

December 16, 1971: 4.31 pm. In a televised ceremony, General Niazi, Commander, Eastern Command, surrenders to India. 90,000 Pakistani soldiers and civilians are taken prisoner. At 8.30 pm Yahya Khan broadcasts to the nation his firm resolve to fight on in West Pakistan. In her broadcast, India's Prime Minister announces unilateral cease-fire on the western front from 8 p.m. the next day.

December 17, 1971: Pakistan accepts cease-fire at 3 pm. Yahya explains that President Nixon had advised him to accept the cease fire. He wanted to save West Pakistan.

December 19, 1971: Following unrest and mutinies in the armed forces, staff officers and senior colleagues persuade General Yahya Khan to resign.

December 20, 1971: Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is sworn in as President and Martial Law Administrator of Pakistan.

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RACISM DISGUISED IN SPACE: SOME COMMENTS ON RECENT SPATIAL ARCHITECTONICS IN SRI LANKA

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Bourdieu once said that the production of a scientific work is a political act. Two objectives of the author determine this political character of the text. First, within the given field, it may be a means of position-seeking. Secondly, outside the field, scientific work allows the researcher to impose an 'objective' account of those observed upon them. In this sense, objective analysis in social science is a contradiction like dehydrated water.

In this paper, I intend to examine Prof. C.M.Madduma Bandara's paper, 'The Case for Redefinition of Provincial Boundaries: A Resource Management Perspective', in the light of Bourdieu's analysis of scientific texts. Prof. Madduma Bandara seems to think that political act and 'academic analysis and interpretation' are mutually exclusive things and that they belong to different spheres. The following words in his paper must lead to this conclusion: '[A]lthough the subject by its very nature is politically sensitive, it is also amenable to academic analysis and interpretation'. By way of constructing a Chinese wall between politicality and scientificity, Prof. Madduma Bandara has proposed a pure scientific criterion for the redefinition of provincial boundaries. In this article, I argue that his view is also political, though he seems to try to disguise his political views in hidden codes and signs. His silence on many relevant issues is, in my opinion, eloquent.

Let me recapitulate the main elements of Prof. Madduma Bandara's thesis. First, he argues that the present provincial boundaries have to be altered since they were drawn to satisfy the colonial needs of the British Raj. He writes:

Once the colonial character of the provincial boundaries is conceded and the fact that they catered to the needs of a bygone age is accepted, one cannot see much reason to treat these regional divisions as inviolable or sacrosanct.

Secondly, in redefining the provincial boundaries, the 'social, economic and administrative implications of these divisions' and the 'relevance to the development and the conservation of basic natural resources of land and water' have to be taken into account. However, the resource management aspect should be the most important factor in determining new boundaries. So, the redefinition of provincial boundaries should be done from the resource management perspective, i.e. the 'sustainable use and conservation' of the resource base of the island. Finally, Sri Lanka may be 'divided into seven regions... on the basis of river basin boundaries'.

This seems to be innocent and free of social prejudice. It may be argued that a system which contributes to ensure the sustainable use and conservation of the country's natural resource base will benefit all the people in the country irrespective of ethnic and religious divisions. However, the discursive formation of the article and the concept of space which is implicitly deployed in the argument give rise to certain questions. I would like to discuss these aspects under three headings, (i) the enunciative function of some statements in the discursive formation; (ii) the concept of space deployed in the discourse and (iii) the socio-political dimensions of the proposed boundary definition.

The enunciative function of some statements in the article has to be elucidated in examining the archaeology of the text. The importance of this is explained by Foucault in the following words:

[The statement] is a function of existence that properly belongs to signs and on the basis of which one may then decide, through analysis or intuition, whether or not they 'make sense', according to what rule they follow one another or are juxtaposed, of what they are the sign, and what sort of act is carried out by their formulation. (1972:pp.86-7)

Prof Madduma Bandara writes:

The traditional divisions were thus superimposed by an arbitrary network of maritime provinces often causing unwelcome divisions among people who had been a *single nation throughout their history*, except during brief spells. (emphasis added)

