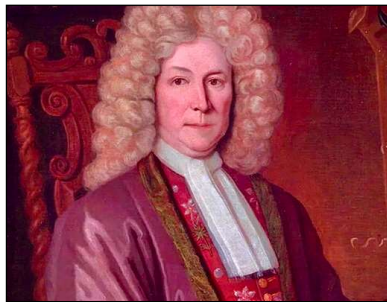

Robert Knox Was Held Captive in Kandy for nineteen and a half years

King Rajasinghe II held him in captivity in the Kandyan Kingdom from 1660 till he escaped through Vanni in 1679

By R Shanmuganathan



Robert Knox

Introduction

Robert Knox's father also Robert Knox was a British sailor who was the captain of the ship Anne. Robert Knox joined his father's ship for his first voyage to India in 1655, at the age of 14, The ship returned to England in 1657. That year Oliver Cromwell issued a charter granting the English East India Company a monopoly of the Eastern trade, which forced the elder Knox and his crew to join the service of that Company. (Oliver Cromwell was the most powerful man in England from 1653 until he died in 1658.)

Robert Knox again sailed with his father to the East in January 1658. They suffered the loss of the ship's mast in a storm on 19 November 1659, forcing them to put ashore at Kottiyar bay, Ceylon(Sri Lanka). Sixteen of the crew, including the Knoxes, were taken captive by the troops of the Kandy King Rajasinhe II. They had angered the king by not notifying him of their landing. It was a period of tension between the king and the Dutch who have earlier jointly defeated the Portuguese. The king was suspicious and upset with the Europeans during this period.

The king forbade them from leaving the kingdom, but treated them leniently. Both Knoxes suffered severe illness and the elder Knox died due to this illness in February 1661. Young Robert Knox recovered from it.

After nineteen and a half years of captivity Robert Knox and his companion, Stephen Rutland escaped in 1679. The two men were able to reach Fort Arippu, a Dutch fort on the north-west coast of the island after crossing the Vanni region. The Dutch treated Knox kindly and took him to Batavia (Djakarta) in Indonesia. He returned to England on an English vessel Caesar in September 1680.

During the voyage Knox wrote the manuscript of '*An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon in the East Indies*' describing his experiences in Ceylon. It was published in August 1681.

Brief Biography of Robert Knox

He was born in Tower Hill London in the year 1641 and spent most of his childhood in Surrey. His Father was A ship captain and mother was a pious housewife. He had a brother and a sister. He was taught by one James Fleetwood who later became a priest. At the age of 14 he joined his father's ship for the first voyage to India and returned to England in 1657. He joined his father again in 1658 for a voyage to India. In 1659 he became a captive in the Kandyan Kingdom and escaped from there in 1679.

After his return to London he continued to work for the English East India Company for thirteen years and made four more trips to the East and left the company in 1694 after disagreements with them. In 1698 he set up his own trading ship but the venture being unsuccessful successful retired in England in 1701 at the age of 60.

He lived a prosperous life, never married and passed away in June 1720 in England. He was buried at St Maris Church Wimbledon.

Dutch Rule of Coastal Sri Lanka

In the 17th century Dutch were a major naval power. They had the most powerful navy in Europe. In Asia they were in control of the Indonesian Islands. In the 18th century the Dutch navy went into decline and France and Britain became major naval powers. A treaty was signed between the Dutch and Kandyan King Rajasinhe II in 1638. Dutch assured the king assistance in his war against the Portuguese in exchange for a monopoly of the island's major trade goods, particularly cinnamon. Rajasinhe also promised to pay the Dutch's war-related expenses. The Portuguese were expelled gradually from their strongholds in Sri Lanka. The Dutch captured the eastern ports of Trincomalee and Batticaloa in 1639 and restored them to the Kandyan king. But when the southwestern and western ports of Galle and Negombo fell in 1640, the Dutch refused to turn them over to the king of Kandy. The Dutch claimed that Rajasinhe had not reimbursed their inflated claims for military expenditures. This pretext allowed the Dutch to control the island's richest cinnamon lands. The Dutch ultimately presented the king of Kandy with such a large bill for help against the Portuguese which could not be paid by the king. After extensive fighting, the Portuguese surrendered Colombo in 1656 and Jaffna, their last stronghold, in 1658.

