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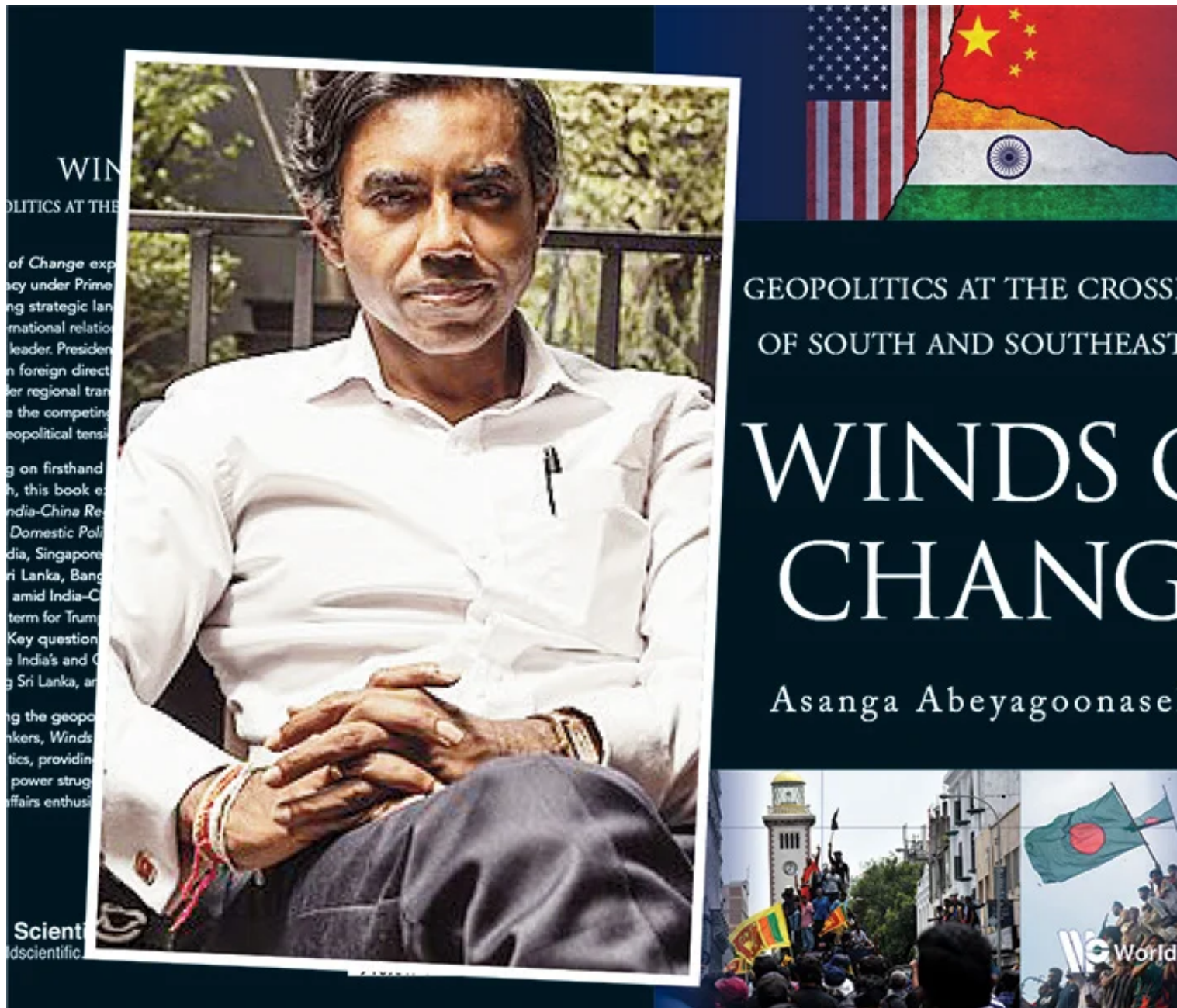


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MIDWEEK REVIEW

Aragalaya: GR blames CIA in Asanga Abeyagoonasekera's explosive narrative

Published 4 months ago on 2026/02/4



Asanga



Did CIA chief William Burns visit Colombo in Feb 2023? Sri Lanka and the US refrained from formally confirming the visit. The Opposition sought confirmation of the then CIA Chief's visit

Colombo in terms of the Right to Information Act but the Wickremesinghe-Rajapaksa government sidestepped the query. A former Republican congressman from Texas and Director of National Intelligence (2020–2021) John Ratcliffe succeeded Burns in late January 2025.



