

Ruling Centres of Later Periods

Introduction

You have already learnt that the Anuradhapura kingdom lasted for a period of about 1500 years and the Polonnaruwa kingdom lasted for about 150 years. The era during which the Anuradhapura and the Polonnaruwa kingdoms existed is called the Rajarata civilization. There were five administrative centres during the period of 200 years beginning from the collapse of the Polonnaruwa kingdom in 1215 AD up to the beginning of the Kotte kingdom in 1415 AD. In this lesson you will learn the reasons for shifting the ruling centres or the capital cities in this manner from time to time, about the great rulers of each of those kingdoms, and the factors that contributed to the progress of the country and the political and economic achievements of those periods.

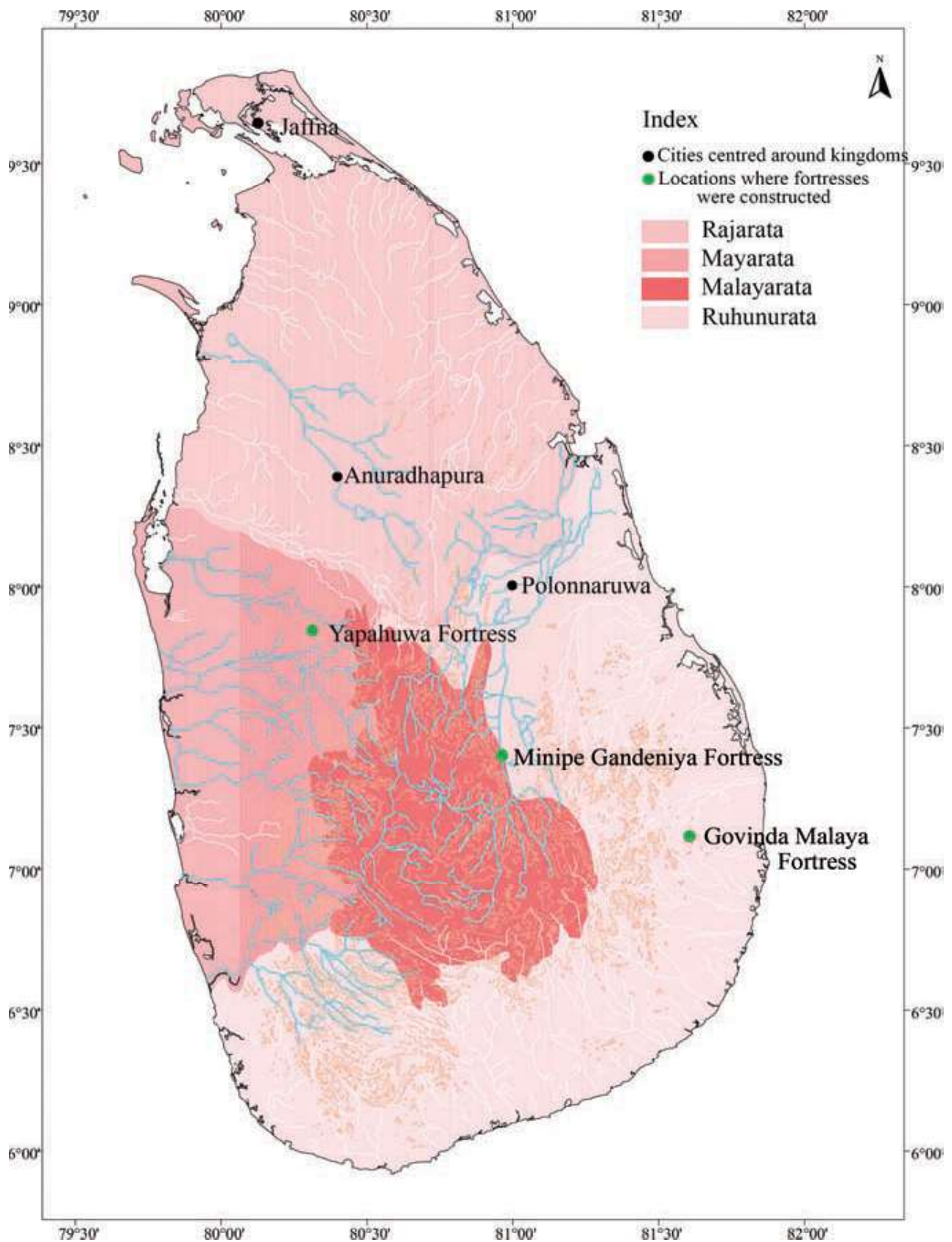
The downfall of the Polonnaruwa kingdom, which was the administrative centre of great kings like Vijayabahu I and Parakramabahu the Great, was brought about after the reign of king Nissankamalla due to several factors. The rulers who came to power after king Nissankamalla were weak and therefore none of them were able to establish political stability. When the kingdom was going weaker in this manner, an invader named

Kalinga Magha landed in Lanka with a huge army. King Parakrama Pandya who was ruling the Polonnaruwa kingdom at this time failed to resist Magha's invasion which was launched in 1215 AD. Consequently, the invader seized power in Rajarata.