Greater economic and naval power enabled the Dutch to dominate the Indian Ocean. They attacked Portuguese positions throughout South Asia. The Portuguese were only able to keep Goa during that period. Eventually Dutch was controlling, the entire Indonesian islands and Sri Lankan coastal area and parts of Southern Indian coast. Dutch power was curtailed by the ascendancy of the British and the French naval power in the 18th century.

Dutch Navy and other European navies in the 17th century

Spanish navy which ran supreme in the 16th century and up to the middle of the 17th century was in decline in the 17th century. Portugal kicked off the age of discovery in the 16th century. They developed a powerful navy and along with Spain they controlled the Atlantic in the 16th century. Portugal dominated the Atlantic Ocean south of the Canary Islands, the Indian Ocean and the access to the western Pacific. Portuguese navy also

went into decline in the 17th century. Dutch navy which became more powerful than the other European navies by the mid 17th century ensured that the Portuguese were pushed out of Asia except for Goa. By late 17th century the Dutch naval power went into a decline as a result of a series of wars with England and France. By the end of 17th century the Dutch became a weak naval power though it managed to hold on to its possession of South Africa, coastal Sri Lanka and Indonesia. In 1795 it lost South Africa and coastal Sri Lanka to the British.

In the 18th century British and French navies became more powerful than that of the Dutch. By the end of the 18th century the British convincingly defeated the French and became the most powerful naval power in the world.

Kandyan Kingdom.

Senasammata Vikramabahu (1469 -1511) is mentioned as the first king of Kandy who ruled under the overlordship of Kote kingdom. He declared Kandy an independent Kingdom during his rule. He was succeeded by his son Jayaweera Bandara who ruled from 1511 to 1551. His son Karaliyedda Bandara ruled from 1551 to 1582. He converted to Catholicism. His daughter Dona Catarina ruled for a short period.

Rajasinhe 1 (Tikiri Bandara) of Sitawaka conquered Kandy and ruled over it till 1591. In 1591 a Portuguese expedition displaced Rajasinhe 1 from Kandy and installed Dom Phillip as the king. He died under suspicious circumstances and one of the Portuguese generals of native origin, Konnappu Bandara proclaimed himself king. He severed all ties with the Portuguese, converted to Buddhism and ruled Kandy as Vimaladharma Suriya. Portuguese sent an expedition in 1594 to conquer Kandy, which Konnapu Bandara defeated and married Dona Catarina, the former King's daughter who came with the Portuguese expedition, to legitimise his rule. Portuguese made further attempts to conquer Kandy which were successfully repulsed by Konnapu Bandara. He ruled as Vimaladharma Suriya till 1604. After the demise of Rajasinghe 1 Portuguese conquered Sitawake. Kandy under Vimaladharma Suriya remained the only kingdom independent of the Portuguese.

Vimaladharma Suriya died in 1604 and his cousin Senarath ruled from 1604 to 1635. He married Dona Catherina and her daughters to legitimise his rule. Portuguese expanded their territory during this period. Senarath's son Rajasinghe II ruled from 1635 to 1687. He oversaw the replacement of Portuguese by Dutch as the Coastal ruler of Sri Lanka. An agreement with the Dutch in 1638 resulted in him cooperating with the Dutch to expel the Portuguese from Sri Lanka by 1658.

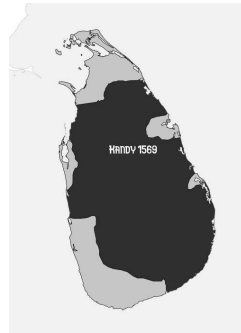
Robert Knox landed shipwrecked at Kotiyar bay near Trincomalee in 1659 when Rajasinghe II was the king of Kandy and the Eastern ports were under his control, the Portuguese being just expelled from Sri Lanka. In 1664 there was a rebellion against the king. Dutch used this opportunity to extend their control and took over the entire coastal area. Kandyan kingdom became landlocked.

