FAMILY FORMATION AND MARRIAGE PATTERNS

A COMPARISON BETWEEN SRI LANKA AND EUROPE

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Family formation and marriage patterns
A comparison between Sri Lanka and Europe

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Preface

With this thesis, my master Comparative History has come to an end. I must say it has been a busy year, with many hours spent behind my laptop. But I am very proud of the result.

During my search for a research topic, I met with my thesis supervisor Jan Luiten van Zanden. As I was still unsure of the direction I wanted to go in, he gave me a suggestion, which I gladly took up. He mentioned VOC archive with registers of the inhabitants of Sri Lanka during VOC rule, or *thombos*. These documents had recently been researched and digitalized by Albert van den Belt. I was allowed to take a look at these interesting, 'new' documents and do some basic investigation. I decided to make use of the course 'Girlpower' by Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden, that I took during my bachelors. This turned out to be a great starting point for my thesis. Once these two basic elements of my thesis had been decided on, I hed into the library and started my research.

Being a history student, I am able to work with historic books and articles. But working with data, analysing and forming figures and tables, and discovering the many aspects of excel have been a great challenge for me. The help I received in understanding the many mysteries I bumped up against has been very valuable to me.

One other challenge I had to face was my lack of knowledge of Sri Lankan society. I read a share of books, but misunderstandings and misinterpretations have been inevitable. Fortunately, I was given a great opportunity when Albert van den Belt invited me to discuss my thesis and the many aspects of Sri Lankan society of which I knew too little. His help has hopefully made this thesis more accurate and true. I thank him for this.

All my friends also receive a small thank you, for they listened, were patient, and most importantly were enthusiastic and gave me self-confidence.

Utrecht, June
Carolien Huijgen

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Introduction

Every culture we know of, past or present, has some form of the institution 'family'. The family provides an environment for human beings to learn to eat, talk, and walk and to acquire morals, a sense of culture and modes of behaviour. The family is seen as the product of human history and changes through time, adapting to society. This social structure can therefore provide valuable insights into society of today, but more importantly into societies of yesterday.

One such society of the past, of which much is still left undiscovered, is situated in late eighteenth-century Sri Lanka, also known as Ceylon. The colonialization of Ceylon, first by the Portuguese, later the Dutch and finally the English, put this rich and fruitful country on Europe's maps. While Sri Lankan cinnamon became famous and the Dutch United East India Company settled in the region, the local population, on who the economy was mostly built, lived on in quite the same manner. This was possible because the European colonizers chose to keep many Ceylonese institutions in place, and to alter only some as to further dominate the region and population.

This thesis attempts to reconstruct the family structure of late eighteenth-century Sri Lankan peasant society and to compare this society to the very different European society of that time. The family as a social unit will receive focus, for some historians believe that family formation and household composition could influence economic development greatly.[1] This thesis will deal with family formation: differences between the European marriage pattern and the Sri Lankan marriage pattern, differences between the family as a unit in both regions, differences in size and composition of families, and differences in the potential these varying family structures had such as ascending the social ladder (perhaps through education).

These issues will be addressed by analyzing *thombos* (land and head registers) of the Colombo region in Ceylon, revised in 1760. These inventories were introduced by the Portuguese and adapted by the Dutch to register population, their belongings and ultimately to asses the amount of taxes they owed the colonial rulers. *Thombos,* as a primary source, tell us part of the tale of the Ceylonese peasant family life in 1760. This source forms the basis of this thesis and Albert van den Belt, who has been visiting the Sri Lankan archive to research these documents, made its use possible. I am most grateful to be allowed to work with these valuable sources.

By comparing the information obtained from the *thombos* to what we know of European peasant society, we can build upon theories about the role of the family in economic development. The theory of the European marriage pattern (with late marriages, high marriage ages, and low fertility) and its effects (the development towards a capitalist society) will be used as a benchmark.[2] Marriage patterns of other regions such as China are used in these studies to explain why capitalism did not occur in societies with different characteristics. The case study of Ceylon can contribute to these theories.

The first part of this thesis will discuss the European situation: the European marriage pattern and European family formation. The theory of John Hajnal (the European marriage pattern) and works on his theory will be discussed, as well as regions analyzed to provide a framework which we can later compare to the Sri Lankan findings.

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[1] Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa* (Amsterdam 2006). And J. Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective' in: D.V. Glass, D.E.C. Eversley, *Population in history* (London 1965).
[2] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 101-103.

The second part of this thesis will focus on Sri Lanka in 1760 and the information derived from the *thombos* of the Colombo *dissavany*. After a short background setting and further elaboration on the source *thombos*, we will focus on family sizes, marriage ages and traditions, and literacy rates. A comparative aspect can be found in this section of the thesis, for three rural Sinhalese communities have been studied and compared. The villages Toppu and Mahagam, and all the villages of Megoda district all share a common culture base – they possess a peasant agricultural economy, share the same institutional structures such as the presence of castes, and are located near the eastern coast of Sri Lanka. But within these similarities variations could be found that can further enhance our investigation. These comparisons and their combined conclusions can reconstruct the demographic picture of peasant society. The main body of this thesis will therefore focus on Sri Lankan peasant society, combining the data from the different regions under discussion. The appendices of this thesis will provide extra comparisons between the different regions, as to further enlighten those interested in the many variations found in the *thombos.*

In the final section, a second comparative aspect can be found: the two marriage patterns or systems will be compared using the comparative method. Comparative researchers tend to ask 'big questions', and the discussion of the European marriage pattern fits well within the debate of the 'Great Divergence'. The difference between 'the West and the rest', and explanations for an economic divergence between Western Europe and the Yangzi delta (China's most developed region) have brought about many different types of research. The European marriage pattern describes the position of women and the structural changes in marriage traditions that have contributed to the development of a capitalist society in Western Europe.[3]

The comparative aspect of this thesis is central to its purpose: defining the differences between the European and Sri Lankan marriage patterns. The goal of comparative history is to form new explanatory interpretations of historical phenomena, in stead of purely describing historical events. Comparative historians hope to formulate universally-valid explanations by investigating a number of historical cases. The methods used within comparative history can vary, as James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer state comparative historical analysis is concerned with causal analysis, has an emphasis on processes over time, and uses a systematic and contextualised comparison.[4] It can also combine two methodological approaches: the case-oriented approach and the variable-oriented approach. The case-oriented approach is holistic, discussing a limited number of cases within their specific historical context. The variable-oriented approach discusses a large number of cases statistically, trying to falsify a hypothesis through a quantitative approach.[5] When both approaches are combined, we can hope to find answers to the 'big questions' in our societies.

This thesis discusses two cases using a historical, holistic, qualitative approach (part one and two). In the final section, however, a step will be taken towards the quantitative approach by comparing selected variables in order to reach more general conclusions. One method used within comparative history is Boolean algebra, which uses binary data to determine if a characteristic is present or absent in a case and if these characteristics lead to a certain outcome.[6] This can all be presented in a truth table. Unfortunately, this approach can not be applied to this thesis, as no specific outcome can be determined (a marriage pattern should not be categorized as an outcome in my opinion). That does not mean that we can not use the basic principles of this approach to present a comparison of our two cases. A number of variables or characteristics of the European marriage pattern will form

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[3] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa,* 19.

[4] J. Mahoney and D. Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge 2002) 6.

[5] Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, 41.

[6] Ragin, *The Comparative Method*, 85.

the red thread of our discussion of the case study Sri Lanka. This will allow us to compare these variables in the final section of this thesis, to determine their relevance and contribution to each separate marriage pattern. We will not be able to conclude if certain variables were crucial for a marriage pattern to develop, but we will be able to determine the presence of certain variables and their effect on each separate pattern. The placing of the Sri Lankan case study within the theory of the European marriage pattern can thus provide us with some new conclusions.

A glossary has been added at the end of this work to explain terminology; mostly Sinhalese names used in the *thombos* to describe services, castes and other customs.

Part one: European family formation

1   The European marriage pattern

John Hajnal, a Norwegian historical demographer, constructed a highly influential theory in 1965 on Western Europe's marriage pattern.[7] In his hypothesis he identified a zone of low nuptiality situated northwest of a line drawn from Trieste to Leningrad. Two distinctive marks of the 'European pattern' were found in this area; first, high ages at marriage, and second, a high proportion of people who never married at all. Ages of marriage could go up to an average of twenty-five years for women, and for men even higher, and percentages of men and women not marrying at all could have increased from fifteen to twenty-five percent.[8] A factor that pushed up the marriage ages was the development of marriage on a consensual basis; men and women chose their own partners and took the time to search for the right match.[9] Another factor contributing to higher marriage age was the necessity of couples to form economically self-sufficient households. Because it took time to acquire the necessary resources, men and women waited with marriage until it was economically possible to set up a separate household.

Table 1 presents an overview of mean ages of marriage for a number of European countries. It is clear to see that the mean age of marriage was high and also gradually increased over the years (in all countries except England).

Table 1.   Mean ages of women at first marriage

Country	Period	Mean Age
Belgium	Pre-1750	25.0
	1740-90	24.8
	1780-1820	27.9
England	Pre-1750	25.0
	1740-90	25.3
	1780-1820	24.3
France	Pre-1750	24.6
	1740-90	26.0
	1780-1820	26.7
Germany	Pre-1750	26.4
	1740-90	26.9
	1780-1820	27.5
Scandinavia	Pre-1750	26.7
	1740-90	25.5
	1780-1820	29.8

Source: Michael W. Finn, *The European demographic system 1500-1820* (Sussex 1981) 84.

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[7] Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective', 101-140.
[8] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa,* 14.
[9] Ibidem.

Other important theories can be linked to this European marriage pattern such as the Malthusian growth model.[10] The demographer Thomas Robert Malthus was concerned with the balance between population and resources. In his model he describes a tendency of population to grow at a geometric rate (exponentially), while food supply in the long term was capable of expanding only in arithmetical progression (linear).[11] Malthus thus predicted crises rising periodically as population grew too far ahead of subsistence. In his view, the key to avoiding such mortality crises lay in the practice of 'positive checks' (natural famines and diseases would force up death rates) and 'preventive checks' (delayed marriage, family limitation and celibacy). These checks thus kept population in balance with resources; only societies which practiced moral restraint were able to preserve high living standards. Malthus thus tied social well-being to late marriages.[12] In Hajnal's European marriage pattern, the preventive checks were key as they formed a balancing mechanism: a certain living standard was assured by altering marriage ages if variations in the economic situation occurred.

Another line of research closely connected to the European marriage pattern is the study of household structure and the prevalence of nuclear families in Europe.[13] In many societies marriage was an agreement between the heads of two families, with mostly women leaving the household of their family to move in with the family of their husbands (*patrilocality*). But the European system, as the theory suggest, was based on consensus and the free choice of both men and women, with new couples setting up their own household once married (*neolocality*).[14] Setting up a new household was, however, costly, so people either waited with marriage until they could afford their own house, or did not marry because this investment became too expensive.

1.1   Characteristics

If Europe has such a unique marriage pattern the next questions to ask is when and how it arose. Before we can fully understand the European pattern and its consequences, it is necessary to understand how it developed and how certain specific characteristics such as neolocality and marriage on a consensual basis emerged.

According to Hajnal, this pattern could be traced back in many countries to the first half of the eighteenth century or earlier.[15] But signs of a new pattern were already emerging in the Middle Ages when workers started to depend on wages and investments in education began to be made.[16] After the Black Death access to employment suddenly increased and many women entered the labour market. This enabled a stronger dependence on the market and fundamentally changed the power balance between generations.

1.1.1   Consensus
One important aspect of the European marriage pattern is its consensual basis; the agreement of both parties to marry. This was endorsed by the Roman-Catholic church from

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[10] George Alter, 'New perspectives on European marriage in the nineteenth century', *Journal of family history*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1991) 2.

[11] John Hatcher and Mark Bailey, *Modeling the Middle Ages, history & theory of England's economic development* (New York 2001) 24.

[12] James Z. Lee and Wang Feng, *One quarter of humanity: Malthusian mythology and Chinese realities, 1700-2000* (Cambridge 1999) 64.

[13] Alter, 'New perspectives on European marriage in the nineteenth century', 2.

[14] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa,* 15.

[15] Hajnal,'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective', 112.

[16] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa,* 16.

the early Middle Ages and was recognized as the factor that actually confirmed a marriage.[17] Although a father's opinion probably remained of great importance, it was no longer his decision alone. The marriage became a matter of contracts between equals rather than a decision imposed on one party. With this new form of equality, the position of women became stronger, as they had a say in determining their husband. Romantic motivations could even come to play at this stage, a development that had no influence in earlier marriage contracts.

  Marriages based on consensus had an effect on the difference between the ages of men and women. Consensus meant equal partners, which is why the ages of men and women tended to converge.[18] This indicates the balance of power in a relationship, for the smaller the difference in ages, the more influence a woman could have. One way of determining the extent of this power is by calculating the 'girlpowerindex'[19] By subtracting the number of years men were older from the average marriage ages of the woman, an index is formed that provides insight into the power of women. In Western Europe this index was very high while it was low for many African or Indian regions (see map).

Map 1. Girlpowerindices across the world
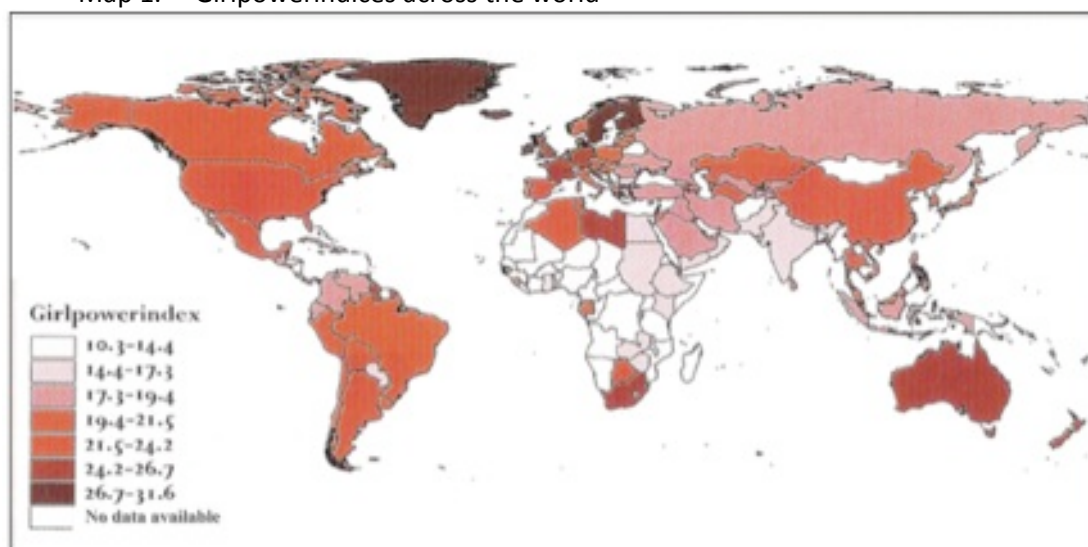
Source: De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 63.

1.1.2 Neolocality

Married couples were able to withdraw themselves from parental control by setting up their own new households. But neolocality, as this phenomenon is called, required marriage ages to rise. With marriages based on consensus, the process of looking for one's spouse became individualistic, and this could take longer as men and women needed to reach an age at which they could make this mature decision. Furthermore, neolocality required savings from which investments in a new household could be made. The life cycle of young adults adjusted to the developing labour market; a period of wage labour was introduced after reaching adulthood and before marriage, during which savings could be built up. If times were rough and wages were low, it could take longer to save up the sum required. As a consequence marriage ages went and or some did not marry at all. Families also became

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[17] Ibidem, 22.

[18] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 61.

[19] An index indicating the difference between the average marriage age of women and the number of years the men are older. See: De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 63.

smaller, more nuclear, as a new household was founded when couples married. Families were small, four to five persons on average.[20]

So how did this development come about? One important factor in the consolidation of the European marriage pattern was the development of the labour market. Those who were relatively independent economically, such as young men and women who became servants in another household, were better able to make independent choices such as determining their marriage partner. As more people earned a living through wage labour, a society emerged where children left the household at an early age to work to build up their savings.[21]

After the Black Death more men and also more women participated in the labour market, for the decrease in population caused many jobs to open up. As the labour market expanded, these people became increasingly dependent on the market and not the family household. Women could even gather their own social capital. Agriculture was no longer the only means of survival and living on the family plot was no longer a necessity. People started to migrate to other regions or to the city to find employment. A result: a proletariat developed.

1.1.3   Remaining unmarried

The European marriage pattern is also characterized by a large amount of people remaining unmarried. One aspect of this phenomenon would be the result of later marriages, as relatively more people remained single in their younger years (till marriage). Because it took time to save up money and find the right partner, more young adults remained single than in patterns where people married young because they did not need savings (they could move in with their parents) and because they did not need to choose their partner (because marriages were arranged). As Hajnal describes, because people in Western Europe were far more independent, it was possible that they did not find a suitable partner and thus chose to remain single.

These unmarried women were fairly common in Western Europe in the late Middle Ages. Young women could join beguine courts (loose semi-monastic communities without formal laws) and live a celibate life. They contributed to the community through charity work.

Table 2 illustrates this theory; it shows the proportion of the population that was still single in certain age groups. In the European pattern, a larger proportion of people remained single throughout life, in contrast to the Eastern European and the Asian patterns where there were hardly any singles at a later age. For the first age group (20-24) a larger percentage remained single in the European pattern, and in the last age group (45-49) the high percentages of singles in the European pattern can point to those remaining unmarried throughout life. This small example suggest an acceptance of the unmarried life for both men and women in Western Europe, while in Eastern Europe and Asia this alternative seems scarce. The overall lower percentages of singles in Eastern Europe and Asia point to early marriage. They differ however in the first age group, for Asian men have a much larger percentage of singles in these years. This can allow us to conclude that Asians married slightly later than Eastern Europeans, but earlier than Western Europeans.

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[20] Richard Wall, 'The transformation of the European family across the centuries' in: Richard Wall, Tamara K. Hareven, Joseph Ehmer ed., *Family history revisited, comparative perspectives* (Cranbury 2001) 217.

[21] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 45.

Table 2.   Selected European and Asian countries around 1900: percentages single at selected ages
(Single population as per cent of total population in age group)

Country	Men			Women		
	20-24	25-29	45-49	20-24	25-29	45-49
'European pattern':						
Belgium	85	50	16	71	41	17
Sweden	92	61	13	80	52	19
'Eastern European pattern':						
Bulgaria	58	23	3	24	3	1
Serbia	50	18	3	16	2	1
'Asian pattern':						
Ceylon	80	43	8	29	12	3
Japan	71	26	2	31	9	2

Source: Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective', 101, 104.

1.2   Consequences

1.2.1   Education

The European marriage pattern had a number of effects. One of these was the larger participation of people in the labour market. Households became almost fully dependent on the market, which altered their daily life greatly. It became common to work as a servant in someone's household or become a master's apprentice between the years of 12 to 14 and 20 to 25.[22] During this period, education came to be influential; investments in human capital were made because it eventually benefited the wage labourer. As people no longer worked purely in agriculture but dived into the labour market and all its different sectors, a certain level of education was needed for people to succeed and survive.

