Introduction

This book is based on research in Ambakandawila, a village on the northwest coast of Sri Lanka, about three miles south of Chilaw and sandwiched between the coast and Chilaw Lagoon. In 1969, when I first knew the village, it consisted of around 140 households, one hundred of which directly depended on fishing to make a living. The village itself was clearly defined: the sea to the west and the lagoon to the east, whilst coconut estates marked the village boundaries to the north and south. Everyone in the village claimed to be Sinhalese, although around half the village spoke Tamil as their first language. All were Roman Catholic, and the church, physically at the centre of the village, was by far the largest building in Ambakandawila.

After my first stay in Ambakandawila between 1969 and 1971, I visited the village on a fairly regular basis, and in the late 1990s, was involved in a research project on coastal zone management that was in part concerned with Ambakandawila. Through these years I saw the village changing, but it was only in 2015 that I was able to start a restudy on Ambakandawila focusing, of course, on what had changed over the preceding forty years or so.

In 2015, Ambakandawila was much wealthier than it had been in 1970. Then, around a third of all houses were brick constructions, the rest made out of cadjans – woven palm leaves – tied to a wooden frame standing on a concrete floor. By 2015, almost every house in Ambakandawila was built of bricks and, in a few cases, had an upper floor. As well as this, all houses now had access to electricity (it arrived in the 1990s), and, instead of open wells for bathing purposes, most houses now had attached bathrooms with their own water supplies. Rather than open fires in detached kitchens, kerosene or bottled gas were now generally used for cooking, and the kitchens had become part of the house. In 1970 no one in the village owned their own land transport (except for a few bicycles); everyone was dependent on the bus service into Chilaw, the occasional taxi in times of emergency, and the ubiquitous bullock carts. By 2015, around a third of households owned small motorbikes or scooters, and in three or four cases they owned cars – not to mention the three buses owned by a successful entrepreneur. The bus still ran but the bullock carts were no more. Most households owned TVs, many owned DVD players, and every household had at least one mobile phone. Everyone agreed that life had become much easier, that the village had 'developed' (*'diyun velaa'*), and in material terms this was certainly the case.

If housing was one of the obvious changes, there were other visual changes. In 1970 the beach was lined with *theppan*s, the small wooden rafts used for fishing, but by 2015 these had all gone. They had been replaced by small glass-reinforced plastic (GRP) boats or small *theppan*s made out of the same material. Immediately behind the beach was a line of prawn hatcheries, either custom-built or converted houses, some in use and others abandoned. On the other side of the village, most of the mangrove swamps that had lined the lagoon in 1970 were now converted into prawn farms, some of which were owned by people who lived in Ambakandawila.

Whilst the prawn industry provided one alternative to fishing, other occupations had become much more important. By 2015 a considerable number of people, both men and women, were now working outside the village, commuting on a daily basis into Chilaw or other local towns to work in textile factories, offices and the retail sector. On the southern side of the village a tourist hotel was built in the early part of this century, catering mainly for visitors from Eastern Europe, as well as serving as a venue for weddings. Some villagers worked in this hotel, whilst others worked in hotels and restaurants in tourist areas to the south. There were also four workshops – two catering for the equipment used in the prawn industry, one with electrical goods, and another occupied by a carpenter – as well as a boatyard, and many more boutiques than there had been in 1970. In addition, from the mid-1970s onwards, considerable numbers of people from Ambakandawila went abroad, mostly to the Middle East or to Europe. Although fishing was still very important, by 2015 well under 50% of households were directly dependent on fishing as their major source of income, compared with around 70% in 1970.

Spatially, the village was no longer a clearly demarcated entity. Admittedly, the old boundaries to the east (the lagoon) and the west (the sea) were still there, but the estates to the north and south had all been broken up and sold off in the 1980s and 1990s. By 2015 there was a sort of 'village sprawl': to the south of the old village was an area known as the 'New Colony', and, to the north, Palugastenna, the old name for the estate that had been there. In sum, and not surprisingly, Ambakandawila in 2015 was a very different place from what it had been in 1970.

