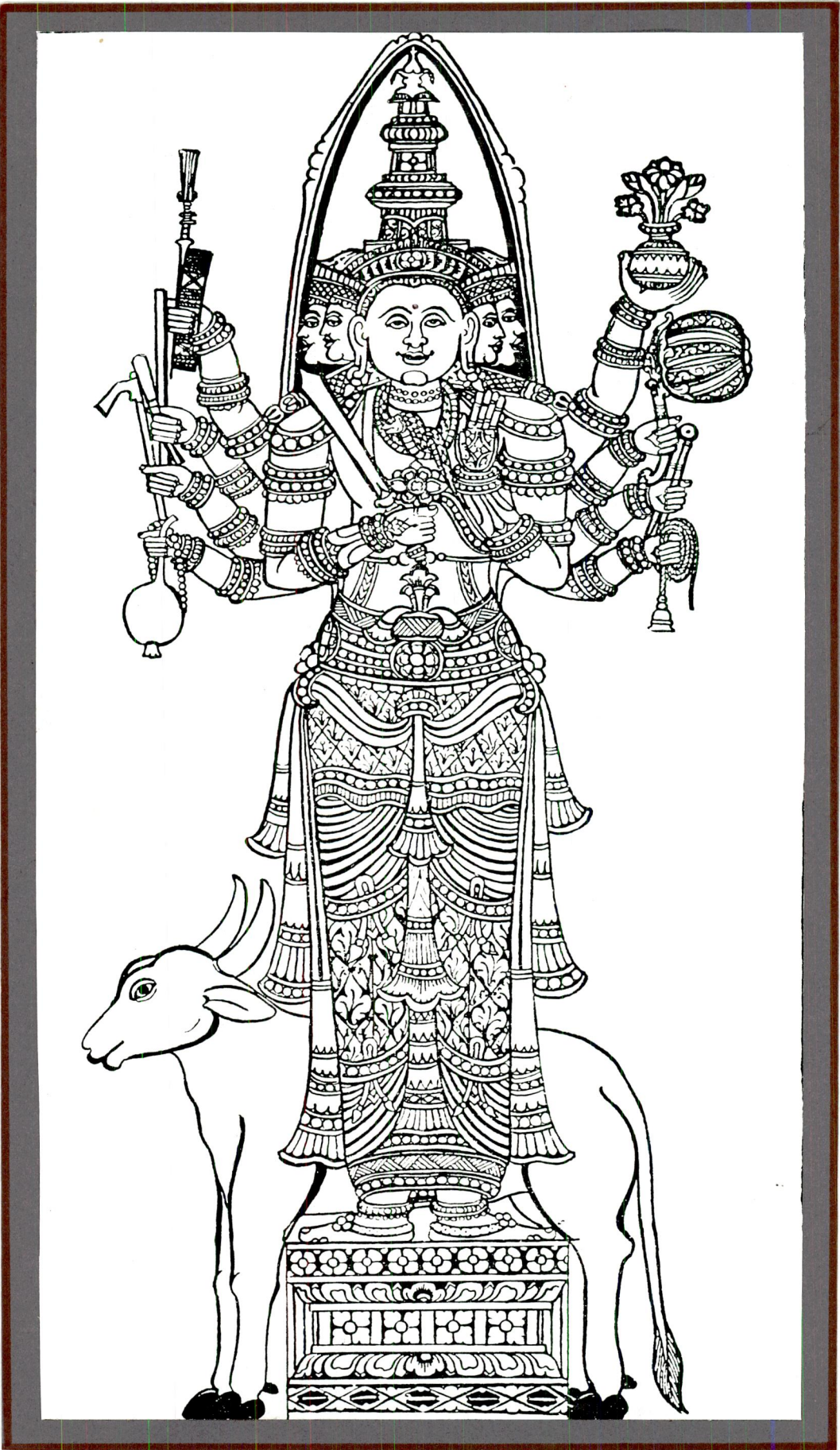


fig.4

God Vishvakarma has five 'tilaka' marked faces, ten arms, one holding a book and writing stylus, others holding a sword, a club, a citron, a cup, a water pot, a rosary, a cobra and a noose, and lastly hands betokening sternness and beneficence (one closed and one opened) and wearing a golden sacred thread.

Vishvakarma is not worshipped by craftsmen with offerings or ritual but often referred to in charms and songs connected with buildings operations where he is invoked to ward off disasters and assist the craftsmen. A special instance is the jump from the threshold when a new house is constructed. The carpenter places the first door frame in the house and jumps inside the house over a bar across the door frame. Mantharas and songs are then chanted to invoke the blessings of God Vishvakarma on the house.

CHAPTER 4

- i) Sri-Lankan earthenware may be roughly classified into four categories.
- 1 Domestic pottery
 - 2 Ecclesiastical pottery
 - 3 Architectural pottery
 - 4 Ornamental (painted) pottery

These types used for the above mentioned purposes are more varied than might seem at first sight. They also possess beauty of form and suitability to the purpose. The last consideration determines the basic form of the vessels. Sinhalese earthenware is primarily utilitarian in character and aim. This quality gives much charm to the elegance of form and the very simple decoration which accompanies it.

Sinhalese pottery fulfils the requirements of good workmanship in earthenware,

- a) the vessel must be of a shape convenient for its purpose
- b) the shape must be one that arises naturally from the mode of manufacturer and exhibits to advantage the plastic properties of clay, without becoming weak or fanciful.
- c) the ornament should not interfere with usefulness and should be appropriate in amount and character in relation to the purpose of the vessel and the material it is made of.
- d) the smoothness of surface and elaborate refinements are not to be thought of as ends in themselves and may appear unsuitable if striven for in vessels meant for ordinary daily use and made of a material that is not overfine.

ii) In domestic pottery the clay used alluvial material that is obtained in most rice fields in the valleys presumably deposited there during floods. Especially good supplies of suitable clay is found in Kumbaldiwela (in the Kegalle district), Ambalanmulla (in the Negombo district), and Kelaniya (in the Colombo district) to name a few villages (Fig. 5).

Red clay which is an alluvial deposit is common in river basins up to a depth of about six feet. Below this level is black clay especially useful in the making of tiles. The proportion for the mixture for pottery is as follows:

red clay	- 2 portions
Black clay	- 1 portion
Sandy clay	- 1 portion
Sand dust	- 1/2 portion

Each variety of clay is cleaned and freed of all dead leaves, bits of wood, pebbles and stone. The different varieties are mixed and then further removed of impurities by means of a strip of bamboo. The compound is then piled up on a large sack on which sand dust is sprinkled to prevent sticking. Water is then added and trampled under foot until a proper consistency is reached. Then the mixture is kneaded.

Potters generally work in the verandahs of their houses or sometimes in separate sheds made for this purpose. The appliances are simple. The wheel is a hand wheel which requires two people - or the potter uses one hand for throwing and the other for turning the wheel head. The wheel is a circular board about 2¹/₂ feet in diameter mounted on a stone which fits onto the ground. The horizontal surface of the wheel itself stands not more than five inches above the ground. The potter sits in front of the wheel and a lump of clay is centred on the wheel head. The potter turns the wheel head with the left hand and makes the pot with the right hand. When it is finished the potter cuts off the pot from the wheel and sets it aside to dry.

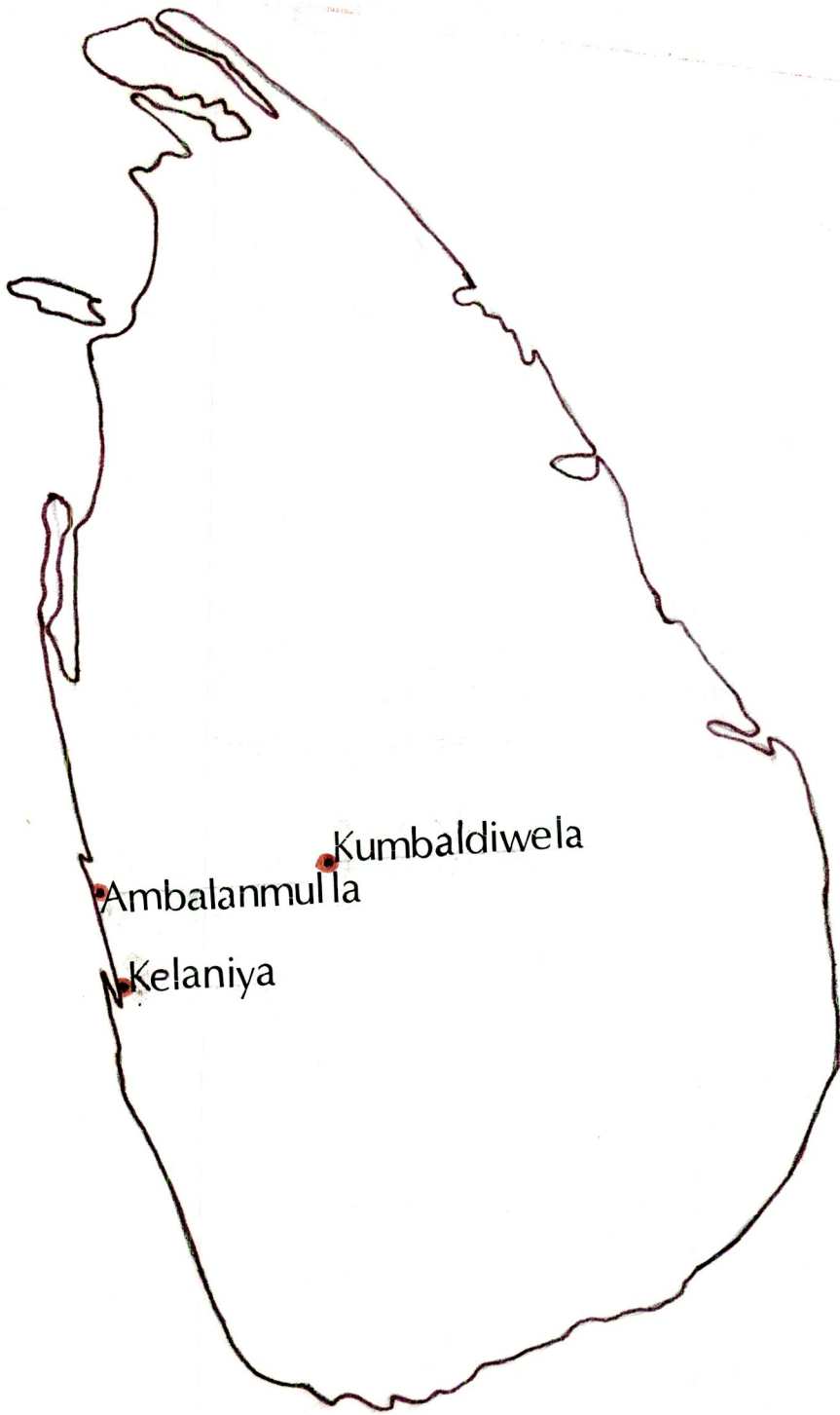


fig.5



fig.6

To finish off the rims a strip of wet cotton material is used. With this the potter smooths off the edges as the wheel turns, pressing it with the finger nail and making the little mouldings at the top. As removed from the wheel the pots are bottomless and have to dry for a few hours ($2\frac{1}{2}$ hours on a sunny day) or, if indoors, for a day before they can be finished.

When they are ready the potter takes a smooth stone in the left hand and a soft wooden bat in the right hand and holding the stone inside the vessel beats and pats its sides till finally they meet across the bottom (Fig. 6). The vessel is rubbed smooth with a bat. Occasionally the surface is polished by rubbing with a smooth seed, any ornament required is now added. The pot is left in the sun for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ days until the surface shows a whitish colour. Now the pot is ready for firing.

In potter's songs translated by Ananda Coomaraswamy from a manuscript lent by Mr. S.D. Mahawalatenna shows the humble and poor Sri-Lankan potter's way of making pots (see Appendix 2).

The firing is done in a low kiln with stone sides and a domed covering of wet clay and sticks or roof tiles. The kiln is square in plan and has three or four openings along one side for the insertion of fuel (firewood) and on the other side small openings for the escape of air. Long sticks are used for fuel, pushed through the openings by degrees as they burn away. The kiln is usually protected from the weather by a rough shed.

Vessels are carefully stacked in the kiln. As many as a hundred could be stacked at a time. A layer of straw is placed over the vessels and covered with clay. The firing commences early morning on any day except on a Wednesday (its considered as an unlucky day). A steady but low fire is maintained for about twelve hours. Then the heat is increased for about six hours. After midnight the fire is left to die out or is removed. The vessels are then ready for removal.

During the rainy season firing may be prolonged by about six hours.

In some Kandyan villages the potter keeps a clay bowl in the centre of the kiln where the heat is at its maximum. In the firing process the bowl turns red like a piece of heated metal, and a blue halo is seen round the bowl. This indicates that the pots are correctly fired.

Domestic pottery has a variety of items to suit various activities connected to the process of cooking on the open fire. Robert Knox, the English author of the book An historical relation of Ceylon, says 'The Sinhalese are apt at making all sorts of earthenware to boil, stew, fry and fetch water in'. (Knox - 1956 Journal 1 - 4) (See footnotes).

There are special terms for all pots. They are Heliya, Kalasa and Walanda. However they may be classified according to form into four major types.

- | | | |
|---|----------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1 | Kalagedi | - vessels for fetching water |
| 2 | Mutti | - vessels storing grain or cooking rice |
| 3 | Appalla | - vessels for cooking curries |
| 4 | Etili | - vessels for cooking curries. |

Kalagedi is a pot that is completely spherical in shape (Fig. 7). It is used mainly for fetching water or storing water and is indispensable to every family. It is carried by women on the hip, the arm passing round the neck. A favourite dance of the village is the Kalagedi Netima (dance with pots). That is performed on ceremonial occasions. The pots used for this dance are smaller than those used for domestic purpose.

Muttiya is a wide mouthed vessel generally used for boiling rice (Fig. 8). They are of different sizes according to the amount of rice cooked and they are sometimes decorated for use during festivals especially the festival connected with bringing the rice harvest into the home every year. This festival is called the

Alutsal Mangalya. The Muttiya is also used for a variety of purposes apart from that of boiling rice and the name changes with use.

Appalla is a shallow vessel used for cooking curries (Fig. 9). They are termed loku appalla (larger vessels) and podi appalla (smaller vessels) according to their size.

Etili are also shallow vessels used for cooking curries (Fig 10). They are wide mouthed. A larger sort of broad shallow pan is used for cooking sweetmeats. A variety with handles are called Kanbola etiliya. Besides these four major types are a variety of other vessels.

Nebiliya is a shallow dish with rim projecting inwards and completely covered inside with a decorated arrangement of deep furrowings (Fig. 11). These are scored before firing by means of a rough wooden comb. The nebiliya is used for washing rice to remove stones and dirt. The fragments of grit in the rice remain behind in the grooves of the nebiliya or are held back by its inwardly projecting rim, as the rice is stirred up in the water and gently poured over the edge. This vessel is used daily in every household when washing rice before cooking.

Koraha is a similar vessel made to stand by the addition of a ring-foot to the vessel (Fig. 12). The ring-foot is not made in one piece with the rest of the vessel but is added after the completion of the underside of the vessel. This vessel in this stage is inverted on the wheel and a ring of fresh clay is added to form a foot. The Koraha is mainly used to wash rice before cooking as well as other purposes.

Bath Valanda is a casserole type dish used for eating rice (Fig. 13). This is a shallow dish with a ring-foot, it resembles a Koraha but has no internal grooves. This is generally used for eating rice. Larger vessels of this category



however are used for washing vegetables and other food items before cooking. Today it is used mostly in the process of squeezing the milk out of the scraped coconut. The scraped coconut is put into a bath valanda and sufficient water is then added. Using the right hand the coconut and water is mixed well and the milk is squeezed out and strained. As the vessel is wide mouthed it suits its purpose. When a larger vessel is used it can hold a larger quantity of scraped coconut and both hands are used to squeeze the milk out.

