

Place Nomenclature through the Historical-Geographical Method: From the City of *Mahabali* to a World Heritage City, *Mahanuwara*

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Abstract

The Historical-Geographical Method is a very popular technique used in the study of folklore. The method can be considered an interdisciplinary category and therefore, addressed according to multiple theoretical perspectives in cultural studies, and studies of folklore and sociology. It is also a mode of analysis that has been known for a long time, and can be utilized to discuss or analyze folklore in depth. Therefore, its use as an academic approach in the modern context is important. The historical-geographical method is extremely important in the comparative study of folklore. Through this method a text or a tradition in a society is compared with another text or a tradition. This balancing or comparison is done with different aims and expectations. In line with these aims, in this paper, the historical-geographical method is used to reveal historical, social, cultural, and religious conditions related to the origins of the place named 'Mahanuwara' - a leading city in the hill country of Sri Lanka- and an important place in the central province, and the different names used to refer to this city. The current study follows, primarily, a qualitative research methodology, which was used together with the inductive research approach. The primary data for this study were drawn mainly from literary sources and the conclusions are based on the content of the text.

Keywords: Historical-geographical method, Interdisciplinary Category, Comparison, Modern Context, Origin

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Introduction

The historical-geographical method can be considered an interdisciplinary category and addressed through multiple theoretical perspectives employed in *cultural studies, studies of folklore and sociology*.

This paper is a critical and comparative inquiry into the discourse of the historical, social and folkloristic conditions related to the origins of place names and to explore their sociological and folkloristic ramifications. In particular, it looks at certain hypotheses from a folkloristic and sociological perspective. Constantly exchanging themselves among people and gradually, creating themselves, these stories become - an essential and integral feature of inter-social bonds forged in the city of *Mahanuwara* (Nicolaisen, 1991, p.10) Despite the fact that each story consists of a static, continuous, and complete identity, variations in the same story were observed as they were re-constructed under diverse societal phases, and this can be considered as the main hypothesis of this research.

This study is guided by the qualitative research methodology which was used primarily along with the inductive approach. The primary data for this study were mainly literary sources, and were based on the contents of the texts so examined. The qualitative research methodology is preferred in many academic disciplines, including that of folklore, owing to its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of the value of folklore through an examination of certain folkloric genres.

In this study, several historical documents and folk stories related to the city of *Kandy* and its historical importance were examined. Stories on how the name *Senkadagala* originated deal with a few such themes². The study consequently revealed multiple legends and folk stories in relation to the names used to designate Kandy, from 5000 B.C up to now. However, taken as a whole there is very little information about the ancient hill country of Sri Lanka in chronicles. The most ancient story about the hill country or the *Malaya Deshaya* is related to Buddha's first and third visits to Sri Lanka (Sarathi, 2011, p. 01). During certain periods, this place was also called *Malaya Mandala* or *Malaya Desha* (Seneviratna, 1989, p. 3). During the Anuradhapura period, it became known as *Kandaka Petaka*, and the Cholas in the Polonnaruwa Kingdom converted the name to *Kaattu Palakei* in Tamil. Later on, for ease of pronunciation, people began to call it *Katupuluwa* (Munasinghe, 1998, p. 01).

In this paper, I hope to implement the basic approaches of the *Method* authorized by Lang, Krohn, and Krohn and the method for studying cultural relationship introduced by Nicolaisen in relation to '*Place Names*' - a significant area of research in the field of folklore studies.

Though the *historical-geographical* method can be considered as an interdisciplinary category and addressed using multiple theoretical perspectives, in examinations of *cultural studies, folklore and sociology*, the application of this theory towards the project of evaluating these place names in Sri Lanka has not been carried out by any academic so far. Hence, this attempt can be

² A summary of each folk story will be included here to explicate the analysis clearly

used as a model for future researchers and will strengthen the scope and capacities in this research fields and related areas in the future.

The Historical- Geographical Method

The historical- geographical approach is extremely important in studying folklore. In this approach, a text or a tradition is compared with another text or another tradition. This balancing or comparison is done with different aims and expectations. When employing this method, it is also important to have some knowledge about certain primeval Indo-European cultures which might have influenced Western languages and thinking. This, of course, could be the reason that researchers like Muller have introduced folklore as a study of primeval myths.

Several Humanist studies related to music, art, religion, and literature of the 18th and 19th centuries can be considered historical research. Exploring these histories has been the overall aim of all these studies. Thus, it is apparent that the *historical method* has a special place when studying the *origins* of a text. Thereafter through *comparisons*, we obtain an opportunity, not only to reveal information about an entity's location, structure, and time of origin, but also the space to reconstruct and/recreate opinions about that entity's evolution.

The variations that can be found in certain historical documents are sometimes caused by their geographical backgrounds. Therefore, in studying historical documents, it is extremely important to disclose the geographical factors related to stories.

Names/Naming places is a social product and a process

In this activity, of naming, man spontaneously reveals certain information about the history, culture, and beliefs related to the naming or labeling. When a place is given a name, that name establishes some uniqueness related to that place. Therefore, it is very common that *words* used for place names have some connection with the *day-to-day language usage* of that particular area. Also, those words represent the culture of the people who lived in that era. Thus, studying place names (toponymy) around the world along with folklore and linguistics, through the *Geographical method* can be considered a new awakening in the field.