II

The original research in Ambakandawila was in many ways a classic village study, the focus of my work being the economics of fishing and the nature of kinship in a context rather different from the interior villages that had been the focus of much previous research. After all, in the 1960s and early 1970s, village studies dominated the anthropology of South Asia, including Sri Lanka, and

in the latter the work of Leach, Obeyesekere and Yalman provided the models for emulation. What first attracted me to the village was its bounded nature: I could identify in a physical sense what I assumed was a social unit. In addition, it was, I thought, suitably sized: neither so large that I could never hope to know all in the village, nor so small as to be insignificant. It was also homogenous in terms of religion and occupation. It fitted, in many ways, the stereotype of the village in the anthropology of that time.

When I first started thinking of how to deal with the changes since my first visit, the temptation was to treat 1970 as a sort of baseline. After all, it was from then that I had solid data, and I thought I could trace people and events in the years since with relative ease. Yet very quickly it became clear that this was not a viable approach. First, it became unclear to me what the unit of comparison might be. The old, clearly demarcated unit was no more, and the village was now a somewhat amorphous area, parts of which were at times still referred to as Ambakandawila, but at other times as Palugastenna or the New Colony. Secondly, people born and brought up in Ambakandawila were now scattered around not just Sri Lanka but the world, and in terms of comparing the present with the past and understanding the processes of change, their lives and experiences were as important as those who had never left Ambakandawila.

In many ways, the changes since 1970 could be seen in terms of the relationship between the people of Ambakandawila and the wider world. Long-distance international migration, the growth of the prawn industry in catering for overseas markets, employment in export-oriented garment factories and tourist hotels could all be seen as examples of what is often referred to as 'globalisation'. But whilst these were all developments that had taken place since I first knew Ambakandawila, they were in many ways analogous to processes that had taken place previously. The village itself was founded in the late nineteenth century in response to the demand for fish (both fresh and dried) in the inland estate sector, the estates themselves being a response to international markets for tea, rubber and coconut. Over the last century people moved in and out of fishing: there was nothing novel about occupational change. And finally, people have always migrated both seasonally and permanently, the ancestors of today's residents having come from other parts of Sri Lanka and, in many cases, from South India. To understand what had happened since 1970, it was necessary to place recent changes in a much longer historical frame.

Precisely what is meant by 'globalisation' varies from writer to writer, and there appears to be no agreed definition, except that it involves a process of increasing (or at least changing forms of) interconnectedness between geographically distant localities. Whether it is a modern phenomenon or whether it can be traced back for centuries is a matter of debate, and there are various versions of the globalisation thesis. Bell (2003), for instance, distinguishes between four broad categories: that it is novel and characterises the modern

world; that it is a return to a previous state; that it is a matter of continuity between the present and the past; that it involves the transformation of past relations.[1]

Rather than being involved in these complex (and often arcane) disputes, of more direct relevance for me has been the growing interest in the Indian Ocean and Asia as entities in themselves. Since the 1980s there has been a rapid growth in the literature tracing connections across the Indian Ocean that far predate the rise of the European colonial empires of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In part this literature relates to the wider literature on globalisation; in part it derives from Braudel's work on the Mediterranean and other writers' work on 'global systems'. A number of themes emerge from this work that are relevant to what comes later in my discussions of Ambakandawila.

First is Pearson's concept of 'littoral societies' (Pearson 1985, 2006), the idea that those who live in coastal areas may well have more in common (and more contact) with those in other coastal areas, than they do with those who live inland. They may be fishers, but there are also many others whose lives are, to a greater or lesser extent, governed by their coastal location. In its more extreme formulations, this has led to the view that fishers (and other littoral groups) should be seen in isolation from their inland neighbours – as somehow 'exceptional' – rather than an examination of the relationship between the two and the processes that create difference, similarity and interaction between them.