Gini Kabala (fire dish) is a vessel which is suitable for use as a small hearth or to provide a fire for the goldsmith's blow pipe (Fig. 14).

An ordinary Koraha is more commonly used as a ginikabala.

Gurulettuwa is a narrow necked water vessel or goblet commonly used in households to store drinking water (Fig. 15).

The above account gives a list and description of domestic pottery. It faithfully reflects the simplicity and lack of luxury characterising the typical old fashioned household. The vessels are few and each serves some simple purpose for which it is specially adapted. The vessels are cheap and the value of this rough earthenware is thus so small that breakages are not very serious. Pieces of earthenware however may remain in use for many years and are occasionally even found to be mended. On the other hand Major Davy in the Travels in Ceylon has stated that

there was an extraordinarily great use of earthenware among the Sinhalese in as much as after a feast at which people of different castes have been entertained all the earthenware vessels used on the occasion are destroyed. (Davy - Travels in Ceylon) (see footnotes)

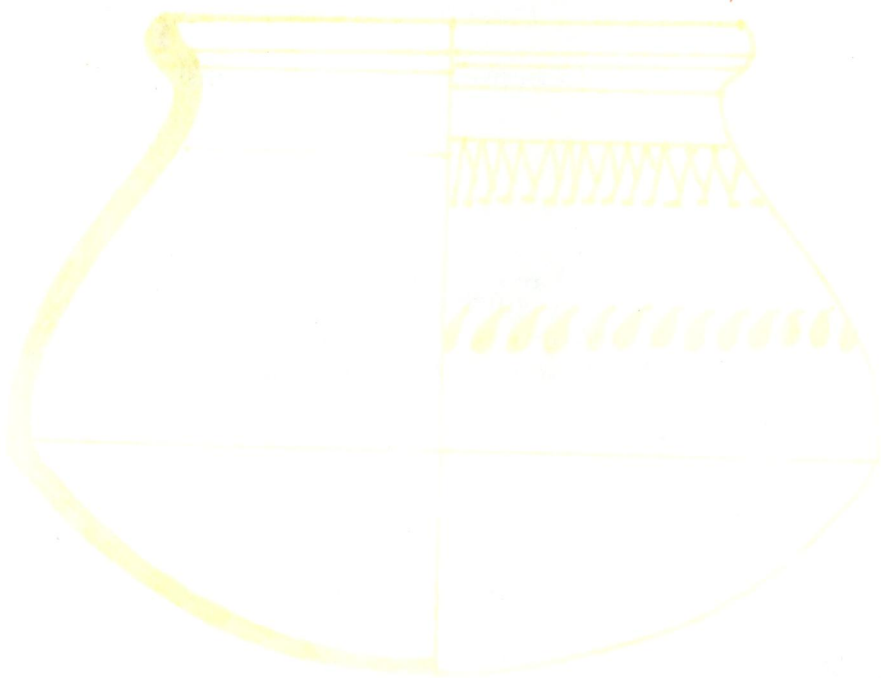




fig.7

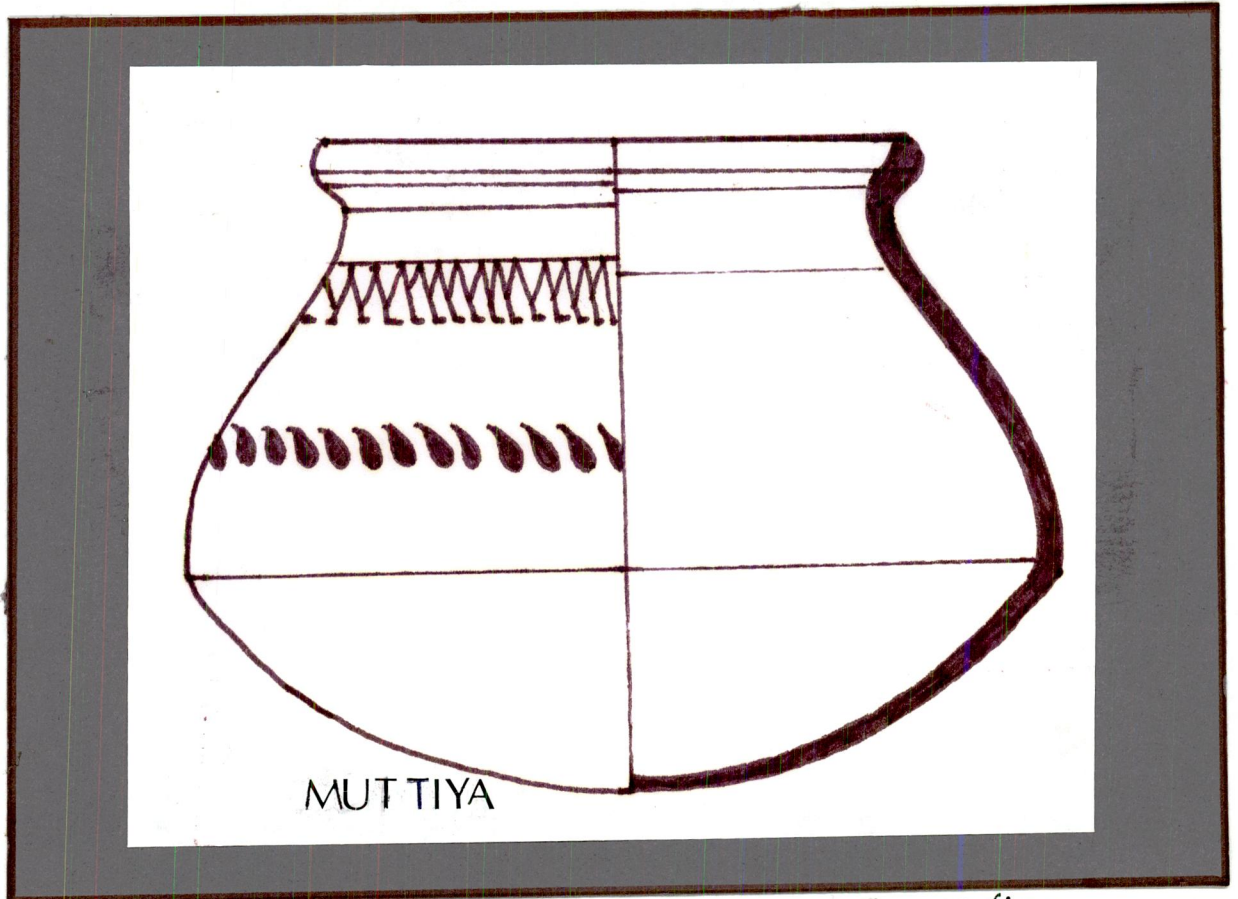
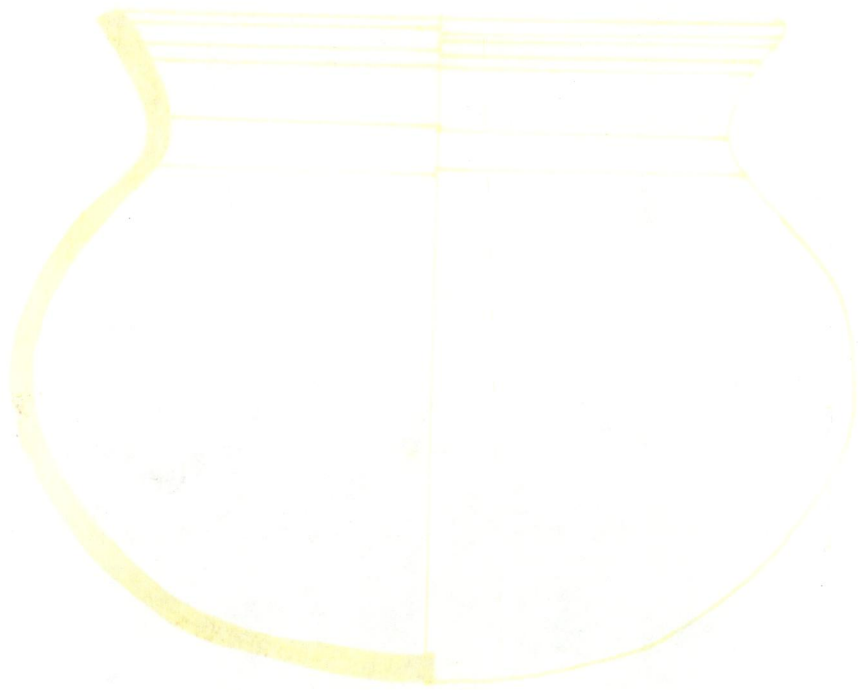


fig.8



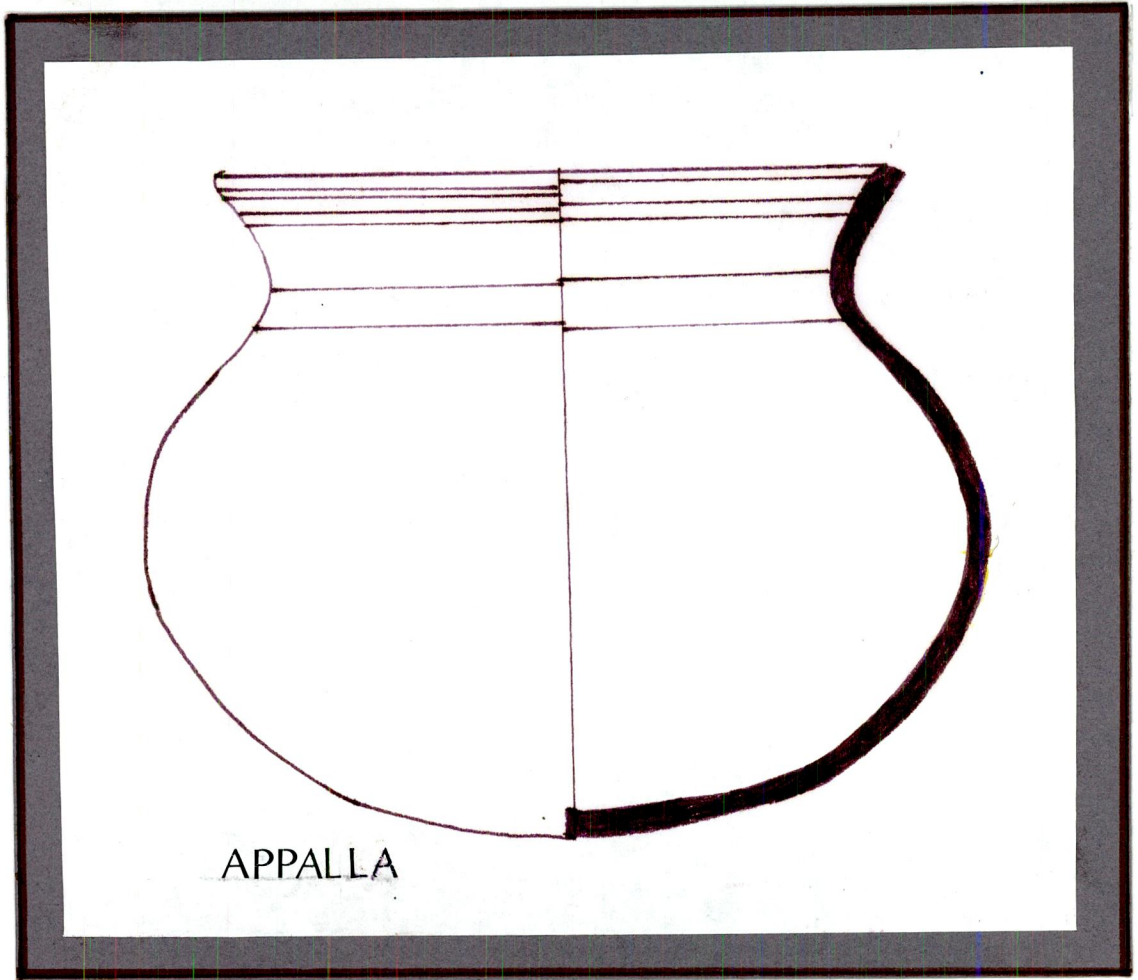
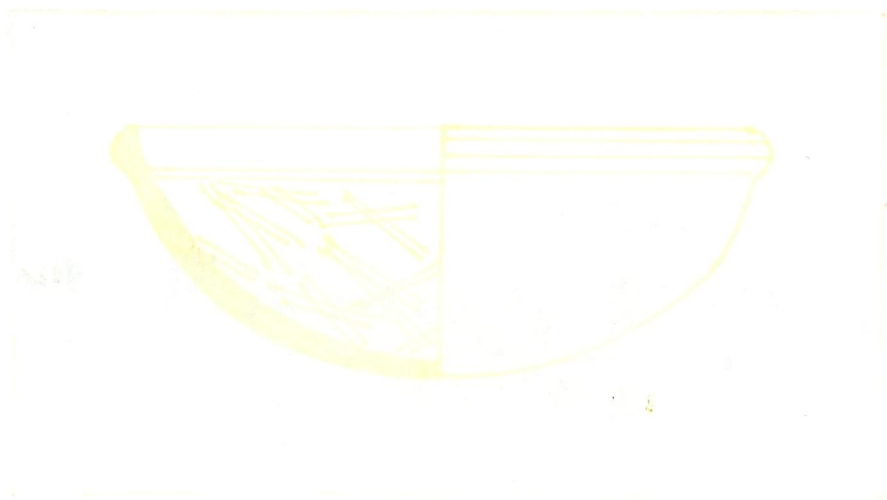


fig.9



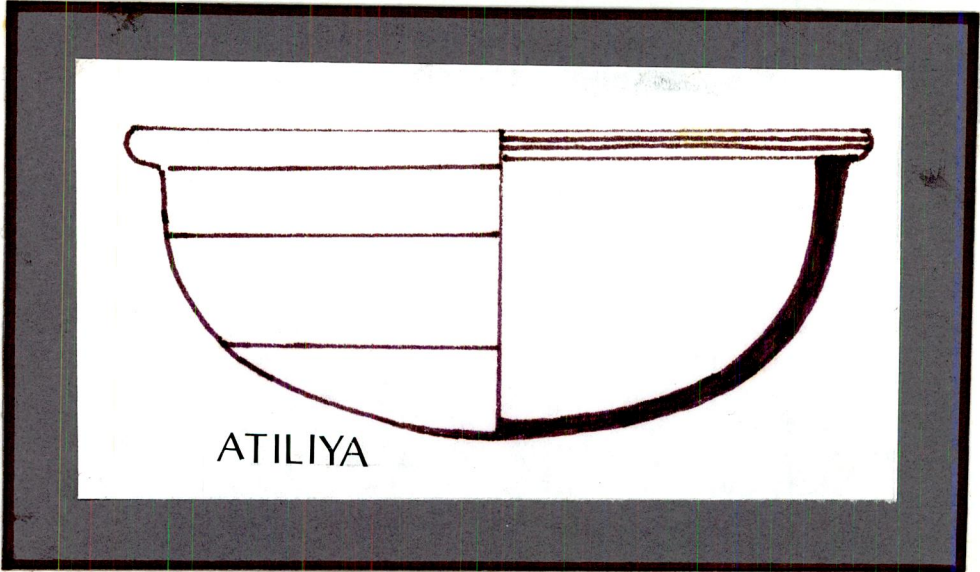


fig:10

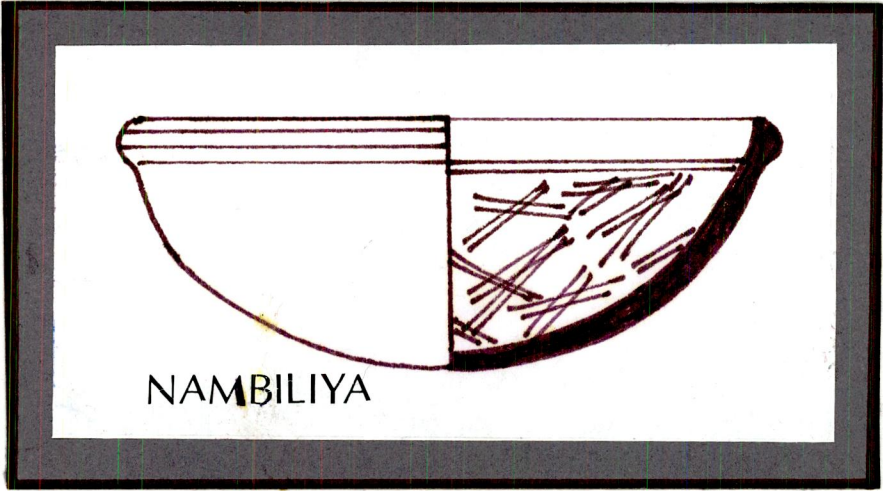
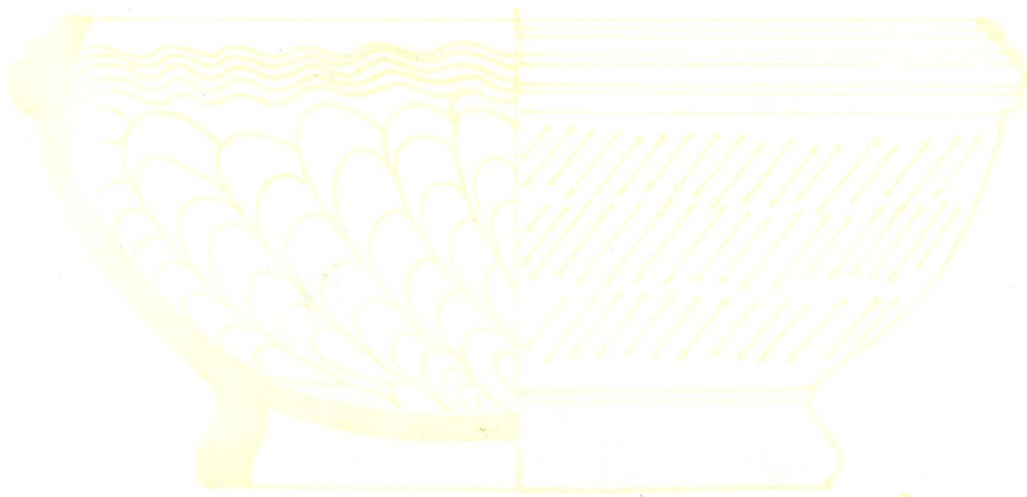


