

A clash of cultures: European colonization and Ceylonese and Dutch Burgherdom in Sri Lanka and Australia, incorporating the complexities of ethnic identities, reconstruction and change.

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Abstract

In Ceylon (Sri Lanka) the European minority under the Dutch rule consisted not only of Dutch occupants, but included other Europeans. They were called 'Vrijburghers' meaning free citizens or settlers whose direct descendents were the Dutch Burghers of Ceylon. The Dutch Burghers were a socially privileged class under the patronage of the British Crown.. The Dutch Burghers of Ceylon were an ex-colonial elite, the product of European seeds of Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial rule in Ceylon which lasted nearly 500 years .They were never more than one percent of the population at any given time, yet reached a peak of elitism unsurpassed for such microscopic minority during British Imperial rule. The earliest recorded history of Dutch Burgher migration to Australia was in 1880's. The 'Diaspora' of Ceylonese Dutch Burghers which began in 1947 presaged a new location especially Melbourne and it's suburbs. The Dutch Burgher migrants were an educated class and many held professional qualifications and found employment in State Government Departments. Due to fluent cultural literacy in English, western oriented norms and European heritage they exploited their advantage over other non English speaking migrants from Europe. Ceylonese Dutch Burgher migrants have greatly enriched and contributed to Australian society in a diverse manner since the early pioneers. At present the Australian society presents a multi cultural mosaic of over 250 races of people in a population of 20 million of which the Dutch Burghers of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) are but a microscopic ethnic minority.

Introduction.

Sri Lanka – (Former British Ceylon)

The Dutch Burghers of Ceylon: a historical overview of Race. Class and Identity.

Who are the Burghers? This reference by D. Brohier explains the race in a specific manner. The term 'Burgher' means a citizen of a burgh or borough alluding to a town or city. It is of 16th century origin and in a higher sense is still used by the Boers of the Transvaal. In the 17th century the Burghers were renowned in commercial cities – Amsterdam, Antwerp, Rotterdam and Utrecht with their particular civic rights and privileges. They were an influential class at the time of Holland's 'Golden Age', but whatever their origins the Burgher-Oligarchy had become a well defined ruling class by the mid 17th century in Holland.

In Ceylon, this European minority under Dutch rule consisted not only of Dutch occupants, but included other Europeans of the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) such as the Swiss, Belgians, French, Austrians, Poles, Irish, Scotsmen, Germans, Italians, Danes and Swedes as they worked for the Dutch ruling class. They were called "Vrijburghers" meaning free citizens or settlers. These settlers were classified together with Dutch officials as a Dutch community, commonly referred to as "Hollanders" or "Hollandsche", whose direct descendents defined by race, were the Dutch Burghers of Ceylon.

The Dutch Burghers of Ceylon are therefore an ex-colonial elite, the product of European seed of Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial rule in Ceylon which lasted nearly 500 years. However, their origins and seed-bed of Dutch Burgherdom are traced to this period of Dutch (1656-1796) and British rule (1796-1948) and the emerging distinct identity of the middle class Dutch Burgher citizenry. The Dutch were therefore the first Europeans to introduce this term to a race of people in Ceylon. Earlier it was the Portuguese who came to the East in search of new lands and the monopoly of the lucrative spice trade. From discovery and

occupation of the Maritime Provinces between (1505-1656) and as the seaborne powers changed came the Merchant Investors from Holland, the Dutch who occupied Ceylon from 1656-1796. They in turn capitulated to the British in 1796. Britain captured Ceylon purely and simply as a military station of strategic necessity to protect the vast blue "British Lake" of the Indian Ocean.

Ceylon became a crown colony of the British Empire in 1802, and was later granted independence on 4th February 1948. However, Britain was the only European power to administer Ceylon as a single colonial administrative unit, after the central Kandyan Kingdom and its territories were ceded to the British in 1815.

This relatively short period of history is vitally important to the "linkage" of Ceylonese Dutch Burgherdom, their heritage, culture and "Europeaness". They were never more than 1% of the population at any given time, yet they reached a peak of elitism unsurpassed for such a microscopic minority during British Imperial rule.

The Dutch Burghers were the ruling class at the time, westernised in race, language, religion and cultural norms and this helped to administer British Colonial policy. They were the socially privileged class who enjoyed power, prestige and status under the patronage of the British Crown. This was the status quo until the outbreak of World War II.

Emigration, re-settlement and elitism of Dutch Burgherdom in Australia

The earliest recorded history of Dutch Burgher migration to Australia was in the 1880's with the arrival of the Foenander brothers, Roland and Lancelot. The latter rose to great eminence in government service and was at one time Private Secretary to Edmund Barton, the first Commonwealth Prime Minister of Australia. Another pioneer settler was William de Boer Leembruggen who left Ceylon in 1904. He settled in Queensland and later became a Minister of the Wesleyan Mission. Other sporadic crossings of migrants occurred until about 1935. However, there was no significant movement until post-war migration in 1947, due to the

massive loss of social, economic and political salience, being a tiny microscopic minority. Their numbers totalled 42,000 including all sub-groups and comprised 0.6% of the total population. However, in actual divisions of Dutch Burghers with proven ancestry of unbroken European descent, were certainly less and totalled between 18,000-20,000. About a third of this number feeling the cold winds of change migrated principally to Britain and Canada. However, the majority of the race migrated to Australia, especially Melbourne. Australia posed an entirely different challenge with its selective immigration policies. The Dutch Burgher Union founded in 1908, sought to preserve a birthright for this tiny community and gave them an authenticated identity. It became a watershed in the identification of the racial factor, as a pre-requisite for emigration to Australia.