On the sheer weight of new evidence presented by Asanga Abeyagoonasekera's ‘

Change, readers can get a clear picture of the forces that overthrew President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2022.

Even five years after the political upheaval, widely dubbed '*Aragalaya*,' controversy surrounds the high-profile operation that forced wartime Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa to literally run for his dear life.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, formerly of the Army but a novice to party politics, comfortably won the 2019 November presidential election against the backdrop of the Easter Sunday attacks that caused uncertainty and suspicions among communities. The economic crisis, clandestinely engineered from abroad, firstly by crippling vital worker remittances sent abroad, almost from the onset of Gotabaya Rajapaksa's presidency, overwhelmed the government and created the environment conducive for external intervention. Could it have been avoided if the government, that enjoyed a near two-thirds majority in Parliament, had sought the help of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)?

The costly and well-funded book project, undertaken at the time Abeyagoonasekera was working on a governance diagnostic report for the IMF, in the wake of the change of government in Sri Lanka, meticulously examined the former Lieutenant Colonel's narrative, taking into consideration regional as well as global developments. Abeyagoonasekera wrote efficiently and furiously with rapidly changing situations and developments before the unprecedented 03 January, 2026, US raid on Venezuela.

Lt. Col. (retd) Gotabaya Rajapaksa, for some unexplainable reason and a considerable time after the events, has chosen to blame his ouster on the United States. We cannot fault him either, by the way we have seen how other regime changes had been engineered, in the region, by Washington, since and before Gotabaya's ouster. The accusation is extended to Gotabaya Rajapaksa in his memoirs '*The conspiracy to oust me from presidency*' without naming the primary conspirator, though he clearly alluded to an international conspiracy.

April 8, 2019 meeting

Launched in March 2024, in the run-up to the presidential election that brought Kumara Dissanayake (AKD) to power, almost in a dream ride, if not for the intervention of outside evil actors, *'The conspiracy to oust me from presidency'* discussed the inter-conspiracy, but conveniently failed to name the primary conspirator. What made President speak so candidly with Abeyagoonasekera, the founding Director-General of the national security think tank, the Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka under the Ministry of Defence, from 2016 to 2020?

Abeyagoonasekera also served as Executive Director at the Lakshman Kadirgama (LKI), under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011–2015), during Mahinda Rajapaksa's second term as the President. The author, both precisely and furiously, dealt with Readers may find very interesting quotes and they do give a feeling of the author's hostility towards the US, India, as well as to the US-India marriage of convenience who sense so may end up thinking *'Change of Winds'* being supportive of the Chinese strategy. Among the highly sensitive quotes that underlined the Indian approach attributed to Indian Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra. The author quoted Mitra as declared: "We need the MRCC centre [Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre], and cannot give it to another nation." As pointed out by the author, it was not a request order given to Sri Lanka on 8 April, 2019, meant to prevent Sri Lanka from even considering a competing proposal from China. Against that background, the author, who had been present at that meeting at which the Sri Lanka delegation was led by then Defence Minister Hemasiri Fernando, questioned the failure on the part of the delegations to take action against the Easter Sunday attacks. Terrorists struck two weeks later. Implications were telling.

That particular quote reveals the circumstances under which India and the US operated here. The incumbent government does not want to discuss the secret defence MoUs it entered into with India and the US as they would clearly reveal the sellout of our interests.

The following line says a lot about the circumstances under which Gotabaya Rajapaksa was removed: "In Singapore, a senior journalist recounted how Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation was scripted, under duress, at a hotel, facilitated by a foreign motorcade."

In the first Chapter that incisively dealt with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it was so lucky to secure an explosive quote from the ousted leader in an exclusive, unreported, interview in June 2024, a few months after the launch of Gotabaya R memoirs. The ex-President hadn't minced his words when he alleged that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) orchestrated his removal. He also claimed that he had US surveillance throughout his presidency.

The ousted leader has confidently cleared India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of complicity in the operation. What made him call Indian National Security Adviser Indira Lakshmi Devi 'a good man,' in response to Abeyagoonasekera's pointed query. Abeyagoonasekera quoted Gotabaya Rajapaksa as having said: "... he would never do such things." The President must have some reason to call Devi a good friend, regardless of the pressure exerted on him and the Mahinda Rajapaksa government by the Indians to do away with large scale Chinese-funded projects. (Devi in late October last year declared "poor governance was the reason behind uprisings that led to change of governments in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka over the period of past three-and-a-half years. The media quoted Devi as having said, during a function in New Delhi, that democracy and non-institutionalised regime change in countries, such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, created a set of problems. That was the first time a senior Indian government official made such a statement on Nepal's government change, followed by the Gen Z uprising in early September, 2020.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa also cleared the Chinese of seeking to oust him. It would be worth mentioning that China reacted sternly when at the onset of the Gotabaya Rajapaksa presidency President suggested the need to re-negotiate the Hambantota Port deal.