The historical- geographical method can be introduced as a discipline that has marked its authority in the field of folklore studies. During the initial stages of folklore studies, the main focus of research was on establishing the Hypothetical Archetype of a folk fiction, which lies in the assumption of its location and origin. Gradually, the historical- geographical method expanded to the extent of disclosing its initial geographical locations as well as different historical origins. That is one reason why Dorson (1972), a giant in the field of folklore research, considers this to be a discipline which has proven its impact in the realm of folklore studies; Dorson shuns the type of criticism which says that the historical-geographical method has neglected certain aesthetic aspects, stylistic features, and the owner's expression related to a folkloric item. Kaarle Krohn of Finland is known as a pioneer in this research field. *Kalevela*, the folksong collection of Finland, is known as a very important item in the entire genre of folklore. This text paved the way for folklore to actually take its place as a *Science*. Krohn (1924), who was interested in conducting studies on world folk stories is also identified as a pioneer who studied folklore through the

historical-geographical approach. This approach which was founded by his father, Julius Krohn, was later expanded by Kaarle Krohn. He expanded the area to include an analysis the manner in which one item/genre of folklore represents the culture and nationality of a country, by comparing a multitude of texts belonging to that particular genre, eventually culminating in revelation the *original text* of that item. The Comparison and Comparative Methodology was the basis of these studies conducted by Krohn. The *historical- geographical method* originated through the strategies Julius Krohn employed to analyze *Kalevela poetry (1924)*. In folklore studies, this is known as the *Finland method* (Ratnapala, 1995, pp. 21-22).

It is said that in order to identify the original sections of and later additions, Krohn (1924) has organized the poetic text *Kalevela* in according to the with poems/songs' varieties, historical time, and geographical locations. He maintained that each item of folklore had a history of its own and that it is essential to analyze the items separately in order to unearth the histories and meanings attached to them. However, in this method, it is not important to find the exact location where these folk tales originated. He pointed out that adding varieties of folklore according to their historical and geographical elements is the basis of this method. Thereafter, the relevant archetypes can be built by gathering information about all the available varieties, of that folk story or myth. Likewise, the route taken by these varieties, the things newly added to them, and the aspects they have lost can be identified (Ratnapala, 1995, pp. 22-23) Some very important research steps that are a part of the historical- geographical method are included in this analysis, and set down below:

1. Identifying one archetype which can be the base/root of all types of stories.
2. Ability to come into a general assumption when and where certain items of archetypical folklore originated.
3. Explaining the way in which different folklore items originated during different times under various geographical conditions.
4. Discussing the geographical and historical factors which might have influenced them.
5. Painting the footprints along which the varieties of folklore have moved.
6. Ability to identify the new sections added to the folklore and the parts or sections dropped, and the factors that caused such addition and eliminations. (It is important to organize and understand the varieties of folklore.)

Nicolaisen (1991) is a pioneer in studies on '*Place Nomenclature*', which is considered an important discipline within folklore studies. With the aid of the many different stories he had gathered, Nicolaisen studied, in depth the cultural affairs, ideologies and time boundaries related to the *Place Nomenclature* on which his studies were based. As the primary outcome of his studies he published '*Scottish Place Names*' which was awarded the Chicago Folklore Prize in recognition of his service to the subject area of Folklore studies. In 1983, delivering a speech on 'Names and Stories', he presented several issues related to the origins and expansion of traditional expressions. According to him, traditional expressions reflect a static and superseding (unchangeable) tradition. The relationship between tradition and creativity is the basis for the genesis of folklore. On the other hand, folklore includes responses to both social conditions and instant behaviors. Thus, it is important to recognize an individual as a cultural being rather than as a person belonging to a

particular cultural condition or level/ground. Thus, even though a story displays a basic, continuous, and complete identity, its diversities burst into the limelight when they are reconstructed or weaved and re-weaved, when they are used and applied in different social contexts. Such fictions are continuously exchanged by people and they gradually expand as an essential and necessary result of social bonds, becoming transmuted and transformed into folklore (Nicolaisen, 1991, p.10)

Researchers such as Taylor (1976), Lang (1899), and Frazer (1935) studied the cultures of people around the globe in depth. Folklorists like Andrew Lang and Dan Ben-Amos have introduced the Comparative Analytical approach and the Historical- geographical method, respectively, as approaches/methods whereby one can conduct research on folklore. These methods are very useful for the current researcher as he adopts one of these techniques and gathers his sample based on it (Ben-Amos, 1992, pp. 107-109).

Through the historical-geographical method, one can expect to gather information regarding a fiction's *origins, evolution, and presumptive first copy*. Another intention of this method is to explore the diversities of a *story* that is re-created/re-constructed/re-weaved when it is in a state of constant flux and becomes a prime outcome of social relations.