fig:11



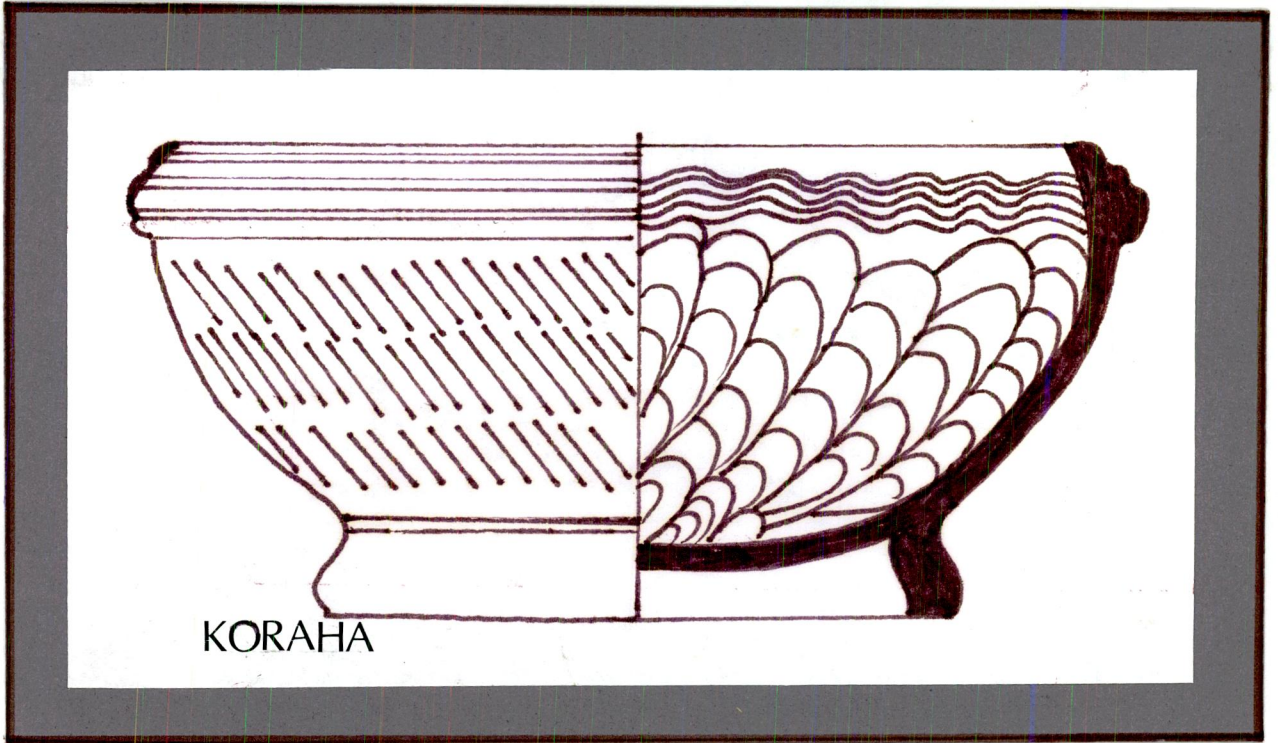
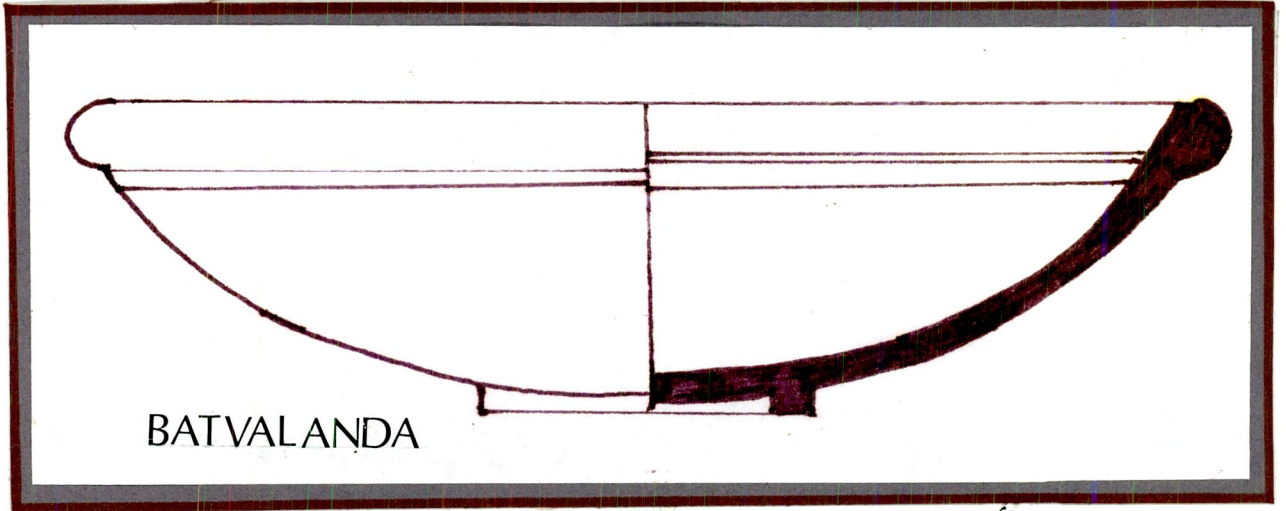


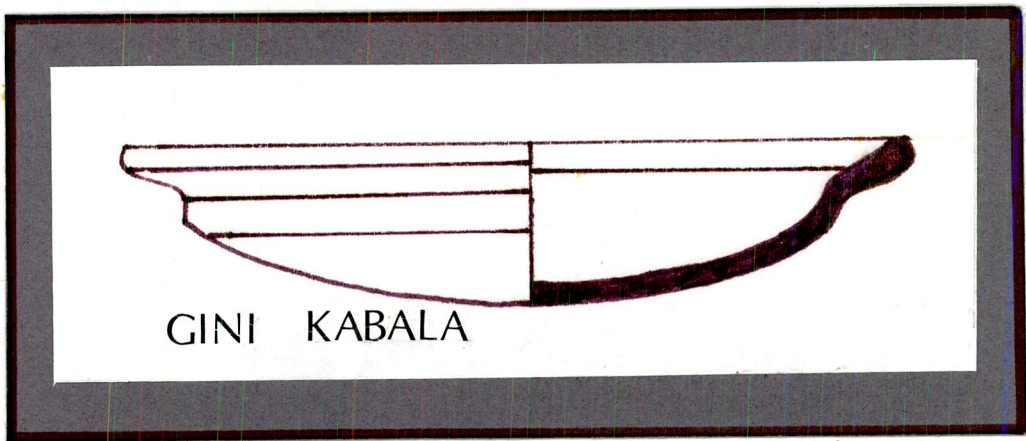
fig.12





BATVALANDA

fig.13



GINI KABALA

fig.14

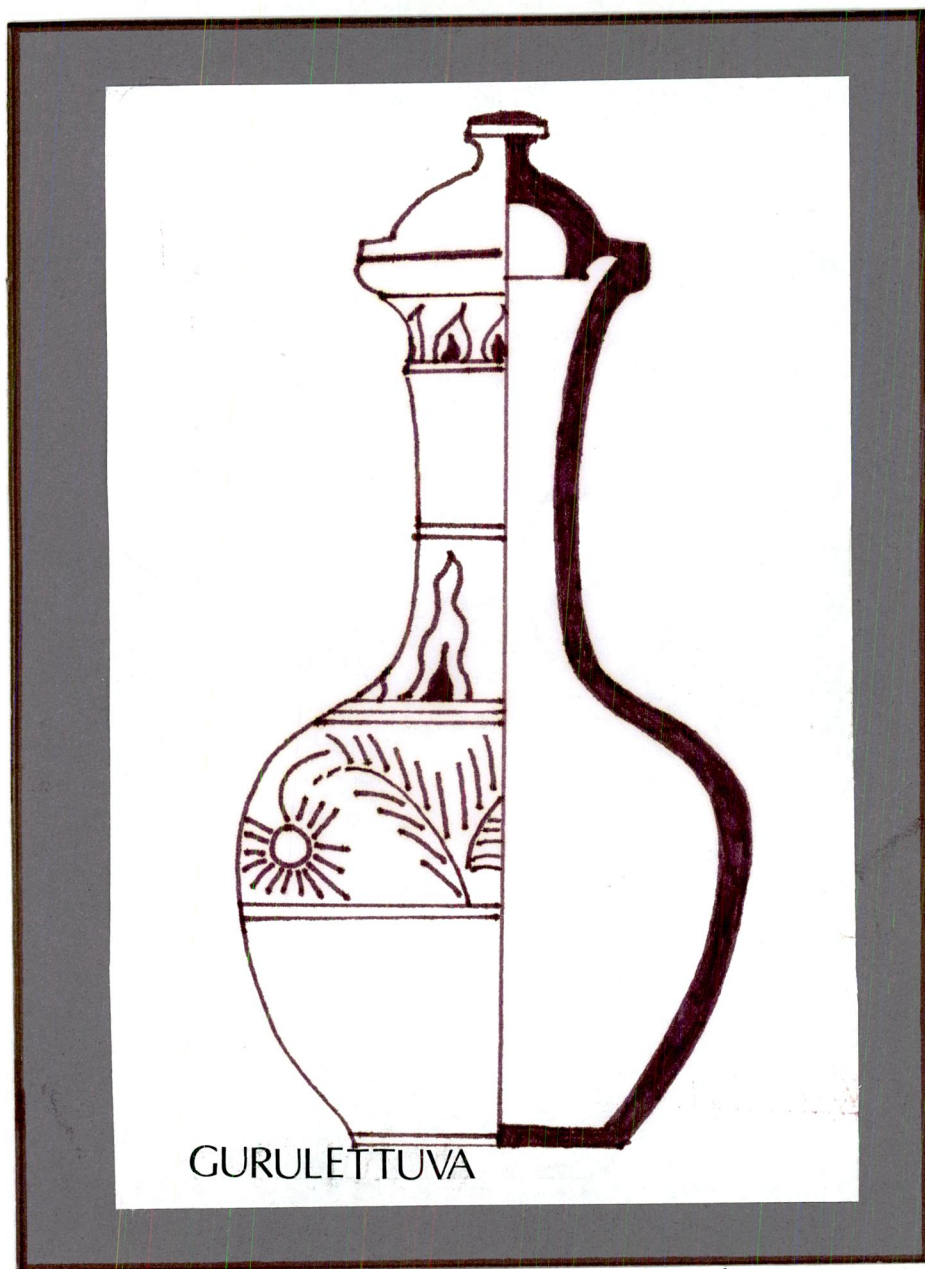


fig.15

(iii) Ecclesiastical (pottery used in temples)

This category of vessel is used especially in connection with ceremonies in Viharas and Devalas (Vihara is a Buddhist temple, Devala is a Hindu temple). Of these vessels the most common is Kotalaya, a spouted vessel used for holding water to be sprinkled over offerings of flowers (Fig. 16). Kotalaya is found every Vihara or Devala. Sometimes it is made of metal and more elegant in form than the earthenware ones. Earthen Kotale are also used in houses as drinking vessels.

Patra is a very large wide-mouthed vessel used in most viharas to hold water or to receive offerings of flowers from worshippers (Fig. 17). Most of these vessels are plain with no ornamentation. Some have a very simple decoration of lines or bo-leaves in red. Besides the big patras, smaller earthen alms bowls are made. Some potters at Kelaniya make an alms bowl for presentation to a priest with every batch of pots turned out.

Meti-Pahana (clay lamp) is used widely in Viharas and Devalas (Fig. 18). The smallest of these lamps is a plain shallow dish which can be held on the palm of the hand. Oil is poured into it and a cotton wick is placed on a mouth on the side of the lamp. These lamps are used in large quantities during festivals like Wesak and it is a delight to the onlookers in Viharas and Devalas. Special niches are provided on the wall for this purpose. Sometimes lamps are placed on earthen lampstands (Pankandu). Occasionally very decorative pankandu are seen bearing a larger lamp above with notches for three wicks. These tall stands are made in several pieces fitting one on the the other, the whole structure tapering slightly towards the top. Sometimes a meti-pandama, an earthen cresset like a metal torch filled with oil is carried in processions.

Pūnava is a remarkable vessel resembling a Kotalaya with twelve spouts and decorated with cobras and elaborately painted (Fig. 19). This is used in devil

dancing ceremonies specially in the cult of the God Pattini.

The Pūnava is made of clay modelled into the shape of a common waterpot but not fired in a kiln. Its details and size are not laid down in any text. Certain elements form essential factors in its make-up and form. These are the cobra hoods projecting spouts and faces of the leopard. The most elaborate vessels are built up in tiers containing twenty four snake hood, twelve spouts and three faces of the leopard surmounted by a fourth. Sometimes the vessel is mounted on a bull.

Dr. N.D. Wijesekara describes a particular vessel he had seen as having four legs at the base and twelve spouts around the body. He says that it is not possible to say whether the spouts have any phallic significance. Around the neck of the pot there were seven hoods of cobras with 'S' marks. The detachable lid had three sides. The whole lid was surmounted by the face of a leopard.

During the performance of the ceremony special honour is paid to the pūnava and in its presence blessings are asked by the officiating person who is called Pattini or Kapurala. At the completion of the ceremony the vessel is taken on the back of a bull to a stream nearby. Taking the vessel with him the Pattini dives in the stream breaks it under water and comes out empty handed.

The Goddess Pattini is a protective female deity who holds an equal if not a higher rank among the other three Guardian deities of the island, God Kataragama, God Vishnu and God Saman. It is of interest to note that her power is invoked during epidemics that spread chicken pox and measles.