Reading and writing were skills the majority of the people in Holland possessed in the sixteenth century.[23] And differences in literacy between the people from the country and the city were modest or hardly present. An indicator for the efficiency of the educational system in a region is the premium of skilled labour. As Figure 1 illustrates, the premium for skilled labour was quite high (100-150%) in Western Europe until the first half of the fourteenth century, but after the Black Death the premium drops to around 60% of the wages for unskilled labourers.[24] Western Europe (and mostly England, the Low Countries and Northern France) seems to have cheaper skilled labour than elsewhere, which could suggest that education was quite common. The educational system enabled large investments in human capital.

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[22] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 68.
[23] Ibidem, 73.
[24] Jan Luiten van Zanden, 'De timmerman, de boekdrukker en het onstaan van de Europese kenniseconomie', *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2005) 110.

Figure 1   Premium of skilled labour in construction in Western Europe, India and Japan 1300-1914 (in percentages of the wages of the unschooled labourers).
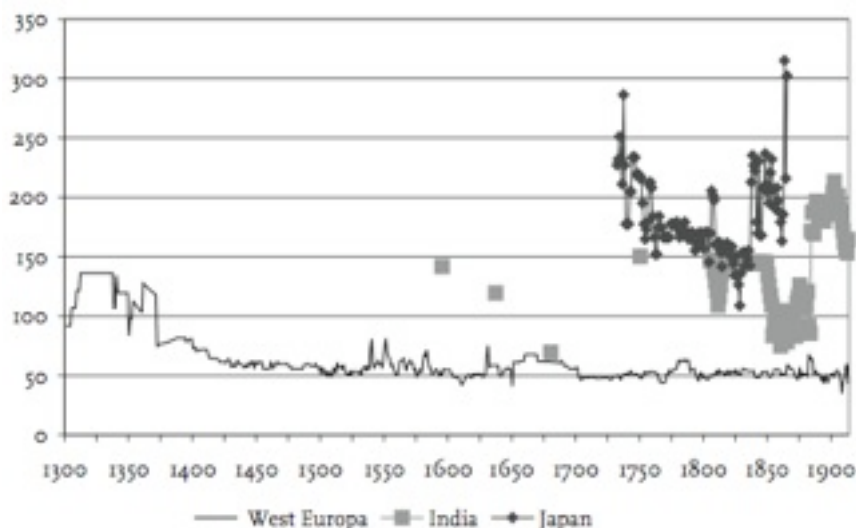
Source: Van Zanden, 'De timmerman, de boekdrukker en het ontstaan van de Europese kenniseconomie', 111.

Not only literacy rates, but also numeracy rates can demonstrate human capital. An awareness of age can be used as a proxy for numeracy, and an indicator used to calculate numeracy is 'age heaping'.[25] Age data are normally derived in one of three ways: by statement of the person involved, by statement from a second party (father, husband), or by estimation from the enumerator.[26] When individuals lack certain knowledge of their own or other's age, they mostly choose a figure they deem plausible; they have a tendency to prefer 'attractive' numbers, like those ending in '5' or '0'. If an abnormal amount of people record their age ending with a '5' or '0', it is assumed that a selection of these people estimated their age. They were thus not able to count properly. Age heaping can therefore tell us something about numeracy in a region.

Next, we can apply a Whipple index to detect the extent to which systematic heaping on certain ages occurs. This index score is obtained by summing the number of persons in the age range 23 to 62 who report ages ending in '0' and '5', dividing that sum by the total population between the ages 23 and 62, and multiplying the result by 5.[27] This index score now tells us the extent of heaping, with an index of 100 meaning no preference for ages ending in '0' and '5' and 500 meaning all reported ages ended with a '0' or '5' (thus total heaping).

The following table (Table 3) is an example showing Whipple indices for Amsterdam in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.[28] As is clear from the table, the indices decrease from around 150-160 in the sixteenth century to around 110-120 in the eighteenth century, which indicates a slight increase in numeracy. The table also presents a slight difference between the indices for men and women, sometimes in the women's benefit. It thus seems that women were able to count just as well as men, and that their overall ability to count increased over the years.

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[25] Brian A'Hearn, Joerg Baten and Dorothee Crayen, 'Quantifying quantitative literacy, age heaping and the history of human capital', *The journal of economic history*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (2009) 6.

[26] John A. Jowett, 'Age-heaping: contrasting patterns from China', *Geo journal*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (1992) 427.

[27] Thomas Spoorenberg, 'Quality of age reporting: extension and application of the modified Whipple's index', *Population*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (2007) 730.

[28] Tine de Moor and Jan Luiten van Zanden, 'Van fouten kan je leren', *Tijdschrift voor sociale en economische geschiedenis*, Vol. 5, No.4 (2008) 42.

Table 3.   Whipple indices from intended marriage certificates in Amsterdam in 1585-1800.

	1585			**1600**			**1650**		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
N	81	66	147	242	175	417	192	143	335
Whipple-index	154	159	156	103	129	114	125	94	112

	1700			**1750**			**1800**		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
N	261	232	493	245	240	485	171	163	334
Whipple-index	142	121	132	135	119	127	114	129	121

Source: De Moor and Van Zanden, 'Van fouten kan je leren', 42.

1.2.2   Social institutions

The European marriage pattern also had effect on society. As nuclear families developed and couples moved out of their family's household, families became more vulnerable. Parents could no longer rely on their children to take care of them because children moved out of the home and their wages no longer contributed to the family income. Family ties became looser, so alternative forms of social support needed to be formed. Social welfare in the form of poor relief, orphanages and other institutions that took care of the needy developed, as well as improvements in annuity and savings. As family ties and obligations to one another diminished, the community needed to step in to form a safety net for those in need.

Conclusions part one

A European marriage pattern has developed in Western Europe from the Middle Ages onwards, which is characterized by high ages of marriage, low fertility rates, and a share of people remaining unmarried. This typical pattern can be compared to other regions, such as Eastern Europe or Asia, where all these characteristics did not take form. Certain specific developments have contributed to the growth of this pattern, such as the Catholic Church with its new perception of marriage based on consensus, the individualization of society with couples settling neolocaly, and the expansion of the labour market which provided employment and a new means of income for many.

Due to this new marriage pattern, certain aspects of society changed. One of them being the level of education, which increased because investments in human capital were made and time for apprenticeships and employment as a servant was made available. Future employment depended much more on the level of education of a person than it would have in a purely agrarian society. But social institutions had to develop as well, as the family ties loosened and no longer provided a strong safety net. The community's contribution in helping the poor, the elderly and the sick was crucial for people to survive.

Part two: Sri Lankan family formation

Our focus will now shift to eighteenth-century Sri Lanka (also known as Ceylon), where the Dutch had colonized parts of the southern coast. The Dutch registration system, taken over from the Portuguese and the indigenous peoples and used as a means of taxing the indigenous society, generated a great number of documents (*thombos*) that can be found in the National Archives of Sri Lanka. This thesis focuses on the study of these documents.

The family as a unit can differ greatly across the globe, but variations in family formation are of interest in this work. The size, number of children, marriage ages, and other demographic variables provide insight into family arrangements. An attempt will be made to paint an accurate picture using *thombos* as the primary source.

2   Historical Setting

Sixteenth century Sri Lanka had three main centres of political power: Kotte, Kandy, and Jaffna.[29] Kotte was the strongest kingdom, the centre of Sinhalese power, and it controlled all the lands to the south and southwest. The kings of Kotte claimed overlordship over Kandy and soon met resistance from military lords who had settled in the central highlands with the city of Kandy as their capital.[30] Jaffna, on the other hand, was situated in the north and was dominated by Tamil power. Different ethnic groups lived within this country: the Sinhalese, who were Buddhists and settled in the middle and the south of the country, and the Tamils who were Hindu and had migrated from South-India to the north of Sri Lanka in the eleventh century.

This country had, from very early times, attracted the notice of people who lived in distant lands. Those who came into contact with Arab traders carried stories of riches, vegetables, minerals, spices and beautiful scenery to Europe.[31] Once European explorers discovered the Indian Ocean, it is of no surprise that Europeans settled in this country to profit from its riches. The Portuguese were the first to colonize the country, keen on spreading the Roman Catholic faith and establishing trading ports.[32] Their rule extended from the 1590s to the year 1658, and it was marked by warfare, political disorder and a decline of population.[33]

In the seventeenth century the Dutch were drawn to Sri Lanka and aided the Kandyan Kings in their fight against the Portuguese. Once these were overthrown, the Dutch East India Company laid claim to the Portuguese land.[34] The VOC performed two roles during their 'reign': they were sovereign and merchant; the Dutch governor of Ceylon was interested in territory but also had commercial interest in the island.[35] The conversion to the Protestant faith was one way of tying the local population to their rule.[36] As their political control increased, the Dutch monopolized the trade on the island: cinnamon (as a main export product) and elephants were rigorously monopolized, and the import and export of

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[29] S. Arasaratnam, *Ceylon* (New Jersey 1964) 124.

[30] Arasaratnam, *Ceylon* 124.

[31] K.M. De Silva ed., *Sri Lanka, a survey* (London 1977) 31.

[32] K.W. Goonewardena, *The foundation of Dutch power in Ceylon 1638-1658* (Amsterdam 1958) 3.

[33] Michael Roberts, *Caste conflict and Elite formation, the rise of a Karava elite in Sri Lanka 1500-1931* (Cambridge 1982) 7.

[34] K.M. De Silva, *A history of Sri Lanka* (London 1981) 154.

[35] Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri, *The adaptable peasant: agrarian society in Western Sri Lanka under Dutch rule, 1740-1800* (Leiden 2008) 6.

[36] De Silva, *Sri Lanka, a survey*, 56.

rice, areca nuts, pepper, and timber were enhanced. Besides surplus extraction, the Dutch also innovated the already present administration system and introduced a judicial administration system.[37]

2.1   Religion

Although the country was influenced by colonialism from the sixteenth century onwards, it also had a rich history of its own. One important aspect of Sinhalese society was Buddhism, its institutions, and its ideologies. Buddhism in Ceylon was of the form called *Theravada*, which belonged to the philosophical system called *Hinayana.* In this philosophy Buddhists wanted to attain *Nirvana*, the individually achieved salvation.[38] In each village and town a monastery (*vihara*) could be found where people could come for worship. The teachings of the *Theravada* school were marked by a remarkable blend of clarity, simplicity and compassion.[39] Individual efforts were stressed as a means of achieving salvation. Charity was also a great ideal preached by Buddhism and the priests were sometimes dependent on the charity of the villagers.[40]

In the Buddhist context marriage is not a religious duty nor is entry into marriage marked by religious ceremonies.[41] Because the greatest social prestige belonged to the celibate monk, who represented the ideal, there is less pressure upon men to prove their virility by fathering numerous children.

When the Europeans colonized the regions, one main aspect of their interest was spreading the religion. The Portuguese set up many missionary activities, although they were not always successful.[42] With the arrival of the Dutch, a switch needed to be made from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism. The Dutch were rather more tolerant of indigenous religions for they did not officially countenance Buddhism, and harassment of Hindus and Muslims, although continued, was not so severe as under the Portuguese.[43] Still, they set up their own churches, introduced Protestant education, and had ministers and church officials summoned to the island to look after the sick and spread the religion. With the marriage of many Dutch men to indigenous women, Protestantism could sometimes merge with Buddhism (as Buddhism did not forbid other religions).

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[37] De Silva, *A history of Sri Lanka*, 193.

[38] Arasaratnam, *Ceylon,* 76.

[39] De Silva, *A history of Sri Lanka*, 46.

[40] Arasaratnam, *Ceylon,* 82.

[41] T.O. Ling, 'Buddhist factors in population growth and control, a survey based on Thailand and Ceylon', *Population studies*, Vol. 23, No.1 (1969) 53.

[42] 'Oratorians and predikants: the Catholic Church in Ceylon under Dutch rule', *Ceylon journal of historical and social studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1968) 217.

[43] Ibidem, 196.

3 Thombos

The main sources used in this thesis are head *thombos* of a number of villages in Sri Lanka in 1760. The word *thombo* is Portuguese for 'the register of lands'.[44] Although the *thombos* of 1760 were a renovation of earlier *thombos*, only these documents have been preserved. Except perhaps some fragments, all *thombos* of earlier years have been lost. The time period of focus in this thesis is therefore around 1760. Recent archival research in Sri Lanka by Albert van den Belt has provided us with a copy of these documents, and I have been given permission to work with them. I will therefore be working with his version, and not the original copies found in the archives. But before we can put these sources to use, we must first understand what *thombos* are, how they were formed, and what they register.

3.1   Sri Lankan, Portuguese and Dutch registration

During the rule of the Sinhalese Kings, before the Portuguese landed on Sri Lanka, an indigenous registration system was in place. The kings of Kotte had records of landholdings known as the *lekam-mitiya*, or 'land rolls'.[45] In these documents persons liable to regular service were registered.[46] As the sole owners of the land, the kings were entitled to a portion of the land's produce. This took the form of taxes and the transfer of surplus in the form of labour organized under their system of *rãjakãriya*, which was the obligatory but unpaid labour service a peasant had to perform to the sovereign.[47]

As the Kingdom of Kotte was brought under Portuguese rule, the Portuguese took over their administration, their laws and their customs of the land. They inherited the long established mechanism of extracting surplus from the peasants and took over the land registers, which they named *thombos.* Once the Dutch came to power in Sri Lanka, they in turn took over this administration system and perfected it to form legal documents that are still used in Sri Lanka to settle current land disputes.[48] A useful tool for Portuguese and Dutch administration was the native headman system; a system that consisted of a dominant ruling class of elite who made sure the administration system and *rãjakãriya* were followed correctly.[49] An alliance with the indigenous chiefs, who were the real power holders at the local level, enabled the Portuguese and Dutch to strengthen their rule. The structure of native offices, used for the compilation of *thombos* was left mostly as it was by the Portuguese. The highest official, the *Dissave*, was replaced with a Portuguese or Dutch official, but the other officers (*Korale, Vidane, Mayoral*) were still held by indigenous officials.[50] Officials could be given land grants called *accomodessans* instead of salaries, which were given to them as long as they fulfilled their duties to the sovereign.[51]

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[44] K.D. Paranavitana*, Land for money, Dutch land registration in Sri Lanka* (Colombo 2001) 1.

[45] Paranavitana, *Land for money*, 5.

[46] S.A.W. Mottau, 'Glossary of terms used in official correspondence of the government of Ceylon in the records at the National Archives' in: De Silva, *The Sri Lankan Archives*, Vol. 3 (1985-1986) 114.

[47] Dewasiri, *The adaptable peasant,* 5.

[48] Albert van den Belt, *Het VOC-bedrijf op Ceylon* (Zutphen 2008) 248.

[49] Paranavitana, *Land for money*, 6.

[50] Ibidem.

[51] Mottau, 'Glossary of terms used in official correspondence of the government of Ceylon in the records at the National Archives', 13.

The value of *thombos* was not lost on the Dutch Governors once they came to power, although improvements could be made. Soon Governors initiated steps for better registration of the land because, as Governor Rijcklof van Goens explains:

> *The inhabitants in the Company's territory have now for more than ten years been freed from the payment of all taxes and dues to the lord of the land, but it now appears to be high time to have all these lands and people accurately registered and to incorporate them in a new thombo.*[52]

Maps and surveys of the land were the instruments used to lay down the precise land distribution. In 1760, Governor Schreuder initiated a revision of the *thombos* of 1740 to document the exact boundaries of people's land. As wild land was increasingly cultivated for rice production by the indigenous people, cinnamon trees were being destroyed. Since cinnamon was not grown on plantations, these wild trees were of the utmost importance to the Company. As cinnamon prices climbed and the number of cinnamon trees declined, the Company needed to safeguard its stock: they documented the boundaries of people's land to prohibit further damage of the wild. All lands of which property rights could not be proven became Company land.

Because the Company instructed the compilation of *thombos,* those in charge were VOC officials. A *landraad* was formed, burdened with carrying out a set of uniform land registration procedures in the entire territory under the Company's command. Land disputes and placing the land title registration system on a legal footing was one of their main tasks.[53] *Thombo commissioners* were appointed to travel in the *dissavany* from village to village to obtain details of land ownership and to register who lived on which piece of land. But the travel of these *commissioners* became troublesome, so arrangements were made by governor Van Imhoff for the *commissioners* to meet in one central place in each *dissavany*; the land holders and tenants now had to travel to this central place with their evidence of land ownership (including deeds and grants). The native headmen were also required to prepare a list of the landholdings in their respective sub-divisions. The information provided by the peasants combined with the headmen's lists provided enough information to settle many claims. When claims of ownership were granted and disputes were settled, fresh deeds were handed over to the landowners.[54]

3.2   What was registered in *thombos*?

The *thombos* of Ceylon consist of two separated series: the head *thombos* (*hoofd thombo)* and the land *thombos*.[55] The head *thombo* gives detailed information on the families of the landholders: their names, the names of their family members, the relationship between family members, ages, castes, services, and if listed marital status. This precise description gave the Company information on who fell under their jurisdiction, who was in charge and could thus be approached when needed, and what services these peasants were obliged to perform. The names found in these *thombos* are of great value: Dutch and Portuguese influences on society could reflect in names and the 'ge'-name, indicating the family name, is an important source for Sri Lankan genealogy research.[56] The land *thombo* records the

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[52] Rijckloff Van Goens, *Memoirs of Rijckloff van Goens governor of Ceylon delivered to his successors Jacob Hustaart on December 26, 1663 and Rijckloff van Goens the Younger on April 12, 1675*, trans. E. Reimers (Colombo 1932) 46.
[53] Paranavitana, *Land for money,* 55.
[54] Ibidem*,* 65.
[55] Albert van den Belt, *Het VOC-bedrijf op Ceylon* (Zutphen 2008) 248.
[56] Van den Belt, *Het VOC-bedrijf op Ceylon*, 249.

property of each landowner and the mandatory services owed to the sovereign that came with the property. In these land *thombos* the size and type of the property (gardens or paddies), the number and type of trees, the legal status of the land (*parvenie*[57], Company property etc), the services, the origin of the land, and many more aspects were noted.[58] Because the Company had a clear overview of the distribution of land and people, the native headman system lost some of its power. The powerful native landholders became tenants of the Company, giving the Company more control over the inhabitants of the country.

All *thombos* were arranged according to province (*dissave*), district (*korale*), sub-district (*pattu*) and village (*gama*).[59] In the *dissavany* of Colombo the head and land *thombos* were each recorded in separate volumes.[60] For a picture of a *thombo* entry (to see what was really included) see appendix 1.

3.3   *Thombos* used in this thesis

This study will focus on *thombos* (revised in 1760) from the Colombo *dissavany*, in particular a small number of villages situated in three *korales* in this region[61]: the village *Toppu* in the *Danagaha pattu* of the *Alutkuru korale*, the village of *Mahagam* and three of its annex-villages in the *Maha pattu* of the *Pasdun korale*, and all the villages in the *Megoda pattu* of the *Walallawiti korale*. They will be discussed in full in the following chapters. There will not be a comparison with other villages due to the limited size of this research.

Using these *thombos* will require some translation, for their information is given in Dutch. When a translation is not possible, this thesis will use the Dutch names and spelling. At other times the Sri Lankan, or Sinhalese terms, names and concepts will be used.