Linked to this is the issue of 'terracentric bias' (Mukherjee 2014, 2017). Here, the argument is that social sciences in general have been oriented to the land and land-based relationships, connections and activities, and therefore that those who live on the coasts are frequently seen as marginal, isolated groups. But, as Mukherjee and others point out, the relationships, connections and activities associated with the ocean are at least as important; far from being a barrier, the seas often provide the highways by which people are related.[2] At the same time, this terracentric bias is as much a matter of how coastal groups are viewed by their inland neighbours as it is a product of academic observers, and coastal groups are often seen as being somehow different by those who live away from the coast.

A third theme that comes out clearly in the emerging literature on the Indian Ocean is that of mobility – of people, things and ideas. Much of this literature concerns the activities of traders, and the ways in which the coast of East Africa, the southern coast of Arabia, the coasts of India and the islands and peninsulas of South East Asia were all part of complex trading relations, flows of ideas and flows of people.[3] This, in part, is associated with a more general literature that focuses on mobility, arguing that much of the social sciences suffers from a 'sedentary bias' (Malkki 1992; Schiller and Salazar 2013) and sees movement as somehow abnormal and in need of explanation, whilst

non-movement is unproblematic. In the context of Asia and the Indian Ocean, the stress on mobility has led writers such as Engseng Ho to develop the idea of 'mobile societies' (Ho 2017; Marsden and Skvirskaja 2018).[4]

The stress on 'mobile societies' and on 'flows' and 'connectedness' is linked to what Ho has called the 'trap' of seeing society as a thing or an entity in itself. He argues that we should accept that no locale or community is an isolate, and that what we are dealing with a lot of the time are 'partial societies', a reality hidden by the rise of the nation state that imposes a false unity on what was, and is, in effect, a concatenation of 'part societies'. One result of this has been 'territorialisation', the imposition of boundaries where previously there were none, or, at least, where they were much less clear cut,[5] which further adds to the marginalisation of Pearson's littoral societies. Another has been the rise of national histories, or what Hopkins (1999: 216) has called the 'provincialism' of many modern histories, anachronistic impositions of contemporary political units upon the past.

Such tendencies are clear in the Sri Lankan context. Until recently, histories have tended to stress the beleaguered existence of the Sinhalese kingdoms under continual pressure from foreign invaders, first from South India and later from Europe. Of course, the existence of movement between Sri Lanka and India has always been recognised: there has been too much to be ignored. But in recent years the stress has shifted from looking at these movements as involving alien entities either threatening or being assimilated into the Sinhalese polity and society, to seeing them as integral elements of complex economic and political systems that linked what became Sri Lanka with South Asia, and to examining the flows across the region as a whole. One element in this revisionist history is a stress on the cosmopolitan nature of the Kandyan court (Obeyesekere 2020; Sivasundaram 2013). Another, perhaps more directly relevant to this book, is the renewed interest in the 'Sea of Ceylon', the waters separating southern India from what is now Sri Lanka, and the flows that criss-crossed this sea. Of course, this interest is not entirely new, and the ways in which groups from South India have settled in Sri Lanka over the last five hundred years is a recurring theme in the histories of coastal Sri Lanka (e.g. Roberts 1980, 1982). Nonetheless, the works of writers such as Strathern (2009, 2010), Biedermann (2010, 2014), Biedermann and Strathern (2017) and Frost (2002) have added detail and focus as well as a more encompassing frame to our understanding of the ongoing processes that linked what became Sri Lanka to South Asian and European worlds.

In some ways, the critique of what Hopkins described as 'provincial histories' – histories defined by seemingly discrete social units such as the nation state – is paralleled by the critique of studies that take the village as their focus. The idea of the village community as somehow being the basic unit of South Asian society has, of course, a long history, and has been a staple of think-

ing about Asian rural society (Dewey 1972). It has been a continuing trope in political thinking in both India and Sri Lanka: in the latter, the village is frequently seen as the authentic unit in rural society, and symbolic of the nature of what it means to be truly Sri Lankan. Thus, contemporary political discourse in Sri Lanka glorifies the village community, whilst popular literature extols the moral virtues of the village and mourns its apparent demise. In a very different context, the idea of 'community' and the virtues of rural life have remained dominant motifs in much contemporary thinking about development, especially that which advocates a 'bottom-up' approach to development and sees visions of the past as exemplars for the future.