(iv) Architectural Pottery

Bricks and tiles. The minerals found in Sri-Lankan clay have been used from ancient times for the making of bricks and tiles in the construction of buildings. Clay suitable for this purpose is found in the basins of the major rivers notably in the Kelani, Kalu and Nilwala gangas and Maha Oya, Gin ganga and Gal oya. Good clay is also found in tank beds in the dry zone. In these areas villages make bricks and tiles in kilns using fuel wood. When the need arises they make their own bricks in their gardens in temporary kilns. Today private companies have built about fifty large factories whilst the state own seven such factories. These large scale and small scale factories use about 500,000 cubes of clay annually.

Bricks. Bricks for building purposes were made by the Sinhalese during ancient times. Proof of this is found in the ruins of ancient buildings in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. These bricks were well constructed and burnt, hence their preservation up to the present day. Vast amounts of bricks were used in the buildings of Dagobas, Palaces and Monasteries and also tank bunds. The Abayagiri, Ruwanweli and Mirisavati dagobas at Anuradhapura are examples. The bricks used for the construction of dagobas and other buildings are of the rather flat narrow form which is so much more satisfactory in appearance and makes a stronger wall than the bricks of equal dimensions which are now in use.

In the manufacture of ordinary bricks sand is added to the clay before leaving for seasoning, unless the clay selected already has the required quantity of sand. This is to prevent the cracking of bricks in the process of firing. The seasoned clay is put into a mould made of wood. One set, the wooden frame is removed and the bricks are left to dry for about two to three days in fair weather, or longer in wet weather. Next it is stacked in a kiln for firing, which generally takes about twenty-four hours.

A brick bat found near the inner rampart wall at Yapahuwa showed that paddy husks were also kneaded with the clay.

Tiles. Like bricks tiles belong to one of the chief forms of architectural earthenware. The oldest types are flat tiles. They are of nearly oblong form, but taper slightly upwards where a projection on the underside serves to keep them from slipping off the beams. Other flat tiles are pointed at the lower end and very beautiful roofs are often seen in which the pointed and square ended tiles are arranged in patterns or in alternate rows giving great variety. Tile hangers are very clever in covering all sorts of awkward angles and steep slopes (Fig. 20). Old Kandyan roofs are consequently very picturesque, an effect which is greatly enhanced by the change of slope which is usually found and corresponds to a structural feature of the timbering. Flat tiles are usually ornamented with very simple parallel incised lines (Fig. 21). These seem to be a survival of the much deeper grooves which are to be seen on the old tiles, so common at Anuradhapura and Sigiria. The grooves were probably originally intended to facilitate the flow of rain water. The simple incised lines found on Kandyan tiles are of no practical use for this purpose and are ornamental.

The roofing tiles most commonly seen in the present day are semi-cylindrical in form tapering slightly upwards. They are often associated with flat tiles on the same roof and are generally used also for ridge or coping tiles. The semi-cylindrical tiles are simple in form but are quite pleasing and satisfactory. When used four or five thick they are a very efficient protection against heat owing to the layers of air which occupy the spaces between the tiles.

During latter years the new fashioned tiles have been used. They are more convenient especially in respect of leakage but they are far less cool. They are flat and rigid in form with grooves to drain off the water. They have a mechanical effect and the roof has a plain surface crossed by strictly parallel lines which are

wearisome and uninteresting. The semi-cylindrical tiles if well burnt and well laid are much to be preferred in respect of appearance and comfort.

Decorative tiles and bricks. Ancient buildings in Sri-Lanka have been beautified by the use of decorative terracotta tiles and bricks. The term 'tile' as used here refers mainly to tiles used as decoration on perpendicular surfaces of buildings (Fig 22). Normal roof tiles needed no decoration except perhaps coloration and glazing. Examples of coloured glazed tiles have been found from some sites in Sri-Lanka notably from a building near the Mahapali alms hall at Anuradhapura. Tiles require more refinement than bricks in the preparation of the clay, in casting the mould, in drying and in burning.

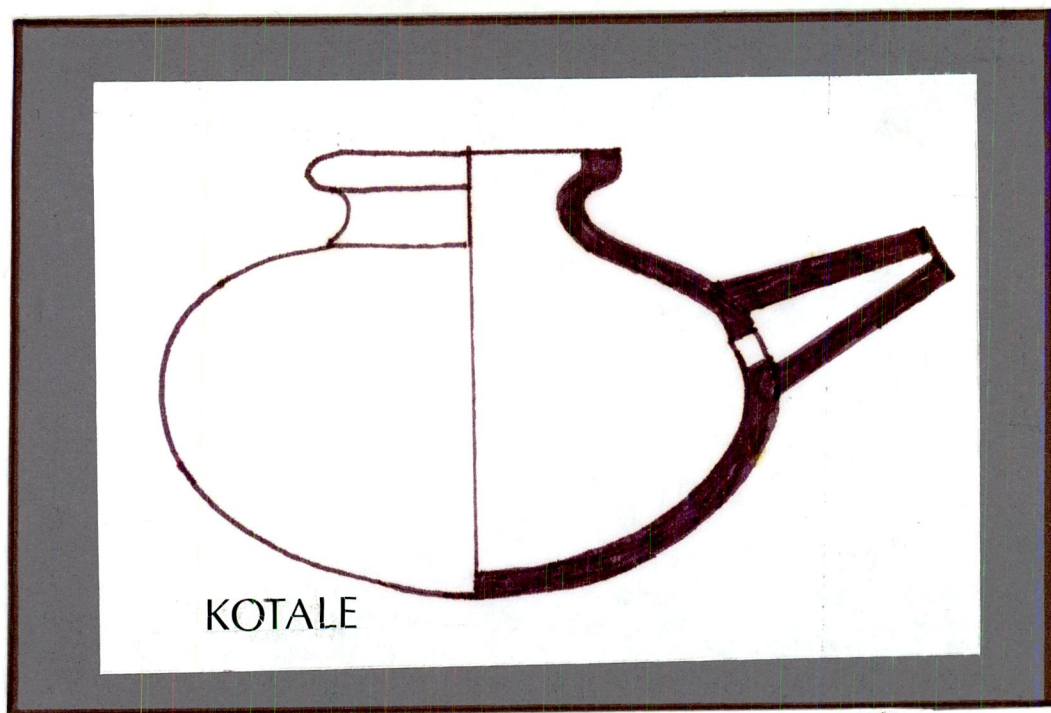
The application of colour or the use of decoration are refinements found more often found in the tile than in the brick.

The techniques of making decorative bricks and tiles in ancient Sri-Lanka are not revealed in any literary or other source. The art of making these however survives among a few craftsmen in the area around the Lankatilaka Vihara in the Kandy District. The ancestors in these men are traditionally the people who made tiles for the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy and other temples of the district. Now these people make no more of the decorative tiles but make ordinary bricks for a living. The Department of Archaeology has been able to give these men the occasion to revive their art though in a small way, by engaging their services for turning out the decorative tiles required for replacements in some of the ancient temples repaired recently. It is regretted however that this tradition will certainly not last beyond the present generation.

(v) **Ornamented pottery.**

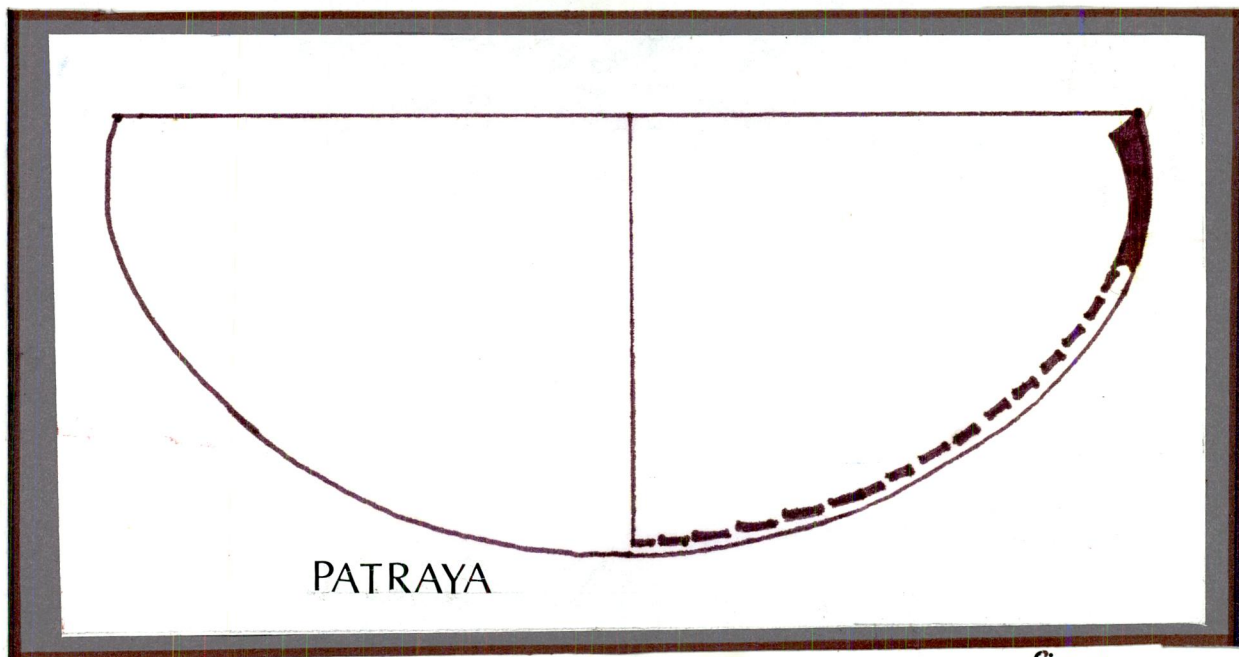
Highly finished water vessels (Kalagedi) are made at Kelaniya and on these incised decoration reaches its highest level of design and execution. Once the pot is fired a red paint made by grinding gurugal (red stone) with water is applied on the pot. Traditional designs are incised with a sharp metal tool. The decoration is made to stand out by applying a coating of kaolin. These pots are very much in demand and is sent to many parts of the country.

Apart from ornamental pots there is a variety of clay toys, tills, animals and fruits made of clay (Fig. 23). The animals have an intrinsic aesthetic value. They are simplified in outline and are decorated in bright colour. However some are distorted in appearance and painted in gaudy colours.