What enunciative function does this statement play? What sense does it make in the analysis? Prior to the resolution of these problems, it is necessary to examine though briefly, the historical validity of the above statement. What Prof. Madduma Bandara means by the phrase 'a single nation' is not clear. In conventional nomenclature, nation means a cultural or social grouping with certain shared characteristics such as language or ethnicity (Hannum, 1992: p.3) Sometimes it has been defined as a 'group of people who believe they are ancestrally related' (Conner, 1990). Or as Anderson puts it. 'it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (1991: p. 6). Though it is only a passing remark, Prof. Madduma Bandara makes a very bold assertion in writing that the Sri Lankan people were 'a single nation throughout their history'. Many observers who write on the process of nation-formation have been very cautious in deploying the term 'nation' when referring to pre-modern communities (see, Cobban, 1969; Hobsbawm: 1990). Conner (1990) concluding his article writes: 'In any event, claims that a nation existed prior to the late nineteenth century should be treated cautiously'.

Historians have adduced plenty of evidence to show the presence of different communities in different areas of the island almost throughout its history. (see Gunawardana, 1979; Seneviratna: 1996) Even those who disputed Prof. Gunawardana's argument that the term 'Sinhala' used in the chronicles referred to the ruling group of the island and not all the inhabitants, do not seem to subscribe to a single nation theory. (Dharmadasa, 1989) G.H. Peiris, a more careful geographer, writes:

[I]t is possible to discern a semblance of consensus on several basic issues emerging from the related research writings. That the early migrants of Sri Lanka are likely to have originated from several source areas, including Dravidian language areas of the subcontinent, is now being accepted almost without dispute..... Secondly, the perception that with disparate settlements established by migrants gradually coalescing to form larger political units and eventually, a kingdom encompassing the whole island, and that Buddhism and the Sinhala language became the foremost cultural traits of that kingdom also appears to have found general acceptability. This consensus, however, does not extend to the issue of whether, during the early stages of state formation, a mass consciousness of a Sinhala-Buddhist identity pervaded all levels of society and had penetrated to all parts of the island. [T]here is seldom any disagreement among scholars on the importance of the Tamil elements in the history of Sri Lanka from earliest times. (1996: p. 24)

It appears that Prof Madduma Bandara's discursive project is to give the idea that Sri Lanka has been not only a geographically coherent territory, but has also been a single-socio-cultural entity throughout its history. So why should ethnic plurality be given a prominent place in the redefinition of political and administrative boundaries? If, as a by-product, the ethnic element also can be addressed by the proposed redefinition of boundaries, no harm would result. But it should not be the determining factor. Prof. Madduma Bandara writes:

It is argued that historical, ethnic and cultural considerations can also to a large extent be accommodated within the proposed framework. It is conceded, however, that it may not be possible to develop a provincial system which can please all parties concerned. (emphasis added)

It appears that the second statement above flows from and is consistent with the single nation theory. As Foucault notes: X

'[t]he regularity of statement is defined by the discursive formation itself. The fact of its belonging to a discursive formation and the laws that govern it are one and the same thing'. (1972: p. 116)

Prof. Madduma Bandara seems to hold the view that the objective base is given so that the role of the human agents is to manage the given resource base effectively in order to ensure the sustainability and conservation of those resources. He writes:

Any new demarcation of regional boundaries must take into account the resource base of the country and its sustainable use and conservation, than mere political expediency, particularly in view of the heavy national investments made on the development of land and water resources.

This bifurcation between the objective base and the human agents as the resource managers working within the given base raises some epistemological problems. It also gives rise to the concept of space which is abstract, narrow and empty. Besides, this concept of space does not take into account recent developments in the field of geography. As Harvey points out: 'Space.... gets treated as a fact of nature..... [W]e typically treat of it as an objective attribute of things which can be measured and thus pinned down'. (1990: p. 203) However, in recent years, this concept of space, i.e. space per se, space as a contextually given, which is abstract, static and therefore empty, has been refuted by many academics in the field. (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 1990; Soja, 1989) Space, as Lefebvre notes, is neither a 'subject' nor an 'object' but rather a social reality - that is to say, a set of relations and forms (1991: p; 116). Soja writes:

[The] physical space has been a misleading epistemological foundation upon which to analyse the concrete and subjective meaning of human spatulate. Space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization, and meaning of space is a product of spatial translation, transformation, and experience. (1989: pp. 79-80)