The post-war migration of the Dutch Burghers from Ceylon was set against the background of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, which translated into the Migration Act of 1958, otherwise known as the "White Australian Policy". By acceptance the Australian Government and its action gave it a moral and legal legitimacy.

The "Diaspora" of Ceylonese Dutch Burghers which began in 1947, presaged a new location especially Melbourne for a new cultural group with a rich and complex past bridging a world between Asian origins and European heritage, but mainly British cultural identification in race.

The Australian Census of 1954 first referred this minority group from Ceylon, as totalling 1961. By 1969 there were approximately 11,000 Ceylonese Dutch Burghers in Australia. The majority of the race between 50%-60% settled in Melbourne, Victoria. A major part of this process was due to "chain migration" and family reunions. About 20%-25% settled in New South Wales and the balance in Brisbane, Queensland; Perth, Western Australia and Adelaide, South Australia. The migration exodus continued well into the late 1960's and early 1970's.

The Dutch Burghers are mainly city or inner-city dwellers and the early migrants confined themselves to Melbourne suburbs such as Footscray, St Kilda, Reservoir, Bentleigh, Broadmeadows, Oakleigh and Moorabbin. Later migrants settled in Dandenong, Noble Park, Endeavour Hills, Mt Waverley and Glen Waverley as

the suburbs expanded. These inherent patterns were similar to their experiences of living in coastal towns and cities of Ceylon but mainly Colombo and Galle. They also developed along lines of economic necessity being close to transport, employment and the vagaries of weather patterns.

Dutch Burgherdom in Australia also saw the emergence of various clubs and organisations to cater for their social and cultural needs. These included the inaugural Australian-Ceylon Fellowship established in 1957 to promote and encourage the migration and assimilation of Dutch Burghers and the social cultural welfare of the community of Melbourne. With the influx of migrants over the years many others were established including the Warblers Social Club, The Silver Fawn Club in Brisbane, The Bell Bird Club in Sydney, The Eighty Club and The Burgher Association in Melbourne.

The Dutch Burgher migrants were an educated class, many held professional qualifications and most found ready employment in Federal and State Government Departments, the railways, State Electricity Commission and the administrative clerical sectors of established multi-national companies, banking, finance, education and the medical and legal professions. As a consequence, it directed the process of assimilation and integration in a smooth transitional phase into mainstream Australian "Anglo-Saxon" society.

Due to a fluent cultural literacy in English, western orientated norms and European heritage they exploited their advantage over other non English speaking migrants from Europe. This resulted in enhanced social mobility, which in time led to increased wealth and patterns of residential movement from working class to wealthier suburbs. Mainly Christians by religion, the Dutch Burghers were converted to many forms of Christianity, including Portuguese and French Roman Catholicism, Dutch Protestantism, English Anglicanism, Cornish Methodism and Welsh Baptists.

Ceylonese Dutch Burgher migrants have greatly enriched and contributed to Australian society in a diverse manner since the early pioneers of the 1880's. The multi-cultural mosaic of Australian people have certainly acknowledged some

of the 'elites' of Dutch Burgherdom. It is also a tribute to the great majority of migrants who made the 'crossing' to this timeless land – in a spirit of sacrifice.

The historical background.

In advertising this discussion the reference to R.A. Kriekenbeek, a Dutch Burgher written 43 years ago, delineates a profile of this microscopic community and encapsulates the Dutch Burgher story in a historical context.

“In the 17th century the ancestors of the Ceylonese Dutch Burghers responded to the call of the East.

They left Europe to seek their fortunes in the service of the United East India Company. Nearly three centuries later, they, in their turn, were leaving the East to make a fresh start elsewhere in Australia.

But the motivation was different. What their ancestors had done in a spirit of adventure, they were carrying out in a spirit of sacrifice.

Their youth had to be safeguarded, the identity of the racial group preserved, their contribution to the story of Ceylon no longer needed.”

It started with European expansion and Portuguese discovery in 1497 and maritime occupation from (1505-1656). As the seaborne powers changed this led to Dutch rule from (1656-1796) who in turn capitulated to the British in 1796. However, Britain was the sole Colonial power to conquer and unify the entire island from 1815 onwards as a single administrative and economic unit. Earlier administrated from India, it was taken purely and simply as a military station for strategic necessity to protect the “vast blue British lake” of the Indian Ocean. Ceylon became a Crown Colony of the British Empire in 1802, and was finally granted Independence from Britain on 4th February 1948 ending 443 years of successive European power domination by the Portuguese Dutch and British colonial powers in the region.

As a direct consequence of the European presence by occupation and colonisation the foreign powers of Europe created a “Colonial Elite” in Ceylon. Their ancestors came to be known as the Dutch Burghers of Ceylon. The Dutch Burghers are not a homogenous community but are the product of European seed, after nearly

450 years of European discovery and colonisation. The emergence of this group from 1505 onwards remains an enigma unparalleled in the annals of Ceylonese history.

