

## Eighteenth Century Dutch Missionaries and Their Contribution for the Advancement of Sinhala Literature

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**ABSTRACT:** Sri Lanka's contacts with some European countries during 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries led to make numerous socio-cultural changes in the country. From 1656 to 1796 AD, the Dutch ruled the Maritime Provinces in Ceylon. The objective of this study is to identify the contribution of Dutch Missionaries for the advancement of Sinhala literature. During this period, a new genre was introduced and the method of book production transformed from labor-intensive methods to mechanical reproduction ways and established entrepreneurship in book production. Dutch is the second European nation who captured and ruled some areas of the island of Sri Lanka, then called Ceylon. Their influence was one of the key factors of changing the socio-economic and cultural elements of the island. The impact of the Dutch rule in Ceylon had been studied and discussed in various ways by several scholars. The objective of the present study is to shed some light on the literary activities and scholarly contribution made by the Dutch Missionaries during the said period. Since its inception, Sinhala literature has had a content related to Buddhism and all the other cultural modes of the Sinhalese, except Buddhism, are related to Sanskrit literature. Although the subject matter of Sinhala literature was taken from Pāli literature, the literary techniques and the writing styles can be considered as same as the Sanskrit literature. This situation was changed only with the influence of Europeans. The foremost role of changing the existed facet of Sinhala literature was played by the Dutch. Data were gathered by Library reference and content analysis of the relevant texts was conducted as the qualitative research method. The findings exhibit that the transformation of the cosmology and the belief system of Sinhalese from an oriental Hindu-Buddhist to the Judeo-Christian system and the development of new lexicon and diction in Sinhala literature resulting in a changing of the cultural value of the book and creating a new reading public.

**Key words:** Dutch Missionaries, Sinhala Literature, Book production, Labor-intensive, Mechanical reproduction

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Portuguese, who spread their jurisdiction in the Maritime Provinces of the island from about 1505/6, began the propagation of Christianity in Sri Lanka. "Therefore, it is a historical fact that since 1505/6 Christianity is the first thing gifted by Portuguese, who was the first European nation (Wijayasuriya 1984:24). The pioneers of propagating Christianity in this island were the Franciscans during the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Then the Jesuits, Augustinians, and Dominicans started religious activities in Ceylon. It is said that it was the behest of Father Benedict XV, a contemporary pope, who stated that having adequate knowledge of the language of the country in which they spread their religion should be a basic qualification of a missionary (Peiris *n.d.*:1). It is a well-known fact that the Catholic priests who came to India with Portuguese were keen to acquire a sound knowledge in Sanskrit, Bengali, and Tamil. Further, they established the foundation for the illumination of modern Indian Disciplines. However, the earliest Catholic priests in Sri Lanka did not have a sound knowledge of native languages. It can be stated that they were satisfied with the acquisition of a communication capability, which was sufficient for the day to day communication for the propagation of religion. It seems that they have involved in compiling dictionaries and grammar books that were useful for the accomplishment of the said task (Balagalle 1998:47-54). Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Catholics (the Portuguese) have commenced schools (Abayasinghe 1966:178, 198-99) and have compiled books to be used at those schools (Peiris 1978:75). Jesuits priests have played the main role in that regard. It is said that in 1610 an Italian Jesuit priest lived in Malvāna named Luis Mattheus Pelingotti (1579-1616) with the help of a Sinhalese has composed a set of books such as a Catechism, biographies of twenty six saints, and a book named Passions of Our Lord, the explanations of seven Sacraments, some prayers and many other things useful to the Christians (Peiris 1978:76). It is said that the person who taught him Sinhalese was a man called Simon Correa (Perera 1941: 51, 161). In the

middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a book on the basics of Christianity was compiled by the Jesuit priests of St. Paul's College, Colombo (Perera1915:115).None of these books were published as printed copies.

It should be noted that as the Roman Catholic clergy had to satisfy the compilation of little religious books and pamphlets, which were to be used in schools, and they could not get involved in a difficult task such as Bible translation. Nevertheless, the work of Bible translators in later years became much easier because of the foundation they laid. When considering the Sinhalese translation of the Bible published in the period of Dutch ruling, it is interesting to note that the Portuguese vocabulary has been used to proclaim the new religious concepts (Peiris1978:75).It can be said that much of the Sinhalese vocabulary used to assert the conception of Christianity have a Portuguese origin or etymology (Fox 1936: 45-60; 126-144; Hettiarachchi1964: 229-238).