During the treacherous '*Yahapalana*' administration (2015 to 2019) Gotabaya Rajapaksa revealed how Devi had pressed him to halt not only the Colombo Port City project but also to back Hambantota Port as well. By then, the Chinese had twisted the arms of the then leaders Mairithpala Sirisena and Ranil Wickremesinghe and secured the Hambantota Port a 99-year lease in a one-sided USD 1.2 bn deal. The Colombo Port City project, though halted by the *Yahapalana* government, too, was resumed possibly under Chinese influence for some money incentive.

Once Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe, PC, declared, at a hastily arranged media briefing at the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Foundation (SLF), that Sri Lanka would be relentlessly targeted as long as the Hambantota Port. The writer was present at that media briefing.

Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe said so in the aftermath of the 2019 Easter Sunday carnage, disclosing his abortive bid to convince the *Yahapalana* government to abrogate the Hambantota Port deal. Did the parliamentarian know something we were not aware of? The author's assessment, regarding the Easter Sunday attacks, based on interviews with officials and scholars, is frightening and an acknowledgement of a possible West Sri Lanka's destabilisation plot.

The ousted leader, in his lengthy interview with Abeyagoonasekera, made some grabbing comments on the then US Ambassador here, Julie Chung. The ex-President questioned a particular aspect of Chung's conduct during the protest campaign but his decision not to reveal it all in his memoirs is a mystery. Perhaps, one of the most provoking queries raised by Abeyagoonasekera is the rationale in Gotabaya Rajapaksa's claim that he didn't want to suppress the protest campaign by using force against the backdrop of his own declaration that the CIA orchestrated the project.

Author's foray into parliamentary politics



Gotabaya

For those genuinely interested in post-Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga developments, pertaining to international relations and geopolitics, may peruse *Change* as the third of a trilogy. *'Sri Lanka at Crossroads'* (2019) dealt with the M Rajapaksa period and *'Conundrum of an Island'* (2021) discussed the treacherous Wickremesinghe alliance. The third in the series examined the end of the Sri Lankan Podujana Peramuna's (SLPP) President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's rule and the rise of Kumara Dissanayake (AKD) whom the author described as a Marxist, though this the view the JVP and NPP leader AKD is not so. AKD has clearly aligned his administration with US-India while trying to sustain existing relationship with China.

Among Asanga Abeyagoonasekera's other books were *'Towards a Better World Or* and *'Teardrop Diplomacy: China's Sri Lanka Foray'* (2023, Bloomsbury).

Had Abeyagoonasekera succeeded in his bid to launch a political career in 2015, on Sri Lanka may not have materialised. Abeyagoonasekera contested the Gampaha at the August 2015 parliamentary election on the UNP ticket but failed to garner enough preferences to secure a place in Parliament. That dealt a devastating setback to Abeyagoonasekera's political ambitions, but the Wickremesinghe-Sirisena administration created the Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka (INSS), under the Ministry of Defence, for him. Abeyagoonasekera received the appointment as the founding Director General of the national security think tank, from 2016 to 2020.

Several persons dealt with '*Aragalaya*' (the late Prof. Nalin de Silva used to call it '*Paragalaya*') before Abeyagoonasekera though none of them examined the regional and global contexts so deeply, taking into consideration the relevant developments. I refer to Wimal Weerawansa's (*Nine: The hidden story*), Sena Thoradeniya's (*Galle Face Press: How Systems Change or Anarchy?*), Mahinda Siriwardena's (*Sri Lanka's Economic Revival: A Reflection on the Journey from Crisis to Recovery*) and Prof. Sunanda Maddumabandi (*Aragalaye Balaya*), the writer is of the opinion Abeyagoonasekera dealt with the question as an incisive insider.

Abeyagoonasekera, as a person who left the country, under duress, in 2021, painted a frightening picture of a country with a small and vulnerable economy trapped in global rivalries. The former government servant attributed his self-imposed exile to these issues.

