

A study of the food habits of ancient Sri Lankan people as depicted in local folk tales

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Among the aspects of folk life that we find in Sinhala folk tales, food is a central item. Paddy cultivation was the primary occupation of the rural folk in the past and rice was a central part of their diet. This was consumed with either meat or fish, vegetables and different types of greens, and fruits were also part of their daily diet. There were substitutes for rice as well such as yams and jackfruit and least one of their three meals consisted of *Rotti*, *Pittu*, and *Thalapa*. The Sinhala people of the past were equipped with both tangible and intangible knowledge as to how to process these food items and it can be seen how at present, various kinds of food have been modernized based on these ancient food recipes. As a result of this modernization even foreigners have become interested in certain traditional food types such as *Imbul Kiribath* (one kind of sweet rice). There are some traditional words that are used with regard to diet and some of these are *Haththaleema*, *Atakama* and *Perangama*. Emphasis will be paid to information on the traditional dietary habits and practices of the Sinhala people as revealed in their ancient folk tales.

Key words : Tangible knowledge, Intangible knowledge, Rotti, Pittu, Thalapa, Haththaleema, Atakama, Perangama