In contrast, as far as anthropology is concerned, since at least the 1970s the village has been seen as a problematic concept. Instead of thinking about villages as self-contained entities that can be studied in themselves, there has increasingly been a framing of social life in rural areas in terms of the flows, movements and forces that generate the village as we perceive it. Just as there has been a shift away from national to regional histories, so too there has been a decline, or eclipse, of village studies. Increasingly, the argument has been advanced that village studies falsely reify and conceptually isolate the village, giving a place a social significance that it does not necessarily justify. And in terms of anthropological practice there has been a shift to 'multi-sited ethnography' focusing on particular themes such as trade, pilgrimage and gender (Ribeiro 2019). To quote Engseng Ho:

> Anthropologists did not so much critique the local village as abandon it for the wider pastures of the global. Instead of focused, long-term residence in a small place, anthropologists started going for multiple sites and shorter periods at each. Instead of experiencing the whole social round in one small place for the obligatory year of fieldwork, composing a synthetic picture of society in its many dimensions, anthropologists went for a thinner slice of society spread over multiple sites. (Ho 2017: 912–13)

Although never explicitly set out, the question posed is how anthropologists can combine the depth and quality of village-based ethnography with the 'thinner slice' but broader geographical reach of multi-sited research.

Yet, as Mines and Yazgi point out, the traditional village study is something of a straw man, and it is very difficult to identify anthropologists who treated villages as isolates. Rather, the classic village studies of South Asian anthropology produced by writers such as Bailey, Epstein and Beteille who were only too aware of wider social forces at work transforming rural life (Mines and Yazgi 2010: 7). As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, the village-based studies of Leach, Yalman and Obeyesekere were not concerned with analysing some

autonomous social entity, but with particular theoretical issues: Leach with the nature of kinship, Yalman with the analysis of Dravidian kinship systems, and Obeyesekere with the formation of status groups. The strength of these studies (and others such as those by Alexander, Brow and Spencer) is that the themes that are being explored are set within the rich and multivalent context of particular places. Just as anthropologists have made a point of criticising development consultants as 'development tourists', so too can multi-sited anthropologists be just as easily accused of 'ethnographic tourism'. What is perhaps frequently lost is an appreciation of the ways in which Ho's different 'slices' relate to one another.

III

As I have said, my choice of Ambakandawila as a field site in 1969 was driven by pragmatic criteria: it was a Roman Catholic fishing village. It was a handleable size: neither so large that I could not hope to know the population in any detail, nor so small that it would be little more than a hamlet. It had clear boundaries: I knew where the edges of my unit of study would be. This led, at times, to a certain amount of confusion in the way I thought about Ambakandawila, confusing Ambakandawila as a place or a territorial area with Ambakandawila as a social entity, a much more problematic entity. By 2015, such confusion was impossible. There was still a place called Ambakandawila, but it was difficult to maintain the illusion that it formed a discrete social unit. As such, it could only exist as a form of nostalgia, a hankering after an imagined past.

In the sense that what follows is concerned with a place, this book is a village study. But this is not to claim that Ambakandawila formed a social entity, discrete and understandable in itself, continuous over the years since people first settled here in probably the latter half of the nineteenth century. Rather, Ambakandawila as a place provides a window through which the changing lives of people can be viewed over the last 150 years. To look at the Ambakandawila of 1970 or 2015 is to see what amounts to a precipitate of continual processes of change. The people I knew from 1970 onwards are, almost certainly, mostly the descendants of people who had moved to Sri Lanka from the coasts of South India. Later, they or their descendants moved to Ambakandawila in response to the growing demand for fish from the burgeoning estate sector of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But with the changing contours of international capitalism, new drivers of change came into play in the late twentieth century; these were, primarily, the demand for labour in the Gulf and Europe, that for prawns in Europe, Japan and North America, as well as the international demand for tourist destinations and low-cost garments. These introduced new opportunities and threats that transformed the economic basis

of life in the village. They created new linkages, not just between people in Ambakandawila and distant overseas markets, but also with the rest of Sri Lanka.