## II. LITERARY WORK COMMENCED DURING THE PERIOD WHEN III. THE DUTCH RULED THE MARITIME PROVINCES OF THE ISLAND

After the Dutch expelled the Portuguese from the island's Maritime Provinces and from the Jaffna peninsula in 1658, the Christianity that prevailed in Sri Lanka was Protestantism, not Roman Catholicism introduced by the Portuguese. Even under Dutch rule, both religious propagation and education were jointly maintained. The main function of the schools was not to educate the citizens of the country but to adapt them to the Protestantism (Palm 1847-48:5).Therefore, in this regard, there was the requirement of communicating with the people in the island in native languages. As a result, young Dutch clergymen, who were suitable for giving such language education, were brought here from Holland. There was also a decree requiring all priests to learn the languages of this country. Academies were established in Jaffna in 1690 and Colombo in 1696 for both purposes of education and religious propagation. Subsequently, these academies became Christian propagation centers (Peiris 1978:80).

Simon Cat and Johannes Ruel are two of the first Dutch missionaries who had a reputation as Sinhala scholars were well trained in Sinhala language and compiled Sinhala reading books (Peiris 1978:80; Diehl 1978: 193ff). The book entitled *Grammatica of SingaleescheTaal-Kunst*, compiled by Ruel, and published in Amsterdam in 1708, is considered as the first printed book in Sinhalese characters. The text of this book was in Dutch and the examples were given in Sinhala characters. For this purpose, the Sinhala letters were cut in wood in Holland. Johannes Ruel delivered his first Sinhalese sermon on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1696 (Peiris 1978:80). Specht, M. Masius, VanderBank and Meerland were also Sinhalese-educated Dutch clergymen. The two priests namely, J. de Voogt, and A. de May compiled a *Portuguese-Sinhalese Dictionary* and a *Sinhalese-Dutch Dictionary* (Palm 1847-48:36-37).

Simon Cat and Johannes Ruel laid the foundation for a new era of the book culture in the island. That was by printing a written book for the first time. The transformation of book culture was started with the introduction of the mechanical book production, which was hitherto prevailed as a labor-intensive book production. At the beginning of this new transformation, it was confined only to the island's coastal areas, which was under the Dutch rulers and to the Protestant Religious Institution. It can be seen that though they were in Sinhala, the main language of this island and in Tamil, the major language in the Northern peninsula, it spread around the whole country as at the period of mid-twentieth century and as a result of that, the entire Sri Lankan society reached a new era.

Simon Cat who was born in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in 1624, after studying Theology arrived in this island around December 1670/ January 1671. He learned Latin, Greek and Hebrew in addition to Dutch. He is also considered as someone who was well versed in French. He came to Sri Lanka with the intention of becoming a preacher or a priest. After arriving here, he learned Sinhala and Tamil and became an expert in those languages. Sinhala and Tamil were more difficult to master than other languages because dictionaries and grammar books that help to study those languages were rare. He married Gertrude Van de Cueto in Sri Lanka. They had two children named Eva and Simon. In 1704 Simon Cat passed away (Diehl 1978:193).

During his thirty years in this country, he got involved in teaching and preaching as well as in translating books. It is noteworthy that he had to create a new vocabulary for this purpose. His translation work was bilateral, where he translated in both directions such as from Dutch (or Greek) into Sinhala and Tamil and from those indigenous languages into Dutch. As it is also said that Cat has compiled a Sinhalese-Dutch dictionary (Palm 1847-48:44) it seems that he has involved in organizing everything needed for his writing from the very beginning of his work. Although the Portuguese clergy who spread Catholicism in the island had compiled few books that contributed to the study of Sinhala language (Balagalla1998:47-55), it is not certain whether Simon Cat had the chance of using them.