When using *thombos* as a source, a word of caution is in order. The Company used the information generated by the *thombos* for taxation purposes. It was therefore met with some resistance from the indigenous people; mostly chiefs who enjoyed considerable authority over the peasants and were entitled to part of the peasants' surplus.[62] The work of the *thombo commissioners* was therefore often obstructed, and new research was sometimes needed to determine landownership. On the other hand, peasants could also welcome the use of *thombos*, for they acquired stability due to secured property rights. Disputes about land property were settled during the period of *thombo* compilation, which meant that boundaries were clear and further stability was created.[63] Although it is uncertain if the content of these *thombos* was always correct and exact, they should not be valued less.

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[57] *Parvenie:* a piece of land owned by the peasant. This land could be inherited and sold, and could not in any way be traced back the Company (so land could not be taken back if services were not performed).
[58] Van den Belt, *Het VOC-bedrijf op Ceylon*, 248.
[59] Paranavitana, *Land for money,* 85.
[60] Ibidem, 86.
[61] The *dissavany* of Colombo has eight *korales* in total, each consisting of a different number (three to four) of *pattu's* and *gamas*.
[62] Dewasiri, *The adaptable peasant,* 21.
[63] Ibidem, 20.

4   Agrarian society: the villages in the Colombo dissavany

Three different villages will be analysed as to give a thorough understanding of peasant society and household formation in late eighteenth-century Sri Lanka. The following chapter will give a detailed description of the three villages of research. The *thombos* used in this thesis all discuss villages situated in the Colombo *dissavany*, which is located on the west coast of Sri Lanka. The map below (Map 2) pictures this west coast of Sri Lanka and has the three districts in which our villages are situated outlined.

Map 2.   Map of the Colombo *dessavany*
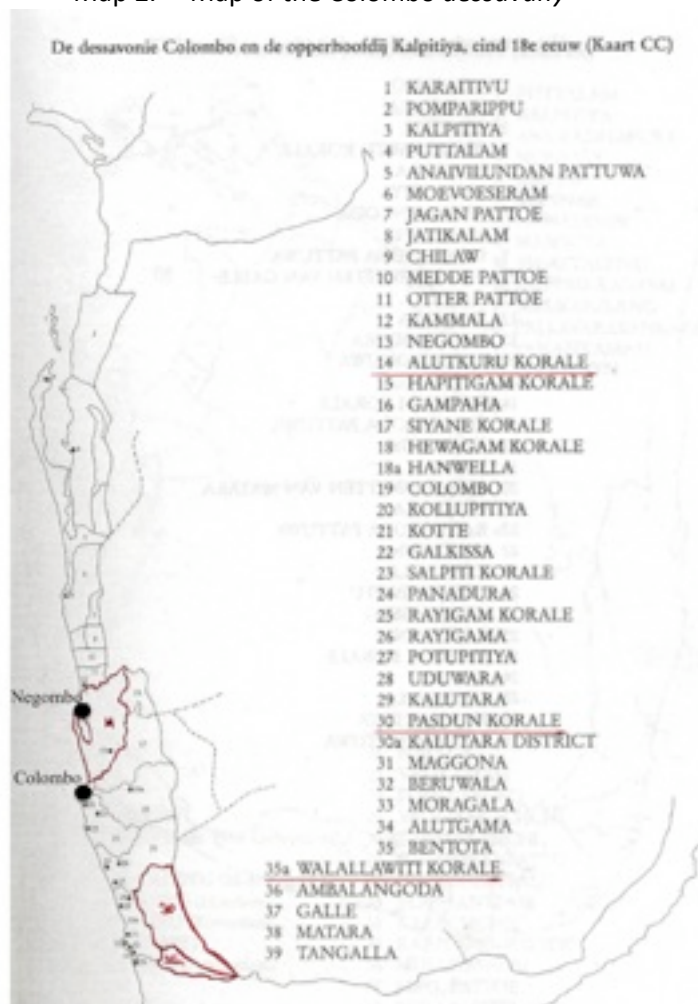
Source: L. Hovy, *Ceylonees plakkaatboek, deel I, Voorwerk, teksten 1-269* (hilversum 1991) CXLV.

One way of characterizing the different villages is by caste. The caste system in Sri Lanka differs from the Indian caste system, which has four main castes with a highest ranking religious caste, a warriors caste, a farmers caste, a service caste, and several sub-castes within each category. In Sri Lanka, the highest caste is that of the *goyigama*, which formed a lower 'farmer' caste in India. Within the *goyigama* caste many sub-castes can be found. The other castes of Sri Lanka are considered 'service castes', which are also divided into many different sub-castes. The hierarchy this system implies is the most important feature of the

caste system.[64] Specific ritual status in relation to that of other groups is determined by caste. But the order of hierarchy can vary according to the subject who articulates it and as the communities evolved, changes in caste hierarchy could be made. Caste distinction can be made clear through aspects such as clothing, eating arrangements, living conditions and naming. Another essential difference is that the Indians are Hindu, while the Sinhalese are Buddhists (and thus do not have a high religious Hindu caste like the Brahmans of India).

Another distinction between the villages can be found in the services their inhabitants performed. Caste names can no longer determine the type of service performed by a person. Since people from certain castes had migrated from India to Sri Lanka, the king, at their arrival, appointed a service to each caste or group of people while the caste name they carried did not alter. It was thus possible that those in a cinnamon peeler-caste no longer peeled cinnamon as a service. Our *thombos* list the services of each landholder, which could thus give insight into the type of village we are dealing with.

Another variation that can be found is the location of each village. Although the villages in question are all situated in the same *dissavany*, there are still some distinctions to be made (near the coast, further inland).

4.1   Toppu

The first village we will discuss is situated in the Alutkuru *korale* (Alutcoer Corle), situated just north of Negombo, not far from the coast. The village out of this *korale* that receives attention is called Toppu (Topoe), which is part of the *Danagaha pattu*. Toppu had a total of 758 inhabitants, 409 men and 349 women.

The largest number of people living in this village was *chetties* (*chittij*), which formed a group of people who were outside the caste system.[65] *Chetties* were merchants originally found in South-India, who had moved to Sri Lanka long ago. By the time of the Portuguese arrival in Sri Lanka, the chetty communities had established small outposts along the North Eastern and North Western coasts of Sri Lanka. They were no longer considered to be purely merchants. Coming under Portuguese rule, many of these groups converted to Catholicism. The Portuguese, Dutch and later British appointed many chetties to high office, as they were considered reliable (due partly to their religious affiliations and partly to their access to excellent education in the colonial urban centres). Thus some Chetty families became extremely influential. Toppu also had a number of people from the *goyigama* (also known as Bellalle or Wellale) caste, who formed the highest caste in the society of Sri Lanka; they were considered the 'chief caste of the kingdom'.[66] In Toppu, one family was of the washer caste (*rada* or *dhoby*), who washed the clothes of people from higher castes. Their presence was crucial for certain ceremonies such as marriage; when people married, their clothes needed to be washed by someone of the washer caste, or the marriage was invalidated. A very small number of families in this village were from the *durava* (*chiando*) caste, which was associated with toddy tapping (collecting toddy, the liquor fermented from coconut or palm sap). And there was also one family of the fisher caste (*karava).*

Judging from their names, most inhabitants of Toppu were Roman Catholic Chetties. As caste distinctiveness could reflect in names, the spread of Christian names can be important evidence of the spread of the Catholic faith. Since the sixteenth century, Catholic missionary activity took place and, although there is no available record, the impression is that the largest concentrations were to be found in the Alutkuru korale, in the vicinity of

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[64] Dewasiri, *The adaptable peasant,* 187.
[65] Paranavitana, *Land for money,* 99.
[66] Dewasiri, *The adaptable peasant,* 189.

Negombo, around Colombo, and in the Kalutura distict.[67] Castes could play an important role in the spreading of the Catholic faith; some missionaries complained that they could only attract the members of lower castes in the social order,[68] for these castes could find the higher status within Christianity attractive.[69] Chetties, as a group outside the caste system, could be such a group attracted by new social status.

The services the inhabitants of Toppu provided were mostly *nainde*. They executed the work that was to be done in a village;[70] they were employed to transport cinnamon and timber by means of Paddaboats, and were under obligation to supply rattans and to bring the necessary supplies for the Company's coconut and pepper gardens. They also had to perform certain other duties such as transporting wood for charcoal for the powered-mill, supply bamboos to the Company, and supply medicinal herbs to the Company's apothecary's shop.[71]

4.2 Mahagam

The second village that will be investigated is situated in the Pasdun korale (Pasdum Corle). The korale is situated south of Colombo, and stretches from the east coast land inwards, with one border being the Kalu Ganga river. The village Mahagam is situated in the Maha pattu, near the middle of the korale and quite inland. Three other small villages around Mahagam formed annex-villages: Neboda, Latpandura, and Halwatura. In general, annexes were smaller settlements with a low population density, located around the main village.[72] These villages consisted in total of 645 people, 295 men and 330 women.

Almost all inhabitants of Mahagam and its annex-villages (except for a very small number of families) were part of the *hakuru* caste (also known as jegereros); the village was thus a one-caste village. This was an agricultural caste, whose name meant 'those who make jaggery', which was crystal sugar made from the sap of palm trees. The *hakuru* caste had a tendency to be concentrated mainly in villages located closer to the colonial centre. Exclusively *hakuru* villages were however not very common occurrences.[73]

The inhabitants of Mahagam provided a number of different services. They were mainly cinnamon peelers, which was a major production activity in Ceylon. As the Company's power grew, these cinnamon peelers were emerging as a relatively privileged group. Another service common in this village was that of *cooly* (*coelij*), day labourers used for heavy tasks such as transporting goods, and collecting and bringing down the bark of cinnamon trees.[74] The duties performed by *coolies* and *naindes* overlapped, with the chief difference between the two being one of social status (*coolies* being of lower status).[75] Another service provided by these inhabitants was *duraya* (or *doeria*). A *doeria* was a petty headman; a head of low caste and rank who supervised the cinnamon peelers.[76] Finally

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[67] J. van Goor, *Jan Kompenie as schoolmaster, Dutch education in Ceylon 1690-1795* (Groningen 1978) 126.

[68] 'Oratorians and predikants: the Catholic Church in Ceylon under Dutch rule', 218.

[69] Jamers E. Tennent, *Christianity in Ceylon* (London 1850) 11.

[70] Mottau, 'Glossary of terms used in official correspondence of the government of Ceylon in the records at the National Archives', 136.

[71] Joan Gideon Loten, *Memoir of Jaon Gideon Loten governor of Ceylon delivered to his successor Jan Schreuder on February 28, 1757*, trans. E. Reimers (Colombo 1935) 28.

[72] Dewasiri, *The adaptable peasant*, 45.

[73] Ibidem, 206.

[74] Mottau, 'Glossary of terms used in official correspondence of the government of Ceylon in the records at the National Archives', 55; And Loten, *Memoir of Jaon Gideon Loten governor of Ceylon delivered to his successor Jan Schreuder on February 28,* 28.

[75] Dewasiri, *The adaptable peasant*, 97.

[76] L. Hovy, *Ceylonees plakkaatboek, deel II, teksten 270-690, nawerk* (Hilversum 1991) 323.

some inhabitants were *ilendaria* (child of a *doeria*, who served as messenger), *lieneduria* (grass cutter), messengers, or *lascorijn* (soldiers).

The village of Mahagam was a '*dispensdorp*' or maintenance village, which means that the income was given to a high VOC officer.

4.3   All the villages of the Megoda pattu

The third group of villages under discussion is situated in the Walallawiti korale (Wallallawitte Corle). This korale is situated next to the Pasdun korale. In this korale a northern and southern region can be distinguished: the northern area (the Megoda pattu) lies in the Colombo *dissavany*, the southern area in the Galle mandate. According to Albert van den Belt this korale gives an average picture of traditional agricultural society characterized by a relatively small amount of newly cultivated land. It is also considered a relatively inland region. All the 26 villages in the Wallawitte korale together had 2366 inhabitants; 1143 were men, and 1223 women.

Most inhabitants of the different villages in this area were of the *goyigama* caste. This caste constituted the majority of the population in Sri Lanka.[77] Because this caste was so large, a clear distinction has been drawn between lower and higher grades of *goyigamas*, although all share a higher ritual status than those of service castes. The *goyigama* were found throughout the region, but were somewhat weaker in coastal areas where the fishermen (*karava's*) and cinnamon peelers (*chalias*) dominated. Other castes present in the villages of the Wallawitte korale were *Achari* (smiths), *Rada* (washers), *Karava* (fishermen), and *hakuru*. As only one or two families per village were of a different caste than *goyigama*, the inhabitants of these villages (like Mahagam) are mainly part of one caste. The 26 villages of the Megoda pattu will therefore be discussed together as if they were one large unit (village) that had its dwellings scattered over a larger area than the other two villages of this thesis.

The services provided by the people of these villages were many: in two villages (in which people's castes were not mentioned) people were mostly cinnamon peelers. In the other villages many were *majoraals*, whose name literally means 'those who organize *rajakariya*' in Sinhalese. They played the role of auxiliaries to the mechanisms of exploitation.[78] They were also bound to provide, as their principal service, the necessary maintenance from the *accommodessans* allowed to them, whenever any qualified officers were sent into the country on duty, and they also performed several other services.[79] Other services performed by the inhabitants of these villages were that of *nainde,* washers, writers, schoolmasters, coolies, village smiths, or messengers. Some were also exempt from service.

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[77] Dewasiri, *The adaptable peasant*, 193.
[78] Ibidem, 32.
[79] Loten, *Memoir of Jaon Gideon Loten governor of Ceylon delivered to his successor Jan Schreuder on February 28,* 28.

5 Sri Lankan families

The following chapters will dive into the data provided by the *thombos.* As a number of aspects of family life have been recorded by the *thombos* (names of family members, size of families, number of families per village etc) and this information allows us to calculate other aspects of family formation (number of children per couple, marriage ages, living locations etc), we can form a picture of Sri Lankan families and their possible marriage pattern.

In this analysis of Sri Lankan families, their size and composition are of importance; were families small or large? The simplest family unit consists of a married couple, and their offspring. This has been referred to as the 'conjugal family' or 'nuclear family' as it forms the basic unit or starting point of all more complex forms.[80] These complex forms can differ greatly, two or more nuclear families could unite through a common husband or wife as in polygyny or polyandry. This is also called a compound family.[81] Other family types can be produced through blood relationships, combining families of siblings, parents and children to form one unit. Thus brothers with their families could form a unit, or a father and mother, their unmarried children, their married children, and their offspring could form a unit. Because the emphasis lies in a blood tie, this is called a 'consanguine relationship'. The term used most often to refer to families that are larger than the nuclear unit is the 'extended family' or 'joint family'.[82]

In Sri Lanka one expects extended families. As agriculture was the dominant means of income and land was either in the possession of the peasants (*parvenie*) and passed on through heritage, given to peasants by the Company in return for services (*accommodessan*), or possessed by the Company, it was difficult to acquire new land. Families could thus not move away to start a household on a new piece of land and were thus bound to their family property.

5.1 Number of families and family members

Of each village, the number of families, the number of family members, and an average number of people per family can be calculated (Table 4). Of course the number of families varies for each set of villages, because Toppu is just one village and the Megoda pattu consists of 26 villages. However, Toppu was a larger village with eighty-eight families, while the villages in the Megoda pattu were mostly much smaller (between one and thirteen families per village). The village Mahagam and its annex villages were a mix; one large village with many families and also some smaller villages with considerably less families.

However, average family sizes show that the families in the villages of the Megoda pattu and also Mahagam were much larger than those in Toppu. Perhaps Christianity had influence on this phenomenon since it was likely that the chetties of Toppu were Roman Catholics, they could thus be influenced by European traditions of smaller families. The inhabitants of both Mahagam and the villages of the Megoda pattu were more purely Buddhist, and their families were thus larger.

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[80] M.F. Nimkoff and Russell Middleton, 'Types of family and types of economy', *The American journal of sociology,* Vol. 66, No. 3 (1960) 215.
[81] Nimkoff and Middleton, 'Types of family and types of economy', 215.
[82] Ibidem, 215.

Table 4.   Number of families per region

Regions and villages	Number of families	Number of people per village	Average number of people per family
Toppu	**88**	**760**	**9**
The village and annexes of Mahagam	**57**	**645**	**11**
Mahagam	41	457	11
Neebodde	11	89	8
Lapandoere	3	58	19
Halwattoere	2	41	21
The Megoda pattu	**157**	**2723**	**17**
Walallawita	6	143	24
Magurumaswila	3	25	8
Makalandawa	4	51	13
Gulawita	9	102	11
Totaha	4	75	19
Udugama	7	187	27
Yagirala	2	46	23
Karapagala	3	65	22
Matugama	7	67	10
Wekaha	4	51	13
Paraigama	6	99	17
Halwala	13	288	22
Gammana	7	143	20
Lulbadduwa	5	113	23
Badugoda	1	40	40
Ittapana	13	169	13
Madawita	2	42	21
Amunuheentuduwa	1	25	25
Pannilla	7	121	17
Uragoda	8	141	18
Lewwanduwa	9	155	17
Madawala	6	125	21
Welipenna	10	172	17
Kanana	7	107	15
Dodampapitiya	10	111	11
Indigastuduwa	3	60	20

For further explanation of family sizes, Figure 2 is presented, which illustrates how family members were distributed over the many families. By listing all families and the number of family members in each family, various measurements could be made: the lower quartile (the size of the families at the first quarter of the dataset) the median (the size of the families at half of the dataset), and the upper quartile (the size of the families at three-quarters of the dataset). The median for the families in all three regions combined lies at 10 people, meaning that half of the families had more and half had less than 10 family members. This figure also shows that 50% of the families had between 5 and 16 family members (indicated by the outlined box), and only 25% of the families had more than 16 people in their family. In Toppu, 50% of the families were between 4 and 10 members large,

in Mahagam this was slightly larger with 5 to 15, and in Megoda most families had between 7 and 23 family members.

The size of these families suggests the existence of extended families consisting of more than a nuclear unit with only two parents and their children. As families could have as many as 16 members, it is clear that they were joint families with relatives or other families living together to form one unit.