The ways in which people in Ambakandawila depended on the wider world and reacted to this changing environment were not simply a matter of economics. Being a littoral group and depending largely on fishing had always made them somewhat marginal to the mainstreams of Sri Lankan society, and this marginality was emphasised by uncertainty as to their ethnic status. Whilst claiming to be Sinhala, many people in Ambakandawila spoke Tamil as their first language, up to the late twentieth century. This marginality also appears to have been a major factor behind the strength of the Roman Catholic Church in this area of Sri Lanka, which marked and accentuated their marginality to the inland population. Just as in Europe, the Church organised its followers into parishes, and those who lived in Ambakandawila became an organised congregation. This paralleled the efforts of the colonial administration to establish a similar, territorially-based administrative organisation – based in part on the notion that the island consisted of discrete village communities. Church and State were key in defining what one could later see as the village of Ambakandawila.

In some ways, nineteenth-century Ambakandawila and the other villages along the coast approximated Pearson's concept of a littoral society, in the sense that they shared relatively little with their inland neighbours, and possibly more with Catholic fishing groups across the Sea of Ceylon. But by the mid-twentieth century the overall matrix had changed. With the rise of nationalism, a response to international processes and in some senses an imported concept, villages such as Ambakandawila were drawn into a new set of relationships with a much more terracentric focus. For a while the autonomy and independence of the Church was undermined by the resurgence of Sinhala Buddhism, whilst the demands of representative democracy pulled voters into the world of Sri Lankan politics. At the same time, more and more people from Ambakandawila moved out of fishing. People in villages such as Ambakandawila became increasingly integrated into Sri Lankan society, a fact perhaps most clearly marked by the almost-total disappearance of Tamil in Ambakandawila in the forty years after 1970. From being Catholics who happened to be Sri Lankan, they were now Sri Lankans who happened to be Catholic. Yet the continual flux and rearrangement of old elements continued. From being the 'handmaiden' of the colonial state the Church took on a new role in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Having itself gone through a series of transformations in the face of the modern world, the Church now adopted a new stance in Sri Lanka as 'defenders of the people' against what was seen as the state's capitulation to the demands of international capitalism.

Running through all this is a history of what globalisation meant at a local level. This book is concerned with the different ways in which the lives of

the inhabitants of this relatively small and unimportant village have been intimately and intricately involved in processes that transcend not just northwest Sri Lanka or the Indian Ocean but, ultimately, the world. These processes have consisted of linkages and connections that involve the movement of objects, people and ideas across the world, with the (probable) exception of Africa and Latin America. The chapters that follow can be read as separate papers dealing with different aspects of these movements and linkages, although, hopefully, they do link with one another and can be read as a connected narrative. What they do not attempt to do is put forth any holistic presentation or analysis because, in the end, there is no empirical entity (no 'village') that can be dealt with in such a way; rather, there is a series of interlinked processes.

IV

Given that the fieldwork on which this book is largely based took place at various times spanning a period of over forty-five years, some comment is needed on what this involved, and who did what and when. What one can and wants to do in one's early twenties is, of necessity, rather different from what one can do fifty years later. The depth, character and intensity of the field research has varied greatly over this period, and at times the 'slice' is decidedly thin.

The first period of field research involved around twenty months of field research. During this time I lived in Ambakandawila and, whilst concentrating on fishing and kinship, generally did what anthropologists of those days did: collect any information I could on anything I could think of. Whilst most of the research was concerned with the area within the bounds of Ambakandawila, I also did research in fish markets, especially in Chilaw, and in the migrant fishing camps frequented by fishers based in Ambakandawila. I was assisted by K.S.M. Mahroof, first as an interpreter and then as a research assistant. His help was invaluable in part because of his command of three languages, Tamil, Sinhala and English, but also because of his excellent knowledge of the Chilaw area.