The Dutch government established schools in Sri Lanka for the dual purpose of propagation of their religion and education. Europeans lived here were educated in both Portuguese and Dutch, while the medium of instruction in schools for locals were Sinhala and Tamil. Catechism and prayers were also taught in these schools other than the basics of writing and reading. Special teachers were appointed to teach Sinhala and Tamil, besides Theology, Greek, Latin, and Dutch. However, it is said that the knowledge gap between local school teachers, catholic teachers, and Proponents, and the students under them was very narrow (Peiris 1943: 8). The lack of appropriate teaching equipment cannot be considered as the only reason for this situation. The lack of proper training for both above mentioned groups was also a major factor. The shortage of teaching equipment has also affected Dutch schools. As the lack of basic Dutch reading books, Catechism, and stationery had caused interruptions for the education of the Dutch colonial students, they periodically requested to provide those needs (Peiris 1943: 6). The quality of Sinhala and Tamil teaching equipment were even worse than that of Dutch teaching equipment. Though there were printed Dutch books, there were no printed Sinhala books. Since Sinhala books were not printed, what were used as Sinhala teaching materials were manuscripts that were large in size, difficult to use, and not easily reproduced. It seems that these manuscripts were not written in the same paper type. It is reported that a teacher of the Chunampitty Malabar school had requested to transcribe the Sinhala translation of the *Gospel of Matthew* on papers since the ola leaf, in which that book was previously written was old (Palm 1847-48: 124). Although this is about a Tamil manuscript, it is reasonable to assume that the same could be happened for the teaching material in Sinhala schools. However, such requests could not be easily fulfilled due to the lack of papers. "Stationery also was either not at all; or very sparingly dealt out, for in the Galle district the children are said to have practiced writing by describing the characters on a board or table strewn with fine sand" (Palm 1847-48:124) Under these circumstances, only a teacher could be provided a manuscript of a textbook. Therefore, cramming and memorizing things became the only teaching method (Palm 1846-47:124).

In this context, Simon Cat and Joannes Ruel as well as their later writers namely J. P. Wetzelius, Wilhelm Konyn, J. J. Fybrands and Henricus Philipsz began their translation and bibliography works. During the period between 1600 and 1725, a large number of documents, which were entirely religious and were essential for the use of in local religious places and schools, were translated into Dutch. They were manuscripts written on paper or olla leaf. By 1703, all the proponents, Catechists, and school teachers in this country became natives. It is said that the number of students schooling was 700,000 and the reason for this increase was the royal law that adjudicated non-schoolers to fine. The government provided schools with sufficient financial and administrative support. Further, each church had its own school. It is evident that the main purpose of the Dutch to further amplify the education system introduced by the Portuguese was to promote religion (Wickramasuriya 1978:286).

By 1680, Simon Cat, who considered that his responsibility was to promote Christianity in the indigenous languages of this island, had translated a large part of the New Testament into Sinhala and Tamil. Colombo Seminary was founded in 1693. Though Simon Cat expected to be its director, the colonial authorities did not appoint him. By 1695, he had also completed writing a book on Sinhala grammar in Dutch. He was also compiling a Dutch-Sinhalese dictionary (Diehl 1978:194).

Joannes Ruel was able to become proficient in the Sinhala language within two years of his arrival in the island in 1692 and was appointed as the head of the Seminary. He further engaged in compiling a Sinhalese grammar book. His work was completed by 1699. Ruel presented his book to the authorities of the Dutch East India Company (**Dutch:** Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie; **VOC**). Ruel passed away in 1701, and seven years later, in 1708, the Sinhalese grammar book written by Ruel was printed and published in Amsterdam. The first printed work in Sinhalese was this Sinhalese Grammar Book of Ruel. The letters and the numerals needed for the printing task were made of wood (Diehl 1978:194-5).

Simon Cat continued to work on the translation of the Bible, and he finished the book of Matthew's Gospel, the First Book of the New Testament, and the Acts of the Apostles. Along with that Sinhala translation he also compiled a Tamil translation of the same. Adrian, a Sri Lankan preacher who was considered as a Tamil language expert, also read and revised it. While doing this work, Simon Cat passed away in 1704. Cat's translation of the Bible went into the hands of the Dutch authorities only after his death. Two Sinhalese, who were assisted by Cat in this work, have also been mentioned there, but their names are not specified (Diehl 1978:195).