KOTALE

fig.16



PATRAYA

fig.17

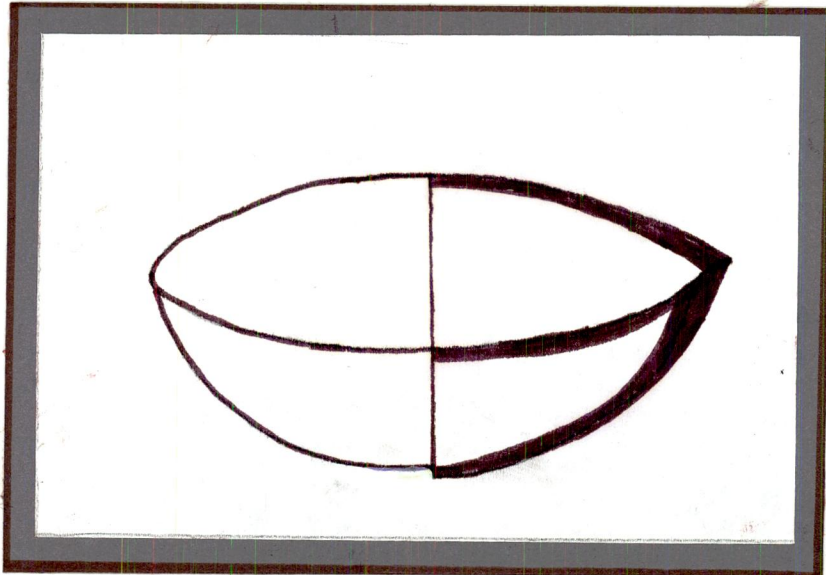


fig.18



PŪNAVA

fig.19

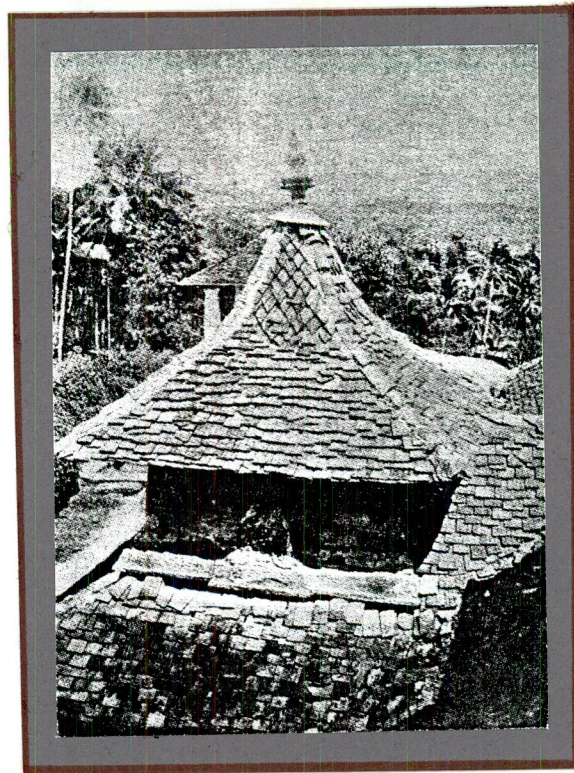


fig.20

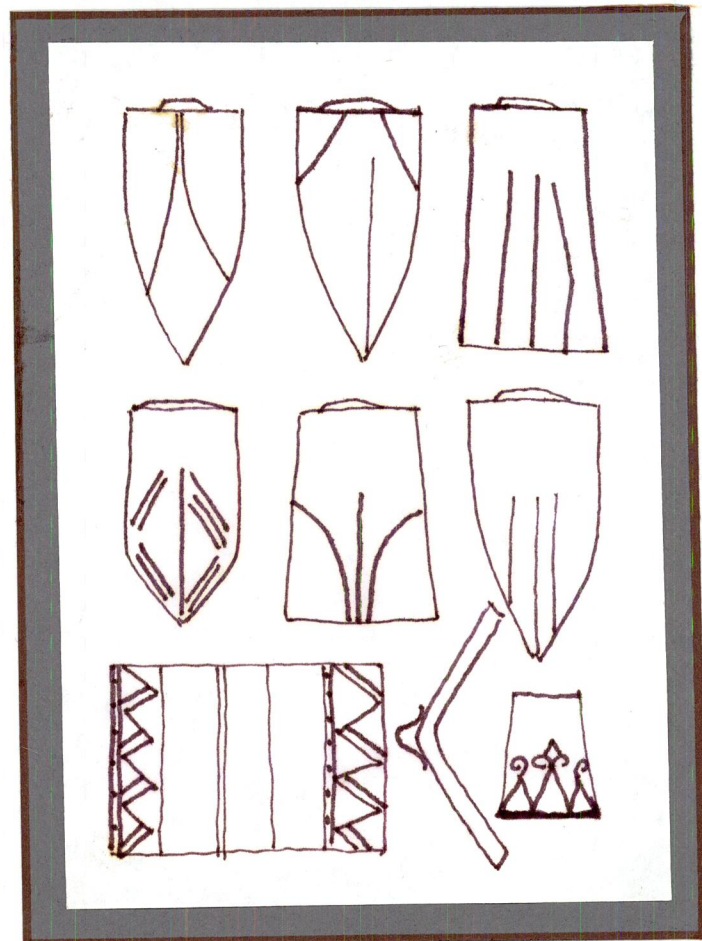


fig.21



fig.22

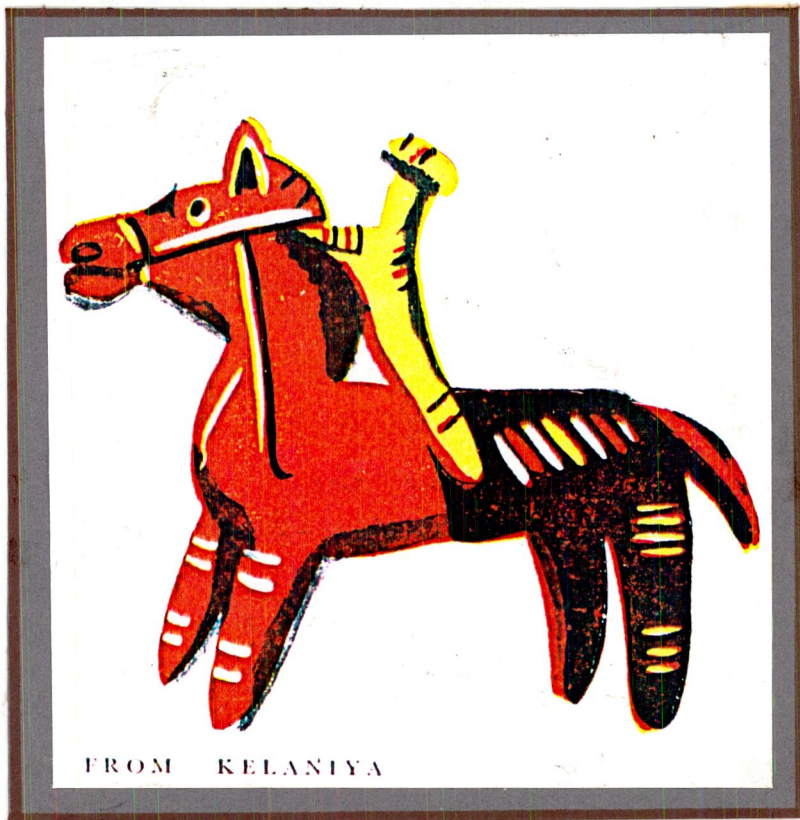
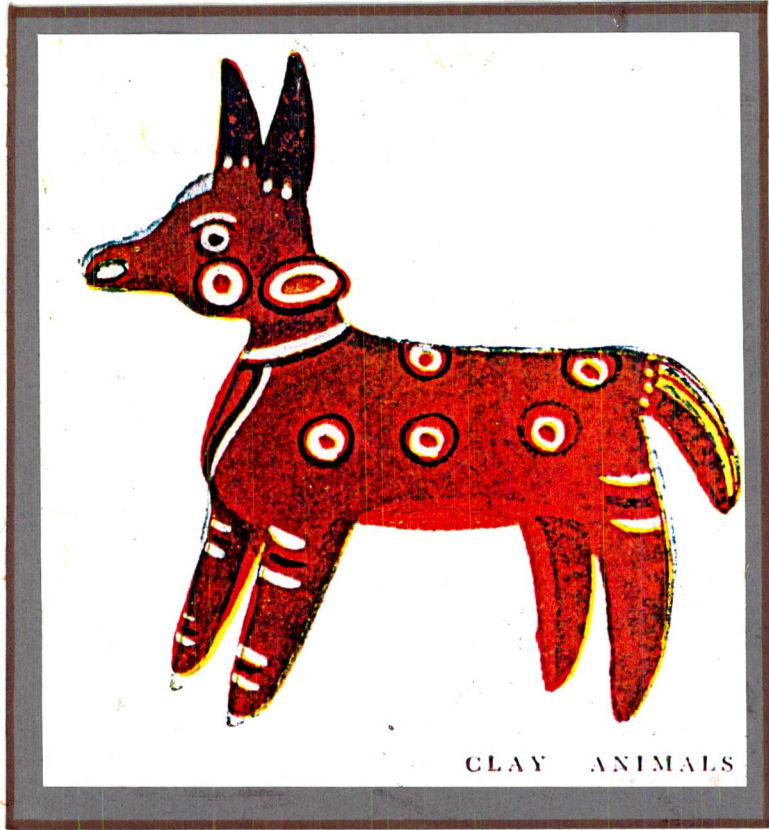


fig.23

Chapter 5

Pottery at the Village of Boralessa.

The village Boralessa is situated about thirty miles north of Colombo and six miles north of Negombo which is the closest town (Fig. 24). It is situated in an agricultural area where coconut is the main crop interspersed with patches of paddy land. Bordering the coconut lands are the fishing villages along the western coast. From ancient times this village has been doing the craft of pottery, supplying the surrounding villages with earthenware for cooking.

Climatically Boralessa lies in the wet zone, with a plentiful supply of rain throughout the year. The village lies on the banks of Maha Oya which supplies the clay. This clay is used to make pots as well as bricks and tiles for which the area is well known.

The wet zone forests supplied the fuel for use in the kilns in the past. Today, with the growth of population, the forests have been cleared for coconut cultivation and coconut husks, and shells are used as fuel.

The village Boralessa today is called the kosgahawatta potter's colony. In 1956 Hugh Fernando, the Member of Parliament for the area, acquired a coconut estate from a landowner and settled fifty five potter families in it. Each family was given land and a loan from the government to build a house. A potter's cooperative society was also set up to help the craftsmen. This move helped the potters considerably as they now own their house and land. Many families have built houses of bricks with tiled roofs. A few families still live in mud walled houses with thatched roofs (Fig. 25).

The raw material for the craft is obtained from the low lying fields in the neighbourhood. The clay is dug by the men in the village and collected in a mound on the dry ground (Fig. 26). Most of the clay here is black although in

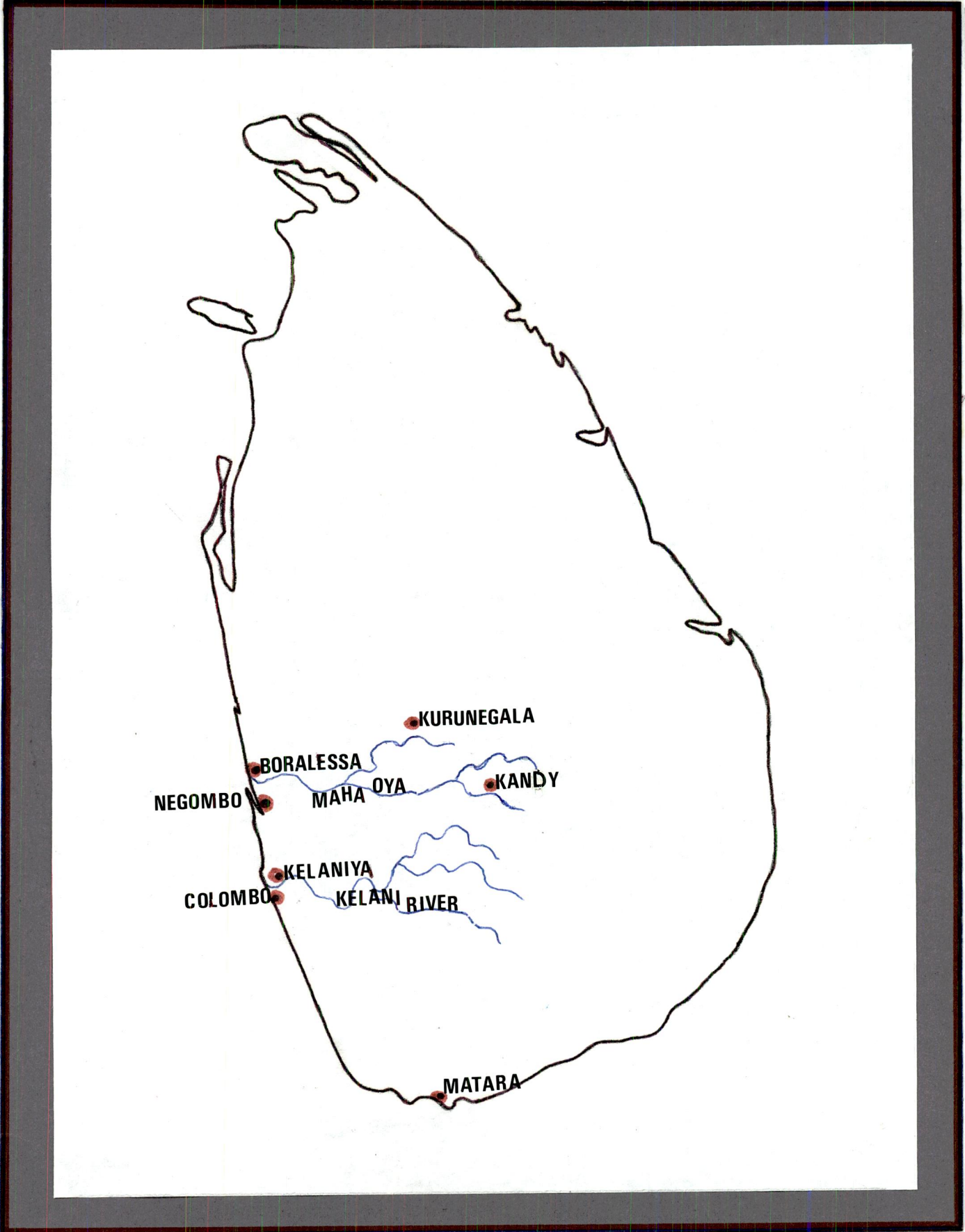


fig.24

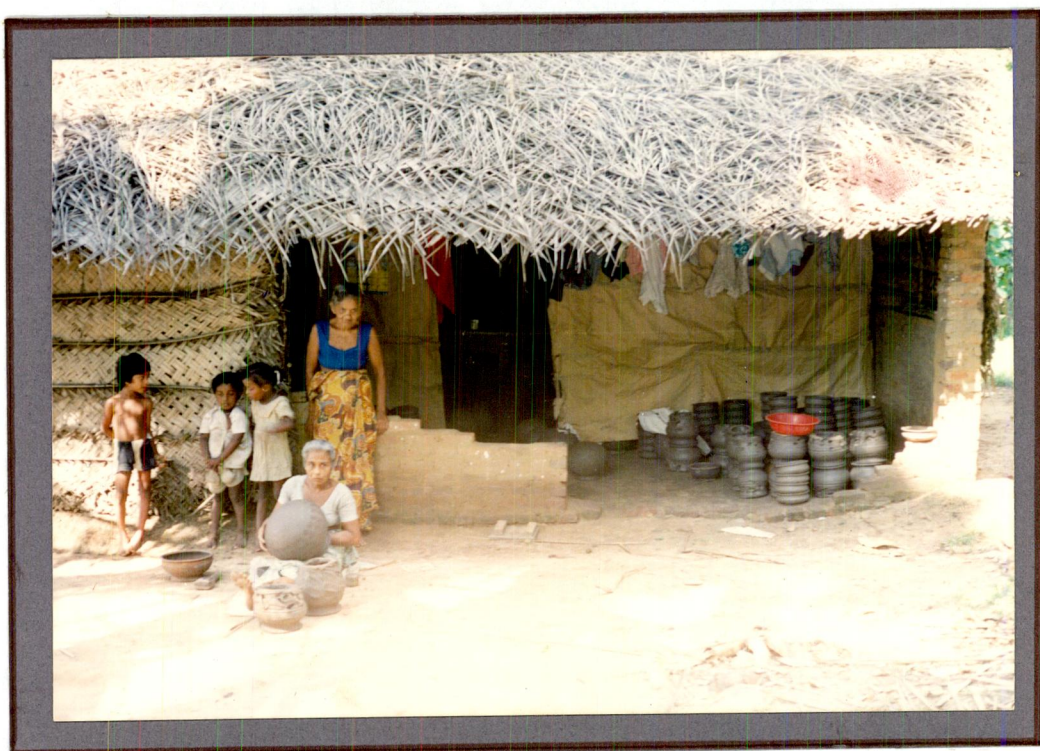


fig.25



fig.26

some fields red and yellow clay is found. The fields that supply the clay also belong to the colony. The clay is purified by removing stones and other impurities with the help of a strip of bamboo. It is then kneaded by adding water and trampling under foot by men. After kneading it is covered with coconut leaves and left for two to three hours. Sand is also added to prevent cracking (Fig. 27).

The potters in the colony use handwheels to make their pots (Fig. 28). In making globular water pots the first step is done on the wheel in the form of a hollow, rounded mass of clay, which is open at the bottom. Using the beater and anvil technique the pot is finally given its shape and the bottom is formed (Fig. 29). The pot is then left to dry.

Apart from water pots the potters make shallow, wide rimmed pots for holding curd. Cooking utensils are also made (Fig. 30). The making of pots on the wheel is done by the women. About thousand pots are collected before firing begins.

The firing is done in brick kilns. The biggest kiln holds about 2000 pots. The pots are arranged along tunnels in the kiln. A big kiln has five tunnels (Fig. 31). After stacking the pots in the kiln it is covered with clay, dry reeds or straw. Broken pieces of pottery are placed on the sides to support the clay covering (Fig. 32).

The fuel used for the kiln is mostly coconut husks which is available in the area. When the clay on the top of the kiln is dry holes are made and the temperature increased by firing on both sides of the kiln. After the firing process is over the kiln is left to cool for about twelve hours. Then the clay covering is broken and the pots are taken out. Some pots are then decorated with a simple red line. The paint used is red dust (guru) mixed with water.



fig.27



fig.28

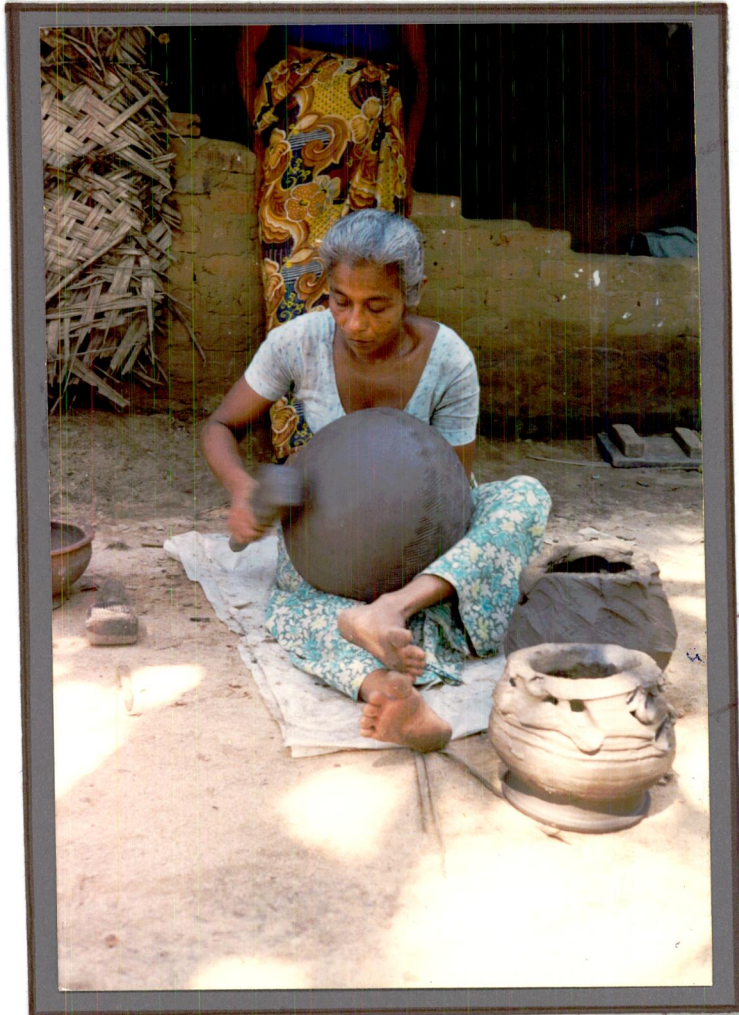


fig.29



fig.30



fig.31



fig.32

The markets for these pots are in the neighbouring villages. Traders buy the pots and transport them in lorries to the markets. The Cooperative Society in the colony buys the water pots and curd pots and transports them in lorries to areas where there is a demand for them.

In spite of the help given by the government potters in this colony have a hard life as their craft is still done according to traditional methods. They have to face high competition from metal cooking utensils that are more durable. Therefore younger members of the community who are better educated have entered other areas of employment. In society this move has removed the stigma of caste from their lives.