In 1974 I spent another three months based in Ambakandawila, but increasingly I became involved in research into the changing world of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka as a whole. This led on to work in the late 1970s and early 1980s concerning Sri Lankan Catholics, and although I spent time in Ambakandawila, it was only one site in my attempt at a multi-sited ethnography. Through the late 1980s and early 1990s I visited Ambakandawila on a number of occasions, but these were short, fleeting visits, and not what one might grace with the title of 'research'.

The second period of focused research in Ambakandawila was in the late 1990s, when I was the Principal Investigator on a research project titled

'Coastal Zone Management in Sri Lanka', and funded by the Department for International Development (DFID); Ambakandawila was one of three sites we chose to concentrate on. The actual field research was carried out by Jens Foell, Nihal Chandrasiri and Anula Rathnayake, to all of whom I am extremely grateful. Their excellent work provides much of the data presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century I visited Ambakandawila most years, partly through my involvement in development projects funded by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), which had a marginal impact on fishing in Ambakandawila; however, the major field research was carried out at various times in 2015 and 2016. This time, though, I was not living in the village, but visiting on a daily basis, and naturally this did not generate the same depth or breadth of information as my original research. I was assisted by Shammi Perera, who carried out most of the survey work and assisted me when my Sinhala failed to be adequate.

Thus, the quality and nature of the field research varied greatly. The richest in terms of depth and overall knowledge of what was happening in Ambakandawila comes from the first period and from the work done by Jens and his associates. Much of this was based on non-focused observation and conversation, supported at times by questionnaires. My work in 2015 and 2016 was much more directed and, to be honest, involved much less immersion and general understanding of what was going on in the village. Put simply, as one gets older it gets more and more difficult to develop the same sorts of relationships one had when one was young. I should also mention other research carried out in Ambakandawila. This involved a number of researchers interested in the rise of the prawn industry in the 1990s, and their work will be discussed in Chapter 4.

There are also archival materials. Of government records, the major sources I have used are the Administration Reports produced by the Government Agents and their assistants in Chilaw and Puttalam, going back to 1867. Running alongside the Administration Reports are the diaries of the Government Agents and their assistants, held by the Sri Lanka National Archives (SLNA), where there are also files relating to fisheries and other sectors of the economy. Amongst these are files relating to fisheries' disputes. In addition, I had access to files on disputes held by the office of what was, in 1970, the District Revenue Officer in Chilaw, now the Assistant Government Agent. In Chilaw I also had access to the Land Records, which held data on land transfers and mortgages. Finally, as far as the Church is concerned, I was granted access to the births, marriages and deaths registers held at the Bishop's House in Chilaw for the early years, and in Ambakandawila for the later years. It is also worth mentioning, at this point, the magisterial collection of documents edited by Fr Perniola on the history of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka.

I have not attempted to anonymise Ambakandawila: it would take five minutes on Google Maps to identify the village. What I have done is change the names of many of the people mentioned in the text and, in a few cases, scramble the details of events.

V

Given the importance of fishing to the livelihoods of people in Ambakandawila ever since it was first settled, it's not surprising that the opening chapter of this book is concerned with the nature of fishing in Ambakandawila. By any definition, fishing in Ambakandawila can be characterised as small-scale fishing and, given the recent interest in 'artisanal' or small-scale fishing in the world of development, it is not surprising that much of the discussion is set against those wider interests. Here, what I want to stress is that, as far as Ambakandawila is concerned, fishing of any sort was primarily a matter of earning a living, not a commitment to a particular way of life. People moved in and out of fishing depending on what alternative ways of making a living there were. Fishing has continued to be the most important way of earning a living in Ambakandawila not because people were committed to it, but rather because it continued to make sense in terms of the incomes it generated. Whilst there are certainly features of fishing that mark it out from other livelihoods, at base it shares much in common with them.