The Dutch administration had already made all the arrangements for a powerful Christian Missionary campaign in the country and was also focusing on introducing a technology to make the work of book producing easier that could be used for that mission. The Dutch missionaries were of the opinion that the establishment of a printing press could eliminate all factors that hinder the propagation of truth. The Governor, Gustav

Wilhelmus Baran von Imhodeh is said to have been a man who understood the need to spread Christianity to Buddhists and Muslims and to work on it. The foundation laid in this regard by the former Governor Jacob Christian Pielat was important to him, and further the two clergymen, J. P. Wetzelius, Wilhelm Konyn, and Gabriel Schade, the inspector of the Dutch government arsenal were also present to guide him. (Peiris n.d: 9). In 1736 the Dutch government imported a printing press. SINGALEESCH GEBEEDE - BOEK, the first Sinhalese book printed in Sri Lanka, was published in 1737.

The year when the first printing press was established in Sri Lanka is still uncertain. Sarathchandra Wickramasuriya suggests that the printing press was established in 1737, the same year of printing the first Sinhalese book in Sri Lanka (Wickramasuriya, (1978): 283: 288). Father J. D. Palm stated that it was founded in 1736 (Palm 1846 - 47:125). M. W. Jurriaanse says that it was founded in 1734 (Jurriaanse 1943 19: 19). Father Edmund Peiris believes that the work of printing press was commenced by Gabriel de Schade in 1729. (Peiris 1943 :10.) Douglas C. McMurtrie is in the opinion that the year, in which the printing press was imported was in 1736 (McMurtrie 1931: 5). According to Sarathchandra Wickramasuriya who engaged in studies in this regard, the number of books published (including reprints) within the two years just after the end of Dutch rule in Sri Lanka was 28 (Wickramasuriya, (1978): 290-94). According to John Murdoch and James Nicholson (1868) who published a book on printed books and pamphlets in Sri Lanka, the particular amount was 22 (Murdoch and Nicholson 1868: 3-4). According to an article published by P. J. Ondaatje in 1845, the number of books printed in the printing press from 1737 to 1790 was 52 books. Among those printed works, 26 were in Sinhalese (including reprints), 19 in Tamil, 3 in Dutch and 2 in Portuguese and Latin (Ondaatje, 1865:141-44).

The compilation of the Sinhalese translation of the Bible, the holy book of the Christianity, began with the pioneering work of Simon Cat. However, Cat's Bible translation was printed 67 years after his death. Prior to that, in 1739, two years after the first printing press was established in Sri Lanka by the Dutch, the four Gospels were published in print. It is said that the translator of the book was Wilhelmus Conyn, a Cat's predecessor, who translated it from Greek to Sinhalese and P. J. Wetzelius edited this particular work and published it (This was further revised by Johan Joachim Fybrands and Henricus Philipsz and reprinted in 1780).

A printed copy of the complete Sinhalese translation of *The New Testament*, which was commenced as mentioned above, was launched in 1776. It was published in six parts from 1739-1776. However, the parts translated by Simon Cat into Sinhalese cannot be specifically identified. The credit for Simon Cat for this translation work is assigned only to *The Acts of the Apostles*. Even in that part, credits were given not for his translation task, but just for his task of supervising the translation task.

Rev. Palm (1847-48) and Murdoch and Nicholson (1868) compiled lists of work printed in the Dutch press in Ceylon which demonstrates the contribution of the Dutch writers in the advancement of Sinhala literature by propagating Christianity. The two lists are given below.

### **The following publications were printed in Sinhala by the Dutch:-**

#### **Publications of Murdoch and Nicholson (1868)**

Collection of Prayers, 8vo, 1787.

Confession of Faith, 8vo., 46 pp., 1738. 2nd ed. 1742.

The Four Gospels, 4to. 1739.

The Heidelberg Catechism, 8vo, 79 pp., 1741. 2nd ed. 1761.

Catechisms and Prayers, 8vo., 123 pp, 1742.

Short Plan of the Doctrine of Faith and Godliness, 8vo., 243 pp., 1744.

The Liturgy of the Dutch Reformed Church, 8vo, 1744.

Four Sermons, 8vo. 1746.

Four Sermons on Love and Faith, 8vo., 1753.

The Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, &c., 8vo., 1755.

Dictionary of the Sinhalese Language, 1759.

Metrical Version of the Psalms and other sacred Hymns, 8vo., 1768.

The Acts of the Apostles, 4to., 1771.

Epistle to the Romans, 4to., 1772.

Corinthians to Hebrews, 4to., 1773-6.

The remainder of the New Testament, 4to., 1776.