There are, however, sub-classes within this stream such as the Portuguese Burghers known as “Tupases” and “Mestizos” (half-castes)*, yet the origins of Dutch Burgherdom are traced back to the Dutch and British colonial eras in which they reached a peak of elitism, unsurpassed for such a tiny minority ruling class (for they were less than one per cent of the population at any given time) during British Imperial rule. This period of European rule is vitally important to the “linkage” of the Ceylonese Dutch Burghers, their culture, heritage and “Europeaness”. It is this linkage with the Colonial Powers and the creation of a “Bourgeoisie Elite”, one who served loyally under their patronage. Therefore the beginning of the 16th century marked a watershed in the realm of Burgher ethnicity with the presence of the Portuguese on the island. These were the beginnings of a distinct society that became more stratified and re-defined later under Dutch and British rule.

The year 2005 celebrates the 500th anniversary of European contact with Sri Lanka and Portuguese colonisation, followed by the Dutch and British occupations. The result led to an inevitable “clash of cultures”.

- ❖ Tupases – could claim a Portuguese ancestor
- ❖ Mestizos – were directly born from a Portuguese father

Some Burgher sub -groups -Ceylon

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|----|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Portuguese Burghers | “Tupases” (Mother-Portuguese) |
| 2. | Portuguese Burghers | “Mestizos” (Father-Portuguese) |
| 3. | Dutch/Portuguese | “Eurasians” |
| 4. | Dutch/Dutch “Slaves” | “Mixed Descent” |

- 5. Dutch/Dutch Dutch (European) Burghers
 - 6. Dutch/Dutch "Compagnie" Dutch (European) Burghers
 - 7. Dutch/British Dutch (European) Burghers
- N.B. Groups 5, 6 & 7 are specifically referred to as the Dutch Burghers of Ceylon

The historical background

The Iberian region that Portugal borders with Spain have a long and complex history. In particular, the capital Lisbon, on the estuary of the River Tagus was a major port city, and was occupied by Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths and Moors until 1147AD.

The Moorish influence which penetrated the Iberian Peninsula almost certainly had an impact on the Iberian people. As a consequence the Iberians can also trace their origins to North Africa. The legacies of their culture are still visible today. However, Portugal shared a common history with Spain for centuries, but was developing a distinct identity and individuality in culture and language, combined with a determination for self rule, brought it to Nationhood in the 12th century, when Dom Alfonso Henriques proclaimed himself King of Portugal. But the wars with the Moors and Spain would endure for another 400 years.

The bitter and bloody European power, rivalry between the two most rich and powerful Catholic nations in the world, (between 1400-1500) went beyond their shores, as they sought to expand their Empires overseas. While Spain discovered the Americas, Portugal in 1494, sought to expand their Empire and came to the East. The two countries constantly at war, finally agreed to the Treaty of Tordesillas, signed in 1494, and divided the known world between them, into two spheres of influence, trade and dominance.

It was Henry the Navigator, whose influence encouraged explorers, navigators, instrument makers, cartographers, ship builders, sailors and others which enabled Portugal to become a great seafaring nation. The Portuguese caravels discovered Africa, Asia and India, Sri Lanka which they called "Ceilao" and the trade route to the East, and in process also the monopoly of the lucrative spice trade. Famous names such as Vasco Da Gama who discovered the route to Calicut (India) and others like Magellan, Cabral, Almeida enabled Portugal to bring the wealth of the East from precious gems such as rubies, sapphires, gold, precious metals and spices, nutmeg, pepper, coriander, cloves and cinnamon worth a King's ransom, via the port of Lisbon to the countries of Europe. Portugal's wealth and sea-power became the envy of the nations in Europe.

Sri Lanka too provided the maritime conquerors Portugal (1505-1656) with gemstones, precious metals, spices and cinnamon which grew freely in the lowlands.

By the early 1600's, Portugal was losing some of its dominant power in Asia, and particularly in South East Asia. Once again, the economic greed and power for trade dominance came from another country, the Merchant Investors from Holland, the "Dutch Seafarers", V.O.C. Compagnie (est. 1602) – the United Netherlands Chartered East India Company whose primary aim was to break up the Portuguese monopoly of the lucrative wealth of the spice trade of Asia. To this end, the private enterprise, were given special powers to deal with other nations, build forts, make treaties, agreements or even wage war with the Portuguese to control the sea routes and occupy foreign territory.

This was Holland's "Golden Age", the Renaissance and its power, wealth and expansion overseas was the start of another colonial chapter.

In the 16th century, Holland was part of the Spanish Empire. After many years at war, especially the Eighty Years War (1568) led to the separation of the Northern and Southern Netherlands. The south chose the Catholic Monarch Philip of Spain, while the northern provinces became known as the Seven United Provinces, later, joined by Brabant and Limburg, were under the growing Calvinist or Protestant movement – became a Republic.