The Historical-Geographical Method in Sri Lanka

The historical-geographical method is very important when studying folklore. This research method can be identified as a mode of analysis that has been known for a long time, and it can be utilized to discuss or analyze folklore in depth. Its use as an academic approach in the modern context is important. It is also necessary to examine which folkloric items were compared through it, the aim of comparisons, what changes the comparisons underwent during the last few decades, and how much space these comparisons will be given in the future academic-context or milieu.

Kandy, the city on which this study is based, belongs to the Central province (*Meda Rata*). Other two main cities *Matale* and *Nuwaraeliya* also belong to the same province. Both *Matale* and *Nuwaraeliya* are historically important as several historical documents, literature, and folklore based on the impart knowledge on the evolution of place names of these two cities. In the *Chulawamsa*, the 13th-century chronicle, *Matale* is referred to as *Mahathila* which might imply its geographical location (*Mahathanithalawa*- the extended flat land) (*Culawamsa*, 1960, 42nd Chapter). When referring to *Kada Im Poth*, it was revealed that king *Gajaba* who lived in the 2nd century A.D. had captured 2400 Cholas from the *Chola* dynasty in India and re-settled them in *Matale*, which was then named *Maha Thalya* (a huge crowd); this city later came to be known as *Mathale* (*Sirilak Kadaim Pota*, 1961, p. 77). In the *Nikaya Sangrahaya* (*Nikaya Sangrahaya*, 1984, p. 09) and the *Asgiri* palm leaf scrolls (*Asgiri Talpata*, 1997, p. 3) this city is known as *Mathula Danawaa* while the *Sadharamrathnakaraya* (*Saddharmaratnakaraya*, 1912, p. 303) refers to it as *Mathula Rata*.

The folklore related to *Nuwaraeliya* dates back to the era of *Rawana*. According to folklore/myths, *Rawana*, the mythical king of the Demon cult, abducted *Rama*'s wife *Seetha* and

confined her in *Seethaeliya* situated in *Nuwaraeliya*. *Rawana's* army also captured *Hanumantha*, the giant ape *Rama's messenger*. Folk stories further relate that in revenge. *Rawana's* army set fire to Hanuman's tail. Thereafter, Hanuman ran all over the city swinging his burning tail which caused the whole city to catch fire and blaze, eventually burning down to the ground; thereafter, the city was called *Nuwaraeliya* [(the city which was cleared (razed to the ground)] (Dewapriya, 1992, p. 2).

The historical- geographical method could be used as a fruitful and novel approach to the studies carried out in the field of local Folklore in Sri Lanka. However, in the first half of the 20th century, when Henry Parker was searching for stories parallel to local stories, he, for the first time attempted to employ the *historical-geographical method* after which he used it regularly in his folklore studies as well (Weerasinghe, 1986, p.181). There he attempted to analyze the similarities between Sri Lankan and Indian stories (Parker, 1910, p. 33). However, there is little evidence to demonstrate the widespread employment of the *historical-geographical method* in folklore studies. Therefore, this effort or attempt at demonstrating the historical-geographical method will strengthen the field of inquiry and widen its scope as well as the analytical capacities of scholars in the field of folklore studies in Sri Lanka. On this basis, in this paper, the *historical-geographical method* is used to reveal historical, social, cultural, and religious conditions related to the origins of the place name 'Kandy' - an important city in the central province, and the *different names* used to refer to this city. To do this I have used as the basic approaches to my analysis, the *Method* authorized by Lang, Krohn, and Krohn and the method whereby a cultural relationship was introduced by Nicolaisen in relation to '*Place Names*' - a significant research area in the field of folklore studies.

The Evolution of the Place Name 'Mahanuwara (Kandy)'

The paper deals with the *names* used in ancient Sri Lanka to refer to the present *Kandy* city and the way in which they evolved, while focusing on the similarities and differences between those names. Due to practical issues such as the extensive expansion of folklore, the social background, and geographical areas, that needed to be covered, it was impossible to apply each and every step sequentially as it was introduced by Julius Krohn. Employment of the *Comparative Method* is related to the study of *Place Names* and it was used in the current study following its original and exact format.

In ancient documents, the present-day *Mahanuwara /Kandy* was referred to as *Senkadagala Sri Wardanapura*. But agreement among historians cannot be seen on the exact time period this term came into use, and when the city was physically established (Paranavithana, 1958, pp. 42-44). Though some assume that it is a place king *Nissankamalla* used to visit in the 12th century, Paranavithana says that an exact place name used for this city could not be found (Paranavithana, 1958, p. 42).