The New Testament, 4to., 1780.

A Catechism, 8vo., 1780,

Questions and Answers on the Doctrines of Christianity, with Prayers, 8vo., 1780,

The Book of Genesis, 4to., 1783.

A Grammar of the Singhalese Languages, 1783.

### **Publications of Rev. Palm**

1. Collection of Prayers in Cinghalese, large type 8vo. printed 1737.

2. A Confession of faith, Cinghalese 46 pages, 8vo. anno 1788,

3. Catechism and prayers (Tamul) octavo, anno 1739.

4. Four Gospels in Cinghalese, quarto 1739.

5. Gospel of Matthew in Tamul, quarto 1740 and 1741.

6. Heidelberg Catechism in Cinghalese, 79 pages, 8vo. 1741.

7. A volume comprising 5 smaller Catechisms, the Creed, Ten Commandments and 5 prayers in Cinghalese, 123 pages, octavo, 1742.

8. Second Edition of the Confession of faith in Cinghalese, improved in size, 32 pages, octavo, 1742.

9. A short plan of the Doctrine of truth and godliness, 243 pages, octavo, 1743 and 1744.

10. Ritual containing forms for the administration of Baptism to infants of believers, of Baptism to adult persons, and of the Lord's Supper, forms for the solemnization of Marriage, visitation of the sick, prayers before and after the explanation of the Catechism, preparation to the attendance at the Lord's Table, and the Benediction. Numbers 6, 25, 26. 144 pages, 8vo. 1744.

11. Gospel of Matthew, and the Gospel of Luke nearly completed, 1745:

12. Collection of Cinghalese Sermons in quarto.

13. The Triumph of Truth, a refutation of Roman Catholicism by one of the native Clergy, 1754.

14. Collection of Cinghalese Sermons, 1754.

15. Heidelberg Catechism in Tamul: 1754.

16. Bern's Compendium of the Christian religion, translated into Malabar, printed 1755.

17. Borstius' short questions on Religion, translated into Tamul.

18. The entire Tamul New Testament 1758.

19. A Cinghalese Dictionary 1759.

20. Several Psalms of David to be sung in Churches (in Cinghalese) revised by Rev. Mr. Fybrands with a preface by Rev. S. A. Bronsveld. 1768.



21. Acts of the Apostles, translated by Rev. Mr. Fybrands, Epistle to the Romans, by Rev. H. Philips, and revised by Fybrands, printed in 1771.
22. The Epistles as far as the Ep. to the Colossians, by H. Philips, printed 1773.
23. Genesis, by H. Philips, printed 1783.
24. The three other Books of Moses, by H. Philips. 1785.
25. Leviticus and Numbers, in Cinghalese, 1789.

According to the above list, it is evident in 1739; the Dutch Printing Press issued the Sinhala translation of Four Gospels. Wetzelius mentions that the Rev. Conyn did not live to see the crowning of his laborious task and that the translation was found among his papers after his demise. The clergies paid their tribute to Governor Imhoff, for his great contribution in this task by bringing the printing Press to perfection. A revised edition was brought out in 1780 by Johan Joachim Fybrands and Henricus Philipsz and they revised the Acts of the Apostles, translated into Sinhala by two interpreters under the supervision of Simon Cat. Rev. Edmond Peiris (1978) summarizes that Philipsz followed this up with the translations from the Greek, of the Epistles of St. Paul: Romans in 1772, Galatians and Corinthians in 1773, and the rest of the books of the New Testament, including the Revelations in 1776. To the last volume, he appended an epilogue of 8 pages containing a compendium of the New Testament and two pages of Index to the books and chapters of the whole Bible. He did not rest here. He next proceeded to translate the Old Testament from the Greek text and with the help of the Hebrew version; the book of Genesis appeared in 1783, Exodus in 1786, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy in 1789. He may have translated the rest of the books up to the book of Job; but they were not printed (87). Furthermore, Peiris further explains by referring to a Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society of 1813 that "The Old Testament up to the Book of Job, by a native clergyman of the name of Philip. MS. This Manuscript is deposited among the archives of the Dutch Church of Colombo but on examination it was found to be deficient in many places. The Rev. Giffening, a Dutch minister born in Ceylon and versed in the Cingalese language, has lately undertaken to revise and complete the translation" (1978:87). Governor Imhoff has instructed his successor to continue the task of translation of the rest of the Bible. But the entire book of Psalms did not appear in print (Peiris 1978:87). It is worth mentioning here that in the time of Governor Bruyninck there was even a suggestion to print the Bible in three columns: Tamil. Portuguese and Sinhala; but whether this tripla was ever attempted does not appear anywhere among the Dutch records so far available (Palm 1846-47:125).