Figure 2   Box plot of the number of people per household
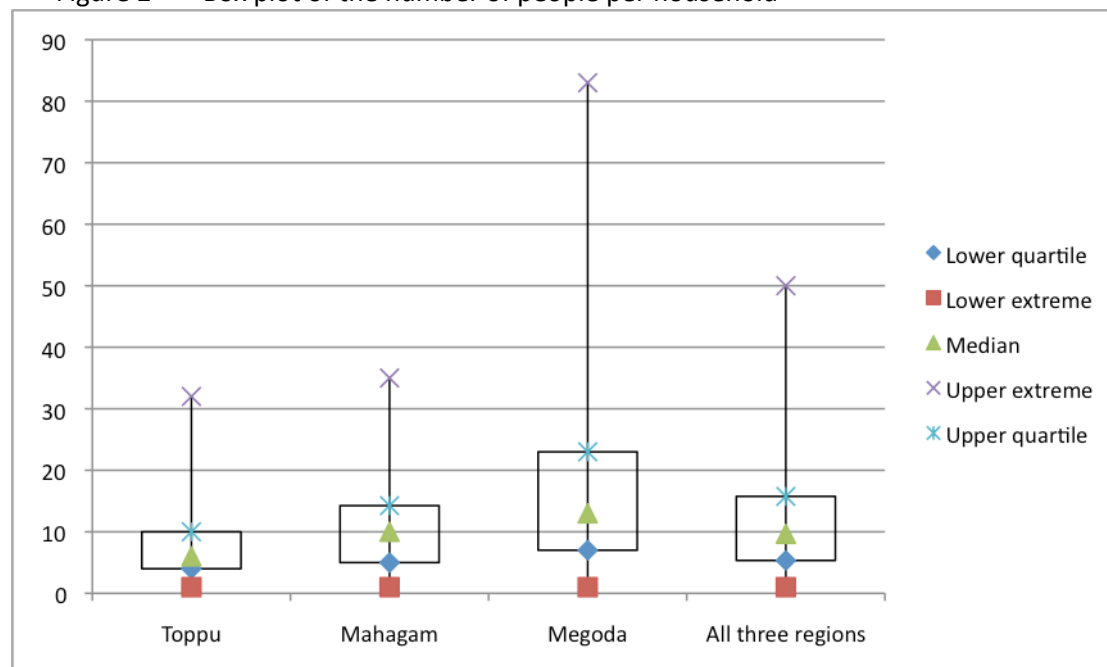
5.2   Relation types

Now that we know how large families were, we can investigate how family members were related to each other. As each person's relationship to the head of the family was listed, a type of relationship could be appointed. All types are explained below.

Type	Relation within the extended family to the head of the family
A	Nuclear family: direct family of the head of the family (wife and/or children)
B	Family of the children of the head of the family
C	Brother and/or sister of the head of the family and their family
D	Father of the head of the family and his family
E	Mother of the head of the family and her family
F	Family of the grandparents of the head of the family
G	Family of the spouse of the head of the family
H	Other cases (half brothers or sisters, cases that had to do with incest, foster parents)

Using the *thombos* we can list which combination of relation types could be found in each household. They can then be used to calculate how often each separate relation type was listed in the combinations. Figure 3 shows how often each relation type occurred in each region and on average in the three regions together. This means that one household could consist of one or more relation types (which is why the percentages in the figure add up to more than 100%).

Figure 3   Number of relation types in each region
                  (in percentages of total number of households per region)
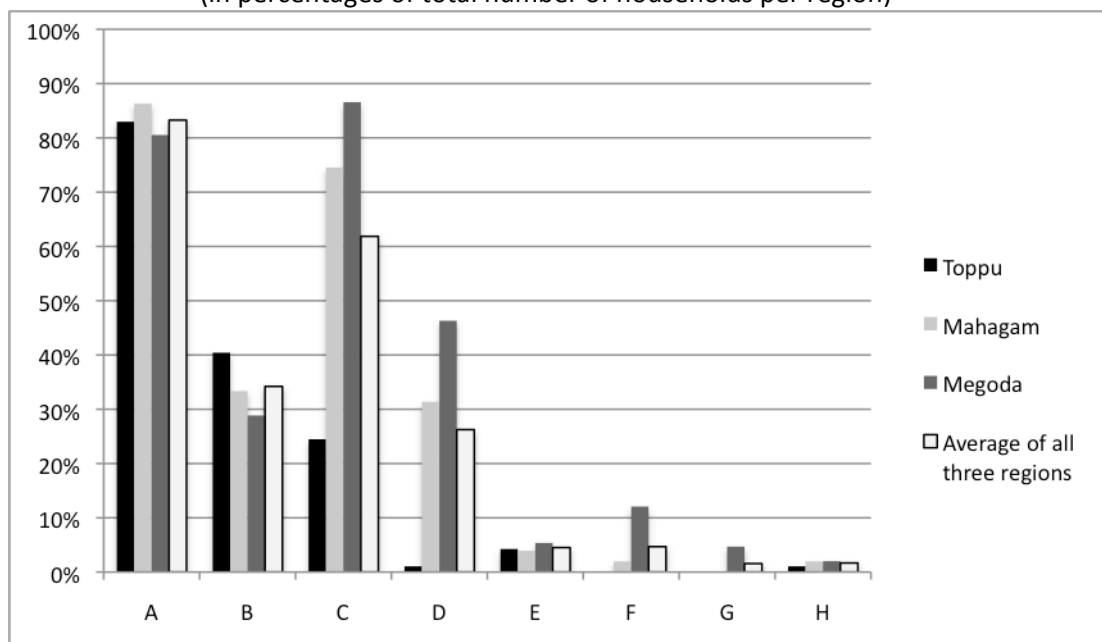
The existence of a type A relationship in around 80% of all the families indicates that the nuclear unit (head of the family, his spouse and their children) was the basic unit of a family. Only a few families did not have family members of this relationship type, mostly resulting in families with the head living together with his or her siblings and their families (type C) and perhaps with other relatives such as the family of the head's father (type D). The high percentages of other relationship types indicate that many families were larger than the nuclear unit, living with other relatives and their families as well. In around 30% of the families, the families of the head's children were also part of the family unit. It seems that it was not uncommon for children to stay at their parents' house after marriage.

A difference between the villages can be found in relation to relation type C (siblings of the head and their families). In both Mahagam and the villages of the Megoda pattu, many families had this relationship type as part of their family. In Toppu this relationship type was drastically less represented. If we also take type D into consideration (families of the father of the head), we find that hardly any members of Toppu's families were of this relation type. In Mahagam and the villages of the Megoda pattu, a son could take over a father's household and thus live with those already part of the family, including the siblings of the father. As it was common to live with the head's siblings (type C), it is logical that when a head's son took over, these family members became relation type D. This also points to patrilocality (which will be discussed in a later paragraph) where children stay in the household of their father, rather than that of their mother.

So why did the families in Toppu not have many of these type of family members? As we have learnt that Toppu's families were smaller, it is possible that this had an effect on family composition as well. It is possible that Roman Catholic influences were felt in this region in the same way as in the European marriage pattern: couples wanting to start their own household, away from parental control.

Because the above figure does not illustrate the exact combination of relation types in each family, Table 5 is included to point out how often each specific combination occurred in each region. The table demonstrates that in Toppu 34% of the families consisted of a purely type A relationship (the nuclear family), but in both Mahagam and the villages of the Megoda pattu a purely nuclear unit was only present in 11% and 4% of the families. The other

combination largely represented in Toppu is that of AB (the nuclear unit and the families of the children of the head). The other two regions once again show lower percentages in this category. The families in Mahagam and the villages of the Megoda pattu had many more types of combinations: families with the combination ABC, AC, ACD and C all show that in many family units, the families of the siblings of the head were included. The wide variety of combinations and the larger representation of these members in Mahagam's and the villages of the Megoda pattu's families demonstrate how common the extended family really was.

Table 5.   Number of families for each combination of relation types per region
(In percentages of total number of families per region)

Relation type combination	Toppu	Mahagam	Megoda	Average of all three regions
A	34.04%	11.76%	4.03%	16.61%
AB	31.91%	13.73%	6.04%	17.23%
ABC	6.38%	15.69%	12.08%	11.38%
ABCD	0.00%	1.96%	8.05%	3.34%
ABCDF	0.00%	0.00%	1.34%	0.45%
ABCDGH	0.00%	0.00%	0.67%	0.22%
ABCE	1.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.35%
AC	6.38%	15.69%	17.45%	13.17%
ACD	1.06%	19.61%	16.78%	12.48%
ACDE	0.00%	1.96%	0.00%	0.65%
ACDF	0.00%	0.00%	4.03%	1.34%
ACE	0.00%	1.96%	2.01%	1.32%
AE	2.13%	0.00%	0.00%	0.71%
AF	0.00%	0.00%	0.67%	0.22%
AG	0.00%	0.00%	2.01%	0.67%
BC	1.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.35%
C	7.45%	11.76%	8.05%	9.09%
CD	0.00%	1.96%	7.38%	3.11%
CDF	0.00%	0.00%	2.68%	0.89%
CDFH	0.00%	0.00%	0.67%	0.22%
CDH	0.00%	1.96%	0.67%	0.88%
CE	1.06%	0.00%	2.01%	1.03%
CG	0.00%	0.00%	1.34%	0.45%
H	1.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.35%

5.3   Family size conclusions

The above has made it clear that the extended family was the most common in eighteenth-century Sri Lankan society. On average families were mostly between 5 and 16 members large. Only the village of Toppu differed slightly from this observation as families were smaller (between 4 and 10 family members) and had fewer members of certain relation types (C and D). Their families were far more nuclear, with only relation type A present, or otherwise extended to the family of their children. Perhaps their Roman Catholic influences played a part in this phenomenon, as we have already seen happen in Europe during this period. The other two regions, however, show signs of larger extended families, with members of many relation types including the siblings of the head of the family and the head's father's family.

6 Marriage

Sinhalese marriage laws and customs reflect the traditions of the ancient Indo-Aryan Hindus and their rigid patriarchal society with extended family households.[83] According to Asiff Hussein and early compilations of Sinhalese law, certain conditions had to be fulfilled before a marriage could be contracted: first, parties needed parental consent, second, they were not to be related within the prohibited degrees of kinship, third, they had to have the intention of forming a definite alliance and fourth, men and women had to belong to the same caste.[84] But it is uncertain if these rules were actually followed or if they were of importance for the local population. As there have not been many studies on marriage traditions and rules in eighteenth-century Sri Lankan society, we can only speculate about what actually was of importance.

But what of actual marriage traditions? Polygyny (a man having more than one wife), polyandry (a women taking more than one husband) and concubinage were all recognised as legal.[85] From a European point of view, marriage in these regions was thus less restricted to one couple as was the case in Europe (one person bound to another single person). As Joao Ribeiro, a Portuguese captain who presented a manuscript to his sovereign describing the history and his impressions of the island, mentions in his work:

> The first night of consummation is allotted to the husband, the second to his brother, the third to the next brother, and so on as far as the seventh night, when, if there be more brothers, the remainder are not entitled to the privilege of the eldest six. These first days being past, the husband has no greater claim on his wife than his brothers have; if he finds her alone, he takes her to himself, but if one of his brothers be with her, he cannot disturb them. Thus one wife is sufficient for a whole family and all their property is in common among them; they bring their earnings into one general stock, and the children call all the brothers indifferently their fathers.[86]

Of course he could have exaggerated greatly and this story could have been far from true, but the mentioning of such a relationship could mean that it was possible for brothers to 'share' a wife. Marriage contracts could thus be less sexually binding than European marriages. Unfortunately, our *thombos* do not show if one wife was 'shared' by several brothers, but Robert Knox, who reported on Sri Lankan traditions, also remarked on the possibility of women bedding different men without their husband getting jealous.[87] However, we can not be sure if this was actually the case.

The *thombos* also list second wives or husbands, allowing us to find out to what extend polygamy was customary. In all three regions combined, only 24 cases of second wives or husbands can be found. Although polygamy was thus allowed, it does not seem to be a common form of marriage.

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[83] Asiff Hussein, 'Traditional Sinhalese marriage laws and customs' in: *virtual library Sri Lanka, www.Lankalibrary.com.*

[84] Hussein, 'Traditional Sinhalese marriage laws and customs'.

[85] Ibidem.

[86] George Lee, *History of Ceylon, presented by captain John Ribeyro to the king of Portugal in 1685*, translated from Portuguese by the Abbe Le Grand (Colombo 1847) 60.

[87] Robert Knox, *An historical relation of Zeilon, and island in the East-Indies* (London 1681) 66.

According to Hussein, a condition for marriage was that husband and wife needed to be of the same caste.[88] But it appears that things were slightly more complicated than that. It was not unknown to have intercaste marriages, but only if these castes were of relatively equal status or the marriage was between a member of a certain caste and someone outside the caste system (such as chetties). The names in the *thombos* could point to this (a study someone very much at home with Sinhalese names and their reference to castes and status could undertake). Different social levels within a caste had great influence on marriage possibilities: a *goyigama* of high status certainly did not marry a *goyigama* of much lower status. Thus no marriage was to be matched between people of superior and inferior castes or status; within rank marriage was sought after. Riches could therefore not persuade people to marry someone that would stain the family honour.[89] According to Robert Knox's report on Ceylon and his imprisonment in the Kandyan Kingdom in 1659, caste hierarchy was of great importance where marriage was concerned:

> And, if any of the females should be so deluded as to commit folly with one beneath herself, if ever she should appear in the sight of her friends, they would certainly kill her –there being no other way to wipe off the dishonour she hath done the family, but by her own blood.[90]

On the other hand, Knox also describes that men were allowed to be intimate with women beneath their status as long as marriage did not follow:

> It is not accounted any shame or fault for a man of the highest sort to lay with a woman far inferior to himself, nay of the very lowest degree, provided he neither eats nor drinks with her, nor takes her home to his house as his wife.[91]

As Knox wrote about the Kandyan Kingdom, which was far more traditional than the coastal areas, these observations are not necessarily true for the Colombo *dissavany*. But they do provide insight into Sinhalese traditions.

Because marriage between caste members was sought after, marriages could be arranged between people from villages located relatively far from each other, or with families in the Kandyan King's territory. Family kinship networks thus extended beyond the limits of the hamlets and villages. Inter-village kin groups could develop strong relations with each other through marriage and other important life milestones. One such shared feature was the sharing of labour with distant kin groups: during the harvest, married daughters of the family could return together with their husband and children to provide labour and to fetch their 'legitimate' share of the harvest.[92]

Our *thombos*, however, do not provide much information on inter-caste marriages, for only two cases of interest can be located in the *thombos* of these three regions. Both are present in the village Toppu, where two men of the *goyigama* caste moved in with the family of their wives, who were chetties. This could be the result of inter-caste marriage, but because the chetties were not an official caste this assumption is not conclusive.

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[88] Hussein, 'Traditional Sinhalese marriage laws and customs'.

[89] A.M. Oxon Philalethes, *The history of Ceylon: from the earliest period to the year MDCCCXV, with characteristic details of the religion, laws and manners of the people and a collection of their moral maxims and ancient proverbs* (London 1817) 131.

[90] Knox, *An historical relation of Zeilon, and island in the East-Indies,* 66.

[91] Ibidem, 68.

[92] Dewasiri, *The adaptable peasant,* 32.

6.1   Marriage ages

To determine a Ceylonese marriage pattern which can be compared to the European pattern, we need to investigate marriage ages. Were Sinhalese men and women marrying young or did they wait a number of years to find a match? As income was dominantly derived from agriculture and no cases of leaving the household for wage labour can be found in the *thombos*, it is most probable that the period taken to find a suitable husband was much shorter than we have seen in the European marriage pattern.

Although the age of marriage was not listed in the *thombos*, two methods will be used to make an educated guess. First, a person's age and the age of his or her first child is used. If one can assume that children were mostly legitimate (conceived by wedded parents), we can subtract the age of the eldest child from the age of the parent and find a maximum age of marriage. Although this strategy leaves many aspects undetected, it does provide us with an estimate. Nonetheless, we need to be aware of the fact that some people did not know their exact age and therefore made an estimate (age heaping), differences in ages between parents and children could therefore be far too large or far too small. If, for example, a mother estimated her age at 20 while she really was 24, and estimated her son at 15 while he really was 11, we would calculate her age when giving birth to her son at 5, but she would really be 13.

Another important aspect not included in this calculation is mortality. Since only living family members were listed in the *thombos*, it is impossible to estimate how many children or parents passed away. It is therefore plausible that a parent was younger when giving birth to a first child than calculated according to the *thombos*, because this first child had passed away. As child mortality was probably quite common and many children did not reach adulthood, we need to adjust our derived marriage ages to include child mortality. If we assume that one out of every two children did not reach adulthood, half of our calculated marriage ages would be overestimated (they would have had a child before this calculated age, implying that they married at a younger age). Thus, with a birth interval of around 2 years, marriage ages of half of our men and women would actually be at least two years younger. This brings us to an average overestimation of 1 year for all men and women.

It is also possible that not one but two children passed away before reaching adulthood (and thus being listed in the *thombos*). Half of the cases that were overestimated could thus be further overestimated. With the death of 2 children and a child interval of 2 years, we would have overestimated the age of marriage with almost 4 years for 25% of our men and women. This leads to an overall overestimation of another year. This could also be said for the death of three children before one lived to be registered in the *thombos*. This would be an overestimation of marriage ages with 6 years for 12.5% of the men and women. These calculations show that is difficult to estimate marriage ages due to the lack of data on child mortality rates.

Furthermore, remarriage was possible, for example if one's spouse passed away. If men and women remarried, the children of a previous marriage became part of the new family. It would therefore be difficult to evaluate if a child of a woman was also the child of the listed husband (and vice versa).

We need to look at Table 6 with all these limitations in the back of our minds. The table presents the possible percentages of men and women per region having their first child in each age group. This table does not present figures for age groups above 34 because it is very likely that they did not conceive a first child at this age, but already had one or more children pass away. If one assumes couples had children after marriage, or that a child was a reason to marry,[93] we can read this table as possible marriage ages. As children who

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[93] Marriage as a result of having children was listed in a mandate: "*all illegitimate children, from which the father and mother are of the same caste who are to marry each other afterwards, will be legitimized and counted to the*

were not born out of wedlock were listed as 'illegitimate child', it is assumed that the other children were born in wedlock.[94] Since it is also likely that parents were married some time before having their first child, and women were pregnant for 9 months, these marriage ages have been adjusted by subtracting a year from the calculated age. On top of this adjustment another 2 years have been subtracted due to possible child mortality of people's first and/or second child. The percentages listed in the table are for each region separately, thus 30.25% of the males in Toppu possibly had a child between the ages of 15 and 19. The last two columns combine the data from the three regions and provide percentages of the whole region. Thus 14.12% of all the males in these regions possibly had a child between the ages 15 and 19.

Looking at the three regions combined, this table clarifies in which age groups most females probably married, namely 10-14, 15-19 and 20-24. For men this was slightly higher, namely age groups 20-24 and 25-29. Furthermore an average age of possible marriage has been calculated (Table 7) which shows an average age of 19 for women and 24 for men in all three regions.

If, however, we compare the regions with each other, another observation can be made. Toppu shows a much larger percentage of women in a relatively younger age group (15-19 and even 10-14). The men in Toppu were also younger, with a smaller percentage in the age group 30-34 and a larger percentage in younger age groups than the other two regions. Table 7 also shows a much younger average age of marriage for both men and women in Toppu, while the men and women of Mahagam and the Megoda pattu seem to have almost the same average marriage ages. This observation is different from our expectations, as Toppu shows more 'European' signs of family formation (smaller families) one would expect higher marriage ages.

Table 6.   Percentages of people per region having a first child at selected ages.