The next two chapters are concerned with two alternative ways of earning a living that became increasingly important in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Chapter 2 is concerned with international migration. Since the 1970s, and especially after 1990, a significant number of people from Ambakandawila have gone abroad; some to the Gulf, but more to Europe. The major argument in this chapter is that, far from being something new, there is a long history of migration in places like Ambakandawila, although admittedly the distances have generally been rather shorter in the past. This chapter traces the recent history of migration, especially the contrast between migration to the Gulf and that to Europe. Migration tended to involve the relatively rich rather than the poor, and it did not involve the development of a remittance economy nor much in the way of earnings from migration being invested in local ventures.

Chapter 3 is concerned with the rise of prawn farming in Ambakandawila. Here, as with migration, the key factors have been developments in the international economy and the rise of an international market for prawns. In the 1990s, people in Ambakandawila who had the resources set up prawn farms and hatcheries. Some were very successful, others failed, and by 2015, outside interests had taken over much of the area under prawn farms. Unlike the

fishing industry in Ambakandawila, distinctions between owners and workers developed in the prawn industry, and one of the key factors in determining success was the degree to which farm and hatchery owners could move from an economic model that worked for small-scale fishing to the rather different one required to run successful farms and hatcheries.

The last three chapters are concerned with how people make a living. Lurking in the background have been two major institutions – the Church and the state – that have, in many ways, set the agenda within which people in Ambakandawila organised their lives. One argument in Chapter 4 is that much of what makes up 'the village' or 'the village community' is a product of the actions of the changing state and the changing Church, people in Ambakandawila reacting to, and taking advantage of, the changing environment in which they lived. 'Top-down' rather than 'bottom-up' pressures were all-important. A second argument concerns the changing relationship between the Church and the state in independent Sri Lanka, and how this impacted Ambakandawila, especially in the context of the 'Voice of America' affair.

Chapter 5 continues with the same sort of theme – the ways in which people's lives have changed over the last century or so, as a result of the interplay between forces working at various levels. I examine the way that the changing nature of the state and the economy has pulled them into a more terracentric world, with an increasing sense of being part of Sri Lankan society. Whilst the notion of a uniform 'universal Church' may have become less salient, new ways in which other parts of the world are experienced have developed. Much of the chapter is concerned with marriage, probably the most important event in any person's life in the village, and an occasion that not only highlights the ways in which the people of Ambakandawila have been drawn into wider social circuits, but also makes visible changing ideas about morality and value.

Finally, in the conclusion, I briefly summarise the argument of the book, stressing the themes of process and change. Since its foundation, the history of Ambakandawila has been a matter of people reacting to ever-changing global and national processes, rather than that of some older static entity being destroyed by external forces. Change, not stasis, is what characterises the social. This leads on to a consideration of what implications this detailed ethnography might have for approaches to rural society, both those that are relevant to an understanding of the sociology of fishing and those that more generally concern rural development. I argue that concepts such as 'small-scale fishing' and 'community-based natural resource management' are based on romantic notions of rural society imbued with a nostalgia for an imagined past, a nostalgia notably absent amongst the people of Ambakandawila and, I suspect, elsewhere.

Notes

1. Besides Bell's paper, the two that I have found most useful are by Scholte (2008) and Ribeiro (2019).
2. For instance, Vink (2007) proposes the term 'thalassology' to denote activities associated with the sea, arguing that compared with other oceans (e.g. the Atlantic or the Pacific), the Indian Ocean as an area of study remains underdeveloped.
3. Here the literature is vast. Worden (2017) provides a useful survey. See also, for instance, Markovits (2004) and Vasantkumar (2017).
4. See also Ludden (2003) and Chatterjee (2017).
5. One example of this is the continuing disputes between Indian and Sri Lankan fishers over fishing rights in the Gulf of Mannar. See Menon et al. (2015), Scholtens and Bavinck (2014), Scholtens, Bavinck and Soosai (2012) and Stirrat (2018).