"The Bible is a difficult book to translate. It is not only the expression of a nation's genius, stretching over many centuries of vicissitudes, but also the depository of the Word of God. Its universality of interest, the rugged severity and conciseness of its Language and its picturesque style and rhythm, its simplicity of structure as well as its depth of thought—all these characteristics demand from the translator a wide and intimate knowledge of both the original language and the language into which it is translated. History bears witness to the fact that a translation of the Bible, done correctly and elegantly, can hold fast the affections of people. Shape their morals and even their language" (Peiris 1978:88).

By discussing the language and the style of the early Sinhala translation of the Bible, Rev. Edmund Peiris explains that it can be presumed that our translators had a fair knowledge of Greek, Latin and even Hebrew. But of Sinhala, they seem to have known only a great deal of the spoken idiom of the time and very little of the literary language. A detailed criticism of the Sinhala translations of the Bible printed in the time of the Dutch has not been done. The lexicon introduced by the Dutch is rich with many Portuguese loan words, and that lexicon was established in the Sinhala Christian liturgical literature.

Some of those words have been mentioned by Rev Peiris (1978) e.g. anju (Matt. 1, 10), rapesas (ib. 8, 20), lobos (ib. 7, 15), bautisarukaranda (ib. 3,14); from Latin, mera, tempalaya, Sinegoga, legioya, presalitakaranda (cf. Matt 2, 9; 4, 4, 23; Lk. 8,30; Matt, 23,16).

Furthermore, Rev Peiris discusses that the syntactic structure of the Bible translation in the Dutch period as in the inflexions of verbs and nouns, grammar is sometimes violated: e.g. Singular verb with a plural noun, direct case instead of the oblique. He states that the orthography is often irregular, especially in the use of dental and cerebral S, N, L; and such obsolete and peculiar forms as rāstriya, tipāsaya, pavistraya, mistraya, mastakaya (Matt. 2,14; 5,6,18,24, 17,27), occur often. On the other hand, these translations are not without their merits. Their vocabulary is wide, and they have pre- served for us a large stock of words, both learned and unlearned which would otherwise have been lost? Moreover, as they grew out of a literature that cultivated a simple and forthright style they made for a new influence in our literature, which is one of leisure and not of action.

In addition to that, සුභරාමිසතරා -SubhāramciSatara- translated by Conyn and edited by Wetzelius, and published in 1739 can be regarded as a work initiated to translate by Cat, because it is unreasonable to consider that Cat has started to translate the New Testament from the second part relinquishing the first part. It is reported that Simon Cat has involved in the preparation of reading books for the school established in Colombo under the Dutch administration and further his books were circulated as manuscripts. Therefore, it can be considered that he completed the translation of the Bible. In 1847 comparing to the Dutch records, D. J. Palm reported that the writers in later years after Conyn described him as "their best Sinhalese scholar of the time." (1847-48: 57). It can be considered that Conyn's popularity may have undermined Cat's contribution. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that Conyn has fulfilled that requirement of editing the translations done by Cat to make them suit for public readers, since Cat's translations were adapted for the use in schools.

Though the Sinhalese Grammar Book composed in 1699 by Ruel added to the history as the first printed Sinhalese book, Ruel missed the pleasure of seeing it. In the same way Simon Cat didn't have the chance to see the printed copies of the Sinhala Translation of the Bible, which had been initiated by him to translate. Further, Cat even didn't receive a proper compliment for his contribution on the said work. However, Simon Cat's name is placed as a pioneer of the Sinhalese translation of the Bible as well as the author of the first printed Sinhalese grammar book in the history of the Sinhalese literature. The efforts of these two can be appreciated as the first attempt of presenting a foreign content which differ from the Sinhalese culture according to local vocabulary and language tradition. Although these were not literary works, these were important experiment conducted in using the Sinhalese language appropriate to a creative literature. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the basis for modern Sinhala literature was based on them (Dharmadasa 1995:489).