	Toppu		Mahagam		Megoda		All three regions	
Ages	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
10-14	10.08%	27.10%	4.76%	16.88%	1.99%	16.79%	4.40%	13.27%
15-19	30.25%	41.38%	15.87%	28.57%	7.96%	31.39%	14.12%	21.70%
20-24	28.57%	10.34%	23.81%	27.27%	26.87%	27.74%	20.69%	13.99%
25-29	10.92%	4.31%	25.40%	15.58%	26.87%	14.96%	16.50%	7.46%
30-34	7.56%	0.86%	25.40%	5.19%	16.42%	4.74%	12.89%	2.31%

Table 7.   Average age of possible marriage

Toppu		Mahagam		Megoda		All three regions	
Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
19.81	15.32	24.4	19.00	26.00	19.00	24.00	19.00

6.2   Unmarried or widowed

The second method for determining marriage ages can also be used to calculate the amount of singles in a region. A proportion of the population were single, either because they were

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same caste." As explained in entry 397, 'Mandate forbidding the different sub-castes of Chialiassen to marry amongst each other, and insisting that a child out of a mixed marriage always remains part of the cinnamon peelers.' 1753, March 23, Colombo in: L. Hovy, *Ceylonees plakkaatboek, deel II, teksten 270-690, nawerk* (hilversum 1991) 402-403. Original tekst: "dat alle kinderen in onegt gebooren en waarvan de vader en moeder van eene caste zijnde naderhand met den anderen komen te trouwen daardoor als gewettigt zullen zijn en tot dezelfde casta zullen gerekent werden"

[94] In all three regions, 17 children were listed as 'illegitimate child', from which 15 came from the Megoda pattu. It was clearly not very common for children to be produced outside of marriage.

not married or because they were widowed. Because the civil status of each person was listed in the *thombos* (married, unmarried, widowed) we can investigate how many remained single throughout life. The number of people remaining single can differ slightly from the percentage given below because in some cases a marriage or widowed status could be forgotten to be listed, so our data will give higher numbers than is probable in reality. The following table (Table 8) presents the percentages of singles in each region per selected age group. The number remaining single at 40-49 may be taken to indicate the numbers who never married at all. According to Hajnal, this value was often below 10% in regions where it was uncommon to remain single (in Europe this percentage was often above 15 percent for women).[95] In the three regions combined around 7% of the women remained unmarried in the age group 40-49. This would mean that it was uncommon for women not to marry. More men on the other hand remained single, possibly because it was possible for brothers to share a wife (as explained in the beginning of this chapter) or because they has slightly more security (as land was passed on through the male line, and marriage was thus not purely a means of securing a living).

The age groups 20-24, 25-29 and 30-39 can also be used as indications of marriage ages, because those who were not single were either married or widowed. This table seems to present a different outcome for marriage ages than the tables in the above paragraph. The difference is mostly localized in the villages of the Megoda pattu, where a large percentage of women in the age group 25-29 remained single, and where many men of 30-39 were single. This can be partly explained by the fact that marital status was not always given (the *thombo commissioner* would simply note 'not listed'). In the villages of the Megoda pattu many of these cases were present. So although this person did not have a spouse, he or she could have had children. It is possible that their spouse had passed away but they were not listed as 'widowed', or that they were divorced (which was not very common). They would once again be categorized as single.

Table 8. Percent single per region in selected age groups
(single population in percentages of total population in selected age group)

Age groups	Men				Women			
	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49
Toppu	93	70	29	19	58	40	8	11
Mahagam	93	60	39	48	29	42	4	11
Megoda	96	88	68	44	61	79	32	5
All three regions	95	80	53	40	55	66	20	7

6.3 Differences in age between men and women

The differences in ages between men and women when married provides a better understanding of the type of marriage present in these regions. Age differences can be an indication of the balance of power between men and women.[96] Small differences in age could suggest more equal marriages, while large differences suggest a domination of mostly the male over the female.[97]

Figure 4 pictures the differences in age between men and women in our three regions. The many couples having an age difference of five or ten years can be ascribed to

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[95] Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective', 103.
[96] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 61.
[97] Ibidem.

age heaping (as the following chapter will make clear) since some people gave an estimate of their age and tended to pick ages ending with '0' or '5'. Only a few of these people differed exactly 5 or 10 years in age (their given ages would for example be 22 and 32, indicating that they did not estimate their age but were truly 10 years apart in age), but in most cases the difference of 5 or 10 yeas was due to their actual age estimate. The fact that fewer men in Toppu were 5 or 10 years older can be ascribed to the smaller amount of age heaping in this region (see chapter 7). Unfortunately, age heaping does make this table less reliable.

   In all three regions most men were between three and ten years older than their wives. The median lies at 8 years (in half of our couples the men were less than, and half were more than 8 years older). Most couples were thus not of the same age, demonstrating that these marriages were probably arranged. Outside of this range, the village of Toppu shows more couples with a difference of only zero to two years, while the villages of the Megoda pattu and Mahagam both had slightly more husbands being more than thirteen years older than their wives. A possible consequence could be that marriages in Toppu were slightly more equal, while the regions of Mahagam and Megoda had more hierarchical marriages.

Figure 4   Differences in years between married men and women
       (in percentages of each region's population)
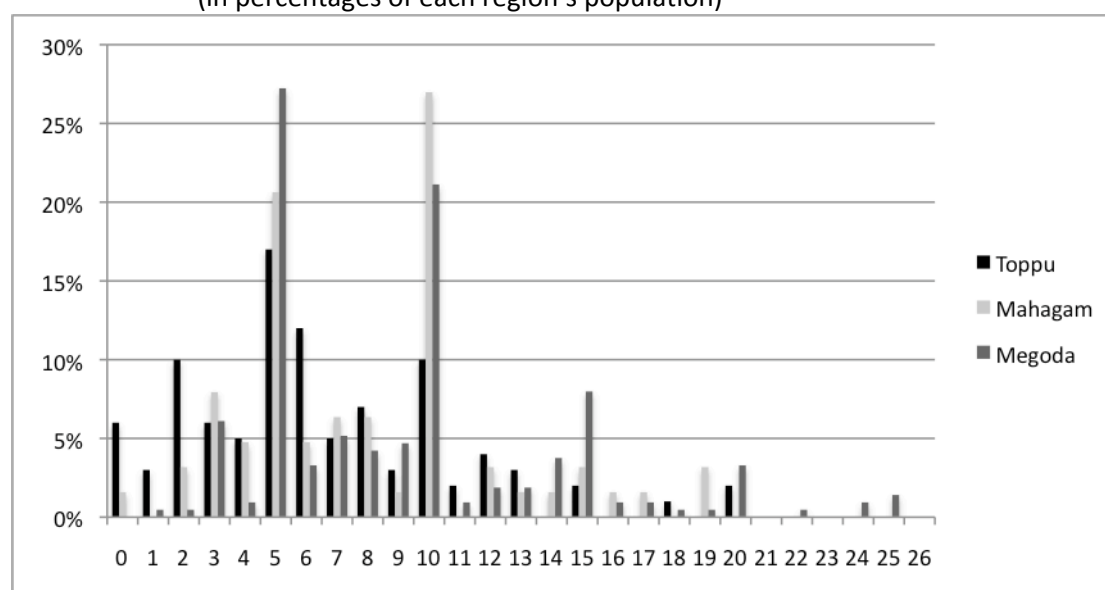
6.4 Girlpowerindex

The average marriage ages and the differences in marriage ages of men and women can be combined to form a girlpowerindex.[98] As we have calculated the average age of marriage for women (19) and we know the median age difference between men and women (8) a girlpowerindex of 11 is formed. This indicates very high levels of inequality within these regions. Women's positions did not seem to be strong as they married relatively young and were sometimes much younger than their husband.

   But this outcome is not confirmed by all aspects of Sinhalese society. For example, hinayana Buddhism was very democratic and egalitarian. In one of the Buddhist scriptures, *Samyutta Nikaya*, that is part of the three baskets (the basic scriptures or canon at the heart

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[98] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 63.

of Buddhism's teachings), comments are made on the position of women: one's gender presented no barrier to attain the Buddhist goal of liberation from suffering. Women as well as men were thus able to attain *nirvana* in much the same manner giving them a rather equal position.[99] In his work '*Buddhism in Sri Lanka*' Perera remarks on the position of women in Sri Lanka. He said that the status of women showed no distinction from that of men. They took part in every activity of life and were free to choose their own husbands.[100] This Buddhist state of mind would argue for an egalitarian treatment of women.

In 1817 a history of Ceylon was published by Philalethes, who used the work of Dutchman Valentijn and his own research to provide a detailed description of the island. His comments on the position of women would argue against this idea of equality:

> The women are compelled to wait on the men at their meals and to provide them with what is necessary and when the men have satisfied their appetites the women eat the residue.[101]

And:

> The women are treated more like the vassals than the equals of the other sex. […] No woman is permitted to sit down upon a stool in the presence of a man.[102]

A low girlpowerindex is confirmed by this information. So it is possible that the position of women was in theory more equal than it was in practice.

6.5   Number of children

One main outcome of marriage is having children. For Sri Lankan families a large number of children contributed to the strength and prosperity of the family.[103] Sons perpetuated the name; they were economic assets and provided security in old age. Daughters, though not so directly useful, could be a means of raising family status through hypergamic marriage. Conscious limitation of family size was contrary to family mores, and fertility was an important attribute of the wife, for she was expected to be capable of bearing many children.[104]

Large families with many children would thus be the expectation, but Figure 5, which gives an overview of the total number of children per parents (married, unmarried or widowed), presents another outcome. It is clear to see that the majority of the couples had one to four children. In addition, there were no great differences between the regions. These figures give an average of 2.93 children couple in Toppu, 3.27 in Mahagam, and 2.98 in the villages of the Megoda pattu. This brings us to an overall average of 3.01 children per couple (which is not really an indication of large families).

[99] Tessa Bartholomeusz, *Women under the bo tree: Buddhist nuns in Sri Lanka* (Cambridge 1994) 4.
[100] H.R. Perera, *Buddhism in Sri Lanka, a short history,* second impression (Kandy 1988) 29.
[101] Philalethes, *The history of Ceylon: from the earliest period to the year MDCCCXV*, 234.
[102] Philalethes*, The history of Ceylon: from the earliest period to the year MDCCCXV*, 235.
[103] S.J. Tambiah and Bryce Ryan, 'Secularization of family values in Ceylon', *American sociological review*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1957) 294.
[104] Tambiah and Ryan, 'Secularization of family values in Ceylon', 294.

Figure 5   Total number of children per parents in each region
                (In percentages of total number of parents per region)
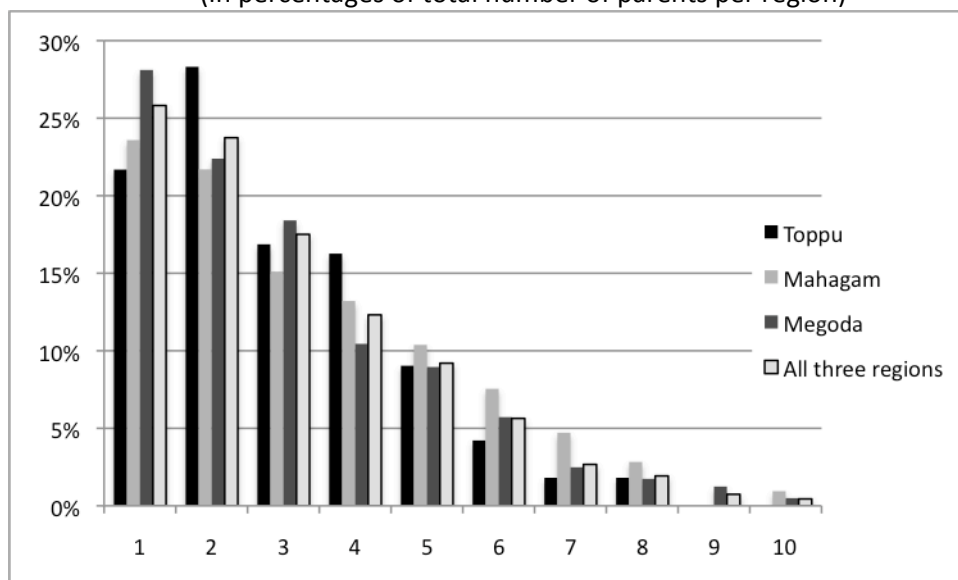
One aspect that is neglected when calculating the average number of children per family, is the fact that most of these families were extended. More than one couple could reside in the same household and thus more children would contribute to the household income. It is possible that couples had smaller families because they were merely part of the larger household of the head of the family. As children could both be an asset to the family when working and generating an income, or become a burden if they merely became another mouth to feed, it is possible that a choice was made by these family units. Because more couples resided in the same household, they could not all have five or six children, as there was only so much work that needed to be done.

An average of the number of couples per family can be calculated, and when this average is multiplied by the average number of children per couple, we can find how many children were present in each household on average. This brings us to an average of 3.89 children per household in Toppu, 3.95 in Mahagam, and 6.36 in the villages of the Megoda pattu. An overall average of 5.12 children per household is thus calculated for all three regions combined. And this is a number that can be expected for larger extended families.

6.6   Location

Living locations and the possible movement of men and women to other locations can provide insight into marriage customs and other characteristics such as neolocality or patrilocality. The following table (Table 9) was made by combining the data from all the inhabitants of the villages in the three regions under discussion. The population in these regions has been divided into different categories: married men and women, and men and women of whom it was unknown if they were married (we will type them as 'unmarried'). Of each category the percentage of people living in different location types has been given to find out how people were distributed across the villages. These location types were listed in the version of the *thombos* given to me, but were not listed in the official *thombos*. Further information can be found in appendix 3, which explains what each location type stands for and it shows a comparison of the different villages and regions.

A first observation reveals that around 70% of the people lived on the family property in their home village (total percentage of population in village 1). This would encompass the head of the family, his wife and children, their wives and children, perhaps other relatives of

the head of the family (brother, sisters, parents, grandparents) and their families. The remaining 30% of the population lived elsewhere; in another household in the same village (village 2), in an annex village (village 3), in another village in the same district (village 4), in another district (district 1, district 2) or even in the Kandyan Kingdom (Ex VOC). Of interest here are the possible reasons behind moving away from the family household and the family village.

Table 9.   Percentage of total population living in each type of location.

Type of location	Married (31.3%)		Unmarried (68.7%)		Total percentage of population
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Village 1 (family property)	10.6%	11.5%	30.8%	16.2%	69.2%
Village 2 (not on family property in same village)	0.0%	2.9%	0.1%	2.5%	5.6%
Village 3 (family property in annex-village)	0.6%	0.6%	1.9%	1.2%	4.3%
Village 4 (same district as family property)	0.1%	2.4%	0.9%	2.6%	6.0%
Village 5 (not on family property in annex-village)	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
District 1 (different korale of pattoes of Colombo dessavany)	0.2%	0.9%	2.0%	3.4%	6.6%
District 2 (another region of the Company)	0.1%	0.8%	2.0%	2.5%	5.3%
Ex VOC (outside VOC territory, such as Kandyan Kingdom)	0.1%	0.3%	1.6%	0.8%	2.9%

6.6.1   *Diga* marriage

With the caste traditions (marriage between caste members only) and marriage possibilities in the back of our mind, it is interesting to investigate to what extend this society was patrilocal or neolocal. In a patrilocal society married couples lived in with or near the parents of the husband; when a man married, his wife moved into his household (and that of his father). Thus sons stayed with their parents, while daughters eventually left the family home.[105] This type of marriage was called a *diga* marriage in the Sinhalese society.[106] In a neolocal household, the married couple leaves the family household altogether to set up their own household elsewhere (a characteristic of the European marriage pattern). Due to the strong caste traditions and the dependence on agriculture, it is most likely to find a patrilocal system at work in the peasant society of the Colombo *dissavany*. The strong social hierarchy would limit the movement of couples to regions unfamiliar to their caste, and a tie to the land would make acquiring new land difficult.

Table 9 confirms this notion: a larger percentage of married women (rather than men) were living on other property than the family property in village 1. Women would be married to male members of the same caste, moving from their father's household to that of their spouse. The 11.5% of married women living on the family property (village 1) were almost always the wives of sons of the head of the family. This would mean that the family of their father no longer mattered, for they were now listed under the family of their

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[105] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 28.

[106] S.J. Tambiah, 'Kinship fact and fiction in relation to the Kandyan Sinhalese', *The journal of the royal anthropological institute of Great Britain and Ireland,* Vol. 95, No. 2 (1965) 143.

husband. The 2.9% of women living in a different household in the same village (village 2) are most probably counted as the daughters of the heads of one family, while living with the family of their spouse. (Note that no married man lived on property other than his own in his village.) The same can be said for the women who moved to another village in the same district (village 4); it is likely that they also transferred into the household of their partner. Nevertheless, a small percentage of both men and women moved to annex-villages of the main village (village 3 and village 5). Both married men and women were equally represented in the case of those who were sent to tend to the family property in the extended village (village 3). But no men moved to the annex-village to set up their own household (village 5). Overall, this table confirms what one would expect: the relocation of mostly women to other households as to move in with their husbands, which is characteristic for patrilocality.

Another indication for patrilocality is the size of the families. As has already been explained, extended families were the norm. So families consisted of the head, his or her children, their spouses and children, other family members of the head, and their spouses and children. If neolocality had been the case, these families would have been smaller: married couples would separate themselves from their family to set up a new household of their own with a new family head.

6.6.2   *Binna* marriage

Although the data clearly points to a patrilocal system, another form of marriage could be found in Sri Lanka: the *binna* marriage. *Binna* marriage was a marriage in which the husband contracted to go and live in the wife's house.[107] This is also called matrilocal or uxorilocal. In the *thombos* he could be described as the husband of one of the relatives of the head of the family (for example, the husband of the daughter of the head). In such a marriage, the female could become the head of the family, a matriarch. According to Robert Knox, certain lands in the Kandy Kingdom showed signs of land being passed-down through the female line:

> Young sons of other families, when grown up, the elder brothers having all
> the land, they marry these women that have lands. A man in this case only
> differs from a servant in laying with his mistress for she will bear rule and
> he no longer then willing to obey can continue but she will turn him away at
> her pleasure.[108]

But since Knox wrote about the Kandyan Sinhalese, it is uncertain if these quotes also present an accurate picture of low-country Sinhalese. But *binna* marriage could be an arrangement by which means male labour could be obtained for running a girl's parents' estate in case they had no male offspring.[109]

Although sources claim *binna* marriages were quite common,[110] only twenty-eight men out of all the people listed in the *thombos* of these three regions had moved in with the family of their wife. This accounted for only 0.08% of the population. Clearly the *binna* marriage was not practiced frequently in these regions of the Colombo *dissavany*, females moving in with their husbands accounted for a much larger percentage of population (as Table 9 shows).

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[107] Tambiah, 'Kinship fact and fiction in relation to the Kandyan Sinhalese', 143.
[108] Knox, *An historical relation of Zeilon, and island in the East-Indies.*
[109] Hussein, 'Traditional Sinhalese marriage laws and customs'.
[110] Tambiah, 'Kinship fact and fiction in relation to the Kandyan Sinhalese', 143.

6.6.3   Migration

The movement of men and women to other locations can also point to something other than marriage possibilities. We can find larger percentages of unmarried men and women moving to other districts or outside of the VOC territory than those of married men and women (Table 9: District 1, District 2, Ex VOC). This could point to migration out of the region of the family property. But the reason behind this movement is difficult to figure out. Paid labour service was uncommon and the VOC had trouble finding labourers willing to work for wages. They mostly made use of the Sinhalese-European population rather than the indigenous society. So employment possibilities were probably not reasons for relocation. Perhaps young men left the household for an education in a Buddhist monastery.

Land scarcity could appear as population pressure rose, and access to better cultivable land was not always possible. The clearing of new paddy-lands was labour intensive and complicated, and suitable paddy-land was limited. The Company's policy of claiming all uncultivated land to distribute to their best interest, restricted peasants' abilities to resettle in new lands even further. It is therefore quite possible that poor landless peasants moved away from Company territory to try their luck elsewhere.