Upon the demise of Rajasinghe in 1687 his son Vimaladharma Suriya II came to power and ruled till 1707. He married a princess from Mathurai Nayaka clan. Upon the death of Vimaladharma Suriya II in 1707, his son Veera Narendhra Singhe came to power. He was the son of Vimaladharma Suriya II and a concubine. He ruled till 1739. He also married a Nayaka princess.

When he died without issues, his brother in law, a Nayaka prince came to power. He ruled as Vijaya Rajasinghe till 1747. His brother in law, another Nayaka prince ruled as Keerthi Sri Rajasinghe till 1782. Keerthi Sri Rajasinghe's brother ruled from 1782 to 1797 as Sri

Rajadhi Rajasinghe. During this period the British replaced the Dutch as the rulers of the coastal areas. Upon his death, his nephew Sri Wikramarajasinghe came to power. He was deposed by the British in 1815 and the entire country came under the British rule.

Kandy kingdom in 1659 and 1795



‘Bandara’ clan and ‘Nayaka’ clan

It is interesting to note that when the Europeans commenced occupying Sri Lanka Bandara was the ruling family clan in Southern Sri Lanka, whether it's Kote kingdom or Kandy kingdom until 1747 when the Tamil speaking Telugu Nayaka kings came to power and ruled for nearly 70 years. The history of Bandara clan is not well researched. They have not been a ruling clan before. If we trace the family tree of the Kote rulers and the pre Nayaka Kandy rulers it goes back to Kalinga Magha rule and his defeat in Polonaruva. This needs further research.

By 1646 the Vijayanagara kingdom had been completely dismantled by the Muslim kings, many members of the Nayaka clan moved South to Madurai and Thanjavur. By 1736 the Tamilised Telugu Nayakas of Madurai lost their power and the Thanjavur Nayakas lost their power even before that in 1675. Descendants of these clans had marital relationship with the Kandy kings and eventually ended up ruling the Kandy Kingdom. In 1747 when the Nayaka kings commenced their rule in Kandy, they were not ruling in any part of India.

King Rajasinghe II of Kandy



Rajasinghe from Robert Knox's book. The attire is influenced by the Portuguese.

When Wimaladarmasuriya died in 1604, a relative of him Senarath was selected as ruler of Kandy. He married Wimaladarmasuriya's widow queen Dona Catherina

(Kusumasanadevi) to legitimise his rule. Rajasinghe was his son born to Dona Catherina. He successfully schemed to make Rajasinghe the king in preference to Wimaladarmasuriya's two sons born to Dona Catherina. Rajasinghe came to power in 1635. These two potential claimants were eliminated by Rajasinghe II.

In 1638 he successfully concluded a treaty with Dutch East India Company. This treaty helped the Dutch and Rajasinghe to expel the Portuguese from Sri Lanka. By 1658 Portuguese were expelled from entire Sri Lanka.

When Robert Knox landed in Kottiyar bay in 1659, the King was in intense and frustrating negotiation with the Dutch. It dawned on him that he replaced one European power with another more powerful European nation. Robert Knox and his sailors landed at Kottiyar bay at the wrong time and unwittingly got caught in the crossfire.

By 1665, the Dutch were in control of the entire coastal regions and remained the rulers till 1795.

Rajasinghe married princesses of Jaffna who had been living in Tanjavor, Tamil Nadu. He corresponded with his brothers in Tamil and was fluent in Sinhalese, Tamil and Portuguese.

He successfully subdued a rebellion against him in 1664. When he died in 1687, he was an unhappy man.

Robert Knox spent a whole part of his four part book on Rajasinghe. He described him as a cruel man given to changing his mind arbitrarily and used African soldiers as his personal body guards.