CHAPTER 6

Kelaniya red pots by W.A. Rodrigo

Mrs. W.A. Rodrigo, a resident of Waragoda, Kelaniya, runs her own pottery where she makes decorative red pots. This type of pottery has been done in Kelaniya over the years. Rodrigo has developed this style by using traditional designs on a variety of shapes incorporating both functional and non-functional earthenware. The outcome has been very satisfactory from the aesthetic and economic points of view. Today she is one of the more successful potters in the private sector.

She has an inherited ability to handle clay and as a school girl she spent her afternoons at the Government Pottery Centre at Waragoda. After leaving school at the age of fourteen, she worked as a full-time student at this centre. Later she followed a course in Pottery at the Ceylon Technical College in Colombo and subsequently she was appointed a teacher in government schools. She worked as a teacher for a period of twenty-one years in schools in various parts of the country. She was appointed as inspectoress of schools in 1975 from which post she retired in 1978. In 1975 while in Government Service she held an exhibition of her work at the Art Gallery in Colombo. The outcome was rewarding and after retirement she decided to start her own workshop.

The workshop is in the backyard of her home. The raw material, red clay, is obtained from Biyagama, a village in the neighbourhood. She employs four girls to work on two hand wheels (Fig. 33) and kick wheel. The pots are fired in a wood kiln. Therefore her techniques are the traditional types that are found in most villages today. When the pots are a light red in colour. The pots made by Mrs. Rodrigo are mostly thrown on a hand wheel (Fig. 34). She has recently tried making tableware, eg. plates, casserole dishes, dessert cups and larger curry dishes and rice plates. These items are in demand in the cities. Her larger



fig.33



fig.33



fig.34

decorated pots are in demand as items of interior decor in hotels and Government Institutions and Architectural companies (Fig. 35).

When the pots are dried enough to apply the red slip (liquid clay), the red laterite is powdered and mixed with water. Laterite (also called kabok) is commonly found in the wet zone of the country especially around Kelaniya. It is a kind of red and yellow stone, the red parts of which are removed and crushed to make the powder. The red liquid is applied to the pot and left to dry (Fig. 36) after which intricate traditional designs are scraped on it by her nephew (Fig. 37) with the use of a hack-saw blade. The ornamentation on the pots are mostly traditional motifs like the lotus and petal designs (Fig. 38). Once complete the designs stand out in a lighter shade of red on a darker red background.

The kiln she uses is made of bricks. As firewood is used for firing, the bisque firing goes up to 800^o - 900^oC (Fig. 39). They are unable to use an electric kiln or gas kiln as they are expensive. An electric kiln would cost RS 800,000/= and a gas kiln RS 100,000/= per month for a firing. Therefore it is cheaper to have a basic wood fired kiln.

Her main problem today is the inability to improve her craft due to lack of funds. She says the purchase of a ball mill and an electric or gas kiln could help her to do glazed items. But these are too expensive for her to purchase. A Government loan on a low rate of interest or a subsidy would be the answer but it is difficult to achieve.

Rodrigo sells her pots mostly in the showrooms of the Department of Small Industries in Colombo, Kandy and other major towns in the island.

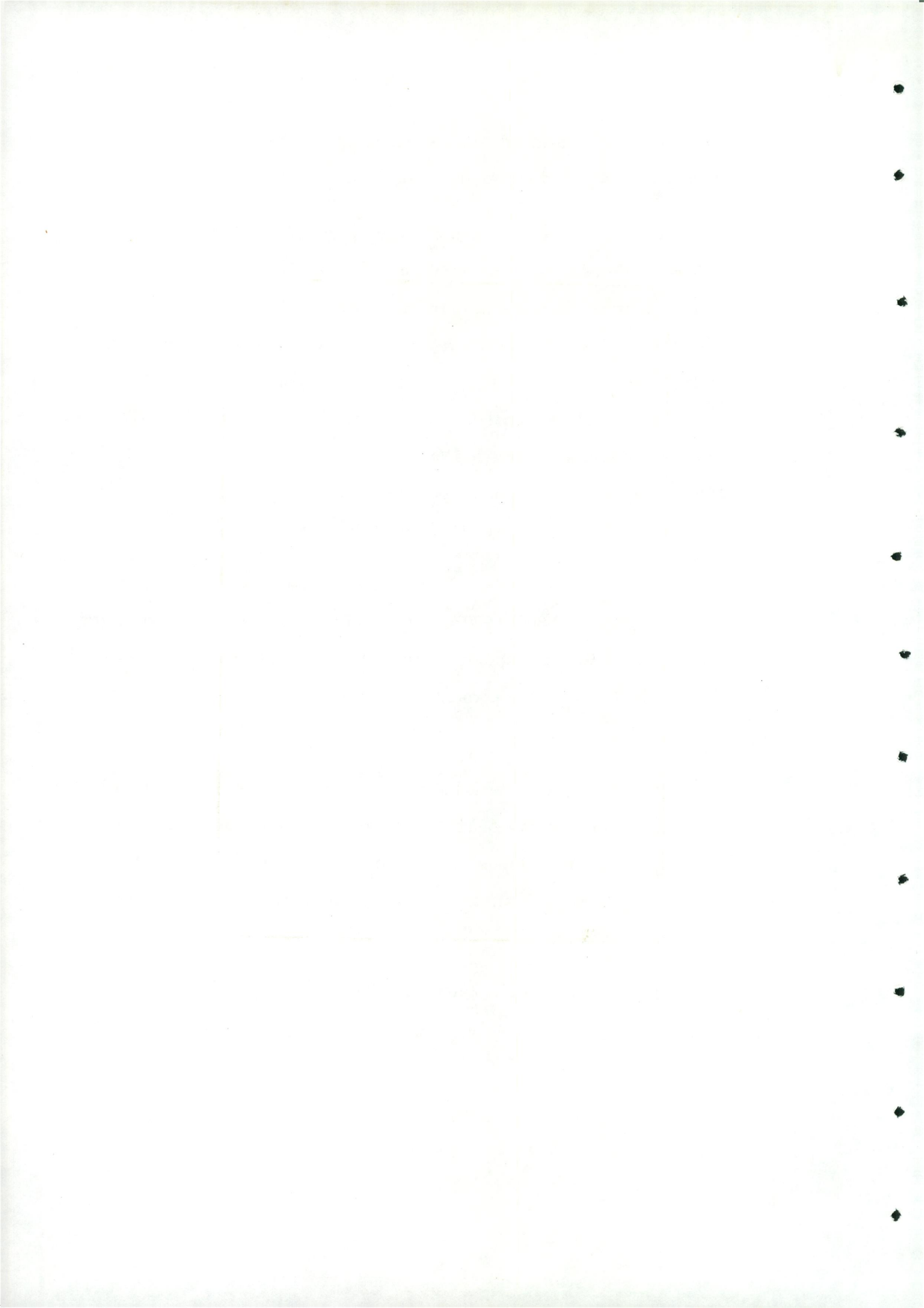




fig.35



fig.36



fig.37



fig.38

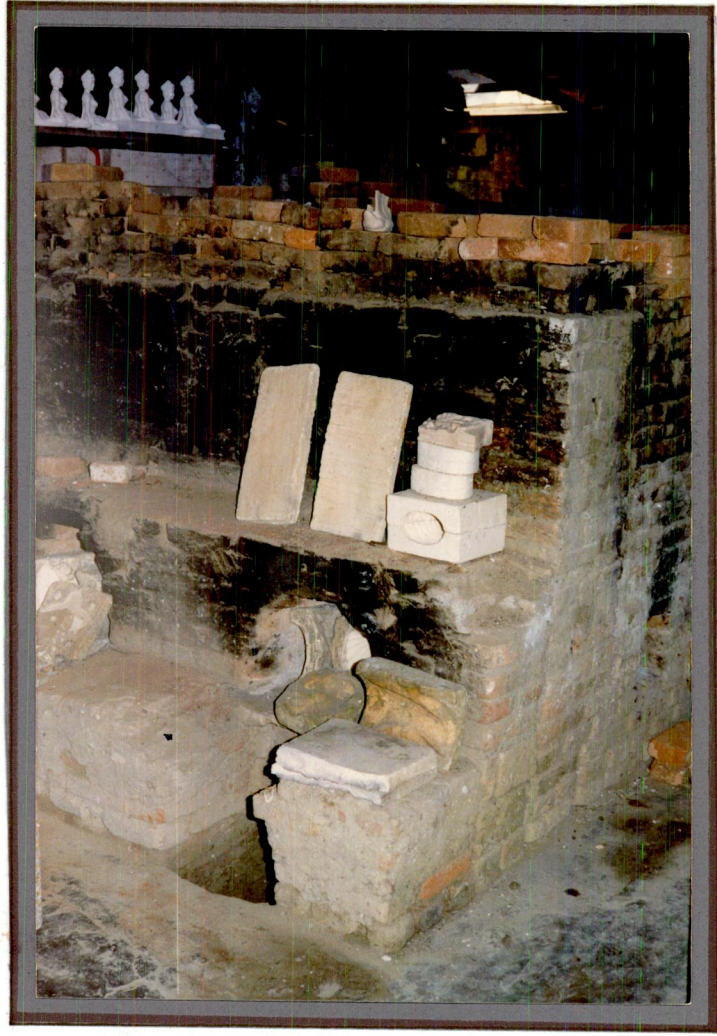


fig.39

CHAPTER 7

Government Pottery Centre (Waragoda Kelaniya)

In 1925 an European started this centre for making domestic pottery. He did this to help the potters in Kelaniya who were poor. In 1938 the Ceylon Government took over the Centre and the Education Department began a training centre here to train young potters. This programme was connected to Education and Village Development. In 1956 the Cooperative Department took over the Centre and combined its activities with the Cooperative movement. Finally in 1970 the Department of Small Industries took it over and it is still managed by this department. There has been a gradual development and today more glazed ceramic ware is made here.

The Department of Small Industries has improved the Centre considerably. They appointed Mr. S. Sivanadian, a qualified ceramic technician, to handle the technology. The Department provided electric kilns and kick wheels, ball mills and expert guidance in glazing and other aspects of making ceramic ware. They also provided the guidance of Japanese experts and opportunities for training in Japan to ceramic artists.

The raw materials for the Centre are supplied by the Department of Small Industries, e.g. Kaolin, Feldspar and Ball clay (Fig. 40). The ball mills are provided by the Small Industries and the Centre prepare their own earthenware casting slip. This Centre makes functional and non-functional casted ceramic ware. They are mostly mugs, small bowls, vases and money tills.

There is a moulding section that provides moulds for the casting department (Fig. 41). All the workers are from the neighbouring villages. There are about 30 men and women working in the casting area in this Centre. They are paid according to their production.

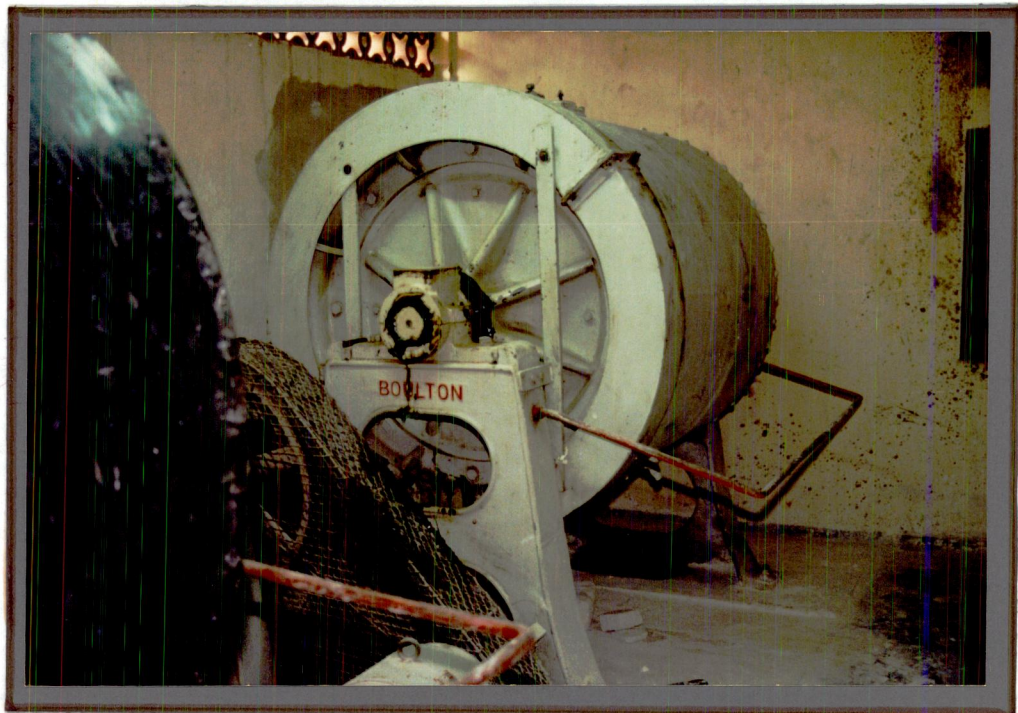


fig.40





fig.41



The throwing department in this Centre is smaller than the casting section. There are seven women working in this area. The clay for throwing is obtained from Kelaniya. They used kick wheels till recently. In 1989 the Department of Small Industries provided them with three new Shimpo electric wheels (Fig. 42). Most of the thrown items are based on the traditional red clay pottery. Items vary from ash trays to decorated bowls, and vases (Fig. 43). The thrown items are very limited because the workers earn more money working in the casting section and therefore they are reluctant to work in the throwing area.

The glazing department makes their own glazes which are provided from the Ceylon Ceramic Cooperation. The Centre has 4 electric kilns which are very old. Recently a Japanese voluntary worker has built a woodfired kiln for the Centre and they mainly use it for bisque firings (Fig. 44). The electric kilns are used for glazing the ware in the Centre. These earthenware glazes are fired up to 1120oC and they use mainly honey glazes for these items (Fig. 45).

The Waragoda Ceramic Centre has been a collecting centre for pottery items made in various centres in around the country (Fig. 46). The best items are sent to the main showrooms in Colombo for selling.