As mentioned in the palm leaf manuscript *Origins of Asgiri or The Tale of the Origins of the Asgiri Temple*, *Senkadagala* was established during the period of king *Gajabahu* who once united the country. Most likely, this was *Gajabahu XI* who reigned in the country between 1131-

1152. According to the myths, an ascetic called *Senkanda* was practicing meditation in a cave in Maya- one of the three ancient Sinhala kingdoms. One day, while plucking fruits in the forest, he saw a fox chasing a rabbit. After a short time, the rabbit turned on the fox and started chasing it. On another day he witnessed something similar; he saw a serpent chasing a frog, but eventually, the serpent became prey to the frog. The ascetic then realized that this place could bring victory to people and later narrated this story to a youngster who had once become lost in the forest. The youth, upon his return to the city, mentioned this incident to king *Gajabahu XI*, who then constructed a city there (*Asgiri Upata hewat Asgiri Vihara Uppatti Kataa Prakaranaya*, 2000, pp. 10-11)

Another work of fiction states that the annual offerings and homage paid to the Tooth Relic (the tooth of the Buddha) during the *Dambadeniya* era (before 1232 A.D) were called *Sri Wardhana Pooja*, as they brought prosperity and happiness to the land and its people. It was believed that worshipping Buddha's relics bring happiness and prosperity in the births to come. Thus, *Yapahuwa*, where the Tooth relic was originally kept, was also called *Sri Wardana Nuwara*. Later on, when the Sacred Relic was brought to Kandy, that city was named *Senkadagala Sri Wardanapura* (Munasinghe, 1998, pp. 3-4)

However, as mentioned in the *Asgiriya Palm leaf document*, around 1312, *Senpathi* (a military leader) *Siriwardane*, the nephew of king *Parakramabahu IV* of Kurunegala, restored the ruins, marked the city limits with walls, established the *Asgiri* hermitage to enhance the city's elegance and named it *Katupulu Danawwe Senkadagala Nuwara* (*Asgiri Talpata*, 1997, p. 5). This record which says how *Senkadagala* could have been renamed *Siriwardanapura* cannot be found in any other historical document (Rohanadheera, 1970, p. 26)

The name *Senkadagala* is also mentioned in the *Ampitiya* rock-inscription (Epigraphia Zeylanica, 1966, Vol iv, pp.01-27, 272) made by King *Wickramabahu III* in 1360, the third year of his reign, and the *Sagama* inscription (Epigraphia Zeylanica, 1966, Vol iv, p. 308) made in the ninth year of *Buwanekabahu V* in 1380. Codrington, another historian, assumed that *Sena Sammatha Wichramabahu* established *Senkadagala Sri Wardanapura* in 1472. His assumption was based on details available in certain inscriptions, literature, and folklore (Rohanadheera, 1970, p. 21) Fernando believes that this region was recognized by the governing body of the country during the mid-14th century. Be that as it may, he states that there is enough evidences to prove that Kandy and its adjacent areas have been populated since ancient times (Fernando, 1958, p. 61).

According to the traditions of the *Rajaratnakaraya*, *Chulawamsa*, and *Dumbulu* temple inscriptions the *Senkadagala* kingdom was established in 1542 by King *Weerawickrama* or *Wickramabahu* (Rajaratnakaraya, 1970, p 53; *Unapurana Sahito Mahawanso*, 1959, pp. 90, 9, 10, 11; EZ, Vol iv, p. 9; Atigala, 1972, p. 643; The *Rajaratnakaraya*) in 1542, mentions the place names *Katupula Banda Senkanda Shaila* or otherwise *Sri Wardanapuraya* (Rajaratnakaraya, p. 53)

The English rulers converted *Kanda (hill)* into Kandy for ease of pronunciation (Jayatileka, 2008, pp 69-70; Munasinghe, 1998, p 3-4). In the 17th century, during the reign of King *Wimaladarmasuriya 1* (1592), the term *Kandy* came into parlance with the meaning of 'the

main city of the whole country' (Jayatilleka, 2008 July, pp. 69-70; Munasinghe, 1998, pp. 3-4). The *Medawala* copper inscription cast in 1755 also mentions the words *Katupulunuwara* and *Sri Wardanapura* (EZ, Vol v, pp. 466-486). Paranavithana and Godakubura confirm the notion that modern –day *Kandy* would have been called *Senkanda Nuwara* in the past (EZ, Vol v, p. 479).

According to the *Palkubura* copper grant constructed in 1804, *Kandy* or *Senkanda Shaila Sri Wardanapura* was a city developed by a king called *Wickramabahu* (EZ, Vol iii, pp. 240-241) although there are controversies about King *Wickramabhu* who is mentioned in the following legends. Mendis Rohanadeera believes that these folk tales developed gradually after people had actually forgotten about the origins of the city (Rohanadheera, 1970, p. 24).

In this research study, the discussions on the origins of the city and various information on different *names* and *eras* related to it became items of great importance. The order of evolution of the Place Name '*Mahanuwara*' can be listed as follows:

- (a) *Mahabali Nuwara, Kantaka Petaka* (early half of Anuradhapura era),
- (b) *Sri Wardana Nuwara (Dambadeni era, before 1232)*
- (c) *Kattu Palakei, Katupuluwa, Katupulu Danawwe Senkadagala Nuwara* (1312),
- (d) *Senkadagala* (1360-1380),
- (e) *Senkadagala Sri Wardanapuraya and Senkanda Nuwara* (1472),
- (f) *Katupulubanda Senkada Shailanam Sri Wardanapuraya* (1542),
- (g) *Mahanuwara* (1592), *Katupulu Nuwara* (1755),
- (h) *Sri Wardanapura and Senkandashaila Sri Wardana Puraya* (1804),
- (i) *Kandy* (20th century), World Heritage City (21st century).