The production and reproduction of the space is an outcome of the material and social processes. For example, take the Mahaweli river basin which is the basis of the Mahaweli Province in the proposed provincial system. There is a significant difference between the Mahaweli river basin as it was in 1970 and as it is today. After the implementation of the Mahaweli River Diversion Scheme, the river basin now covers areas which had originally been outside it. Those who originally lived within the old Mahaweli basin may have been later transferred to areas outside it. However, their relationship with the river may not have changed. So the river basin has become 'a space which is fashioned, shaped and invested by social activities during a finite historical period' (Lefebvre, 1991 p. 72) If this is so, why do we consider its traditional boundaries not to be the new river basin as the basis of the new provincial boundary definition and not the prevailing boundaries? The new Mahaweli basin is not only a reality. It also has its own administrative mechanism under different Mahaweli agencies. This new fluidity and flexibility of spatial arrangement is a result of social processes which are invariably conditioned by the presence of power relationships. Lefebvre posits this as a political process:

Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be 'purely' formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and modeled from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies. (cited in Soja, 1989: p. 80)

In emphasizing this aspect, I do not imply that the importance of natural factors should be minimized. My focus is on the material and social processes which produce and reproduce natural space. These processes transcend the conventional compartmentalization. Using Lefebvre's three dimensions, namely, material spatial practices, representation of space and spaces of representation, Harvey constructs a grid of spatial practices to capture the complexity and dialectic of the production and reproduction of space. This emphasizes the need for the new concept of space which is dynamic, complex and non-fragmented.

Thus, instead of uncovering the social relationships (including class relationships) that are latent in spaces, instead of concentrating our attention on the production of space and the social relationships inherent to it-relationship which introduce specific contradictions between private ownership of the means of production and the social character of the productive forces - we fall into the trap of treating space as space 'in itself', as space in a way reminiscent of the old fetishism of commodities, where the trap lay in exchange, and the error was to consider 'things' in isolation, as 'things in themselves'. (Lefebvre, 1991: p. 90)

In an attempt to redefine provincial boundaries in relation to the state structure, the isolation of river basins as the basis may create

many problems. In Sri Lanka, the provinces were, as Prof. Madduma Bandara correctly notes, made and remade. After the British occupation, the Dutch system of regional administration based on 'collectorates' was replaced by a network of 13 provinces centred on the coastal towns. This system prevailed even after the annexation of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815 with some modification until the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms in 1813. Under the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms, the island was divided into five provinces. With the creation of the North-Western Province in 1845, the North-Central Province in 1813, the Uva Province in 1886 and the Sabaragamuwa Province in 1889, the number of provinces were increased to nine by 1889 as a result of carving up the existing provinces. This number has remained unchanged since then. (This historical account is entirely based on Peiris, 1996: pp. 18-21.) In creating new provincial boundaries, British colonial interests had definitely played an important role. As Prof. Peris has shown, the outlying territories of the former Kandyan kingdom were annexed to the coastal provinces in 1833. In addition to colonial political interests, the requirements of the plantation economy also influenced the redefinition of provincial boundaries in the nineteenth century. One could argue, with a certain amount of justice, that the colonial provincial boundaries are out-dated and not consistent with the needs of an independent nation-state. However, provinces when made may become a space of representation. It will be identified with social groups including ethnic communities. So redefinition of boundaries should take into account not only natural space but also socio-cultural space. Fichte once said that common language and culture constitute a natural law higher than that of rivers and mountains. (cited in Jones, 1959) Prof. Madduma Bandara's seemingly innocent proposal to redefine Sri Lankan provincial boundaries on the basis of river basins thus loses its practicality because it does not take into account the presence of strong socio-cultural tendencies. 'A boundary is not only a line demarcating legal systems but also is a line of contact of territorial power structures'. (Spykman and Rollins, 1939) Prof. Madduma Bandara's intervention outside the field (in Bourdieu's sense) shows that his 'objective analysis' has its own political agenda. Kristoff writes:

In fact, not only boundaries but all limits ascribed to an area - any compound area, also a non-political purely physical geographical and wholly uninhabited area - are always subjective. They are defined anthropologically (1971: 139).