These writings are attempts of using Sinhalese language to convey a diverse range of experiences differ from the religious and cultural setting that has been the backbone of Sinhalese literature for nearly a thousand years. The perspective of the Sinhalese about the world was primarily a blend of Buddhist teachings and concepts together with Hindu Creationism of Indian and ancient indigenous animism. The Bible is extremely differing from the above and presents a concept related to the perspective on the world of the infinite God, which is the eternal truth.

Secondly, so far Sinhalese literary concepts and its lexicons have been derived from Pali and Sanskrit, which are of the same language branch together Sinhalese and have a long-standing religious, philosophical, and academic relations with Sinhalese language. However, with the translation of the Bible, concepts and lexicons of number of languages which do not have an intellectual relation or a long-lasting interaction with Sinhalese language was started to use to present the Sinhalese language setting.

Thirdly, nearly a period of thousand years the great tradition of Sinhalese literature was represented in a form of language which was not used for daily spoken variety and for use of the lower variety of social function; that means for writing. Although in terms of vocabulary some writes follow the form of language belong to the primary situations of the social setting, or the spoken variety, when considering the whole lexicon of them, they can be considered as writers using the language variety of the secondary social setting (Dharmadasa 1972:70-94). Sinhalese literature represents the written variety belong to the upper language forms use in the situation of social setting in terms of both lexicon as well as grammar, the structure of the language. Nevertheless, Sinhalese vocabulary of the Sinhalese translation of the Bible was based on the daily used spoken variety of the Sinhalese language, and further in terms of grammar it seemed to be closer to grammar of the spoken language (Dharmadasa 1972:105-6).

It must be said that this third fact paved the way for a new era of Sinhalese prose literature than the other two facts. It should be noted that the translation of the Bible has contributed significantly to the development of an intermediate language style that expresses the emotional experience of ordinary people through the use of spoken language. Since they used both written documents and speeches for propaganda purposes, it is possible consider that such a blend would have occurred automatically.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Sinhala literature, with a history of nearly two thousand years, flowed from its inception as a subdivision of the Indian literary stream. It followed Sanskrit literature in form and technique, and the subject matter seems to be closely related to the Pāli literature. According to the existing literature, Sinhala literature existed with religious content.

There seems to be a stream of literary features that have been liberated from religious subjects, but it does not appear to have received the direct patronage of the Buddhist monks and the elite.

It can be pointed out that the patronage of the monks and the monks' contribution to the nourishment of literature was prominent. Since the beginning of the 16th century, the contacts of the island with Europeans have led to a breakdown of this literary stream and the beginning of a new avenue. The downfall is due to the continued absence of state support for the existence of literature.

The collapse of the traditional system of education and teaching, which was required for the existence of literature, also contributed to this collapse. The perseverance for a new path can be identified in several ways. For one thing, literature has been able to get rid of some of the limitations imposed by state patronage and the influence of the monk.

What's more decisive is that a literary path with a new ideology influencing on Sinhala literature decisively moved its way towards new trends. The initiation of it is due to the actions of the Portuguese who had first influenced the island's socio-economic, political, and cultural trajectory.

It may be pointed out that due to the new literature introduced by the Portuguese for the propaganda of the secularist Christian ideology, the Sinhala literature and its way of thinking formed according to a world ideology with the atheistic Buddhist thought and the Hindu philosophy was molded according to a monotheistic Christian Ideology. In the mid-seventeenth century, the cultural activities of the Dutch, which occupied the coastal areas of the island, gained momentum on the basis of a new basis laid down by the Portuguese.

This has resulted in the development of new literature and a language style based on the propagation of religion as well as educational and administrative needs. The translation of the Bible into Sinhala, the source of Christian literature, marks the culmination of the Dutch Cultural Revolution.

To that end, they created a new language style. The Dutch missionaries, who were proficient in the Sinhala, were able to articulate and propagate their religion and its culture in Sinhala, on the recommendation that the missionaries should acquire proficiency in the language of the land they come to. In addition to introducing new literature, they also laid the basis for a wider readership by transforming manual transcription into a mechanical reproduction making more copies of publications more accessible than ever. It is for this purpose that the country's first printing press was established.

At the same time laying the foundation for a new enterprise called book publishing is a result of the Dutch cultural literary activity.

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