It is very clearly mentioned that the English rulers converted *Kanda (hill)* into *Kandy* for ease of pronunciation, which we may note down in this manner *Kanda > Kandy*. (Jayatilleka, 2008, pp 69-70; Munasinghe, 1998, p. 3-4).

The Kandaka Petaka of Anuradhapura era had become *Kaattu Palakei* in the 12th century due to *Chola* influences; subsequently, it transmuted in to *Katupuluwa (B, C stories below)*. Again, during the *Dambadeni* period in the 14th century (1312), the place name changed into *Katupulu Danawwe Senkadagala Nuwara Sri Wardana Nuwara (D)*. Since then, up to the 16th century, *Kandy* was known by different names such as *Senkadagala, Senkadagala Sri Wardanapuraya, and Senkanda Nuwara (E, F, G, I below)*. The general assumption that can be made regarding these folk stories is that the majority of them belong to the 14th century. Historical details confirm that *Kandy* flourished as a kingdom in the 15th century (Duncan, 1990, p 32). The sequence of evolution of the place name, as disclosed by folk stories can be lined up according to an ascending order of time periods and years as follows:

- (a) *Mahabali Nuwara > Mahaweli Nuwara > Mahanuwara* (around 5000 B.C.),
- (b) *Katubulu Danawwa > Katupuluwa > Kantaka Petaka* (250-210 B.C.),
- (c) *Katupuluwa > Sri Wasapura* (9th century A.D.),
- (d) *Kandaka Petaka* of the Anuradhapura era had become *Kaattu Palakei* in the 12th century
- (e) *Sri Wasa Puraya > Siriwardanapuraya* (1312),

- (f) *Sri Wasa Puraye*>*Senkada Nuwara* where the army (*Sena*) of the enemy was defeated (*Kanda*) (1357-1354),
- (g) *Senkada*>*Senkadagala* (1360-1380)³and
- (h) *Chenkatan Nuwara*>*Sen Kanda Nuwara* (up to the16th century)

Evolution of the Place Name *Mahanuwara* (Kandy) and its Thematic Background as Revealed by Folk Tales: A Comparative Analysis

Folk stories based on place names can be generally classified under a few subjects or themes. These stories are basically woven around themes such as;

- a) historical Sri Lankan legends,
- b) relationships with India,
- c) regional conflicts,
- d) celestial beliefs,
- e) idea of a blessed land,
- f) foreign invasions,
- g) uniqueness of the protagonists of the stories,

A few *tales* that come under the category of *folk stories* of different areas were selected for theoretical analysis. These tales disclose the story tellers' creativity, the structure of the stories, their original location, their geographical background, and several other pieces of information related to the evolutionary features of these stories. A special service given by the protagonist to the king and the citizens of the country caused him to receive a reward from the city. The background events that comprised that occurrence, and the consequent *naming of the city after the protagonist can be identified as common events that build up the sequence of these stories*. The following stories are cited as examples that ensure that a better understanding of the meanings and themes of these texts be grasped by the readers.

- A. In the ancient Sri Lanka there lived tribal groups such as *Rassa* (demons), *Yassa* (devils), *Deva* (gods), and *Naga* (cobra). Those who immigrated to this country from India were called *Sura* (deity) whereas the indigenous people were branded as *Asura* (demons). The leader of the *Asura* group was called *Bali* or *Mahabali*. It is said that *Mahabali Nuwara of king Mahabali in the Malaya of the hill country, was transmuted into Mahaweli Nuwara* and later came to be known as *Mahanuwara*. The river, which flows around *Mahabali Nuwara* which was first called *Mahabali Ganga* came into common use as *Mahaweli Ganga* (Tundeniya, 1997, p. 71)
- B. *Uththiya*, the brother of King *Kelenitissa* who ruled Kelaniya, had a stealthy relationship with the king's wife. Eventually, this king's brother *Uththiya* had to flee to the hill country in the *Malaya Region*. He built a small palace of Bulu tress and lived there. This kingdom built in a jungle full of thorny (*Katu*) *Bulu* trees, later came to be known as *Kalubulu*

³ According to the *Palkumbura Sannasa* this name has been using by 1804 A.D.

Danawwa. Also, as the king made a fence of *Katupeleli* around his city, it was called *Katupuluwa*. After some time, the city came to be called *Kantaka Petaka* which might have meant *Katupeleli* (Tundeniya, 1999, p. 1-2)