People could also move to other regions to strengthen kinship ties. But although these people were single at the time of movement, it is most probably that they eventually married. So relocating for other reasons than marriage is difficult to explain.

7 Schooling

Literacy rates and schooling can illustrate how the Ceylonese society was developing, and if European intervention was felt by the local society. Marriage patterns and traditions combined with schooling and literacy rates can explain if investments in human capital were made.

7.1 Schools

The indigenous schools performed a valuable role in the system of registration of the population, for the schoolmasters were obliged to keep a register of births, marriages and deaths. The *predikant* (preacher) had to visit these schools to perform certain ceremonies, such as the discharge of pupils from the school. Boys usually left school at the age of twelve.[111] After that, they had to render services to the Company which, in virtue of their caste and landed property they were obliged to perform. Girls were mostly discharged at the age of ten. This was mostly due to objections of the local people to co-education.[112]

Before the arrival of the Portuguese, education in Sri Lanka lay in the hands of Buddhist monks. Education was passed on by monasteries, where children could be sent to be tutored. But the education of the ordinary folk would not have extended much beyond the stage of reading and writing at an elementary level.[113] Although indigenous schooling was of course not cast aside, Catholic missionaries also took over the task of education as the Portuguese conquered the lands, attaching schools to parish churches and providing children with instructions in Catholic doctrines.[114] The Company took over much of this system as the Dutch influence grew, and previously Portuguese schools and churches were transferred to the VOC. Education was crucial to the new policy of conversion and the children had to be indoctrinated with the Protestant faith at a young age. In 1780, fifty-four schools were found in the *dissavany* of Colombo and forty-one in that of Galle.[115] But as the number of ministers was far more limited than the number of Catholic priests, local officials and village clerks were appointed by the VOC to become the masters in the indigenous Protestant schools.

The extent of influence these masters and schools had varied greatly from region to region. Only in the main towns were churches or schools found; thus the relation between the number of schools and villages in the Colombo *dissavany* was more or less one to ten.[116] Even where Christian education was available, this did not mean that all parents were keen on their children receiving this kind of education, despite them allowing their children to be baptized or registered in the *thombos* as Christians. The need for a Christian education was sometimes rather limited as people were concerned with the cultivation of land.

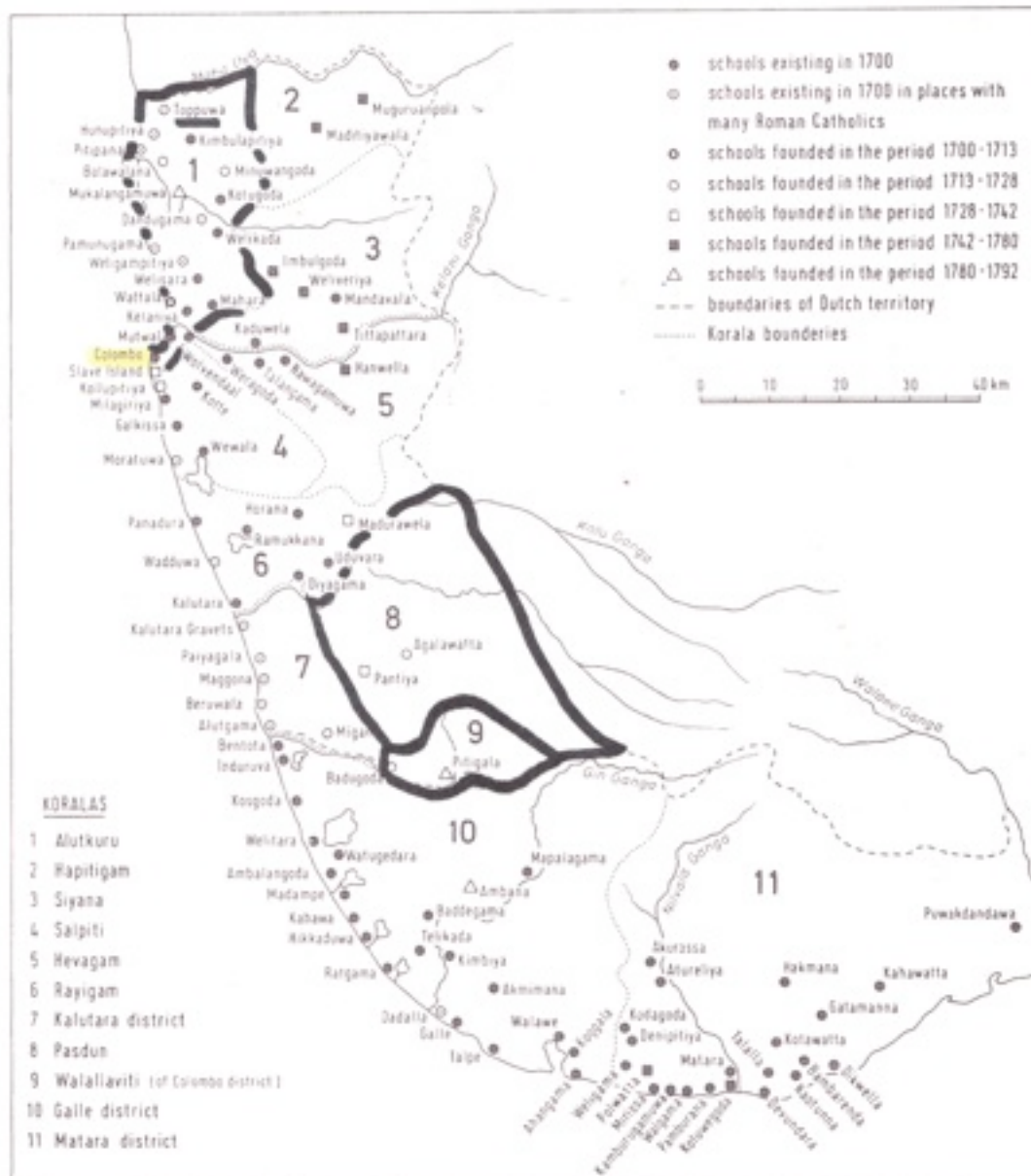[111] Van Goor, *Jan Kompenie as schoolmaster,* 110.
[112] Ibidem.
[113] Arasaratnam, *Ceylon,* 82.
[114] Ibidem, 115.
[115] Ibidem.
[116] Ibidem, 116.

Map 3.   Schools of the Colombo and Galle commandments

Source: Van Goor, *Jan Kompenie as schoolmaster,* 124.

The number of schools in each region is an indication of the human capital amongst the indigenous population. Map 3 shows the distribution of schools along the south-west coast of Ceylon. Between 1710 and 1728 eight new schools were built, some of which in the Alutkuru korale (region 1), the Pasdun korale (region 8) and one in the Wallawitte korale (region 9).[117] The map also shows the existence of a school in the village Toppuwa in 1700, and distinguishes it as a school in a place with many Roman Catholics. This implies that the inhabitants of Toppu had been profiting from a school in the Portuguese period, and continued to receive educational attention during the Dutch period.

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[117] Van Goor, *Jan Kompenie as schoolmaster*, 125.

7.2   Numeracy rates

When investigating societies of the past, certain methods were developed as to estimate facts such as literacy rates and human capital. One method used for this purpose is 'age heaping' as explained in the first chapter of this thesis. Self-reporting age data, such as the *thombos* of 1760, can give insight into age awareness among the Ceylonese peasants.

Age heaping can be detected when people lack the knowledge of their age, and instead choose a plausible figure. Attractive numbers ending with '0' or '5' are mostly chosen, and a large amount of people having an age ending with '0' or '5' can therefore indicate age heaping. Using a Whipple index, the extend of age heaping can be measured.

Many Europeans viewed education as a means of climbing the social ladder, to secure higher positions and economic prospective. If this was also the case in Sri Lanka is uncertain, for social growth was limited (castes determined status, not knowledge). What purpose was there for an education, when a person's type of work and living conditions were already determined by many aspects of their social caste?

The *thombos* of the three regions this thesis focuses on, list the age and sex of every registered person. Because it was mostly the family head who visited the *thombo commissioner* and gave up all the ages of his family members, it is difficult to obtain conclusions on numeracy rates of all the inhabitants in these villages. Although most ages were listed, some were not given. This could be explained by the fact that these people had no idea how old they were, or that this information somehow did not make it onto the *thombo* entry (due to forgetfulness of the enumerator, of the person involved, or the person's age was not know because he or she no longer lived on the family property). Appendix 4 gives an overview of the age distribution in each separate region and an age distribution by gender. All three regions show clear signs of age heaping, we can therefore group them together to give a picture of the Ceylonese peasant society in the Colombo *dissavany*. (Figure 6 and 7).

Not only do these figures tell us something about the demographic composition, but they also have unmistakable symptoms of age heaping. It is clear that above the age of 20 ages of people were estimated: the peaks in the figure are clearly at 20, 25, 30, 35 etc. Another prominent observation is that the ages ending with a '0' are even more numerous than those ending with a '5'. Below the age of 20 there seem to be far less estimates, probably because children's' lives were marked by certain rituals such as birth ritualization, the time the baby eats solid food rituals, a hair-cutting ceremony, the time girls pierce their ears, and the time boys first begin work in a paddy field.[118] Such ceremonies allow heads of the family to be quite sure of a child's age. Once children reached adulthood, it was more difficult to determine one's age, and at this point age heaping commenced.

When we apply the Whipple index, this conclusion is confirmed. We can investigate to what extent age heaping was present; the Whipple index for these villages is 339. An index of 100 would mean that 20% of the population had an age ending with '0' or '5', the correct percentage in a society in which everyone knew their exact age. But the Whipple index illustrates that 60% of population's age was estimated ending with those numbers. Heads of families were thus unable to determine the exact ages of their family members, showing that ages and numeracy were not of a high priority.

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[118] Nur Yalman, 'On the purity of women in the castes of Ceylon and Malabar', *The journal of the royal anthropological institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 93, No. 1 (1963) 28.

Figure 6   Age distribution of the inhabitants of Toppu, Mahagam, and all the villages
                of the Megoda Pattu
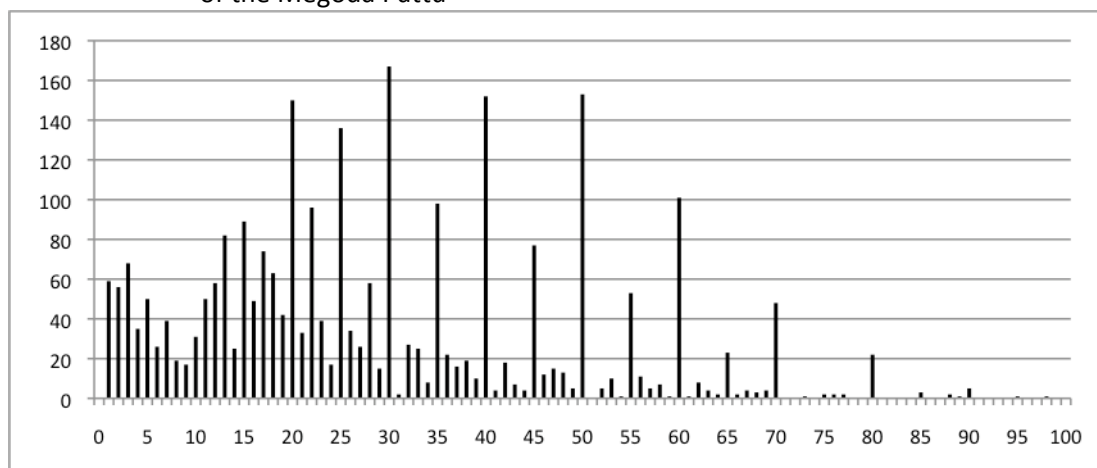
A separation by gender could tell us something about differences between males and females (Figure 7). But the graph does not show greatly different age heaping for men or women. Whipple indices can provide better insight: for men and women the Whipple indices are 327 and 344 respectively. It was thus slightly easier for the heads of the families to estimate men's ages than the ages of women.

Figure 7   Male/Female ages of Toppu, Mahagam and all the villages of the Megoda
                Pattu
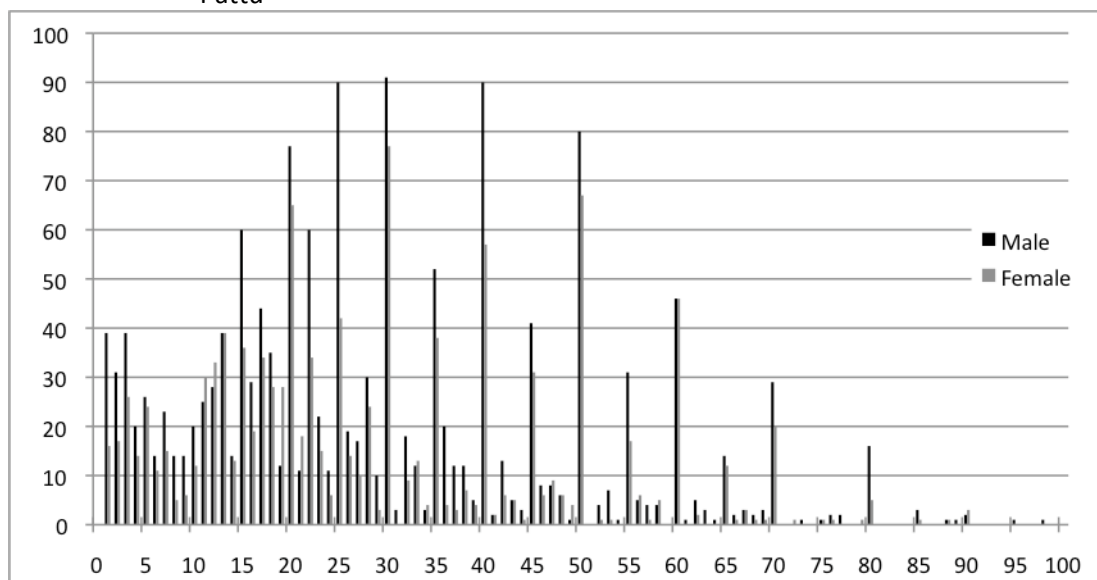
Conclusions part two

Using the *thombos* of our three selected (groups of) villages, we can try to determine a 'marriage pattern' for these areas. Although much more information should be added to form a formal marriage pattern, the data derived from the *thombos* can provide insight into specific topics also described in the European marriage pattern.

      The average marriage ages of the inhabitants of the three regions combined are a maximum of 19 years for women and 24 for men. The marriage ages of the inhabitants of Toppu are however much lower: 15.3 years for women and 19.8 years for men. Still, all regions fall under the category 'early marriage' according to Hajnal, as marriage ages were below 24 years.[119] The difference between the age of men and women at marriage also gives insight into the equality within a marriage. Most men were between 3 and 10 years older than their wives. This presents us with a very low girlpowerindex of 11, meaning the position of women was not very strong. Around 7% of the people in these regions remaining single (this also includes those that were possibly widowed but were not listed as such). This percentages is below the 10% barrier that Hajnal put forth as an indication of how common is was to remain single. As more than 90% of the population in the age group 40-49 ended up married (or rather, not single), we can conclude that the percentage of people remaining single was very low. As for fertility rates, we have come to an average of 5.12 child per family. A high fertility rate compared to our European case study.

      Certain aspects of family formation influenced this system. Extended families were the norm with a majority of the families having 5 to 16 family members. Many relatives and their families lived together to form a family unit. However, in Toppu these extended families were much smaller and had less family members of relation type C and D (families of the siblings of the head and families of the father of the head). In both Mahagam and the villages of the Megoda pattu, the presence of these relation types were much more common. This could possibly be explained by the Roman Catholic influences felt in Toppu due to Portuguese missionary activity in earlier years or the large presence of chetties in this area. In this traditional society married couples settled patrilocally. Most moved into the household of the husband, becoming part of that extended family. It was therefore not necessary for men and women to save up large amounts of money to set up their own household. As paid labour service was uncommon (because no servants were ever listed in the *thombos* and the VOC had trouble finding wage labourers) children did not leave the household for this reason.

      In this traditional marriage pattern no influences of education were felt. As the Whipple indices of our three regions indicate, numeracy was not very high in these villages. Only Toppu had a slightly lower index, which could once again be explained by the Roman Catholic influences felt in this village and the presence of Portuguese schooling from 1700 onwards.

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[119] Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective', 109.

Part three: Comparison

8   The marriage patterns compared

Now that the theory of the European marriage pattern has been explained fully, and we have investigated the case-study of Sri Lanka, a comparison can be made. As Hajnal's theory set aside Western Europe's marriage traditions from Eastern Europe and Asia, we can investigate if his theory is applicable to Sri Lanka. For this purpose, the comparative method will be used. This method combines holistic, interpretive, qualitative case-oriented work with a quantitative (i.e. statistical), theory-based, variable-oriented approach.[120] Our cases Europe and Sri Lanka will be discussed according to a number of variables that have come forth out of the model of the European marriage pattern. Throughout this chapter, a short case study of China will also be presented as it was often used as an example region with opposite characteristics to Europe. But a comparison between Europe and China will be kept to a minimum as this would be study in itself. The variables have been presented schematically in Table 10 at the end of this chapter.

Marriage ages

Average marriage ages of European women were high (above 25 years) and increasing over time. Marriage ages for men were even higher. In these regions marriage choices became more individualistic, in the hands of the parties involved. The Church had great influence on this concept as twelfth century canon law proclaimed that consensus between partners became essential for marriage.[121] Marriage on the basis of consensus caused marriage ages to increase as men and women took the time to find a suitable partner. The time these young adults, who had reached an age suitable for marriage, remained single was prolonged by the fact that a period of individual employment was added to the life cycle. Young men and women could work as a servant or apprentice in someone else's household for a period of time, becoming dependent on wages. These wages could later be used to set up a new household once married. And setting up one's own household became a crucial characteristics of European society; people settled neolocally. Couples moved out of the family household to set up their own household after marriage. The result: nuclear families dependent on the labour market.

Average marriage ages for Asian, and in specific Chinese, women have been identified at around 15 years.[122] As women in China were mostly dominated by a man of the house (her father, her husband or her brothers) as Confucianism proclaimed, she was not very independent or in control of her partner choice. Marriages were arranged at a young age and were mostly contracts between two families. For women, an important responsibility was to produce a male heir who would later secure the family's property and take care of the elderly. The male/female hierarchy that Confucianism supported also influenced the role women played on the labour market, for they were bound to the household until marriage, and could thus not save up an individual income.[123] They could contribute to the family income though home-based labour. The father or head of the family

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[120] C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method* (Berkeley 1987) 35.

[121] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 21.

[122] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 57.

[123] Kenneth Pomeranz, *The great divergence* (New Jersey 2000) 103.

had the highest power within this family construction, making the decisions and protecting the family name and honour. Patrilocality was thus the norm, with women living in the household of the dominant male in their lives (first their father, later their husband).