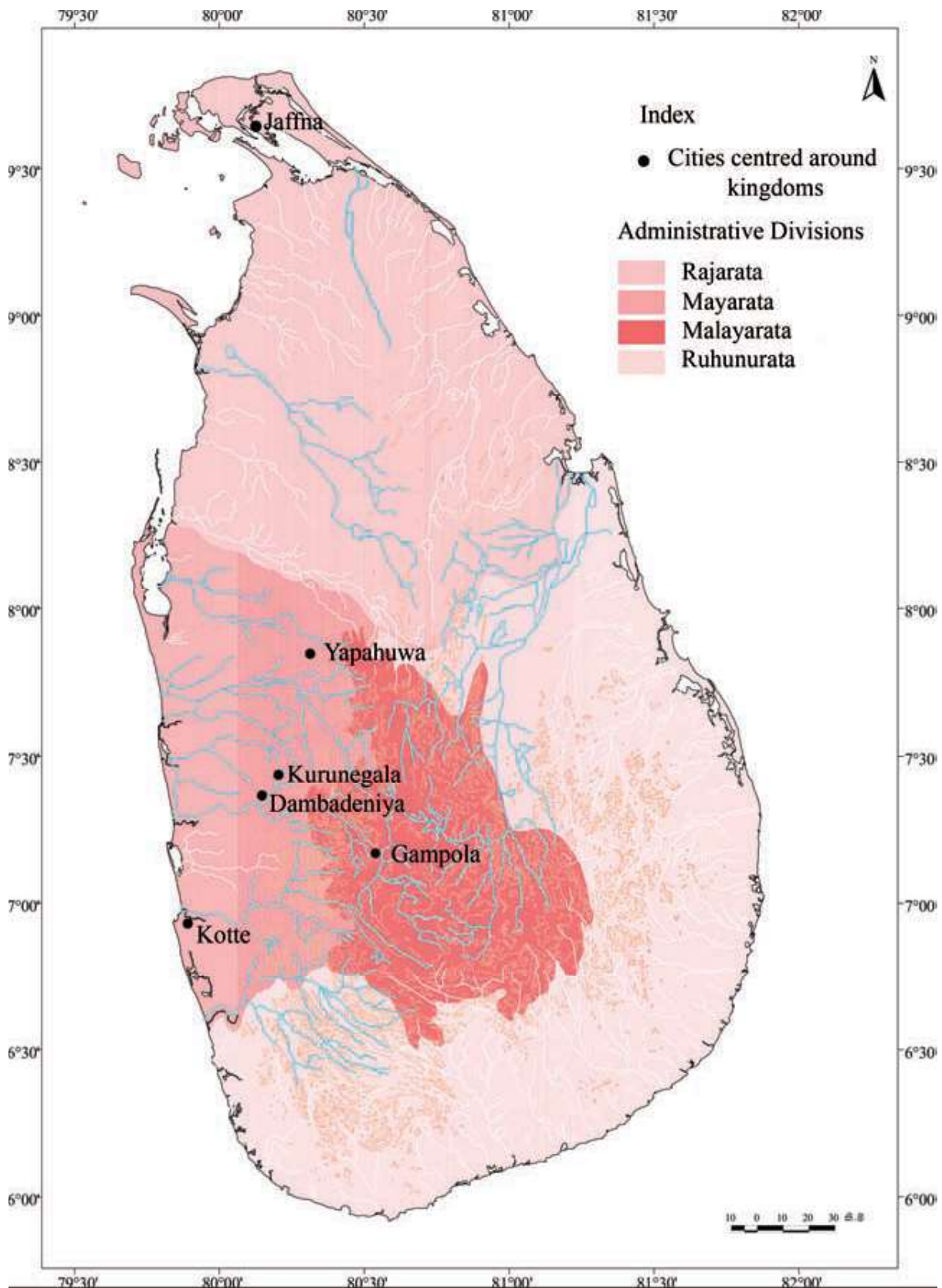
The Mahavamsa speaks of several chiefs who protected the country and its people while Magha's army was holding power in Polonnaruwa. Those chiefs built fortresses in various places that were safe and prevented the invaders from entering the southern part of the country. Among such chiefs who prevented the movement of the enemies were -