- C. In the 9th century, the Mahayana devotees of Sri Lanka shifted the *Natha* temple, their religious headquarters, from *Rajarata* to *Katupuluwa* due to fears of hostile attacks. After the arrival of god *Natha* and his queen, who are said to be able to bestow great riches, *Katupuluwa* changed its name to *Sri Wasapura*. The place where *Sri Wasa* lived is called '*Sri Wasa*'. Thus, the name *Katupuluwa* vanished with the emergence of '*Sri Wasa*' (Munasinghe, 1998, p. 2).
- D. In the Anuradhapura era, Mahayana Buddhism was spreading fast in the country. Those beliefs seeped into the beliefs of the people of *Katupulunuwara* and they built a temple for god *Natha* there. As god *Natha* is capable of granting worldly benefits to people, the area where his temple was located was called *Sri Wasapura*. Obeying the order of *Parakramabahu IV*, his nephew *Siriwardena* built a hermitage called *Asgiri* in *Katupulu Danawwa*. Thereafter, *Sri Wasapura* became known as *Siriwardanapura*. Before this incident, it is said that King *Nissankamalla* also came to *Sri Wasapura* and built a palace there (Munasinghe, 1998, p. 3-4)
- E. With the support of the Emperor *Vijayanagar* of South India, rebel Tamil leader *Aryachakrawartha* of Jaffna invaded Gampola. *Nissanka Alakeshwara*, the minister in-charge of *Sri Wasapura (Mahanuwara)*, gathered his armies against *Aryacharavartha* and defeated him in *Sri Wasapura* following the instructions he received from god *Natha* in his dreams. Thereafter, the city where the army (*Sena*) of the enemy (*Aryacharavartha*) was defeated (*Kanda*) became popularly known as *Senkanda Nuwara (Nuwara=city)* (Tundeniya, 1999, p. 7)
- F. This story is woven around a chain of miraculous events experienced by a young man near a rock in a forest. The youth observes how a wild elephant which chased him, a tiger chasing a deer, a mongoose chasing a cobra receded after seeing a rock. The dumb founded youth meets a hermit called *Senkanda*, while he was recalling what he witnessed. The hermit tells him about the miraculous powers of the rock. The youth delivers this piece of information to King *Wickramabahu of Gampola* who was seeking for an appropriate land to establish a city. After the city was built, it was named *Senkanda* to honor the hermit (Tundeniya, 1999, p. 7)
- G. One day, a basket weaver went to the forest to cut some bamboo. While cutting bamboo he noticed a fox chasing a rabbit. As soon as the rabbit reached a rock which was close by,

the fox stopped chasing the rabbit and receded. In the next instant, the rabbit started chasing the fox. The basket weaver carefully examined the place where this had happened and informed the king about it. The king assumed this to be a blessed piece of land and built his kingdom there. Thereafter the city was called *Senkandagala* (Parker, 1910, p. 03) ⁴.

- H. After the reign of *Buwanekabahu V*, a leader called *Sena Sammatha Wickramabahu* who came from *Gampola* defeated the *Bandara* clan in the place where the hermit *Senkanda* lived. He consequently built his kingdom on that blessed land. He concluded that land was blessed after witnessing a hunter being chased by a rabbit who was first chased by the hunter himself. (Codrington, Vol ii, p. 293)
- I. Several years ago, two monks called *Rathanapala* and Rama lived in the *Hanthana* caves. They enjoyed a fraternal bond. It is said that Rathanapala built a temple on the *Hanthana* mountain for god *Ishwara* or god *Chenkatan*. King *Wickramabahu*, being informed about this land by the two brothers, examined the land and built a city in the name of god *Chenkatan* called *Chenkatan Nuwara*. Later, the name came into use as *Sen Kanda Nuwara*. (Tundeniya, 1999, p. 9)

These stories highlight diverse beliefs about human history, culture, customs, and traditions, in relation to a culturally important city in central Sri Lanka. Certain significant items/aspects like, indicating a unique identity of the place (F, G, H), a crucial event/ occurrence based plot (E), the king, usually being seen as the protagonist of the story, the appearance of a foreign or a local heroic figure (A, D, E, F, H), expressing blessings/ support of a miraculous incident or a strong belief in gods (C, E, I), and the idea of establishing a major city on a hallowed plot of land (A, C, D, E, F, G, H, I) can be listed. Denominating the place as a link between the name of that heroic figure or event can be identified in many stories. (A, D, F).

It is difficult to conclude the exact time in which the early stories came into being. These folk stories which carry details of the Malaya region in the hill country and King *Mahabali*, too might have emerged parallel to other stories. *King Mahabali*, and the *Malaya region* where the *Mahabali Nuwara* city was situated were terms commonly linked to the ancient hill country. The most legendary information on the *Malaya Region* is connected to the Buddha's first and third arrival in Sri Lanka. As reported in the *Mahawamsa*, *Puliyandan*, the *Malaya Region* was established by the progeny of King *Vijaya* and *Kuweni* (Dheerananda, 2011, p. 01, *Deepawamsaya*, 2959, chapter 1, verses 46-80, *Unapurana Sahito Mahawamsa*, Chapter 1, Verses 19-33, Chapter 7, Verse 68). Since then, until it became a significant political landmark in the 14th century, the *Malaya Region* remained a focus of attention of many different rulers (Dheerananda, 2011, pp. 1-3). Therefore, to conclude our narrative related to the period during which this story came into being, it is necessary to dig into the era of *King Mahabali*. The antiquity of this story can be speculated upon when considering the information, it contains regarding the *Yakka*, *Rassa*,

⁴ A rabbit chasing after a certain hunter is a common folk story among the people of Sri Lanka.