In Sri Lanka, average female marriage ages were higher than those of Chinese women, namely 19 years. Although some restrictions were put on the bond of marriage, such as caste limitations (a person was not to marry someone of an inferior caste or sub-caste), it seems that some freedom was given to the parties as well. Asiff Hussein listed certain marital conditions such as the necessity of parents to give their consent and parties having the intentions of forming a definite bond.[124] These conditions imply that a degree of choice was involved, for it is suggested that parents did not always give their consent or intentions of forming a bond were not always present. It is clear that marriage candidates were definitely determined by caste hierarchy, but once this condition was met other influences such as romance and individual choice could have played a role in the decision making. As for the build up of savings, no cases of slaves or servants were listed in the *thombos* which implies that wage labour was not a common occupation. As the VOC mainly made use of European-Sinhalese employees, it seems that the indigenous society did not perform much wage labour of this kind. When analyzing where each family member lived (in the household and village of the head of the family, in another village or in another household) it becomes clear that these families settled patrilocally. Women could move to another household (most probably of their spouse) while most men stayed on the family property. This type of marriage is called a *diga* marriage which was much more common than a *binna* marriage where the man moved into the household of the woman.

Remaining unmarried

The high percentage of unmarried women in Europe is another characteristic of the European marriage pattern. This could be as high as 15 to 25%. A reason why the amount of people remaining unmarried was high could be the more individualistic character of the search for a suitable candidate. As men and women were searching for the right partner, in stead of letting their families take care of those arrangements, personal choices and opportunities started to matter. It should be obvious that is was more difficult for one person to find the right spouse than for a whole family to determine a match. Women could also choose to remain single (for example, by living in a beguine court).

In China, the percentage of women remaining unmarried was small, around 4%.[125] This falls far below Hajnal's 10% limit, above which countries would be categorized as having many people who did not marry (like Europe). Because parents set up the marriages of their children, determining a spouse by family name, economic possibilities and family ties, it was unlikely that a family was unsuccessful in their search. As children could also be promised to one another far before reaching adulthood, matches were most often found. For men, it was another matter. As Chinese society had a lot of female infant- and child-mortality, (as daughters brought with them the cost of a dowry and only sons could carry the family name, look after their family and sacrifice to the ancestors) there was a shortage of women. Female remarriage was also discouraged, so a significant proportion of Chinese males were not able to marry.[126] Male bachelorhood was thus mostly due to 'marriage squeeze' (the unavailability of females). In both cases, male or female, there was no marriage avoidance due to personal choice, whereas this was de the case for Europe.

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[124] Hussein, Traditional Sinhalese marriage laws and customs'.

[125] James Z. Lee and Wang Feng, *One quarter of humanity: Malthusian mythology and Chinese realities, 1700-2000* (Cambridge 1999) 68.

[126] Lee and Feng, *One quarter of humanity*, 64.

The amount of women remaining unmarried in the age group 40-49 in Sri Lanka was around 7%. As in China, this percentage is low enough to argue that hardly any women did not marry. The percentage of male bachelorhood was much larger in this age group (around 40%). As the male/female ratio in these regions was not tilted heavily towards male overrepresentation (as was the case in China) we can not argue that these regions had to deal with 'marriage squeeze'. Other reasons I do not know of could have had influence on this larger percentage of unmarried men.

Fertility

Fertility rates can be greatly influenced by marriage traditions. As European marriages were based on consensus and maybe even love, intimacy or sexual activity was not always a barrier. As marriage was already a contract before God if the proper vows were taken, marriage could be consummated before the actual marriage took place.[127] Childbirth could thus follow marriage quickly as some marriages were forced on couples due to pregnancy. Children were also an asset to the family income, working domestically until they left the household to earn wages for themselves. Due to high infant- and child-mortality rates, since many children did not survive the first years of life, it is estimated that around 3 children per family reached adulthood around 1750.[128] But couples could have up to 9 children based on the 'natural fertility pattern' which states how many children a women could have according to her marriage age and the number of years until she reached the age of 50.[129] As a quarter to half of these children did not reach adulthood, the actual number of children per family was lower than this value.

Chinese marital fertility was significantly lower.[130] Unlike Western couples, Chinese couples did not start childbearing until well after marriage and stopped childbearing far earlier than couples in the West. Extended breastfeeding was practiced as it was a vital nutritional source and a reflection of maternal physiology and psychology. Sexual activity was also limited and regulated to enhance health and to prolonged life, because Chinese philosophies emphasized the contrast between desire and the mind. Because marriages were also a means of forming family ties and arranged marriages were thus the norm, sexual passion was not a reason for forming this bond while moderation was encouraged.[131] It could be difficult for young couples of arranged marriages to become passionate about one another, needing time to adjust to their new situation. Within the time span of being married and reaching old age, Chinese women were able to have up to 6 children.[132] But due to restrictions on fertility and difficulties in adjusting to one's partner, this figure could be far lower.

Fertility in Sri Lanka was somewhere between these two regions. An average of 3.01 child per couple has been calculated for our regions of interest. But taking into account that they lived together in an extended household, the average number of children per household has been calculated at 5.12. As our *thombos* do not list the deceased, we do not have to take a death rate into account. This brings the average number of children per family above the European figures.

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[127] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa*, 58.
[128] Michael W. Finn, *The European demographic system 1500-1820* (Sussex 1981) 33.
[129] Lee and Feng, *One quarter of humanity*, 86.
[130] Ibidem, 84.
[131] Lee and Feng, *One quarter of humanity*, 91.
[132] Ibidem, 86.

Girlpower

The position of women within European society was increasing. With marriages based on consensus, women gained power over the decision-making in their life. If marriages became more romantic, based on mutual affection, the effect must have been a more equal relationship between men and women.[133] As marriage ages of women went up, the difference between the marriage age of men and women went down. The more equal position of women is proven by the small differences in age between husband and wife, namely 2 to 3 years.[134] Together with the average marriage ages of women this brings us to a girlpowerindex of around 22 or higher. Women thus had a say in their own marriage or could choose not to marry at all. In the end, the power was theirs.

After the Black Death labour became scarce which pushed up the wages.[135] Women's income increased as well as the amount of women participating in the labour market. As children left the family household to work for wages, the parental control decreased. Men and women became capable of making more decisions on their own, enhancing individualism amongst women. The labour market thus became a crucial link in this European marriage pattern, giving women more power.

Chinese marriage decisions were made by the family, not the two individuals involved. This would mean that romantic feelings did not have any effect and that the main purpose of marriage was enhancing family ties.[136] Women did not have any power in this respect. But because of child infanticide and the strong preference for sons, there was a male surplus. Not all men could marry and the position of women slightly enhanced. Families with daughters could make higher demands and wed their daughters to older and wealthier men. The average difference between the age of men and women can be calculated using the average age of marriage for women (15) and men (21). This results in a difference of 6 years and thus a girlpowerindex of 9. A very low value.

As Chinese women did not partake in the labour market, their position was neither enhanced nor did it diminish. Working at home and being a humble daughter or wife were characteristics sought after in Confucianism, it is therefore difficult to assess if women gained power or prestige within the household structure.

In Sri Lanka, marriages were determined by the family and caste status was one aspect of great importance. However, as discussed above a degree of choice was involved once certain criteria were met. The power of women in this case would neither be categorized as high or low. But the difference in marriage ages can tell us more, and with men being an average of 8 years older it does portray an unequal relationship. This brings us to a girlpowerindex of 11, which is higher than that of Chinese women, but much lower than European women.

As both men and women did not work for wages on the labour market, and the labour market was thus of less interest, no conclusions can be drawn on the position of women in this matter.

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[133] De Moor and Van Zanden, *Vrouwen en de geboorte van het kapitalisme in West-Europa,* 24.
[134] Ibidem, 62.
[135] Ibidem, 41
[136] Ibidem, 25.

Table 10. Schematic comparison marriage patterns

Characteristics of European marriage pattern	Western Europe	China	Sri Lanka
Average marriage ages for women	25	15	19
Percentages of people remaining unmarried	15-25%	4%	7%
Influences			
Marriage based on consensus	yes	no	Yes/no
Location of settlement	neolocality	patrilocality	Patrilocality (*diga* marriage) Matrilocality (*binna* marriage)
Participation in the labour market	yes	no	Not present
Fertility	high	low	high
Differences between marriage ages of men and women	2-3 years	6 years	8 years
Girlpowerindex	22	9	11

Conclusion

The comparisons made in the final chapter of this thesis illustrate how Sri Lanka fits into the theory of the European marriage pattern. It is clear to see that Sri Lanka differs on a number of aspects from China and Europe. Both the European pattern and the Asian pattern, as described by discussing China, are quite well specified. All of Europe's characteristics (high marriage ages, large percentages of singles in high age groups, high fertility, marriage based on consensus, a high girlpowerindex, neolocal settlement and participation on the labour market) do not seem to be present in the Chinese pattern. The variables can be determined quite easily by analysing the societies in question. But the Sri Lankan marriage pattern does not fit into either category, as it shows characteristics of both patterns. The diversity of Sri Lankan society allows for a very different pattern to take effect.

The many possible bonds of marriage (one man and one women, polygamy or polyandry) already suggest that not one type of marriage was the norm. The different manners of settlement (*diga* marriage or *binna* marriage) also imply that this society knew different marriage traditions. Although the *diga* marriage between one man and one woman was most common in our *thombos*, this does not allow us to conclude that only this form of marriage was characteristic for Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's marriage pattern can thus be seen as more complicated than the European and Chinese pattern in these aspects, since several marriage traditions co-existed within the society. It seems that Sri Lankan families could more easily determine the size of their family and household, and the form of marriage as their morals and values allowed for different social forms to develop.

Sri Lanka is thus situated somewhere between Europe and China, with higher marriage ages, percentages of singles and a girlpowerindex than China, but lower than Europe. Furthermore, Sri Lanka has a higher difference between the age of men and women than in both China and Europe, and the levels of fertility and possibilities of marriage based on consensus are more in line with the European pattern. The absence of an active labour market in both China and Sri Lanka allowed family households to become the central unit of production in charge of the well being of its members. No other social system took care of the elderly or provided employment for the young. In a way, households were individual units in charge of all aspects of family life while European families were part of a larger system, the labour market, which took away some of the responsibilities that previously belonged to the household sphere. The difference between China and Sri Lanka seems to lie in the fact that China had a well defined marriage system. In Sri Lanka this system seems to be less bound to certain rules and regulations (for example, as set in China by Confucianism). Thus, the theory of the European marriage pattern is difficult to apply as cultural and social morals and values affected society in such a manner that different marriage patterns could emerge.

However, some modest conclusions can be made. The theory of the European marriage pattern implies that the presence of education had great effect on marriage ages. Marriage was postponed in order for young adults to receive an education and save up an amount of money. In Sri Lanka (as Map 3 illustrates) a number of schools were set up. One of these existed in the village of Toppu in 1700; the higher level of numeracy is reflected in the village's Whipple index. Marriage ages, however, were lower in this village than in the other villages. We can therefore argue that education did not necessarily allow for young adults to marry later. Apparently the presence of a labour market, where this education could be put to use, was of crucial importance for the European pattern to take form.

The same can be said for the Roman-Catholic influences on marriages in Europe: marriage based on consensus. In Toppu, where Catholic chetties formed the majority,

marriage ages were low (around 15 for women). We could argue that marriage based on consensus was not necessarily a product of purely Church influence, but rather of the increasing position of women as they partook in the labour market.

The living locations seem to be of great importance. Neolocality implies an amount of independence of couples, which choose each other and take care of their family. Patrilocality and extended families result in less independence and a larger amount of choice falling on the family rather than the individual. More arranged marriages could thus be the result. The presence of extended families in Sri Lanka allows for a male dominant traditional society to stay in place, with the position of women remaining unaltered.

For the regions within Sri Lanka that have received attention (Toppu, Mahagam, and all the villages of the Megoda pattu) some concluding remarks are also in place. Toppu seems to have the least 'Asian' characteristics when investigating its marriage pattern. Roman Catholic influences could have been felt in the region: the families in Toppu were slightly smaller forming a more nuclear unit like European families. These villages also had less family members of other relation types than the head of the family, his spouse and their direct children. Perhaps its close location to the colonial centre (Colombo) and all of its European influences could contribute to this phenomenon. However, one should not categorize Toppu as more 'western' since female marriage ages in this village were even lower than in the other two regions. The difference in ages of men and women on the other hand were slightly smaller and thus the equality between men and women was slightly higher in this village. The village's Christian influences could be portrayed through these age differences, as marriage based on a sense of consensus or love could be emphasized through this religion. Nonetheless, the age differences between men and women and marriage ages of women result in almost the same girlpowerindex as the other two regions. Unfortunately we do not know if marriage based on consensus was introduced in Toppu due to its Christian influences. But Christianity clearly did not influence the marriage ages of women enough to result in a higher girlpowerindex.

Both the village of Mahagam and the villages of the Megoda pattu had larger families, with many generations and family member-types living under the same roof. The presence of traditional Sinhalese castes could have had an influence on this pattern, which would imply that traditional Sinhalese society had large extended families as the norm. As both regions were situated further inland, away from the coast with its many European influences, their location might have enabled the traditional system to remain in place. As many inhabitants of Mahagam were cinnamon peelers (who were emerging as a relatively privileged group) and most inhabitants of the villages of the Megoda pattu were of the *goyigama* caste, these people took up relatively high positions on the social ladder. Their marriage ages were on average higher than of the inhabitants of Toppu, which could mean that status could influence marriage ages. As both groups of villages were dominantly of one caste, this meant that marriage candidates were relatively close by. The choice of marriage partner could thus be influenced by other factors than caste, which could result in a longer period of time taken to determine a suitable match than was the case in Toppu.

As for the percentage of singles, the villages of the Megoda pattu show higher values of men and women remaining single in each age group. Because there was no great shortage of either men or women, we cannot argue for 'marriage squeeze'. And marriage ages were no different from the village Mahagam, so it was not a matter of age. It seems that these men and women chose not to marry for some reason. Perhaps they did not need a spouse because they were part of a large extended family and were entitled to land (they could already take care of themselves). Perhaps their *goyigama* status influenced marriage possibilities, as the *goyigamas* had many different sub-castes and a strong hierarchy, it is possible that a suitable match was harder to find. Perhaps official marriages were less

necessary or men and women moved into the Galle district to marry and were thus not yet registered as married in these *thombos*.

Caste and religion do seem to influence household formation and marriage patterns. Unfortunately many more villages need to be investigated to make stronger conclusions. But we do know that European and Catholic influences did not have the expected effect, namely higher marriage ages. We also know that the Sri Lankan villages did not all show the same characteristics, so different social forms could develop due to different social groups and traditions. A specific marriage pattern, which encompasses all of Sri Lankan society is thus hard to formulate as their culture is so diverse.

Glossary

Accomodessan	Land granted to headmen for their maintenance in lieu of salary. They were neither heritable nor alienable, but could be taken back by the sovereign if the obligatory duties were not fulfilled.
Binna marriage	Uxorilocal marriage, the men moved into their wife's residence.
Chettty	A class of people who originally, in early times, came from the coast of Coromandel and Madura. The word is also the Tamil form of the Sanskrit term 'sreshtin': a member of a merchant gild.
Dhoby (or rada)	Sinhalese caste, washers to higher castes.
Diga marriage	Virilocal or patrilocal marriage, the women moved into their husband's residence.
Dissavany	A province administered by a *disava*.
Durava	Sinhalese caste, toddy tappers.
Goyigama	Highest Sinhalese caste.
Hakuru	An agricultural caste; name means 'those who make jaggery'.
Hinayana	Early Buddhist school. Concerned with the achievement of Nirvana, which is the perfect peace of the state of mind that is free from craving , anger and other afflicted states.
Jaggery	A variety of crystal sugar made from the sap of palm trees.
Karave	Sinhalese caste, fishers.
Korale/Korle/ Corle	District
Landraad	Dutch civil courts of law with cognisance over all land disputes of the local population.
Lascarins	Native militia.
Lekam-mitiya	Land rolls, with a detailed description of the landholdings of villages in the Kingdom of Kotte.
Nainde	Lowest member of the farmer caste, obliged to perform manual labour. Generally translated as husbandman.
Parvenie	'Ancestral lands'. Hereditary property held in perpetuity.
Pattu	Sub-district.
Rajakariya	The duty to the king, the unpaid labour service of peasants to their sovereign.
Salagama	Sinhalese caste, cinnamon peelers.
Sangha	Highly influential Buddhist monastic order.
Theravada	The oldest surviving Buddhist school. It is relatively conservative and closest to early Buddhism.
Thombo	Register of lands.
VOC	Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (United East India Company).

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Primary source:
Thombos of the Colombo dissavany of 1760, in particular the villages Toppu, Mahagam and all the villages of the Megoda pattu, inv. 1/3728 tm 1/3894.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Overview of *thombos*

An old map that pictures Sri Lanka on its side. Colombo is situated on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka which is situated at the bottom of this map. The three korales from which we have analyzed a number of villages have been enlarged. Their location, however, it not accurate as the Pasdun korale and the Walallawitte korale do not reach the coast. Both are situated further inland.

Map 4.   Map of Ceylon by Francois Valentijn, 1724-1726.

Source: Nederlands Scheepvaartmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. No. SNSM_b0032(109)06[kaart065].
Smaller map 1: Alutkuru korale; smaller map 2: Pasdum korale and Wallawitte korale.