The Dutch Protestants saw themselves as a chosen people and their country as a 'second Israel'. On a global level, the Northern Netherlands had gained access to the Asian, Arab, African, Caribbean and American markets with the founding of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (United East India Company) or V.O.C. in 1602. The states of Holland and the States-General proposed that the competing companies join forces and compete with the Spanish and the Portuguese, hence the V.O.C. was established in 1602. From then on spices, gold, ivory, silk, porcelain and sugar filled the warehouses of Amsterdam. The V.O.C. proved to be a great success as it dealt a crushing blow to their rivals, Portugal and Spain. The wealthy Dutch Burghers had so called cabinets of curiosity in which they displayed the wealth brought back from the Orient. Thus the availability of capital made great profits for the Dutch Burghers of Holland and also continued to the colourful extravagance which was characteristic of the taste of this tiny upper layer of Dutch Burgher society in the "Golden Age" of Holland.

However, by the end of 17th century and the Peace Treaty signed with Spain in 1648, the economy went downwards, due to the rising mercantilist powers of England and France. The Dutch V.O.C. was forced to defer to England's East India Company and the superiority of the English. In (Ceylon) Sri Lanka, the rise of Britain thus forced the Dutch to surrender their defences and fortifications to the British in 1796.

The rule of one Colonial Power had been replaced with another, as Britain captured the Dutch possessions to impose British Imperial rule over Ceylon until 4th February, 1948. Western Colonial Rule thus ended after 443 years of colonial occupation and dominance. Ceylon, later became known as Sri Lanka in 1972, a Republic within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Dutch Burgher identity

To understand the complexities of Dutch Burgher identity it is necessary to begin with a definition of the term "Burgher".

Therefore we need to ask some focus questions, who are the Burghers? And more specifically where did they emigrate from? How did this term apply to a minority ethnic group in Ceylon? There are complexities in terms of origins, interpretations, terminology and historicity of the terms of definition.

The English Dictionary gives reference to the term “Burgher” as a) citizen of a town in Europe b) descendent of a Dutch Colonist in Sri Lanka, especially as settled in Australia c) attributed generally and pertaining to such a descendent Dutch, German etc.

The term “Burgher” had its origins in the cities and countries of Europe such as Holland, Switzerland and Germany. It was a honorific civic privilege and rights bestowed on the citizens who lived there. The “Burgher Oligarchy” were therefore a wealthy, influential ruling class, a group of citizens who influenced political, social and economic life in their city or town. As Brohier correctly indicated it is of 16th century origin and more specifically related to the Dutch Burghers of Holland. In time, as Holland expanded their overseas empires the term was transported to their colonies and used to differentiate them from the rest of the local populace. The Dutch rule in Ceylon used not only “Dutchman” or “Hollanders” for trading, administration and sail their ships, but employed other foreign nationals as well, under the flag of the V.O.C., the Dutch East Indies Company. At the time of Holland’s most prosperous expansion in the East, the ruling class of Merchant investors in Holland and abroad were the wealthy Dutch Burghers. They enjoyed their positions of privilege and prestige in their overseas colonies as well. The Colonial Dutch rulers in Ceylon simply classed all foreign nationals as ‘Compagnie Servants’ and this minority group were generally known as “The Dutch Burghers of Ceylon”.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines “Burgher” as ‘freeman’ or citizen of a burgh or borough and classifies the term as alluding to a town or city.

The term Burgher is of 16th century origin and Hobson-Jobson’s glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases published in 1902, states that the word “Burgher” has three listed applications, one in a higher sense, it is still used by the Boers of the Transvaal.

In the course of the 17th century history tells us of the Burghers of the great commercial cities – Amsterdam, Antwerp, Rotterdam and Utrecht with their particular civic rights and privileges who were an influential and prominent class at the time of Hollands “Golden Age”, but whatever their origins the Burgher-Oligarchy had become a well defined ruling class by the mid 17th century in Holland.

In Ceylon, this European minority group under Dutch rule consisted not only of Dutch occupants, but included other Europeans of the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) such as the Swiss, Belgians, French, Germans, Italians, Danes and Swedes as they worked for the Dutch ruling class. They were called “Vrijburghers” meaning free citizens or settlers. These settlers were classified together with Dutch officials as a Dutch community commonly referred to as “Hollanders” or “Hollandsche”, whose direct descendants defined by race were the Dutch Burghers of Ceylon. In this manner the Dutch further stratified and re-defined the social classes in Ceylonese society by a significant shift away from the Portuguese Creole community or “Portuguese Burghers” as they were called. The Portuguese who earlier sailed to the East were Catholic males, as a consequence many Portuguese officials and soldiers established liaisons with local women and mixed breeds grew up. The progeny of such liaisons whether in Timor, Macao, Malacca, Cochin, Goa or Portuguese Ceylon were referred to as “Mestizos”, “Tupasas” or “Portuguese Burghers”.

Dutch colonial policy on the other hand was the opposite. They were firstly merchants and investors interested in trade for commercial profit, territorial conquest came next. They kept to their race and encouraged Dutch settler families to Ceylon. Dutch Governors such as Van Goens proclaimed laws and forbade the Dutch community from inter-marriage with the locals. Dutchman and company employees were thus encouraged to bring their families to the East. Even British Governors such as North and others followed this policy and between these Colonial powers managed to keep the race distinctly Europeanised and identifiable – albeit a minority group. Therefore in the strict sense of the term the Dutch Burghers are the descendants in the male like of European settlers who were under the Dutch East Indies Company in Ceylon. The seed-bed of Dutch Burgherdom and the origins of race and identity is therefore referenced to this period in Ceylonese Dutch Burgher history. The Dutch (VOC) which included Europeans of different

nationalities who also settled in Ceylon were classed together under one designation either “Compagnie Servants” or “Burghers” meaning citizens. The Dutch were therefore the first Europeans to introduce this term to a race of people in Ceylon. This period of Dutch power and influence in Ceylon was signified by the distinction of the emerging middle class of Dutch Burgher citizenry. They became the privileged middle classes woven into the fabric of Ceylonese society, enjoying status, power and privilege under their Dutch colonial masters.