Naga, and *Deva* communities that inhabited Sri Lanka in 5000 B.C. It is said that King *Mahabali's Rassa* army lived in this area (Sedaraman, 1955, pp. 9, 16). Chronicles also tell of the *Sura* people who migrated to Sri Lanka from India (presumably, Vijaya and his followers) and the *Asura* who were then the indigenous people of the country (Sedaraman, 1955, pp. 2-3,12). The content of such stories (A) is of significant social value.

Some stories (B, C, D, E) woven around the belief in God *Natha* were also very widespread in Kandy, and also grabbed the writer's attention. However, they might have been fabricated by people who lived before the *Anuradhapura* period. In particular, the story (D) that mentions King *Nissankamalla* of the *Polonnaruwa* era who used to worship God *Natha* in *Sri Wasa pura*, must belong to the pre-12th century era.

The other stories that are related to King *Wickramabahu* of *Gampola* (1357-1375) must belong to the 14th century. The folk stories (F, G, H, I) which mention the ascetic/hermit *Senkanda* and the worshipping of *Ishwara* in *Chenkatan* contain clues that Hindu Brahmins used to live around *Senkadagala*, fulfilling their religious missions.

The above-mentioned information makes it quite clear that the place name *Kandy* has gradually evolved over a long period of time. In the past, the whole of the hill country was identified as *Malaya Deshaya/Malaya Mandala* (A) and thus, Kandy might have been called *Mahabali Nuwara* (A).

To understand these matters better, we can codify and summarize these stories further through the following themes.

Story	Themes
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ historical Sri Lankan legends (a), ✓ relationships with India (b), ✓ idea of a blessed land (e), ✓ foreign invasions (f), ✓ uniqueness of the protagonists of the stories (g),
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ historical Sri Lankan legends (a),
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ celestial beliefs (d), ✓ idea of a blessed land (e),
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ celestial beliefs (d), ✓ idea of a blessed land (e), ✓ uniqueness of the protagonists of the stories (g),
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ historical Sri Lankan legends (a), ✓ relationships with India (b), ✓ regional conflicts (c),

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ celestial beliefs (d), ✓ idea of a blessed land (e), ✓ foreign invasions (f), ✓ uniqueness of the protagonists of the stories (g),
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ celestial beliefs (d), ✓ idea of a blessed land (e), ✓ uniqueness of the protagonists of the stories (g),
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ idea of a blessed land (e),
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ regional conflicts, (c) , ✓ idea of a blessed land (e), ✓ uniqueness of the protagonists of the stories (g),
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ relationships with India (b), ✓ celestial beliefs (d), ✓ idea of a blessed land (e),

With the aid of historical information related to kings and other regional leaders linked to folk stories, it is possible to engage in an in-depth analysis on the eras in which certain place names originated. This process also helps to uncover new information regarding the religious myths and beliefs that existed in these eras. It also enables us to draw conclusions about the phases through which these place names evolved.

Cultural Affinities Related to Place Names: Re-Construction and Expansion

A prominent characteristic of these stories is the belief that kings and citizens had in choosing a *blessed land* on which to establish a city (E, F, G, H, I). This fact is proven by the story which elaborates the *Asgiri Upatha*, which deals with the origins of the *Asgiri hermitage*.⁵ These stories also reveal the notion that these ancient peoples were actually very concerned about the uniqueness of a particular place; and that they were also of the belief that such uniqueness can add extra value to that place.

These stories also shed light on the extent of Sri Lankan's faith in the God *Natha*. They also provide examples for the expansion of Mahayana Buddhism in 9th century Sri Lanka. People genuinely believed that the God *Natha* was capable of awarding all kinds of riches and luxuries to his devoted followers and acolytes. These Mahayana devotees, who were tormented by rival attacks, shifted their religious headquarters- from the temple of the God *Natha*, in Rajarata to

⁵ Refer page 07

Kandy. This story is credible enough as the abode of god *Sri Wasa* and his goddess was called *Sri Wasapura*; consequently, *Katupuluwa* became *Sri Wasa Puraya*.

The texts that first mentioned God *Natha* were composed during the upcountry *Gampola* era, when several of the above-mentioned folk tales also came into being. According to certain records on medieval Sinhalese political history, the concept of the God *Natha* had not only cultural value, but occupied a significant space in the state and political arena. This era can also be recognized as a time in which Hindu and Mahayana concepts influenced both local culture and Sinhala Buddhists. There are several inscriptions and statues that confirm the facts encapsulated in folk tales, all of which evidence that Sri Lankans had believed in the God *Natha* since the 7th century A.D (Halt, 1994, pp. 134-136). These folk tales elaborate vividly how this belief expanded gradually and was localized in the *Gampola* period. The inscriptions of *Sagama* and *Ampitiya* that carry information on king *Wickramabahu III* of *Gampola* (1351) and his minister *Alakeshwara*, also affirm that the belief in God *Natha* was established in the Kandyan era (Halt, 1994, pp. 147-149).