Regarding Rajasinghe's appearance he had this to say "*He is not tall, but very well set, nor of the clearest colour of their complexion, but somewhat of the blackest; great rowling Eyes, turning them and looking every way, alwayes moving them: a brisk bold look, a great swelling Belly, and very lively in his actions and behaviour, somewhat bald, not having much hair upon his head, and that gray, a large comely Beard, with great Whiskers;*"



Rajasinghe's mother Dona Catherina

Vanni Region

Vannimai is a large area from Elephant Pass in the North and covering the area up to Anuradhapura. East to West it extended from Mannar to Mullaitivu and also included Batticaloa, Ampara, Trincomalee and Puttalam. Vanni Chieftains ruled this area. There were seven chieftainships in the North. They were Panankamam, Melpattu, Mulliyavalai, Karunavalpattu, Karrikattumulai, Tennamaravadi and Trincomalee. These Vanni Chiefs paid tribute to the Jaffna kings until the arrival of Portuguese. On the western side Puttalam was under the control of a Vanni chief paying tribute to the Jaffna King. The Jaffna king moved his residence to Puttalam during pearling season. On the Eastern side Batticaloa and Amparai were also under Vanni chiefs. After the Portuguese conquered the coastal regions, these chiefs continue to rule the remaining areas by paying tribute to

Portuguese. When Kandy became a powerful kingdom after 1591, the Eastern Vanni chiefs who lost the coastal areas to the Portuguese probably paid tribute to the Kandy King. This arrangement continued under Dutch rule. When Robert Knox was escaping, the Vanni chiefs in the North were ruling an inland area up to Anuradhapura and were paying tribute to the Dutch. Vanni chief of Anuradhapura was under the Kandyan overlordship. In the north west the Vanni chief ruled an area between the Dutch rule and the Kandyan Kingdom and paid tribute to the Dutch. British brought the Vannimai under their direct rule in 1803 after putting down a rebellion led by the Vanni Chief Pandara Vannian. Kandy kingdom extended up-to Anuradhapura. North of Anuradhapura was the frontier area of Vanni region and the people were Tamil speaking. When Robert Knox crossed the river between Anuradhapura and Vanni(Malwathu Oya), he found that the people there spoke Tamil and did not know Sinhalese. That area was ruled by a Vanni chief.

English East India Company

In the early 17th century two East India trading companies were competing with each other for India British trade. There were also other English trading companies. The lord protector of England Oliver Cromwell issued a charter granting the English East India Company a monopoly of the Eastern trade in 1657. The elder Knox and his crew therefore joined the service of the English East India Company. By then this Company had established a Fort of St George Fort in Chennai India.(built in 1644)

Robert Knox Shipwrecked and Lands Kottiyar Bay

The frigate 'Anne' commanded by the elder Knox set off from the small English Port Downs for its journey to Fort St George (in Chennai now) in January 1657. The Author Robert Knox was 16 years old. They traded from port to port in India for one year. The leading ports at that time in the vicinity of Fort St George were Portonova (Parangipettai, Tamil Nadu) and Matlipatan (Masulipatnam - Machilipatnam Andhrapradesh). While on their way to Machilipatnam in November 1659 there was a big storm and the main mast of the ship had to be cut thus disabling the ship for long voyages. The agent at Fort St George ordered them to sail to Kottiyar bay in Sri Lanka's East coast to repair it. The ship was also ordered to collect clothes from Indian merchants at Parangipettai to be handed over in Kottiyar Bay- Parangipettai being a port on the way to Kottiyar Bay.

Kottiyar Bay along with the adjoining Trincomalee fort was captured from the Portuguese by the Dutch in 1639 and handed over to the Kandyan king Rajasinghe II. The fort was destroyed by the king in 1643. The Portuguese built this Fort in 1624 after destroying the ancient Koneswaram temple(Temple of thousand pillars). In 1665, six years after the landing of Robert Knox, the Dutch built a new fort, Fort Fredrick in Trincomalee. Within the next few years the entire Eastern coastal areas was brought under Dutch control.

In 1659 when Robert Knox landed in Kottiyar bay, King Rajasinghe II was engaged in hard negotiations with the Dutch. He was frustrated with the Europeans when it dawned on him that he had unwittingly replaced one European power with another more powerful European power. He became suspicious and angry with all the Europeans. He always treated the Dutch as enemies.

After Landing at Kottiyar Bay.