With the Dutch capitulation to the British in 1796, they found a community of Ceylonese Dutch Burghers, quite distinct in westernised norms – in religion, culture, language, economic values and a distinct degree of “Europeanness”. They were engaged in trade and respectable occupations exercising a high degree of responsibility. Moreover, to the British it was the creation of this “Burgherdom” and the fact that they were culturally, socially and economically viable to help them in Colonial Administration, significantly positioned them in the favoured upper echelons of the Burgher classes in Ceylonese society.

The scramble to quality in English was accelerated in 1801 by a proclamation abolishing Dutch as the official medium of communication and enjoining all employees in civil departments to be proficient in English. The vacuum was filled by the private English school master who was Burgher with Dutch-English antecedents who had a working knowledge of that language. It is incontestable that the Burghers weathered the changes introduced by the language issue in British Ceylon and exploited it to greater advantage than other communities.

Ceylonese society was thus highly stratified into well defined classes with the British on the top of the ladder followed by the Dutch Burghers.

These were the personnel who had the reins of power in specialised jobs such as Plantation Supervisors, “Tea Tasters”, Chief Clerks, Company Executives and many who also joined the highest ranks of the Ceylon Civil Service, Government Departments and the Armed Forces. By preference these jobs were allocated to Englishmen and Dutch Burghers who directed the masses of labour.

As the Dutch Burghers formed an established association under the patronage of the British Crown, the ascendancy to elitism reached a pinnacle of supremacy as

the political, social and economic factors merged and enmeshed themselves as one, between the British Colonials and Dutch Burghers. Many marriages took place between the ranks of British officialdom and the Ceylonese Dutch Burghers and this is validated through the records of official British documents and the records of the Dutch Burghers Union Journals over the period of British rule.

The Dutch Burgher Union established in 1908, legitimised and reflected the need for differences in the Dutch Burgher hierarchy and other sub-groups of Burghers. Therefore the keeping of registered records pertaining to births, deaths and marriages together with other data such as family histories, genealogical details etc, became an important facet, as the Dutch Burghers sought to be distinctive to preserve a birthright as an identifiable race, and prove their legitimacy of unbroken European ancestry through European racial purity. It was to prove an important factor as they sought to migrate to Australia in later years. The Dutch Burgher Union and its membership by their actions, consciously sought to distance itself away from the rest of the populace and thereby enforced class divisions among the entire Burgher population. This was the status quo until the outbreak of World War II.

Emigration

World War II shattered those dreams for this minority race and their descendents forever, with the decline of the imperial power, Britain. Ceylon was no exception caught in a vortex of political, economic and social change, with the eventual withdrawal of Britain after WWII. The Dutch Burghers faced a hostile background with Britain's withdrawal. When the Colonial Power lost, they lost too, as they were intrinsically linked in ties of heritage, class, society, culture, language, religion and the ruling class. Amidst an anti-Colonialist backlash, surging nationalism, new political parties, a reversal to indigenous politics and the coming of independence – the political reins of power transferred to the local indigenous majority – the Sinhalese.

The general conceptual ideas of race degeneration again reared its ugly head, it also translated (as earlier notions) of European racial superiority during Dutch and British rule, into non compliance and acceptance of Asian culture. In effect

it was a clash of cultures, Buddhist versus Christian, Singhalese versus English, Asian versus European. By 1947 the social, cultural and economic changes had assumed ominous political implications. The position of the Dutch Burghers was becoming increasingly vulnerable as the forces of Singhalese Nationalism and Independence asserted themselves and became entrenched in a struggle for dominance in a post-war Colonial world.

In spite of their significance for the British, indeed because of it, the Burghers were doomed to lose social, economic and political salience, because of their numbers, comprising 0.6% or 42,000 (including all sub-groups) in a total population of 8 million in 1946. The London Times in 1948 referenced the different races in Ceylon, by category, the Burghers including all sub-groups totalled 43,916. Therefore in actual divisions of sub-classes, the Dutch Burghers with proven ancestry of unbroken European descent and of the male line of descent would certainly have been less in number totalling approximately 20,000.

About a third of this number feeling the cold winds of change principally migrated either to England or Canada. Australia posed an entirely different challenge with its selective immigration policies.

The D.B.U. (founded in 1908) which sought to preserve a birthright for this tiny microscopic community, gave them an authenticated identity. It thus became a watershed in the identification of the racial factor. As far as it's known, this maybe the only Europeanised ethnic group by descent to emigrate to Australia from Asia along with the Dutch settlers in (Batavia) Indonesia and British subjects in India, Malaya and Burma on a recognised and legitimised basis, in keeping with the conditions of the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, which translated into the Migration Act of 1958, otherwise known as the "White Australia Policy".