The first was the 2019 Easter Sunday carnage. Why did the Wickremesinghe-Sirisena government ignore the warning issued by Abeyagoonasekera, in his capacity as Inspector General, in respect of the Easter Sunday bombing campaign? There is absolutely no ambiguity about his claim. Abeyagoonasekera insists that he alerted the government four months before the National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) bombers struck. The bottom line is that Abeyagoonasekera had issued the warning several weeks before India did but those at the helm of the administration chose to turn a blind eye.

The second was the impending economic crisis that engulfed the country in 2022.

Abeyagoonasekera is deeply bitter about his arrest on 21 July, 2024, at the Banda International Airport (BIA) over an alleged IRD –related offence as reported at the time, especially because he was returning home to visit his sick mother.

Asanga's father Ossie, a member of Parliament and controversial figure, was killed in an LTTE suicide attack at Thotalanga in late Oct. 1994. The Chairman and leader of the Mahajana Pakshaya had been on stage with then UNP presidential election candidate Gamini Dissanayake when the woman suicide cadre blasted herself. The assassin meant to ensure Kumaratunga's victory. The LTTE probably felt that it could manipulate Kumaratunga more than the experienced Dissanayake who may have had reached some consensus with New Delhi on how to deal with the LTTE.

Let me reproduce a question posed to Asanga Abeyagoonasekera and his response in *of Change* as some may believe that the author is holding something back. “Didn't you listen?” a US intelligence officer had asked me incredulously after the bombings. During my role as a technical advisor for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during Lanka's collapse, the question resurfaced: “How did you foresee the collapse of a regime with a majority in parliament?” My answer remained the same—patterns gathered data and relentless analysis reveal the arcs of history before they unfold.

Perhaps, readers may find what former cashiered Flying Officer Keerthi Ratnayak said about *'Aragalaya'* and related developments (<https://island.lk/ex-slaof-officer-shed-developments-leading-to-aragalaya/>)

Bombshell claim

Essentially, Abeyagoonasekera, on the basis of his exclusive and lengthy interview with former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, confirmed what Wimal Weerawansa and S. Thoradeniya alleged that the US spearheaded the operation.

But Prof. Maddumabandara, a confidant of first post-*Aragalaya* President Ranil Wickremesinghe has bared the direct Indian involvement in the regime change despite of Gotabaya Rajapaksa confidently clearing Indian NSA Doval of complicity

ouster, Prof. Maddumabandara is on record as having said that the then Indian High Commissioner here Gopal Baglay put pressure on Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena to take over the government for an interim period. (<https://island.lk/dovals-question-regional-stock-taking/>)

Obviously, the US and India worked together on the Sri Lanka regime change operation is the undeniable truth. India wanted to thwart Wickremesinghe receiving the prize by bringing in Speaker Abeywardena. That move went awry in spite of some sections of Buddhist and Catholic clergy throwing their weight behind New Delhi.

The 2022 violent regime change operation cannot be discussed without taking into consideration the US-led project that also involved the UNP, JVP and TNA to engineer retired General Sarath Fonseka's victory at the 2010 presidential election and then for turncoat Maithripala Sirisena at the 2015 presidential election.

The section, titled '*Echoes of Crisis from Sri Lanka to Bangladesh: South Asia's Structural Polycrisis*', is riveting and underscores the complexity of the situation and fragility of governments. Executive power and undisputable majorities in Parliament seem to be as external powers intervene thereby making the electoral system redundant.

Having meticulously compared the overthrowing of Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Bangladesh Premier Sheikh Hasina, the author condemned them for their alleged failures and Abeyagoonasekera stated: "When the military sides with the protesters, as it did in Sri Lanka and now in Bangladesh, it reveals the rulers' vulnerabilities." The author unmercifully chided the former President for seeking refuge in the West while alleging direct involvement in his ouster. But that may have spared his life. Had he sought a lifeline from the CIA, late the situation could have taken a turn for worse.

The comment that had been attributed to Gotabaya Rajapaksa seemed to belittle Ranil Wickremesinghe who accepted the challenge of becoming the Premier in May 2022, chosen by the ruling SLPP to complete the remainder of Gotabaya Rajapaksa's five-year term. Ranil was definitely seen as an opportunistic vulture who backed '*Aragalaya*' and any qualms till he saw an opening for himself out of the chaos.

On Wickremesinghe's path

Abeyagoonasekera discussed the joint US-Indian strategy pertaining to Sri Lanka; the National People's Power (NPP) and its President say, the current dispensation: continuing Wickremesinghe's policy as pointed out by the author. In fact, this goes appears to be ready even to go beyond Wickremesinghe's understanding with New Delhi. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on defence and the selling of the core interests of the Colombo Dockyard Limited (CDL) to India, mid last year, must have surprised even those who always pushed for enhanced relations at all levels.