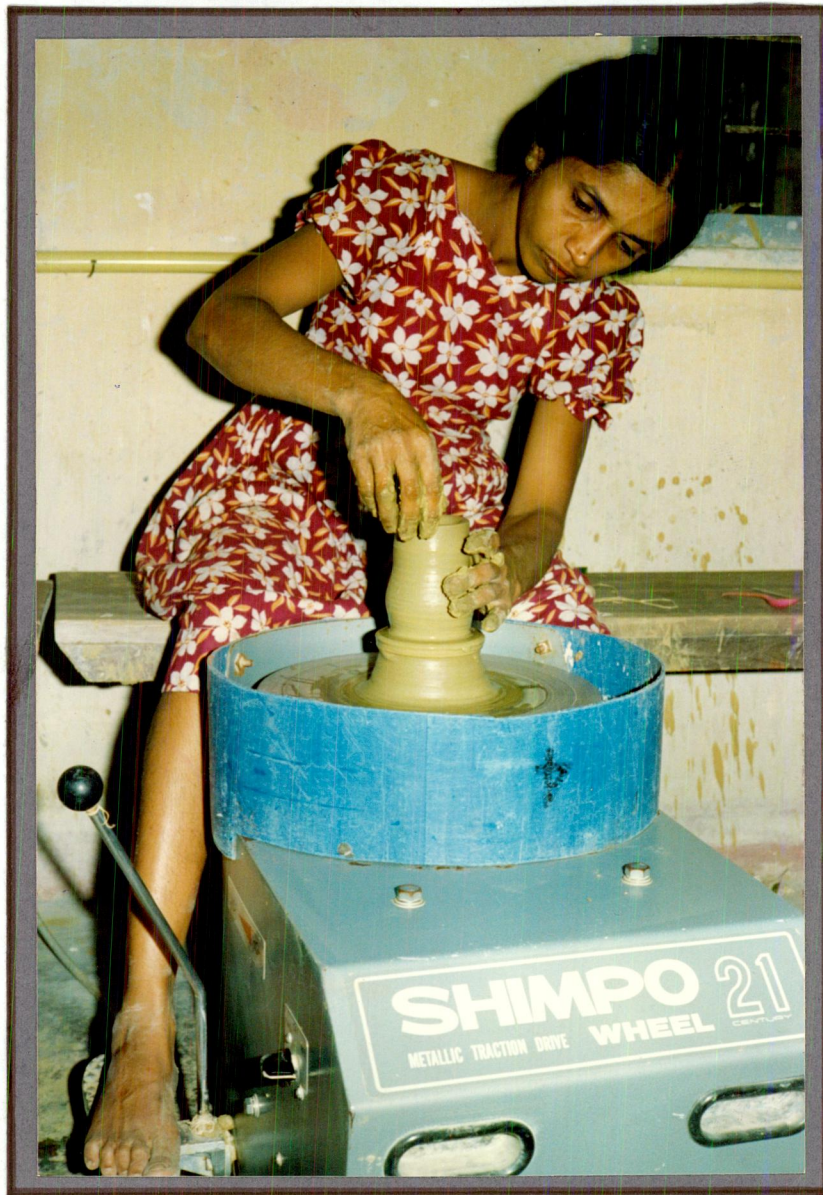


fig. 42



fig.43



fig.44



fig.45



fig. 46



fig.46

CONCLUSION

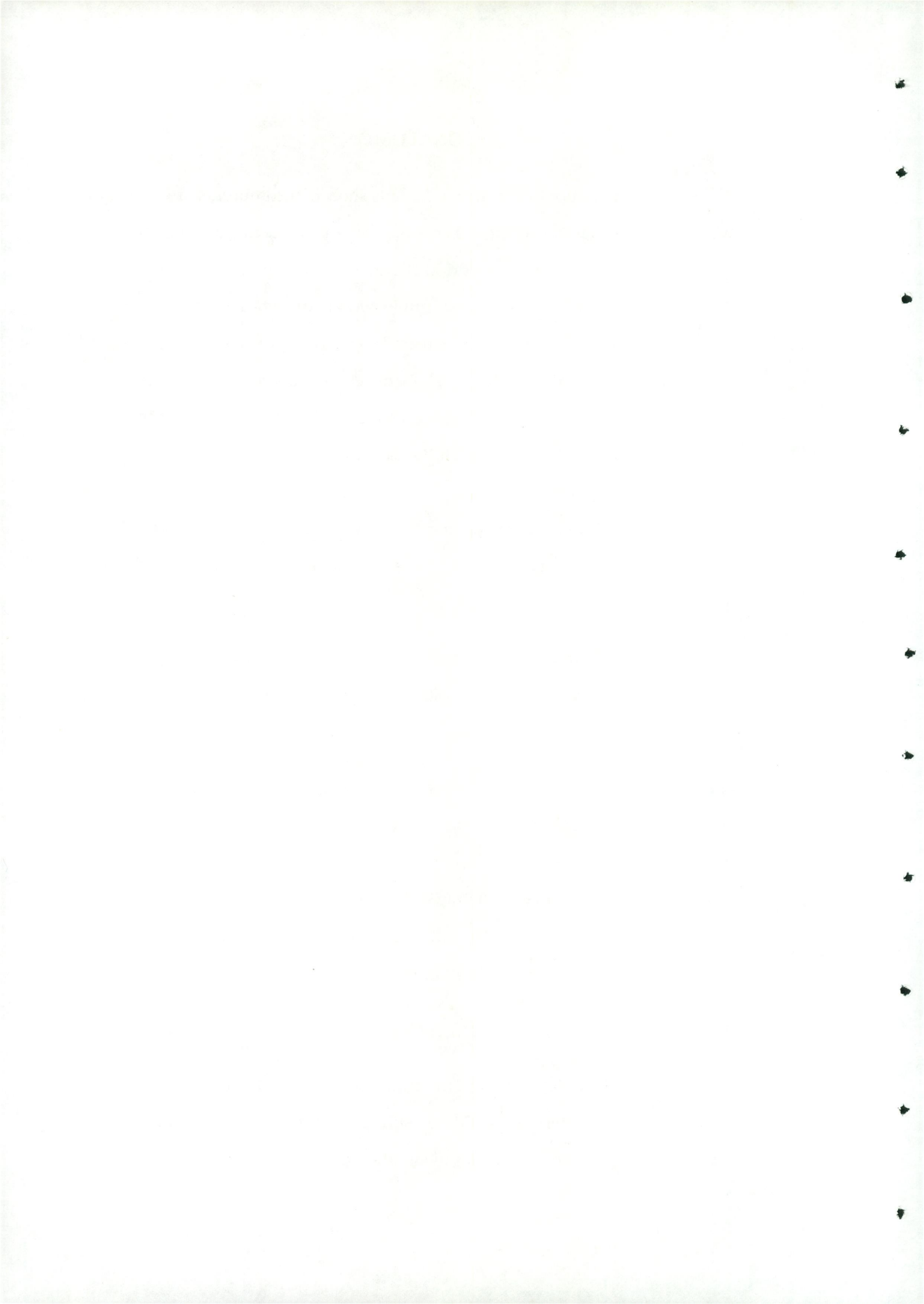
This study of pottery in Sri-Lanka falls short of a comprehensive survey as I was faced with many problems. There is a lack of sufficient published material especially regarding the ancient periods Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, but I was able to collect articles and papers published in Archeological and Anthropological journals as well as articles in The Times of Ceylon, Annuals and the Ceylon Causerie to name a few. These articles gave information on certain aspects of pottery in Sri-Lanka. No books have been published ever on this pottery. There was only a chapter on Earthenware in the book *Medieval Sinhalese Art* by Dr. Coomaraswamy, which gives a short but a comprehensive account of the craft as it existed during the Kandyan Period of history (17th and 18th centuries). Even here details are not available on the technique of firing in kilns.

No reputed potters are available for interview. The only ones are the village level potters who make domestic pottery. I consulted such a potter at Boralessa village.

Regarding the Mechanised Pottery Centre at Woragoda Kelaniya, the manager had no records about the Centre and its activities. He gave me a brief history according to facts he had heard from fellow workers at the Centre. No statistics are available regarding the marketing of the items, although the Centre is the collecting point of pottery and ceramic items produced by other centres managed by the Department of the Small Industries.

The State of the Craft today

In Sri-Lanka today although the craft of pottery has a long history, it is still not developed on modern lines. Potters still follow the traditional techniques, shapes and designs. They are in a sad situation and most of them are giving up



their craft in favour of other forms of employment.

Ceramic ware started very recently, after the Second World War as a factory industry. Centres like Kelaniya started in the 1970s as a very slow development due to lack of trained people. Designs of the ceramic ware and glazing is poor in quality. There is only one person who knows the technology of the glazing at the Kelaniya Centre but he prefers to do work for private enterprises because he is paid better than the Government monthly salary.

Many young artists and designers who are interested in ceramics do not take to pottery because of the caste factor. Even young members of the potter's caste prefer to do other jobs for a living as the potter's caste is low on the social scale. However steps have been taken by the Government in the recent past to remedy this situation, although the results are not very satisfactory. The Government has set up the following four agencies:

- (i) the Craft Council
- (ii) the National Design Centre
- (iii) the Handicrafts Board
- (iv) the Small Industries Department

In October 1982 Parliament passed Act No. 35. This ACT covered the establishment of a Craft Council as an apex body whose powers and functions included the holding of exhibitions in Sri-Lanka and abroad; to improve the quality of raw materials used for the production of handicrafts; the provision of financial and any other assistance with the approval of the Minister to the Craft Council or other institutions or organisations engaged in the design, production and sale of handicrafts; the provision of training for craftsmen and of advice on all training programmes for craftsmen in charge of training institutions connected with crafts; advice on the preservation of handicrafts of national cultural value and on the setting up of craft museums or galleries.



The functions of the National Design Centre are to undertake designs for small industries and research in respect of materials used for the production of handicrafts and designing of such handicrafts. To acquaint itself with market development both in Sri-Lanka and abroad and to introduce machinery with a view to effecting the production of handicrafts more economically and efficiently.

These steps taken by the Government sound very encouraging, but in actual fact they have done very little to improve the level of crafts in the country. For example, Mrs. Rodgrigo at Kelaniya could expand her business if she could buy an electric kiln, but the cost is beyond her means and the Government is unable to help her. Even to buy a ball mill she is unable to get any assistance. Government assistance involves much red-tape in applying and officials are very slow in their work. Moreover it also involves political backing. Corruption is common in Government departments. Some entrepreneurs have to resort to bribes to get a job done. As a result poor craftsmen are unable to get much assistance.

In 1987 before applying to the National College of Art and Design in Ireland, I applied for assistance from the National Design Centre to study craft pottery and the answer I received was negative. Although the National Design Centre was established in 1982 they were unable to give me any assistance as they did not have a programme or plan to help in the development of craft pottery and ceramics. This Centre had a director who was a senior administrator in a Government department. He did not have the necessary background to formulate a plan for the development of the traditional crafts of the country.

Suggestions for future development

The Government and the Design Centres must identify the crafts person in the field of pottery and ceramics and take steps to give assistance economically so that their aesthetic values could develop. Organise a course of study at the



University and the College of Aesthetic Studies in Colombo in Pottery and Ceramics, so that young artists could be trained as designers. Organise seminars and workshops for ceramic artists with foreign craftsmen so that ideas could be exchanged and new concepts in design and techniques could be tried out with a view to improve the quality of the craft of pottery in Sri-Lanka.



APPENDIX I

Table of Castes according to the Janavamsa

1	Govy	(Farmer	ගොවි.)
2	Salagama	(Weavers	සලාගම.)
3	Kamburu	(Artificer	කම්බුරු.)
4	Wadu	(Carpenters	වඩු.)
5	Hannali	(Tailors	හනාලි.)
6	Radau	(Washermen	රඩවි.)
7	Embettayo	(Barbers	ආම්බේට්ටයෝ.)
8	Sommarayo	(Shoemakers	සොමරයෝ.)
9	Durawo	(Taddy tappers	දුරාවෝ.)
10	Badahelayo	(Potters	බදාහෙලයෝ.)
11	Karawo	(Fishermen	කරාවෝ.)
12	Veddo	(Hunters	වෙද්දෝ.)
13	Berawayo	(Musicians	බෙරවයෝ.)
14	Hakuro	(Jaggery makers	හකුරෝ.)
15	Hunno	(Lime burners	හුන්නෝ.)
16	Pannayo	(Grass cutters	පන්නයෝ.)
17	Yamanno	(Iron smelters	යමන්නයෝ.)



18	Vel Waduwo	(Rattan workers <i>വെല്‌വുവോ.</i>)
19	Gahalayo	(Menial Servants <i>ഗാഹലായോ.</i>)
20	Paduwo	(Palanquin bearers <i>പാടുവോ.</i>)
21	Matakarayo	(Florists <i>മാതാകാരായോ.</i>)
22	Kinnarayo	(Mat weavers <i>കിന്നാറായോ.</i>)
23	Rodiyo	(Rope makers <i>റോഡിയോ.</i>)
24	Oliyo	(Dancers <i>ഓലിയോ.</i>)
25	Indrajatikayo	(Conjurors <i>ഇന്ദ്രാജാതികായോ.</i>)
26	Chandalato	(Scavengers <i>ചന്ദലാടോ.</i>)



APPENDIX 2

Potter's Song

1

Waking before the dawn, carrying the basket, (the potter) fares to the place-of-clay;
 After cleaning the basket and clearing the place-of-clay, he worships his guardian god;
 Wearing (only) a loin cloth, and gladly taking (the basket) in hand he goes down into the pit;
 Not breaking down the two sides (of the pit) he digs the clay from the middle and fills the basket.

2

Breaking up the clay, he takes a yoke-load and heaps it in the potter's yard;
 Separating the pieces of clay he breaks them to an equal size and spreads them on a big mat in the sun;
 After having dried the clay, and removed the stones, he pounds it in a mortar and in a *kulla* winnows it;
 Then taking up the powder, he adds an equal quantity of water and makes it into balls.

3

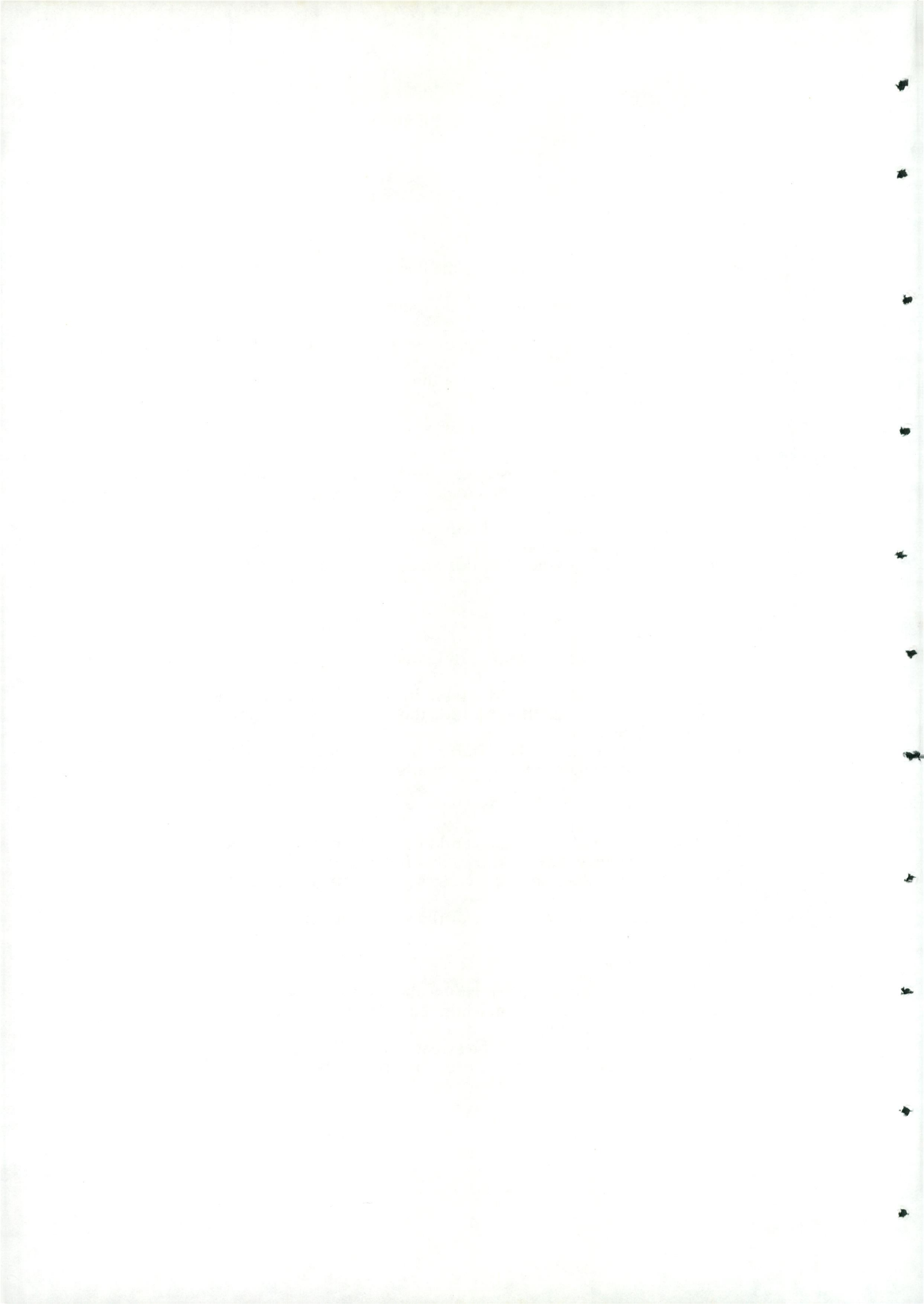
Taking up the balls of clay and putting one upon the other, he covers them with leaves;
 Three days afterwards he divides them into three and kneads them again,
 Knowing the right proportion he adds the finest sand and sprinkling water kneads again;
 After kneading, he makes them into rounded balls again, and makes a heap of them; and takes them up again after three days.