This proves that above all else the official identity of 'race' was accepted by the Australian government and its action, gave it a moral and legal legitimacy. Therefore the question of race and identity became key issues in the quest for survival and was a predominant factor in relation to their decision to emigrate. The survival of race and the future perpetuation of it gave it legitimacy to emigrate to a culture of their own and they found their answer in the Europeanised society of Australia.

Therefore the great “diaspora” of Ceylonese Dutch Burghers which began in 1947, via cargo ships, passenger vessels, and later airliners, presaged a new location in Australia, especially Melbourne, for a new cultural group with a complex and rich past bridging a world between Asian origins and European heritage, but mainly British cultural identification in race. By 1968 there were approximately 11,000 Ceylonese Dutch Burghers in Australia, mainly in Melbourne, with some in Sydney and the other states. The continued exodus lasted until 1970/73, however from 1947/48 until 1967/68 a relatively short time span of just over two decades spelled the demise and virtual extinction of this ethnic group in Ceylon. The relatively few that remained have either married, been absorbed into the indigenous classes or have become the poorest group mainly supported by overseas organisations in Australia such as the Eighty Club, The Burgher Association and the Australia-Ceylon Fellowship. The once ruling class of “colonial elites” have now become the “beggar class” of Sri Lankan society today.

After the “Diaspora” to Australia post 1945 there were very few Dutch Burghers in the strict sense of the term, remaining in Ceylon. Fujinuma’s (1997) case study of “Ethnic Change among Middle Class Dutch Burghers in Post Colonial Sri Lanka” has reflected some views of a re-construction of ethnic identity. The study of social change examined through social history, analysed social patterns, marriage, gender relations and migration. The study was a field research project in which the author participated in various areas of the Sri Lankan Burgher lifestyle. These included personal interviews, religious festivities, social functions and participated in the lifestyle of post-colonial Sri Lankan Burgher lifestyle. Most of the interviews were participants from lower to middle class and recorded themes of cultural, lifestyle and family histories.

Fujinuma’s cultural profile asks the question whether or not the Burghers are culturally distinctive. As stated, the population statistics of Burghers in the 1981 census was 39,400 or 0.3 of the total Sri Lankan population, Dutch Burghers, Portuguese Burghers and Eurasians were all classified under one category, the “Burgher” category.

This is a clear indication that the Dutch Burgher ethnic group has re-invented its ethnic profile by assimilation and adaptation to some extent in Sri Lankan values, traditions and culture. This has certainly occurred within a short period of time, about three decades, as a result of migration, marriage factors and absorption into the dominant majority. Simply stated "The Ceylonese Dutch Burghers" as a distinct ethnic group has ceased to exist, in Sri Lanka.

Fujinuma also states that Sri Lankan Burghers see themselves as culturally distinctive because of a sprinkle of Dutch style celebrations, foods, a western style of social interaction, as evidenced by absence of caste, non involvement in ethnic warfare and relative gender equality.

A further point of view given by Fujinuma was the fact that they were more able and willing to adjust to social change, some of them were more fluent in Sinhalese or Tamil had more Sinhalese or Tamil friends, than those who chose to migrate. They did not want to raise children in more materialistic and secular societies with higher divorce rates and so forth. They are also used to a Sri Lankan middle class way of life (eg being able to hire domestic servants cheaply) and a slow pace of life.

Another important reason was usually revealed later, as for many their immigration applications were denied by the Australian government. This raises the question whether these applicants were typically Dutch Burghers of European descent, because the regulations governing entry to Australia, (post-war migration) and the existing 1958 Migration Act otherwise known as the infamous "White Australia" policy allowed only Europeans admittance to Australia. This was however, abolished by the Whitlam Government by 1975. However, the real issue underlying this fact was the problem of "colour" although officially this was denied.

Fujinuma also explains about kinship networks and the magnitude of Dutch Burgher out-migration had a large impact on those left behind. What was once a small and close-knit community lost its ethnic identity as friends, relatives, neighbours, schoolmates etc left the island.

Fujinuma states even the ethnicities of family and relatives are becoming more diverse. Even among the significant relatives of the participants sixteen per cent are now Burghers. The research similarly corresponds with Dutch Burgherdom in Australia, whereby gender relations and mixed marriages have extended the ethnic composition of Dutch Burghers into many ethnic groups in Australian society. With jobs many Dutch Burghers during British rule were employed in government service, but with emigration and the language policy of Singhalese, the occupational work base has shifted to the private sector, as Fujinuma has notated. Therefore the working nature of Sri Lankan Burghers have changed in nature, from working with them as superior to working more as equals or subordinates than before.

According to census data, inter-marriages in 1974, in Sri Lanka, the rate of Burgher inter-marriage with Singhalese and Tamils compared to Burgher endogamy was already as high as 64.3%. In the next six years this steadily increased to 78.3%. According to Fujinuma one participant speculated that one of the main reasons that the Dutch Burghers emigrated, besides the issues of language, and Asian norms related to their racial identification with Europeans or the politics of race, especially in terms of marriage. In the years of my research of Dutch Burgherdom in Australia, a similar pattern emerged, although during the last decade this has not been the case, as I have stated, because the second generation Australians have married into diverse ethnic cultures.