They landed in Kottiyar in early 1660 and spent twenty days near the shore handing over the clothes to the merchants and trying to repair the mast of the ship. They had no idea that the King is unhappy with the Europeans. The King came to know about their landing and probably was also upset with English for notifying him immediately upon their landing. The King sent his disawa (army captain) to negotiate with the elder Robert Knox. His intention was to arrest the ship's crew and impound the ship. He succeeded in arresting sixteen of the crew including ship's captain Robert Knox and his son but could not impound the ship. The ship with rest of the crew waited for two months and went back to Fort St George.

When the ship left Kottiyar Bay, the disawa went to Kandy to see the king. Robert Knox and the crew were treated well by the people of the Town. After sixteen days the King sent another captain with soldiers to take the captives upcountry. When they came near Kandy, Robert Knox, his father and two others were housed near the city and the rest were separated and sent in different towns.

Robert Knox moved to Bandara Koswatte where his father dies.

After two months the four sailors housed near Kandy were moved to other towns. Robert Knox, his father and the black helper were allowed to stay together in a town called Bandar Cooswat. They moved to this place on the 16th Sept 1660. (This place is Bandara Koswatte near Wariyapola in North Central Province.) The King ordered the Town's people to provide them food and other necessities. Robert Knox's father became sick and died in February 1661.

Robert Knox lived in this town with his helper till 1664. All the while the people provided him with food on King's orders. He negotiated with the people that the food is to be supplied uncooked and saved part of it to sell. He built his own house, reared hens and pigs, and had coconut trees in his land, learned to knit caps and sell them and also learned to speak Sinhalese.

That year the Governor of Fort St George (Chennai) and Dutch Governor of Colombo sent letters to the King to release the English Prisoners. All the English (29 including those from another ship) were called to Kandy on the order of the King where they were offered positions in the King's service. All of them wanted to go back to England. Upon which they were ordered to wait in Kandy. While they were waiting in Kandy a rebellion against the King occurred.

Rebellion against Rajasinghe in 1664

There was a rebellion against the King in December 1664 which started at midnight. The King holed up in his palace and fled next morning to the mountain Gauluda, (Galagoda) about 24 km away from Kandy. The rebellion was led by one lord Ambenwela Rala. The people went to the infant son of the king and made him their king. This infant son was born to the king and his queen. In the night the King's sister took the prince and fled to a place where the King was hiding. There was anarchy and killing for about eight to ten days. The rebel leaders fled the city. The King re-emerged in the city and stopped arbitrary killings until further investigation. The English prisoners were also spared.

After the rebellion

The king dispersed the English captives to other villages after the rebellion. Robert Knox was sent to a village called Handapondown which is on the west side of Kandy nearer to the sea. It is probably Ekiriyagala, near Kegalle.

Robert Knox also set his servant free after the rebellion. He met him again years later when he was trying to escape. He built himself a house here and lived there for two years. In 1666 the Dutch were trying re-establish the Fort Arandora in that area. This Fort was originally established by the Portuguese. The king fearing that the Englishmen would try to escape, moved the four of them out of this area to Cande Uda. (The Kandyan forces captured Fort Arandora in 1670.)

Life in Laggendeny

In Cande Uda the four Englishmen were moved to village called Laggendeny in 1666. (Legundeniya - about ten kilometres from Gampola) which was sparsely populated and situated on a mountain top. Robert Knox was housed with a fellow bachelor Englishman. The king ordered the village to provide them food and ensure that the houses are in good repair. He lived here for three years.

Robert Knox buys land in Eladetta Walauva

Eladetta is about 10 kilometres from Kandy along the Doulagala road. Robert Knox purchased a land there in 1669. and built a house with the help of three other Englishmen. All four of them lived in that house. They lost their free meals and had to fully look after themselves after moving to this village. After a while two of his house mates got married to local girls and left the house. Robert Knox and his friend became peddlers and traders and were going to different parts of the kingdom to sell their products They also reared goats, chicken and pigs in their land. He also became a lender, lending corn and rice for a profit.