- a general named Sanka who had built a fortress on the Gandeniya rock in Minipe;
- a general named Subha who had built a fortress on the top of Yapahuwa hill; and
- Adipada Buwanekabahu who had built a fortress on the top of Govinda Malaya hill in Ruhuna

When you study map 4.1, you will gain understanding as to how the movement of the invaders towards the south of the country was prevented because of the action taken by these chiefs. Although these chiefs succeeded in preventing Magha's army from entering the southern parts of the country, they do not seem to have made efforts to establish a strong kingdom. It was Vijayabahu III, who had become famous as a Vanni chief, that



Map 4.1 Division of ancient areas in Sri Lanka



Map 4.2 Several kingdoms that existed after Polonnaruwa kingdom

came forward to take up that challenge. He established the Dambadeniya kingdom. After the establishment of the Dambadeniya kingdom, there existed several administrative centres until the establishment of the Kotte kingdom.

There were a number of reasons for the establishment of different kingdoms in this manner from time to time. The most apparent among them are:

1. security reasons; and
2. economic reasons

After the downfall of Polonnaruwa kingdom, several new dynasties came to power within a span of 200 years. Protection of the ruling capital was of prime importance because of internal factors like disputes that arose from time to time between heirs to the throne and external factors like threats of foreign invasions. Therefore, in order to ensure protection, the capital was shifted from Dambadeniya to Yapahuwa, and then to Kurunegala and later to Gampola which were considered more favourable locations.

Following the new trends that were created in world trade, a novel situation was resulted in the foreign trade activities of Sri Lanka too. In addition to the demand that existed for elephants, tusks, pearls, and gems which had been the traditional commodities during the period of Rajarata civilization, there grew a considerable demand for the spices of Sri Lanka during this period. Consequently, the wet zone which abounds with spices became more favourable for trade activities. Apart

from such external economic factors, the internal economic situation that was brought about in the fields of agriculture and trade, too, contributed to the growing importance of the wet zone. As the irrigation systems in the Rajarata areas had gone to ruin and as people had abandoned those areas, it was difficult to develop them again. People became accustomed to new agricultural systems like cultivating small areas of paddy lands and terraced cultivations which are suitable for the wet zone. In addition, chena crops like millet and other grains as well as fruits and vegetables were cultivated, too. Thus it is apparent that the administrative centre of the country was established based in the wet zone due to such security requirements and economic reasons.

The Era of Dambadeniya Kingdom (1232 A.D. – 1272 A.D.)

★King Vijayabahu III (1232 A.D. – 1236 A.D.)

Vijayabahu III who had been a local chief became the king making Dambadeniya his capital. At that time Sri Lanka was divided into three divisions namely Ruhuna, Maya and Pihiti. King Vijayabahu III succeeded in unifying Maya division out of those three divisions.

While the invasion of Kalinga Magha was being launched, Buddhist monks took away the Sacred Tooth Relic and the alms bowl relic to Kotmale and deposited them in a safe place. King Vijayabahu III took these sacred

relics away from Kotmale and deposited them in the Temple of the Tooth that he constructed on the top of the Beligala hill in the Kegalle District. It is one of the great services rendered by him. It was believed that the king should be in possession of the Sacred Tooth Relic in order to qualify himself for holding kingship. Therefore he is certain to have received the support of his people.



Fig 4.1 - A part of the stone stairway that leads to the royal palace in Dambadeniya. It was in safe places of this nature that kingdoms were established after the Rajarata civilization.

★King Parakramabahu II (1236 A.D. – 1270 A.D.)

After king Vijayabahu III, his eldest son Prince Parakramabahu II became king. He was able to unify Sri Lanka once again and

created a peaceful situation in the country. He had to overcome various challenges in achieving his goal. Liberating the country from its enemies was the biggest challenge he had to overcome. For this he had to fight three battles for;

1. driving out Kalinga Magha,
2. defeating the first invasion of King Chandrabhanu, and
3. defeating the second invasion of King Chandrabhanu.



Fig 4.2 – Beligala Viharaya

Defeating Kalinga Magha

Magha remained in this country for a period of about 40 years starting from 1215 AD. King Parakramabahu II had to fight a fierce battle to defeat Magha's army and recapture the areas in Rajarata. Finally Magha's army was defeated when the king surrounded

the Polonnaruwa city and launched a direct attack on them.

Invasions of Chandrabhanu

Chandrabhanu is an invader who came to Lanka from Malaya peninsula in the South East Asia. He invaded Dambadeniya twice. On both these occasions, Parakramabahu II could achieve victory defeating Chandrabhanu.