Therefore Fujinuma's research has indicated a number of changes among Dutch Burghers in Sri Lanka which has taken place with adaptive and flexible strategies. The remaining Burghers in Sri Lanka socially integrating with the westernised elite position of non-European ethnic groups. It was reflected in their ethnically integrated social networks, international networks, friendship, jobs and marriage patterns. Therefore we can conclude there has been a definite ethnic change of identity in Sri Lankan Burgher society, at the present time.

Dutch Burgherdom in Australia: re- settlement identity and class.

Dutch Burgher migration to Australia had been established since the 1880's and there has been sporadic crossings of migrants up to 1935. The outbreak of World War II (1939-1945) virtually ended any movement until 1947.

The Dutch Burgher 'diaspora' that began in 1947 due to the changed political climate in Ceylon lasted until about 1970. When the entire group emigrated to Australia and re-constructed their identity according to western European norms. The major focus of Burgher re-settlement was Melbourne, Victoria where about 50-60% of the racial group settled permanently. They were by nature urban (town/city) or inner city dwellers. In earlier Dutch-British times they lived quite comfortably in the major towns of Colombo, Galle, Manaar and later in the major cities/towns of the Kandyan provinces. These inherent residential patterns in Melbourne were therefore developed by past lifestyle and habits but also along the lines of economic necessity, being close to transport, employment and the vagaries of weather, especially the winter season.

The earlier arrivals were well educated, with a fluency in English, others had professional qualifications and most found employment in Federal and State Government departments, the railways, SEC, and also the 'white collar jobs' in established multi-national companies. The politically stable conditions of Australian society, the availability and diversity of jobs, low cost housing, quality living standards, social and cultural aspects all contributed to favour the Dutch Burgher migrants. As a consequence, it directed the process of assimilation and integration in a smooth transitional phase into mainstream Anglo-Saxon Australian society. Because of this and their "Europeaness" together with western European values, and a cultural literacy in English, they exploited their advantage over other non-speaking migrants from Europe. This resulted in enhanced social mobility, which in time, led to increased economic wealth and patterns of internal residential movement from working class to wealthier suburbs.

The earlier arrivals had the vision to emigrate quickly in a “first wave” movement between 1947/48-1957/58. They had the advantage of exporting their entire assets which the later arrivals did not, due to Ceylonese Government Foreign Exchange Entitlement Control Regulations (F.E.E.C). Increased Dutch Burgher migration followed the introduction of the Singhala Only Bill in 1956 and the race riots which erupted in 1958 between Singhalese and Tamils. This second phase of migration adversely affected the ‘exodus’ of Dutch Burghers, in particular, the foreign exchange currency being limited to £150 sterling per adult migrant. However, through a process of chain migration, via family, reunion nomination, accommodation and financial assistance, in particular, the Australia-Ceylon Fellowship founded in 1957, which became the political voice and platform of the Dutch Burgher community in Victoria. Apart from being a social/cultural organisation, it also supported and assisted the Burgher emigrants to settle in Melbourne. Much later arrivals included ‘mixed’ Burghers and also Singhalese and Tamils since the repeal of the White Australia Policy through a series of administrative and legislative processes between 1966-1978, which began another chapter in the Sri Lanka-Australia emigration movement.

By this time certain class trends were beginning to define Dutch Burgherdom in Melbourne and other areas in Australia. This great divide of wealth, status, social and cultural privilege, and in Burgher parlance the “Blue-Bloods” of Dutch Burgher society have generally tended to shift away entirely from middle and working classes of Dutch Burghers and other mixed races of Ceylonese society. There are Dutch Burghers on both sides of this divide, some see themselves as Dutch or English in every sense and reject the Asian label. Other Dutch Burghers share divided loyalties, between Australia and Ceylon. Therefore, the hierarchy of Dutch Burgherdom can be attributed to four main classes and their most identifiable characteristics are as follows:

- Group A: Those who see themselves as Dutch or English Europeans. Reject the Asian label and do not have any interaction with the community. The “Invisible Elites’ of Australian society.
- Group B: Those who see themselves as Dutch Burghers of European descent. A unique identity of race and Anglo-Saxon mentality,

Australian loyalty foremost, mirrored in the image of a past, perhaps prejudiced view of the Colonial legacy. However, interacts with Group C. Retains some elements of past Ceylonese traditions.

Group C: Those who see themselves as Dutch Burghers, but loyalties divided between Sri Lanka and Australia. Social interaction is greatest within this group and others B and D. Retains quite distinctively a large amount of Ceylonese traditions.

Group D: Those of mixed race and other Burghers married to Singhalese/Tamils/Muslims etc. Very strong patterns of allegiance/tradition/interaction with Sri Lanka in every sense. Generally free interaction with Group C. Restricted with Group B.

The result of cultural, economic, religious and social pressures of Australian multi-cultural society today continues to impact on this minority ethnic group. The one class identity has led to reveal several identities and classes within Australian Dutch Burgherdom. Also entwined in this equation is the influence of various religious denominations both Western and Eastern. The Dutch Burghers of Ceylon were converted to many forms of Christianity including Portuguese and French Roman Catholicism, Dutch Protestantism, English Anglicanism, Cornish Methodism, Welsh Baptists, Singhalese Buddhism and Muslim Islamics. Therefore a testimony of facts emerge like a silent revolution to reflect and differ significantly over the groups discussed. These significant characteristics which are defined were based upon many interviews within the community, specific occasions, personal memoirs/diaries, primary sources and relevant texts, together with the authors own experience as a migrant settler in Australia. It is hoped that this paper has provided a balanced 'view from within' with some issues that are real and lasting, and which seeks to address the ominous signs of gradual fragmentation of ethnic identity and change within the Australian community.