This study also concentrated on a few stories (B, C, D, E) that emerged within a political and cultural background in which faith in God *Natha* and goddess *Tara* was dominant. These folk stories and information on religious beliefs may have been spread by people who lived before the *Anuradhapura* period. The folk story which says that king *Nissankamalla* frequently visited the temple of the God *Natha* in *Sri Wasa Pura* is also very important in this respect (D).

Another story (E) mentions that when the rebel leader *Aryachakrawartha* of Jaffna invaded *Gampola* with the support of the Emperor *Vijayanagar* of South India, *Nissanka Alakeshwara*, the minister in-charge of *Sri Wasapura* (*Mahanuwara*), recruited army, fought against *Aryachakrawartha* and defeated him in *Sri Wasapura*, following the instructions he received from the God *Natha* in his dreams. Thereafter, the God *Natha* was called God *Senkanda* and revered by the people of Kandy. This tale can be considered as one which contains very strong evidences of the existence of a belief in God *Natha* among the Sinhalese.

Information on the hermit *Senkanda*, worshipping of *Ishwara* in *Chenkatan*, and on Hindu Brahmins who used to live around *Senkadagala*, fulfilling their religious missions, is included in certain folk stories (F, G, H, I). These stories explain quite vividly how Sri Lankan folk life was influenced by the Indian Brahmin religions since the 12th century. Indian worship of the God *Ishwara* might have influenced the ancient *Yakka* communities who lived in Sri Lanka, as well (Sedaraman, 1955, p. 9). The monk *Rathanapala* of Brahmini lineage, with the assistance of magic and spells he had inherited from his father, might have established a belief in *Ishwara* in the minds of thousands of devotees who gathered around the *Ishwara* temple in *Hanthana*. The records of *Asgiri* temple, which also carry details on the life and teachings of *Rathanapala*, provide proof of this belief in God *Ishwara* (*Asgiri Upata hewat Asgiri Vihara Uppatti Kataa Prakaranaya*, 2000, pp. 10-11).

Conclusion

In this paper, the *historical-Geographical Method* was used to reveal historical, social, cultural, and religious factors related to the origins of the various place names for ‘*Mahanuwara*’. Therefore, the paper comprised a critical and comparative inquiry of the discourse of the historical, social and folkloristic conditions related to the origins of the place names and explored their sociological and folkloristic ramifications.

Since this method is identified as a mode of analysis that has been known for a long period of time, it can be utilized to discuss or analyze the subject of folklore in depth, in future research. In this study, the aim was to underline the use of the historical-geographical method as an academic approach in the modern context. In particular, stories selected for this particular study represent a basic, continuous, and complete identity. However certain differences appear when they are re-constructed in diverse social contexts. It is easy to put all these stories in order when the historical information, place names, and the ancestral character names are taken into consideration. It is in the same way that, as cited above, the stories from *A* to *I*, (on which the study was based), were arranged. According to Nicolaisen, and according to the findings of this study, it is obvious that these fictions were constantly exchanged among people and that they gradually became an essential and integral feature of inter-social bonds in the city of *Mahanuwara* (Nicolaisen, 1991, p. 10). The static and superseding creativity of these traditional expressions, and the connection between this form of creativity and tradition serves as the foundation of these folk stories.

The need to preserve certain basic and continuous variations and the very important dimensions related to these stories reveal the basic similarities that can be witnessed among them. An accidental encounter of a ‘blessed land’ on which it is suitable to establish a city, and witnessing a unique occurrence. (A wild elephant chasing an adolescent turns back on seeing a rock, a tiger chasing a deer flees due to a far off rock/a deer giving chase to a tiger(F), a fox hunting a rabbit turns back on seeing a rock/the fox is chased by the rabbit (G), and a hunter following a rabbit gives up his task because he becomes afraid of a rock/ the rabbit, in turn, pursues the hunter (H) All these themes can be considered as the basic and major dimensions found in the stories. Another important dimension which reveals some basic similarities between the stories can be listed as follows “the person who identified or heard about the blessed land informs the king about it, the king himself examines the unique aspects of the land and decides to establish a city, naming the city after the name of the person who facilitated the identification of the city as a unique place (ascetic *Senkanda* – F, H), naming the city symbolizing a tribal group, a *Senpathi*, or an event that gave rise to the origins of the city (Ex: King *Mahabali*- A, King *Uththiya*- B, Minister *Siriwardana*- D, *Nissanka Alakeswara*- E) and giving the name of a well-recognized god to the newly established city (God *Natha*- I).

As analyzed by Krohn, after a comparative study of a few texts representing a particular folkloric genre, it is possible to expand the scope of the study to the level of a disclosure on the meanings, denotations and connotations, of the original text. Krohn’s original studies were based on comparison. subsequently, researchers have expanded the scope of the historical-geographical method to move from revealing a text’s geographical location to understanding its historical roots.

Therefore, through these stories, it is possible to understand how a *place name* contains unique attributes or features which have been embedded in it since its origin and how these enable the myth or legend to be understood or it can be of relevance to any culture or society. However, it is necessary to exercise caution in interpretation since these folk stories are in constant evolution or flux and are constantly re-constructed, and this re-construction and evolution are characteristic of all genres of folklore.

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