The economic collapse that resulted in political upheaval has given New Delhi the opportunity to consolidate its position here. Uncomplimentary comments on current High Commissioner Santosh Jha in '*Winds of Change*' have to be discussed, paying attention to Sri Lanka's growing dependence and alleged clandestine activities of India's RAW Analysis Wing (RAW). Abeyagoonasekera seemed to have no qualms in referring to the hand in 2019 Easter Sunday carnage.

Overall '*Winds of Change*' encourages, inspires and confirms suspicions about US intelligence services and underscores the responsibility of those in power to be even more cautious. But, in the case of smaller and weaker economies, such as Sri Lanka still struggling to overcome the economic crisis, there seems to be no solution. Not only India and the Chinese, too, pursue their agenda here unimpeded. Utilisation of political space represented in Parliament, selected individuals, and media, in the Chinese effort is obvious. Once parliamentarian Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe raised the Chinese intervention in Sri Lanka. He questioned the Parliament receiving about 240 personal laptops for parliamentarians and top officials. The then UNPer told the writer his decision not to return the laptop paid for by China. Perhaps, he is the only Sri Lankan politician to have written a strongly worded letter to Chinese leader Xi warning against high profile Chinese

Winds of Change

is available at

Vijitha Yapa and Sarasavi

By Shamindra Ferdinando

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Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa receives a copy of Mohan Samaranayake's 'Regime Change project's launch held at Sri Lanka Foundation recently.

The US has been complicit in the 9 July 2022 assault on the President's House. A new book, on the regime change project, by renowned political commentator Mohan Samaranayake, examined the then US Ambassador Julie Chung's role in the

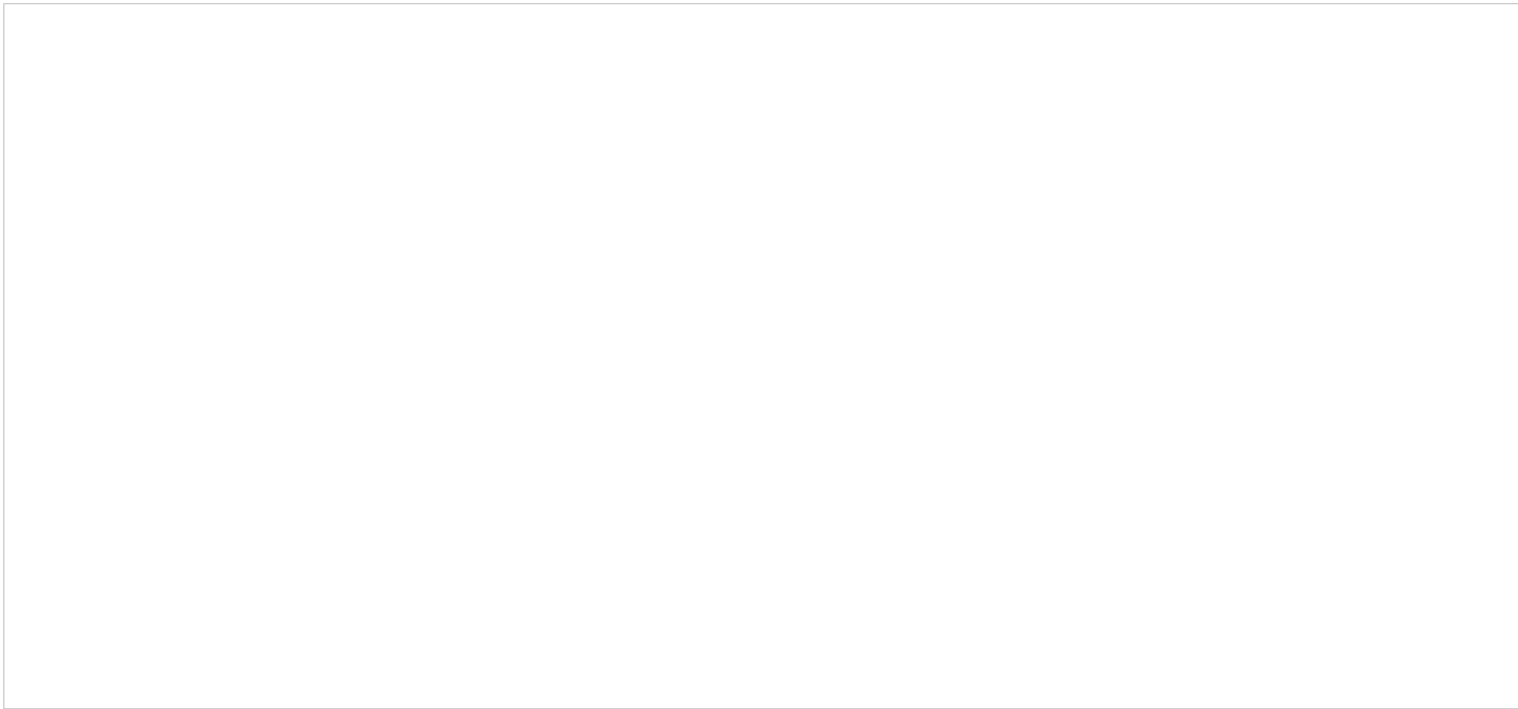
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Sirancee Gunawardena, the author of ‘Palm leaf manuscripts of Sri Lanka ‘(1977) met Pannila of Artigala south, Hanwella when she was researching palm leaf manuscripts. was then a village elder and was the descendant of a long line of palm leaf manuscript writers.