In 1673 he was offered a position in the King's service. He declines to accept. This offer reminded him of his desire to escape. They have decided to escape from Anuradhapura, it being the furthest point from the Capital Kandy. Anuradhapura district was at the Northern end of the Kandyan kingdom. He and his companion went up to Nuwara Kalawiya near Anuradhapura to sell his ware.

Escape from the kingdom.

They came to this part several times selling their ware and looking for a ways to escape. During one trip he meets his former servant who agreed to help him escape. But on the appointed day Robert Knox fell sick and the plan could not be carried out.

At last they decide to escape on a new moon day in September 1679. They armed themselves with small knives, small axes and the wares they usually sell and set out northwards.

They pass through Bandara Koswatte, Nikawaretiya, Nuwara Kalawiya and reached the residence of the governor of Anuradhapura district. His residence is about 10 kilometres before Anuradhapura. It was the frontier town belonging to the Kandyan kingdom. They were pretending to sell their wares and buy dried meat. After spending a few days with the Governor, they set out to Anuradhapura giving a short notice to the Governor.

Aruvi Aru - Malwathu Oya

On the way to Anuradhapura they come across a river called Malwattu Oya in Sinhalese. This 164 km long river starts south of Anuradhapura, passes through Anuradhapura and flows northeastward as Aruvi Aru and falls into the sea near Fort Arippu. Fort Arippu is in Mannar District, about 16 km South of Mannar town and was first built by the Portuguese. It was under Dutch control when Robert Knox escaped in 1679. In the ancient times there was a fort in this area called Alli Rani Kottai.



Fort Arippu is in a ruined state now. It is a small Fort of brick construction. Robert Knox escaped to this Fort

Reaching Anuradhapura and Escaping

In Knox's words *“To Anarodgburro therefore we came, called also Neur Waug(Nuwara Weva) Which is not so much a particular single Town, as a Territory. It is a vast great Plain, the like I never saw in all that Island: in the midst whereof is a Lake, which may be a mile over, not natural, but made by art, as other Ponds in the Country, to serve them to water their Corn Grounds. This Plain is encompassed round with Woods, and small Towns among them on every side, inhabited by Malabars, a distinct People from the Chingulayes.”*

Anuradhapura was surrounded by forest and there were small towns within the forest. Tamil people were living in these small towns.

Knox wrote *“The People stood amazed as soon as they saw us, being originally Malabars, tho Subjects of Cande. Nor could they understand the Chingulay Language in which we spake to them.”*

They abandoned their original plan to escape to Mannar or Jaffna using the main roads as they feared that they will be easily caught by the Vanni chief and sent back to Kandy, if they used the main roads.

After consultation among themselves Robert Knox and his companion decided to escape along the Aruvi Aru(Malwathu Oya) to Fort Arippu. This meant that they would be escaping through the jungle

They leave Anuradhapura on 12 October 1679(Sunday)

Having so decided, they collected the required provisions and also knives and small axes and went back to the river. On that day at Sun down they walked to the river taking all necessary precautions. They walked three or four hours along the river in the night. From thence they walked mainly in the nights and hiding during day and sometimes they also walked during days.They also avoided the roads that lead to Puttalam.

Territory ruled by Vanni Chief

They walked for four days through the jungles and on Thursday they crossed a stream where the Kandyan control ceased and the Vanni region began. Robert Knox had this to say "*We had now Travelled till Thursday Afternoon, when we crossed the River called Coronda oyah which was then quite dry; this parts the King's Countrey from the Malabars*" The Vanni Chief ruling this area paid tribute to the Dutch but was sympathetic to the Kandy King.

In Knox's words"—*knowing that we were now in a Countrey inhabited by Malabars. The Wannionay or Prince of this People for fear pay Tribute to the Dutch, but stands far more affected towards the King of Cande.*"

Fearing that the Vanni chief may hand them back to the Kandy King, they walked along the river as fast as they can and rested only in the nights. On the way they saw two Brahmins and tried to talk to them in Sinhalese. The Brahmins didn't understand Sinhalese and tried to converse in Tamil. After praying to their God "*Tombrane*"(Probably Thambiran) the Brahmins accepted Robert Knox and the companion as friends. One of the Brahmins accepted money and gifts to take them another seven kilometres towards the Dutch Fort. It was Friday night, five days after they commenced their escape.