4

After thus preparing it, he treads and kneads the clay again and again;
 When it is like sticky wax he knows that it is ready;
 Then according to the size of the vessels to be made he divides it into separate lumps;
 The lumps thus made he stores near the workshop and covers them carefully.

5

Next day with a split cane he separates the lumps of clay one by one,
 And having duly divided them again makes them up in balls and keeps them in a heap as on the previous day;
 The next day, waking at dawn, he sweeps and tidies up the workshop,
 And having all the balls of clay close at hand, he sits before the wheel.



6

He takes with the right hand the balls of clay one by one and sets them on the wheel,
 With the left hand he turns the wheel,¹ with the right hand he moulds (the vessel),
 Knowing the size and shape, as required he presses down his hand;
 Then when the right shape appears, he stays the form and moulds the rim.²

7

Having (thus) stayed the form and turned the rim, he turns the wheel very fast,
 And looking now and then to see if it is smooth, he amends with the finger tip any unevenness,
 Sprinkling a little water he polishes (the pot), then takes it carefully with open hand,
 Duly keeps it standing by, and takes it up again after thirty hours from the time of making thus.

8

(Then) taking the *galiheda*³ in the left hand and the *meti aluva*⁴ in the right, holding the vessel tightly with the feet,
 He beats it with the blade⁵, making it bigger as much as need be,
 And after thus beating it to the required degree, and having polished it, he sets it in the sunshine,
 After it is partly dried, he draws leafy branches (*liyavel*), garlands and flower-petals round the vessel;

9

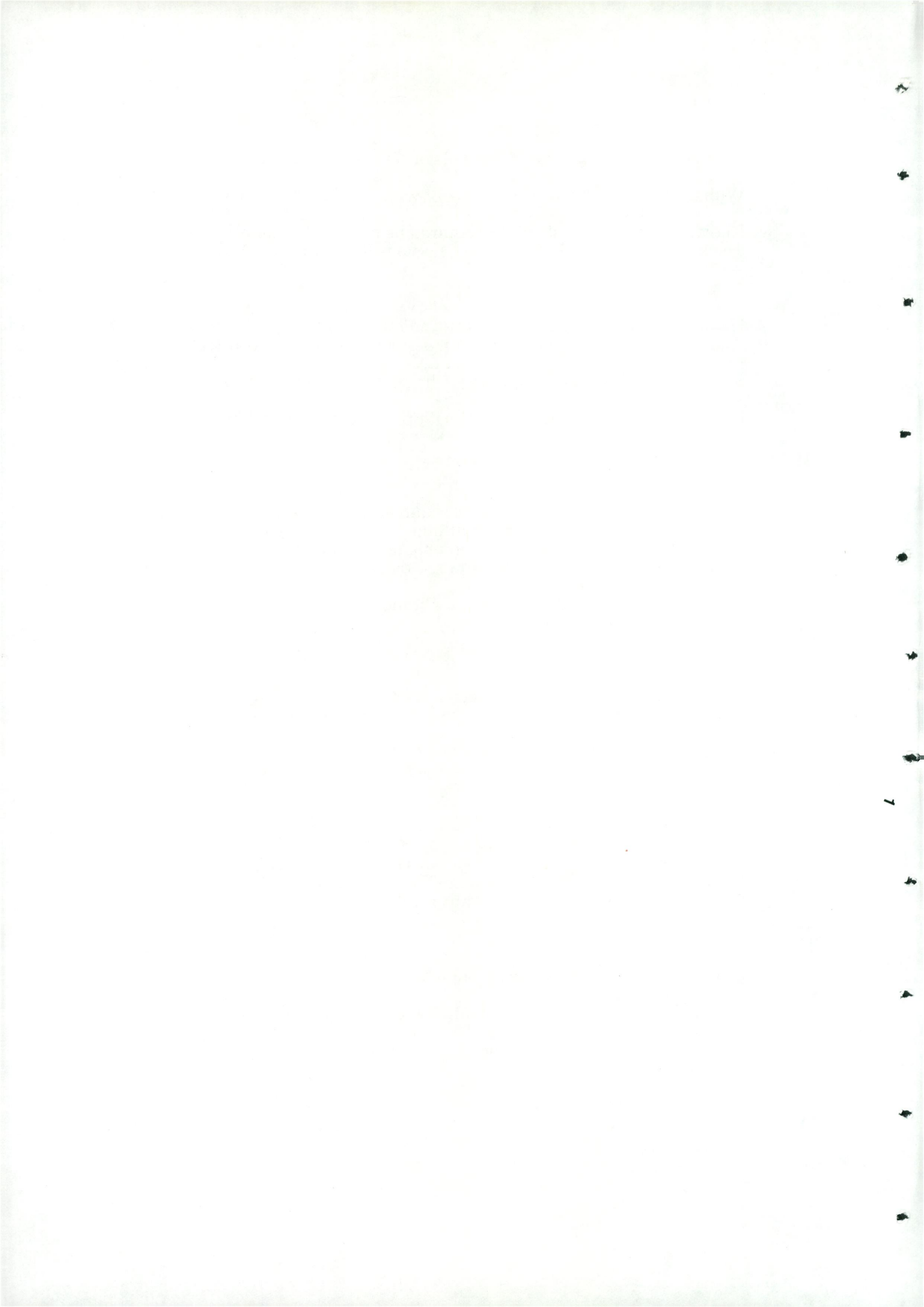
Drawing round it lines, flower-petals, cocks, parrots pigeons, *selalihini*,
 And, each in turn, *bo*-leaves, bunches of flowers and dates, *na*-flowers, *olu*- and lotus-flowers,
 Making the orbs of sun and moon, *makara toran* and the golden *hamsa*,
 Elephants, horses, cattle, deer, lions, tigers, wolves, bears, cobras, and *polongas*,

10

Swimming *tisaru*, flying *lihini*, fair *kinduro*, and honey bees,
 Great boas, fierce serpents not a few, sharks, tortoises, and golden peacocks,
 Beautiful damsels whose ever-waxing breasts are full-frown golden swans,
 Forgetting not to draw dear delightful children.

11

Drawing round it *nari lata*, leafy branches, and eke the letters of the alphabet with vowel signs,
 And inserting in the midst a trident with the signs *om hrim* as a talisman,
 Drawing in the four corners *puttu*⁶, - peacock, cobra, swan and, serpent,
 The signs of the Zodiac, the nine planets, and the twenty-seven asterisms⁷,



12

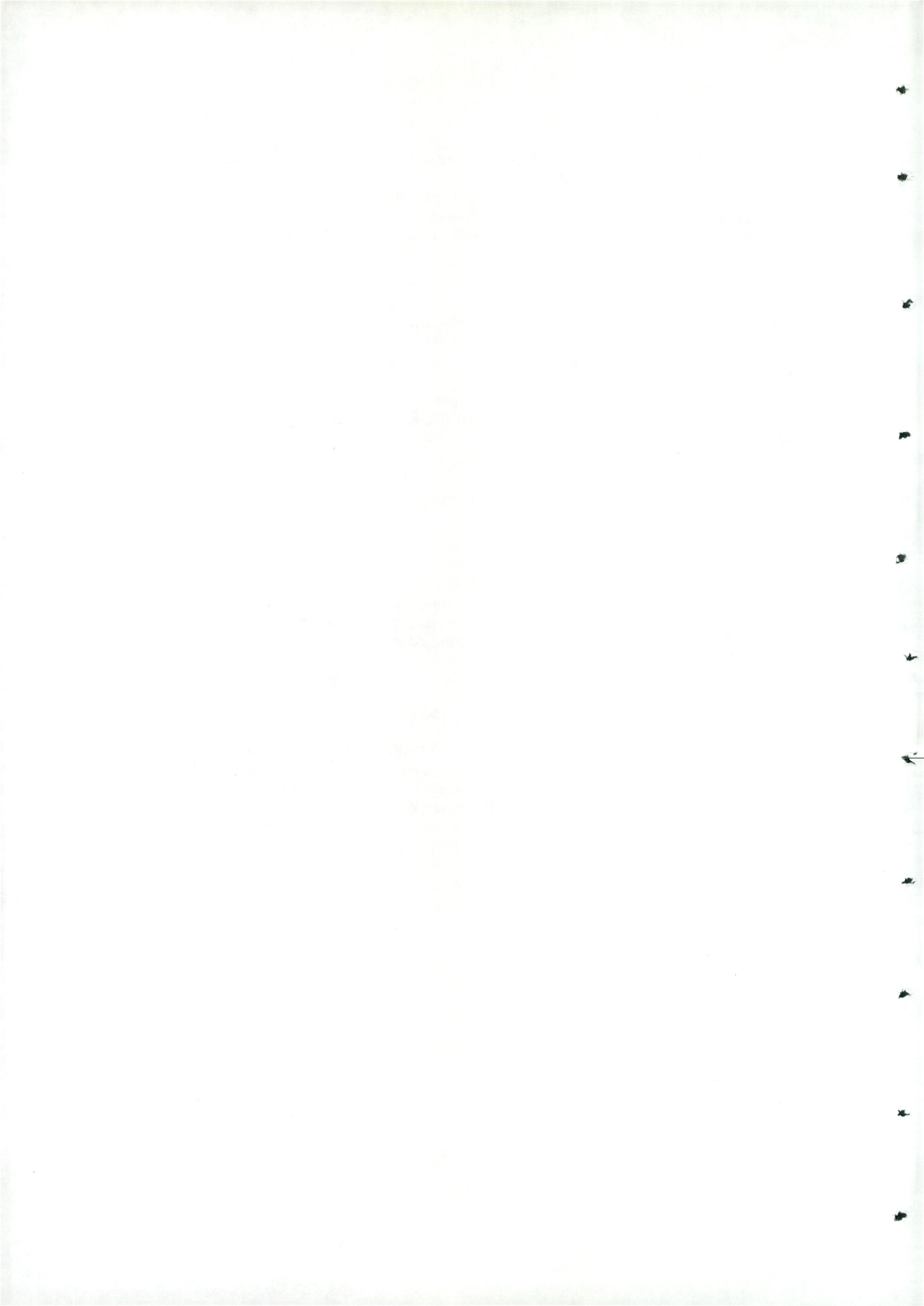
He takes good (red) *gurugala* and (white) *makulu* and mixes them with water to a thick consistency,
 Mingling them with the right amount of oil, that they may shine:
 Thereafter he sets them in the sun to dry them well,
 And after that having stacked them in the kiln, on the first day he dries them in the smoke.

13

On the second day putting only a certain quantity of firewood he lights a moderate fire,
 On the third day he makes the fire fierce enough, and burns (the pots) till they are done;
 Afterwards he draws⁸ the fire and puts it out and leaves three days for cooling,
 On the fourth day ascertaining that the kiln is quite cool, he takes out the vessels one by one.

Notes:

- 1 Usually the wheel is turned by a young assistant.
- 2 'Hedagahasteyi'; i.e. he moulds the rim with a wet rag, turning it over.
- 3 Stone held inside the vessel while the sides are hammered over till they meet, as described above.
- 4 *Meti aluva*, evidently another name for the bat, *valantala lella*.
- 5 *Alla*, lit. palm of the hand, doubtless means the blade of the bat or *valantalana lella*; the description previously given should be carefully read to make the meaning of this verse clear.
- 6 *Puttuva*, a symmetrical arrangement of two, three, or four animals with necks entwined.
- 7 The poem mentions a long list of decorations, some of which could hardly be found room for on an earthen vessel. All the work referred to is of the kind done before firing, and does not include painting, which (except slip painting) is no part of the potters' art.
- 8 The firewood is in the form of long sticks which are pushed in as they burn away; hence the expression 'to draw away the firewood' when the fire is to be put out.



FOOTNOTES

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|----|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 16 | Sinhalese Earthenware | - Coomeraswamy, A.K. |
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| 17 | Potters and Ceylon | - Corner, Caroline |
| 25 | An Historical Relation of Ceylon | - Knox, Robert |
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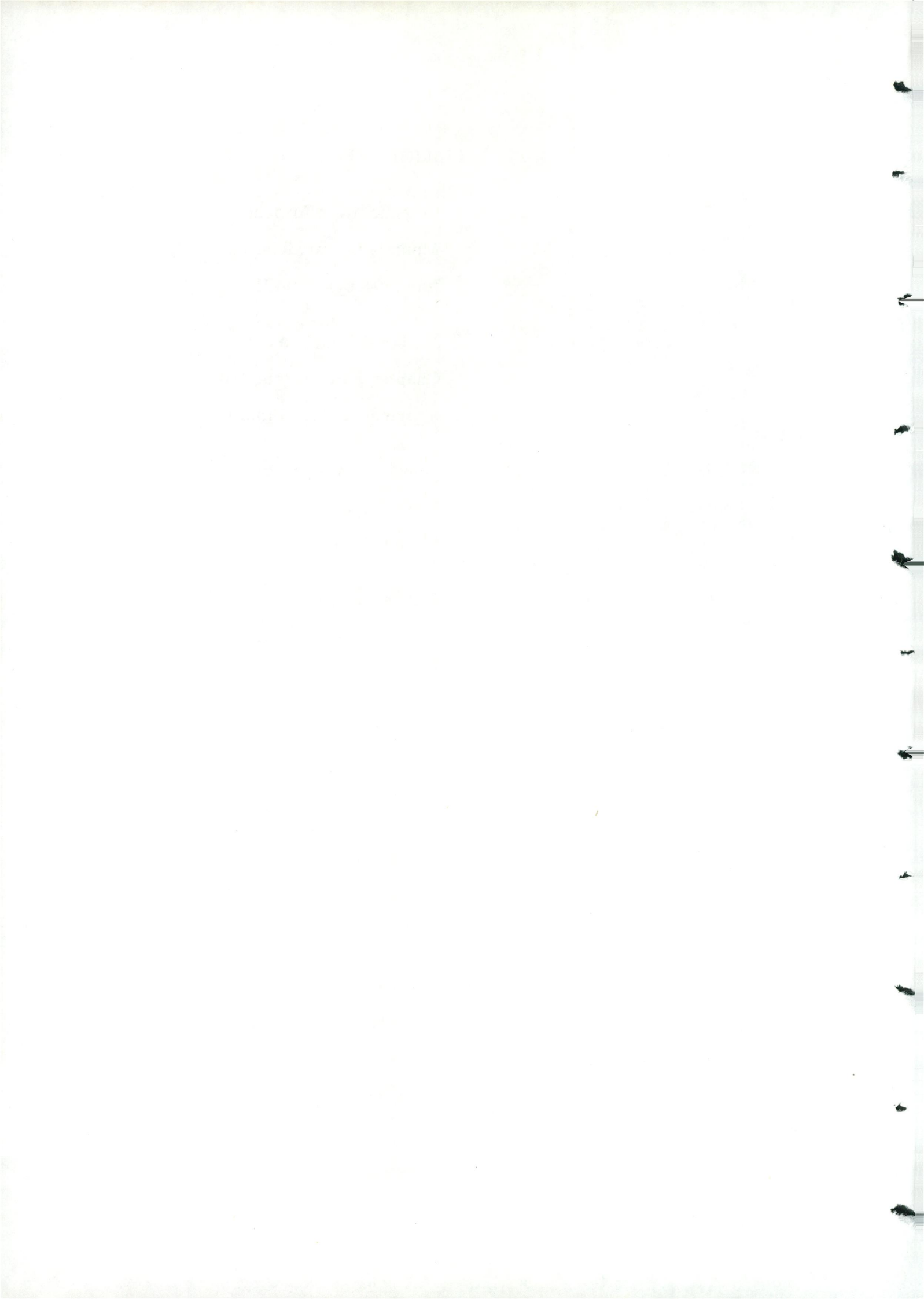
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