Pannila had told Sirancee how the palm leaf is prepared as writing material and she had reproduced the information in her book. It is possible to infer from the knowledge she had that Pannila that palm leaf manuscripts writers were also trained in preparing the palm leaf in preserving the manuscript as well as writing on it. I think there may have been others who lacked the skill of writing, but who knew to prepare the item and to preserve it.

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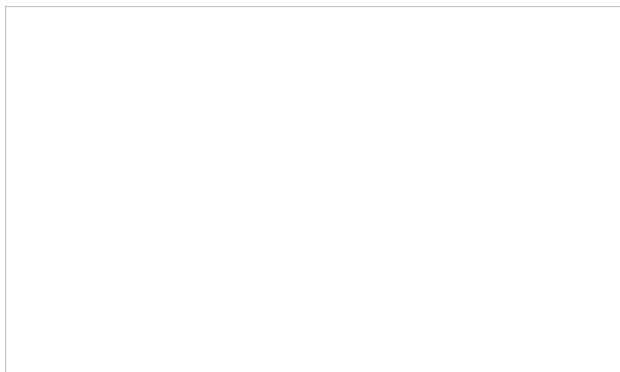
Stillborn Unity Bridge

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Now in their seventeenth year,
Separate ceremonies are ongoing,
By the Victors and Vanquished of war,
To remember the dead of both halves,
Proving that 'Two Nations' exist after all,
Whereas what's so badly needed by the Isle

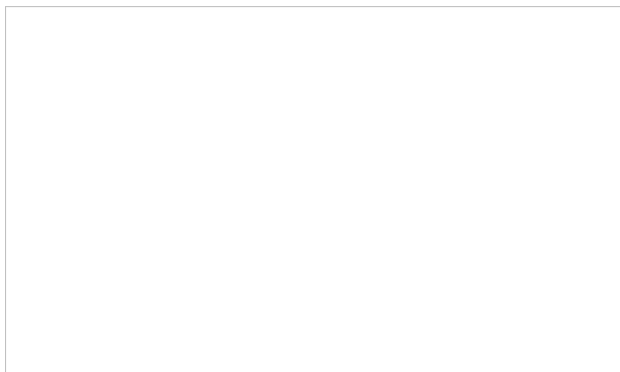
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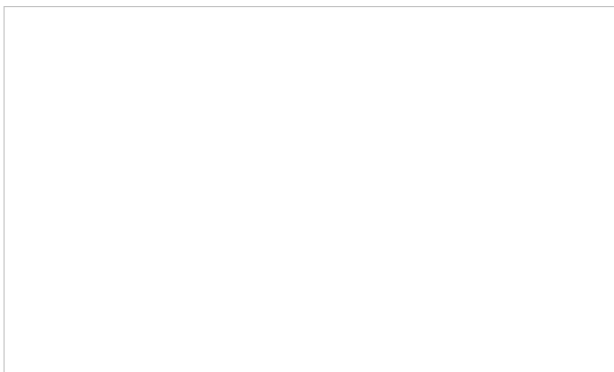
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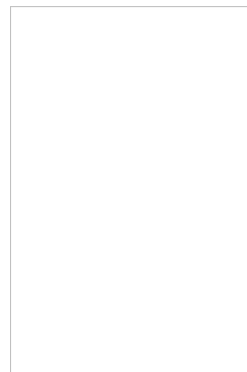
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