Head *thombo*

Pictures of a *thombo* entry to illustrate the primary source of this thesis. The translation illustrates how the entries in this source were made, what information was provided. The indentations were used to illustrate which wife, son or daughter belonged to which family member. The entries were made according to hierarchy, with the head of the family always listed first, then his wife and children (with sons and their families listed before daughters). Other family members such as brothers and sisters and their family members followed, etc.
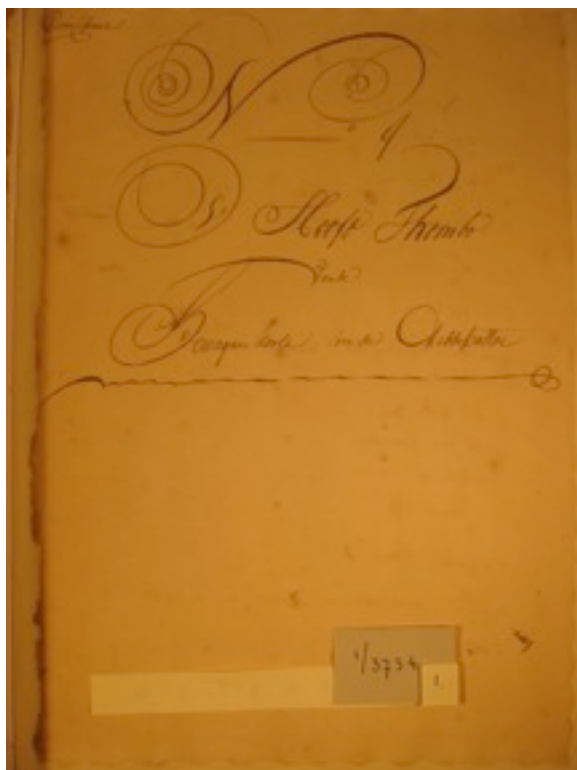
Translated to English:
Head thombo of the Hewagam korle in the Medde pattu
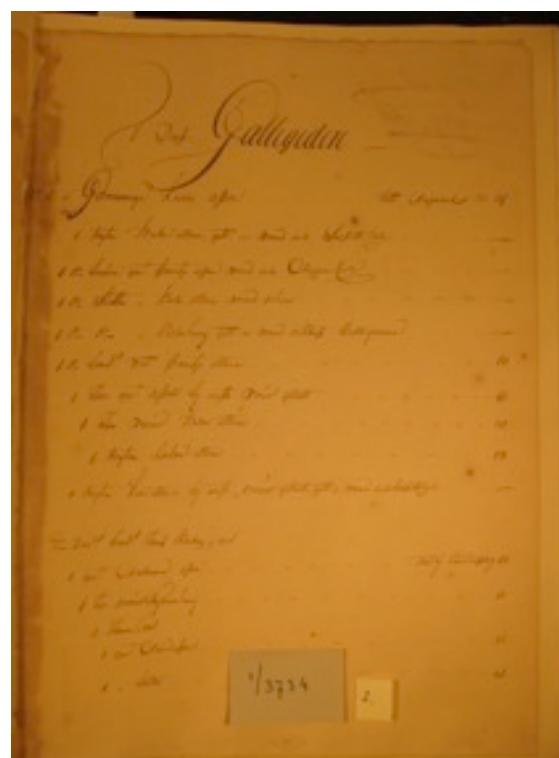
One family entry translated to English:

The village of Pallegedere

Paniege kierie appoe, bellale, majoraal, 14
      1. daughter Baba ettena, married and living in the Salpitte Corle.
1. Brother Baentje appoe living in the Rayigam corle
1. Sister Roeda ettena living in …
1. Sister Ralloe Sanny married and living in the village Deddigamme
1. Brother's widow Soentje ettena, 10
      1. Son Appoe of first wife, 40
          1. His wife Kaloe ettena, 35
             1. Daughter lakoe ettena. 13
      1. Daughter Kiai ettena of first wife, married and living in the Salpitti Corle

Appendix 2 – Living locations

For each person listed in the *thombos*, a living location was mentioned (village, district, or territory) which could differ from the village the person was listed under. This shows that it was possible for family members to move to another household in the same village, or to move to a different village all together. The following types of living locations were formed to categorize the different possibilities:

Village 1   The person was housed on family property that was situated in the listed village.
Village 2   The person was not housed on family property, but did live in the same village as the one the person was listed under.
Village 3   The person was housed on family property in an annex-village of the main village.
Village 4   The person was housed in a village in the same district of the family property's village.
Village 5   The person was not housed on family property in an annex-village of the main village.
District 1   The person was housed in a different korale of pattoes of the dessavany of Colombo.
District 2   The person was housed in another region of the Company, outside of the Colombo dessavany.
Ex VOC   The person was not housed on VOC territory. In most cases this meant that the person had moved to the Kingdom of Kandy (a territory enclosed by the VOC).

These location types allow us to investigate to what extend men and women moved away from their family property, perhaps due to marriage, to set up a new household, to flee the VOC domination, or perhaps due to other causes such as migration.

The following tables show an overview of the percentage of people living in each type of location. These tables clearly illustrate the amount of people moving away from their family property to settle elsewhere. Of interest for patrilocality (relocation to the household of the male) is the percentage of married men and women living in different types of location. The first observation concerning married men and women must be that in both Toppu and Mahagam around 34% of population was married. Only the villages of the Megoda district show a slightly smaller percentage (29%), probably due to a larger number of children in the villages.

In almost all of the cases concerning married men and women, the women relocated to different villages or districts while the men did not. In the village Toppu, married men did not move away at all, while most women moved to another household in the same village (village 2). But it seems that relocation was not very common in this village, for most inhabitants of Toppu did not move away: almost ninety percent of the inhabitants stayed on their family property (village 1). If however, people did relocate, this was mainly done by the women; men thus stayed on their property and women settled patrilocally.

Table 11. Percentage of Toppu's population living in each location type.

Type of location	Married (34.7%)		Unknown (65.2%)		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Village 1	15.0%	15.1%	37.4%	21.7%	89.3%
Village 2	0.0%	2.5%	0.0%	2.0%	4.6%
Village 3	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Village 4	0.3%	0.8%	0.8%	0.5%	2.4%
Village 5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
District 1	0.0%	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%	1.9%
District 2	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.7%	0.9%
Ex VOC	0.3%	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%	0.9%

In Mahagam, many more inhabitants moved to a different location, for only fifty-four percent of the population stayed in village 1. Because Mahagam had three annex villages, the high percentages of people living in village 3 (twenty-one percent) could be explained. Another small percentage of people probably migrated elsewhere, for almost five percent of people left the VOC territory to settle in the Kandyan Kingdom.

For Mahagam, a larger percentage of married women relocated than married men. This once more points to patrilocality, for almost seven percent of married women lived in a different household in the same village (village 2). These women most probably married and moved in with their husband's family. Because married men were not relocated at all, except to an annex-village, clear evidence for patrilocallity can be found in this region.

Table 12. Percentage of Mahagam's population living in each location type.

Type of location	Married (34.2%)		Unknown (65.8%)		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Village 1	8.0%	8.2%	24.8%	13.4%	54.3%
Village 2	0.0%	6.9%	0.0%	2.8%	9.7%
Village 3	3.3%	3.1%	9.5%	5.9%	21.9%
Village 4	0.0%	2.6%	0.2%	1.4%	4.2%
Village 5	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.7%
District 1	0.0%	1.2%	1.4%	1.6%	4.2%
District 2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
Ex VOC	0.0%	0.5%	2.6%	1.7%	4.9%

The percentage of people staying on family property in the Megoda pattu is slightly higher than those in Mahagam. Once again, married women relocated and married men stayed put on family property. But of interest in these villages is the high percentages of people moving to a different district or outside of the VOC territory. As the Walallawitte korle was divided in two, one section being part of the Colombo *dissavany* and one being part of the Galle mandate, it is very plausible that the migration out of the region (district 1) was only a matter of moving a few kilometres into the Galle district.

Table 13. Percentage of Megoda's population living in each location type.

Type of location	Married (29.2%)		Unknown (70.6%)		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Village 1	9.8%	11.1%	30.1%	15.0%	66.1%
Village 2	0.0%	1.8%	0.2%	2.7%	4.8%
Village 3	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	1.0%
Village 4	0.0%	3.0%	1.2%	3.7%	7.9%
Village 5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
District 1	0.3%	1.0%	2.7%	4.9%	8.9%
District 2	0.1%	1.3%	3.2%	3.8%	8.3%
Ex VOC	0.1%	0.3%	1.8%	0.8%	3.0%

Appendix 3 – Age distribution

Using the *thombos* of 1760 we can determine the age distribution in different villages. All the inhabitants of a village were asked to state their age, it is therefore possible to determine how old people were or thought they were. However, some ages were not give, either because people did not know their age or because of other reasons we can only speculate about.

The village Toppu, from the Danugaha pattu in the Alutkuru korale.
The village Toppu consists of 758 people: 409 men and 349 women. Out the 758 people, 11% (84 people) did not state their age. When looking at men and women separately, 5% or 23 men of the male population and 17% or 61 women of the female population did, for some reason, not know or give up their age.

  This village had a Whipple index of 273, which is lower than the Whipple index of the three regions combined (339). This villagers were thus relatively more numerate, and an explanation for this lower index could be their connection to the Catholic faith. As mentioned in the paragraphs on the different villages, the names of the inhabitants of Toppu were mainly Catholic. Although this did not necessarily mean that all inhabitants had taken up the Catholic faith, this can imply better access to education. Many churches had schools attached to them, providing education for the indigenous peoples. This could have had effect on the literacy rates of this village, resulting in a lower Whipple index.

  The social group most likely to turn to Catholicism was the Chetties, for they formed a caste out of the caste system. Alterations in their customs and social status would have had less effect on social stratification. To test the hypothesis of the Catholic faith having influence on the Chetties, a Whipple index was calculated for the Chetty inhabitants of Toppu and the non-chetty inhabitants of Toppu. The results were quite different than expected, for the Chetties of Toppu received an index score of 278, while the non-Chetties scored 258. A religious explanations thus seems less likely, since non-chetties were more literate.

  So why did this village score so well? A separation of male and female ages (Figure 9) can maybe contribute. The men in Toppu had an index score of 248, while the women scored 305; men were thus slightly more literate. Perhaps the presence of a school had such an influence on this society (for both Chetties and non-Chetties), and males scored higher because they stayed in school longer.

Figure 8   Ages of the inhabitants of Toppu
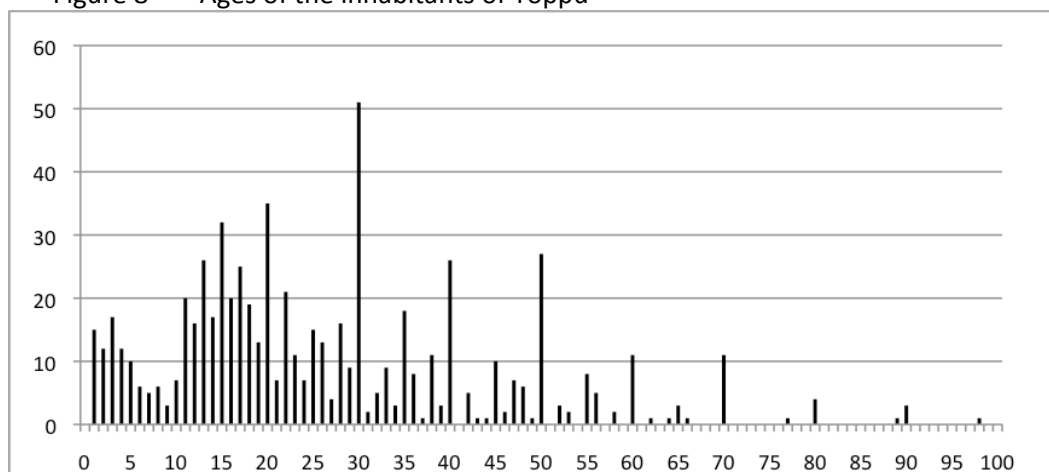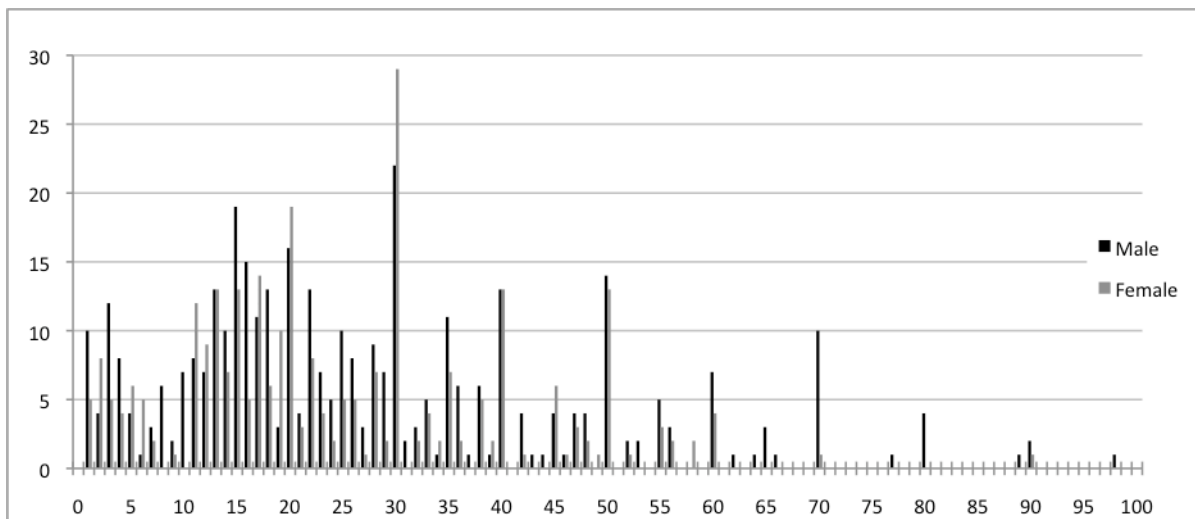
Figure 9   Male/female age distribution in Toppu

The village Mahagam from the Maha pattu in the Pasdun korale.

The village Mahagam consists of 636 people: 294 men, 321 women, and 21 of which we do not know the gender. Out the 636 people, 27% (172 people) did not state their age. When looking at men and women separately, 21% or 36 men of the male population and 40% or 129 women of the female population did not give up an age.

This village had a Whipple index of 310. Slightly higher than Toppu, but lower than the Megoda pattu as we shall see next. Because these villagers were all of the Jageroe caste (a low caste in society) and almost all were cinnamon peelers, education might have been less necessary. A division of the data for men and women does not provide any further information, for both men and women received a 310 Whipple index.
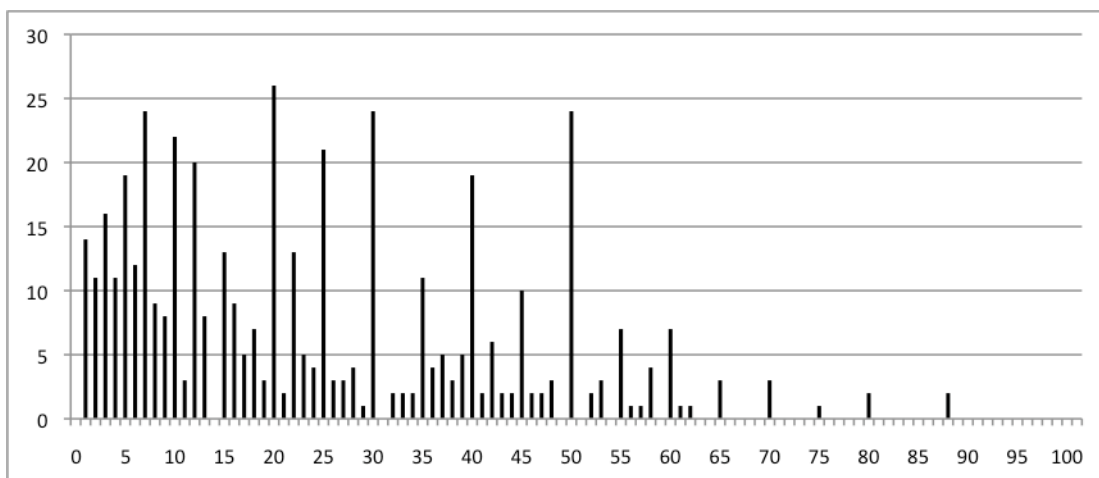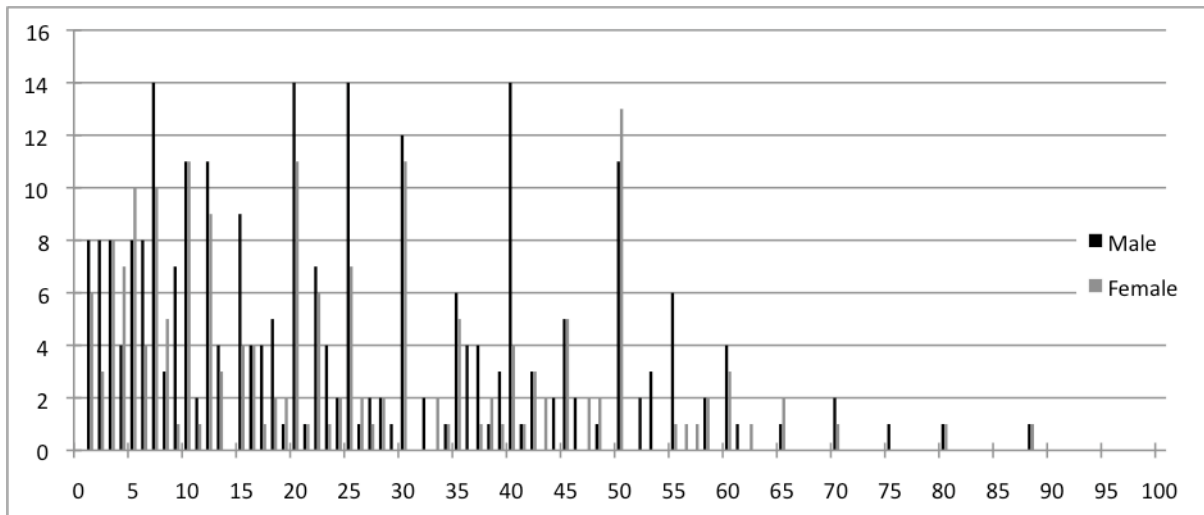
Figure 10   Ages of inhabitants of Mahagam

Figure 11   Male/Female age distribution in Mahagam

All the villages in the *Wallawitte korale* from the *Megoda pattu.*

The *Megoda pattu* in the *Wallawitte korale* has 24 villages. Because these villages are all close together, we will be looking at them as a whole. The total number of people living in these villages is 2448, out of which 1064 are men, 1148 are women, and 236 of which we do not know the gender. Out of the 2248 people, 35% (861 people) did not state their age. When looking at men and women separately, 20% or 217 men of the male population and 43% or 505 women of the female population did not give up an age.

These villages had a Whipple index of 368, the highest of the three regions. Although most inhabitants were of the higher caste of Goyigama or Bellale, and one would thus expect a higher education, this was not the case. Perhaps their location influenced their index score, for the Megoda pattu was the most inland region of the three. European influences like the presence of schools could, perhaps, have been less advanced in inland regions; they could have focused on coastal areas.

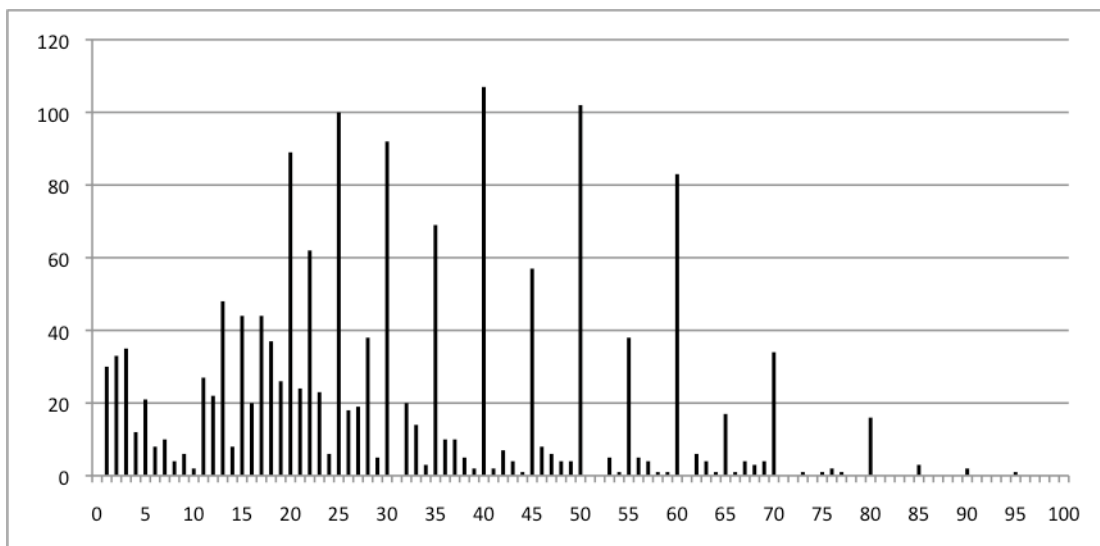Figure 12   Ages of inhabitants of all the villages in the Megoda Pattu

Figure 13   Male/Female age distribution in all the villages of the Megoda Pattu