They Reach Fort Arippu

On Saturday morning(6th day), they met a man who advised them that they are about 10 kilometres from the Arippu Fort and that they are in an area controlled by the Dutch. They were then helped by a Tamil man, who could speak Portuguese. For a gift of a small knife, he helped them go from town to town until they reached Fort Arippu. They reached the Fort on Saturday afternoon 4 o'clock, six days after they left Anuradhapura. It was 18th of October 1679.

Knox was 19 years old when he became the prisoner of the Kandy Kingdom. After nineteen and a half years of captivity he attained his freedom when he was thirty eight and a half years old.

Departs From Colombo and Finally Reaches England

The Dutch were kind to him and his companion.. Next day they was taken to Mannar Fort. From Mannar, they travelled with the Dutch Governor of Jaffna to Colombo. After spending some time in Colombo they were taken to Dutch East India Head Office in Batavia Indonesia on 24 November 1679. They spent some time in Batavia. All the while they were treated kindly and lavishly by the Dutch.

They then departed Batavia in an English ship Caesar and reached England in September 1680. During the passage to England he wrote the manuscript for the book.

About His Book

He published his book titled '*An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon in the East Indies*' in August 1681.

The book has four parts, Part 1 to Part 4. Part I has seven chapters describing the land, agriculture, animal husbandry, animals, birds, fishes, fruits and people's livelihood in the Kingdom.

In Part II which also has seven chapters, he talks about King Rajasinghe, how he became powerful, how the kingdom is administered, the wars he waged against the Dutch, the queen and the rebellion against the king.

Part III has eleven chapters. It deals with the people's livelihood, customs, marriage, man-woman relationships, social hierarchy, learning, medicines, death, language, religion etc.

Part IV has fourteen chapters. It deals with his captivity, his life in the villages of Kandyan Kingdom, escape from the Kandyan Kingdom and finally reaching England.

He has also discussed the European powers Dutch, Portuguese and French who were in one way or the other involved in Sri Lankan affairs at that time. And finally he has also described his encounter with the Tamils and the Vanni Chief during his escape.

His Encounter with the Tamils in Anuradhapura and the Vanni.

When he first landed in Kottiyar bay he probably didn't know the difference between Sinhalese and Tamils. They were kept under guard near ports and taken to upcountry as soon as possible. Since that time he was sent to the villages and was reasonably free to do what he pleased. In those nineteen years he had learned the Sinhalese language and their customs. He does not seem to have met Tamils in Kandy.

When he escaped through Anuradhapura, he found there were hardly any people in Anuradhapura itself but there were small villages within the jungle surrounding Anuradhapura. People in these villages didn't understand Sinhalese because they were Tamils. Robert Knox called them Malabars. He also said that these Tamils had a Tamil Governor who was probably under the rule of the Kandyan King. Robert Knox wrote about his experience in Anuradhapura thus:

"This Plain is encompassed round with Woods, and small Towns among them on every side, inhabited by Malabars, a distinct People from the Chingulayes. But these Towns we could not see till we came in among them. Being come out thro the Woods into this Plain, we stood looking and staring round about us, but knew not where nor which way to go."

"The People stand amazed at them. Being entred into this Town, we sate our selves under a Tree, and proclaimed our Wares, for we feared to rush into their Yards, as we used to do in other places, lest we should scare them. The People stood amazed as soon as they saw us, being originally Malabars, tho Subjects of Cande. Nor could they understand the Chingulay Language in which we spake to them. And we stood looking one upon another until there came one that could speak the Chingulay Tongue: Who asked us, from whence we came?....."