When appearing on an ITN Janahada programme, Prof. Madduma Bandara made it clear that, in his opinion, a solution to the present national question needs the unity of the Sinhala nation in the island. The realization of 'self' is a prerequisite for the domination of 'other'. Curiously enough, his proposed boundary definitions have received support from the social and political groups which think that it is the Sinhalese community that has suffered more from the discriminatory policies of the governments from colonial times and that the so-called Tamil grievances are creations of 'Tamil racists'. Prof. Madduma Bandara himself appeared before the Sinhala Commission to give evidence supporting this view. This subjectivity can also be found in his present proposal to which I shall presently turn.

As Cope argues, the emphases of nature and natural factors have become a form of unscientific rationalization which 'projects historically specific activities, demeanours and thoughts as "natural" to all past and possible human social arrangements and relationships' (1985: p. 7). Susan J. Smith notes that 'the use of natural science metaphors as legitimizing discourses is not restricted to the past' (1993: p. 57). Prof. Madduma Bandara's seemingly innocent proposal to use the river basin as a naturally given basis for the redefinition of boundaries stems from the discourse which minimizes or neglects the ethnic diversity of the island. Further, he tries to show that his proposal has an equalizing and homogenizing effect because each province in his proposed system has river basins, access to sea and more or less equal land area. However, a careful examination of his proposal reveals that it attempts, consciously or unconsciously, to maintain and preserve the prevailing power configuration between different ethnic communities. The implementation of his proposal may give rise to further strengthening of Sinhalese-Buddhist hegemony and Sinhalization of the Sri Lankan state. I also assert that his proposal has a separatist bias. My conclusion is based on the following reasons.

First, Prof. Madduma Bandara has proposed to reduce the land area of the present Northern Province the population of which is predominately Tamils in redrawing boundaries of the proposed Yalpanam Province. (see, Map 1) He has not given an explanation for this reduction of the land size of the present Northern Province in the setting up of Yalpanam. However, it appears that the proposed scheme has made a river basin the sole property of a single province. So the lower basins of Malwatu Oya (Aravi Aru) and Ma Oya which at present belong to the Northern Province are taken away from the proposed Yalpanam and included in the proposed Rajarata Province.

Table 1

Distribution of Land Area and Population in the new Provinces

Province	per cent of the total area	per cent of the total population
Kelani	10	28
Ruhunu	15	16
Digavapi	15	07
Mahaweli	16	16
Rajarata	17	07
Yalpanam	15	10
Dambadeni	12	16
	—	—
Sri Lanka	100	100
	====	====

Secondly, Prof. Madduma Bandara's attempt to show that his proposed structure gives rise to more or less uniform and even provinces is also problematic. The land area of the proposed provinces varies within a range of 10 per cent and 17 per cent of the

total land area of the island. Their populations vary within the range of 7 per cent and 28 per cent. The distribution of natural resources among provinces is also uneven. There is a significant difference between catchment areas of different rivers. Table 2 gives the catchment areas of major rivers in the 7 provinces.

Table 2
River Basins

Province	River Basin	Catchment Area Sq. Km
Kelani	Kelani ganga	2,278
	Kalu ganga	2,688
Ruhunu	Gin Ganga	922
	Nilawala Ganga	960
	Walawe ganga	2,442
Digavapi	Kumbukkan Oya	1,218
	Gal Oya	1,792
	Mundeni Aru	1,280
	Maduru Oya	1,541
Mahaweli	Mahaweli Ganga	10,327
Rajarata	Yan Oya	1,520
	Ma Oya	1,024
	Malwatu Oya	3,246
	Kala Oya	2,772
Yalpanam	Kanakarayn Aru	986
	Pali Aru	451
	Parangi Aru	832
Dambadeni	Mi Oya	1,516
	Deduru Oya	2,616
	Maha Oya	1,510

Source: Natural Resources of Sri Lanka, 1991

This redefinition of provincial boundaries makes Tamils a minority in six provinces. The division of the present Eastern province and inclusion of its parts in the proposed Mahaweli and Digavapi provinces make both Tamils and Muslims minorities in two new provinces. (see Table 1)

Thirdly, Prof. Madduma Bandara neglects the economic reality of the island. If the economic landscape of the island is taken into consideration, the plantation areas in the present Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa provinces could have been put together in a new boundary making exercise.

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