Conclusion

Australian society presents a multi-cultural mosaic of over 250 races of people in a population of 20 million, of which the Dutch Burghers of (Ceylon) Sri Lanka are but a microscopic ethnic minority. The historical legacy of their past in Sri Lanka brings some meaning to the present, although in a different time and place, with a hope that the next generation gives it some future direction. This remote and distinct ethnic minority, most now mature adults, hold the key to future perpetuation of remaining a distinct identity. This also raises the important issues of attitudes, traditions and values being maintained within organised existence and passed on, into the next millennium.

As the focus of assimilation, integration and absorption into mainstream society take place, there exists a very real challenge to Groups A and B in a quest for survival as a distinct ethnic group. The different social classes of identity will most certainly fragment the very structure of Dutch Burgherdom and at some point in the decades ahead, raises the possibility of the disappearance of the Dutch Burgher ethnic group in Australia. As the only ethnic group in the world, Asian in origin, European by descent, it is unique, bridging two worlds together, yet remaining a separate ethnic identity. Notwithstanding class differences, patterns of social and cultural aspects, traditions and attitudinal views there is a need for other researchers to fill the void in this respect of the “second and third generations” in particular, with regard to issues relating to “mixed marriages” in the Australian context.

Since the major exodus began from 1947 onwards, nearly 58 years later we have witnessed a second and third generation of descendents “born in Australia” and in other countries.

At a glance the social interactions of this generation has embraced the ‘multi-cultures’ of Australian society, especially via marriage to various communities, such as Scottish, Hungarian, Norwegian, Croatian, Polish, Greek, Italian, Swiss, Turkish, Mauritian, Irish, English, Indian, Dutch, German and Chinese, Singhalese,

Muslims and Tamils. This in turn has already led to some loss in terms of identity, social and cultural norms, religion and in some cases language as well.

The case for the Dutch Burghers is that this seems well in order for integration and acceptance in the Australian context. On the other hand due to the multi-cultural nature of Australian society at present, Dutch Burghers have also married into other Asian ethnic groups, such as Indian, Chinese, Tamils, Singhalese, Malay and Muslims, which they earlier abhorred. It would indeed be ironic that for the very reasons that emigration did occur just over 58 years ago, will again be challenged in a quest for survival of the Dutch Burgher race as separate and distinct ethnic group – but that area would be worth another field of research.

The achievements of some Ceylonese Dutch Burghers in Australia.

Victor Melder (community) – The Victor Melder Sri Lankan Library of Australia; Rt. Reverend Roger Heft, Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, NSW; Rev. John Blaze Uniting Church Minister, Victoria; Br. Justinian Thompson, De La Salle Brother, Teacher, Scholar and Missionary ‘Pioneer’ to the Aboriginal people, Balgo Hills, WA; Sr. Tania De Jong R.G.S., author, scholar and immigrant worker, WA (Religion); Keith Potger (Music – “The Seekers”); Geoff Jansz (TV personality – author); David De Vos (TV/Journalism/Director/Producer); Aubrey Collette (Cartoonist – The Australian Newspaper); Stephen Bartholomeusz; Chris de Kretser (Journalism); Capt. Eric Weinman (Principal Examiner – Australian Maritime Industry); Edward Ludovic, Arthur Keuneman, Ian Wille, Bertram Markus, Ronnie de Kretser, Douglas Claessen (Law/Legal Profession); Lancelot Foenander, Malcolm Aldons, Aubrey Maartensz, Neville Jansz, David Wille (Public/Diplomatic Service); Dr Darryl Weinman, Dr Justin Labrooy, Prof. Derek Frewin

(Medicine); Dr Richard Van Cuylenberg (Dentistry – Vic); Fred Van Buren (Politics – Vic); Bernard Swan (QLD), Michael Roberts (SA), Cynthia & Ian Van Den Driesen (WA) (University Academics); Dav Whatmore (Victoria & Australia); Malcolm Francke (QLD); Pat McCarthy (WA) Cricket; Malcolm Bulner (VIC – Boxing); Tania Van Heer (SA) Athletics; Anne Moldrich (Miss Victoria 1983); Hilton Fernando & Ronnie Steinwall (Body Building) who was Mr Ceylon 1959-61 and runner-up Mr Universe, London, September 1962; Duncan White, 400 metres hurdles silver medallist, London 1948.

There were others who migrated to Britain and Canada a few are worth noting for their outstanding contributions. They were Clive C Inman, capped for All Ceylon and Leicestershire, England, an outstanding cricketer who scored the fastest 50 recorded (50 runs in 8 minutes) which made the Guinness Book of Records. Maureen Hingert who was runner-up in the Miss Universe Beauty Contest of the mid 1950's and Michael Ondaatje who won the Booker Prize for Literature with "The English Patient". Later made into a film, it was nominated for 12 Oscars in 1997.

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Primary sources (oral history) – I acknowledge with thanks the many interviews with members and families of the Dutch Burgher community in Australia, especially Melbourne.