"So they brought us before their Governour. They are examined by the Governour of the Place. He not speaking Chingulais, spake to us by an Interpreter. And to know the truth, whether we came from the place we pretended, he inquired about News at Court;"

While escaping he came across the Tamils again after four days of travel through the jungle along the Aru Aru (Malwathu Oya) when they crossed a stream at which point the writ of Kandyan King ended and that of the Vanni Chief began. Robert Knox said the Vanni chief's name was 'Coilat Vannea' (it could be Kailaya Vannian). Knox had given a detailed description of this Vannimai:

"These Malabars then are voluntary Inhabitants in this Island, and have a Countrey here; tho the Limits of it are but small: it lyes to the Northward of the King's Coasts betwixt him and the Hollander. Corunda Wy River parts it from the King's Territories. Thro this

Country we passed, when we made our Escape. The Language they speak is peculiar to themselves, so that a Chingulays cannot understand them, nor they a Chingulays.

Their Prince. They have a Prince over them, called Coilat wannea, that is independent either upon the King of Cande on one hand, or the Dutch on the other, only that he pays an acknowledgment to the Hollanders. Who have endeavoured to subdue him by Wars, but they cannot yet do it: yet they have brought him to be a Tributary to them, viz. To pay a certain rate of Elephants per annum. The King and this Prince maintain a Friendship and Correspondence together. And when the King lately sent an Army against the Hollanders, this Prince let them pass thro his Countrey; and went himself in Person to direct the King's People, when they took one or two Forts from them."

"The People are in great subjection under him: they pay him rather greater Taxes than the Chingulays do to their King. But he is nothing so cruel. He Victualleth his Soldiers during the time they are upon the Guard, either about the Palace or abroad in the Wars: they are now fed at his Charge: whereas 'tis contrary in the King's Countrey; for the Chingulay Soldiers bear their own Expences. He hath a certain rate out of every Land that is sown, which is to maintain his Charge."

"The Commodities of this Countrey are, Elephants, Hony, Butter, Milk, Wax, Cows, wild Cattel: of the three last great abundance. As for Corn it is more scarce than in the Chingulays Countrey; neither have they any Cotton. But they come up into Neure Caulava(Nuwara Kalawiya) yearly with great droves of Cattel, and lade both Corn and Cotton. And to buy these they bring up Cloth made of the same Cotton, which they can make better than the Chingulays; also they bring Salt and Salt Fish, and brass Basons, and other Commodities, which they get of the Hollander: because the King permits not his People to have any manner of Trade with the Hollander; so they receive the Dutch Commodities at the second hand."

In conclusion

In 1658 when Robert Knox's ship was plying the sea near the Indian East Coast, the English only had one Fort in the East. It was the Fort St George in Chennai. They were transporting goods between Ports on the East coast. The powerful sea power in the Indian Ocean was the Dutch. The English sea power started growing under the monopoly provided to English East India Company in 1657. Portuguese were driven out of Asia by the powerful Dutch except Goa.

Erstwhile powerful coastal native kingdoms of Kote and Jaffna had long been conquered by Portuguese and had just come under Dutch control, The Vanni region except the coastal areas were still being ruled by the Vanni chiefs who were paying tribute to the Dutch but were on friendly terms with the Kandy King.

The Kandyan Kingdom which earlier was subordinate to Kote king had became powerful after Wimadharmasuriya I claimed the throne in 1591. He defeated the Portuguese invasions and also repulsed attacks from the king of Sitavaka Rajasinghe I. Since then Kandy remained the powerful native kingdom until the English conquered them. They lost the use of western sea ports. But had use of eastern sea ports when Robert Knox landed in Kottiyar bay. By the time Knox escaped in 1679, Kandy Kingdom had lost nearly all its sea ports to the Dutch and had become a landlocked kingdom. Robert Knox didn't know anything about Sri Lanka until he lived among the Sinhalese and learned the Sinhalese language. He came across the Tamils only when he was escaping.

As he didn't know Tamil, he didn't collect much information about them. He still left some valuable reliable information about Vannimai.

His book may have been useful to the English in conquering the Kandy Kingdom.

It's now a valuable historical document giving a detailed account of the life in Kandyan Kingdom under Rajasinghe II.

It also gives a brief but rare description of a Vanni chief and the Tamils living in Anuradhapura and Vanni during that period.

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