Services rendered by King Parakramabahu II

- Taking the sacred tooth relic, which had been deposited in Beligala by his father, to Dambadeniya
- Building a new Temple of the Tooth in Dambadeniya
- Implementing development activities of the country under the supervision of his Minister Devapathiraja
- Developing the roads leading to Sri Pada (Adam's Peak)
- Constructing parks, bridges and cultivating crops like coconut

Being a Great Scholar

King Parakramabahu II was a great scholar who had thoroughly mastered languages like Sinhala, Pali, and Sanskrit. Hence the

honorary title of “Kalikala Sahithya Sarvagna Panditha” was bestowed on him. The book entitled “**Kav Silumina**” is considered to have been composed by him.

Yapahuwa Kingdom

King Parakramabahu II died around 1270 AD and his son Vijayabahu IV succeeded him as the king of Dambadeniya. After a lapse of a period of about two years, King Vijayabahu IV was killed consequent to a conspiracy that had been planned in the royal palace. Following his death, his brother Buwanekabahu I (1272-1284 AD) became king and he selected Yapahuwa, which was a safer place, as his administrative centre.

King Buwanekabahu I rendered a number of services for the well-being of the country. Some of them include:

- constructing a Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Yapahuwa
- composing books on Buddhism
- maintaining trade relations with Egypt

King Buwanekabahu I is said to have sent a trade delegation to the City of Cairo in order to build up trade relationships with Egypt. Through this delegation, he sent to Egypt a letter containing details of the commodities that Sri Lanka could supply.



Fig 4.3 – Yapahuwa

Kurunegala Era

After King Buwanekabahu I, his son became the king as Buwanekabahu II. He established his kingdom in Kurunegala.

King Parakramabahu IV, who succeeded his father King Buwanekabahu II, was a great ruler of the Kurunegala era.

Services rendered during the Kurunegala era:

- translating into Sinhala the book entitled '*Pansiya Panas Jathaka Potha*' which was originally written in Pali
- composing of the literary works like *Dalada Siritha*, *Sinhala Bodhi Wansaya* and *Anagatha Wansaya*

Gampola Era

After the Kurunegala kingdom had collapsed, the Gampola kingdom was established under King Buwanekabahu IV. At the time the Gampola kingdom was established, there existed a kingdom in Jaffna under Arya Chakrawarthy royal lineage and another kingdom in Raigama under Alakeshwara royal lineage.

Following King Buwanekabahu IV, Buwanekabahu V became king in Gampola. Some of the vital facts related to the Gampola kingdom are given below.

- There being two powerful persons namely, Nishshanka Alakeshwara and Senalankadhikara in addition to the king.
- Construction of a fortress in Kotte and defeating of the army of Arya Chakrawarthy by Minister Nishshanka Alakeshwara
- Arrival of the Arabic traveller named Ibn Battuta in Lanka
- Invasion of Lanka by the Chinese General Cheng Ho by the end of the Gampola era
- Construction of Gadaladeni Viharaya, Lankathilaka Viharaya and Embekke Devalaya



Fig 4.4 – Lankathilaka Viharaya



Fig 4.5 Gadala Deni Viharaya

Kotte Era

After the Gampola era, the Kotte kingdom was established under King Parakramabahu VI. His father was named Jayamahale and mother was Sunethra Devi. He captured the Vanni area and Jaffna and unified the country.

King Parakramabahu VI sent Prince Sapumal to Jaffna to capture that area. Prince Sapumal fought a fierce battle and captured Jaffna area. Meanwhile a nobleman named Jothiya, who was the local ruler in Udarata, launched a

rebellion in the upcountry area against the king. The king sent Prince Ambulugala to the upcountry and crushed the rebellion.

Some of the valuable services rendered by King Parakramabahu VI include:

- making Lanka once again a peaceful and unified country under his rule
- bringing about a revival in the field of education of the country and establishment of a few leading Pirivena's including Sunethra Devi Pirivena in Pepiliyana and Padmawathi Pirivena in Keragala
- Making a circle of brilliant scholars like Ven.Veedagama Maithri Thero and Ven. Thotagamuwe Sri Rahula Thero
- Composing of a number of great literary works like *Selalihini Sandesaya*, *Hansa Sandesaya*, *Gira Sandesaya*, *Perakumba Siritha* and *Kavyasekaraya*



Fig 4.6 –Padmawathi Pirivena in Keragala

Jaffna Kingdom

After the downfall of Polonnaruwa kingdom, a provincial kingdom was established based in Jaffna. The books entitled “**Yalpana Vaipawamalai**” and “**Segarasa Sekaramalai**” are the sources which provide information about the Jaffna kingdom. The royal lineage of Jaffna is called Arya Chakrawartha lineage. The first king of that lineage is Vijayakulanga Arya Chakrawartha. Information available reveals that there had been 12 such rulers.



Fig 4.7 Nallur Kovil

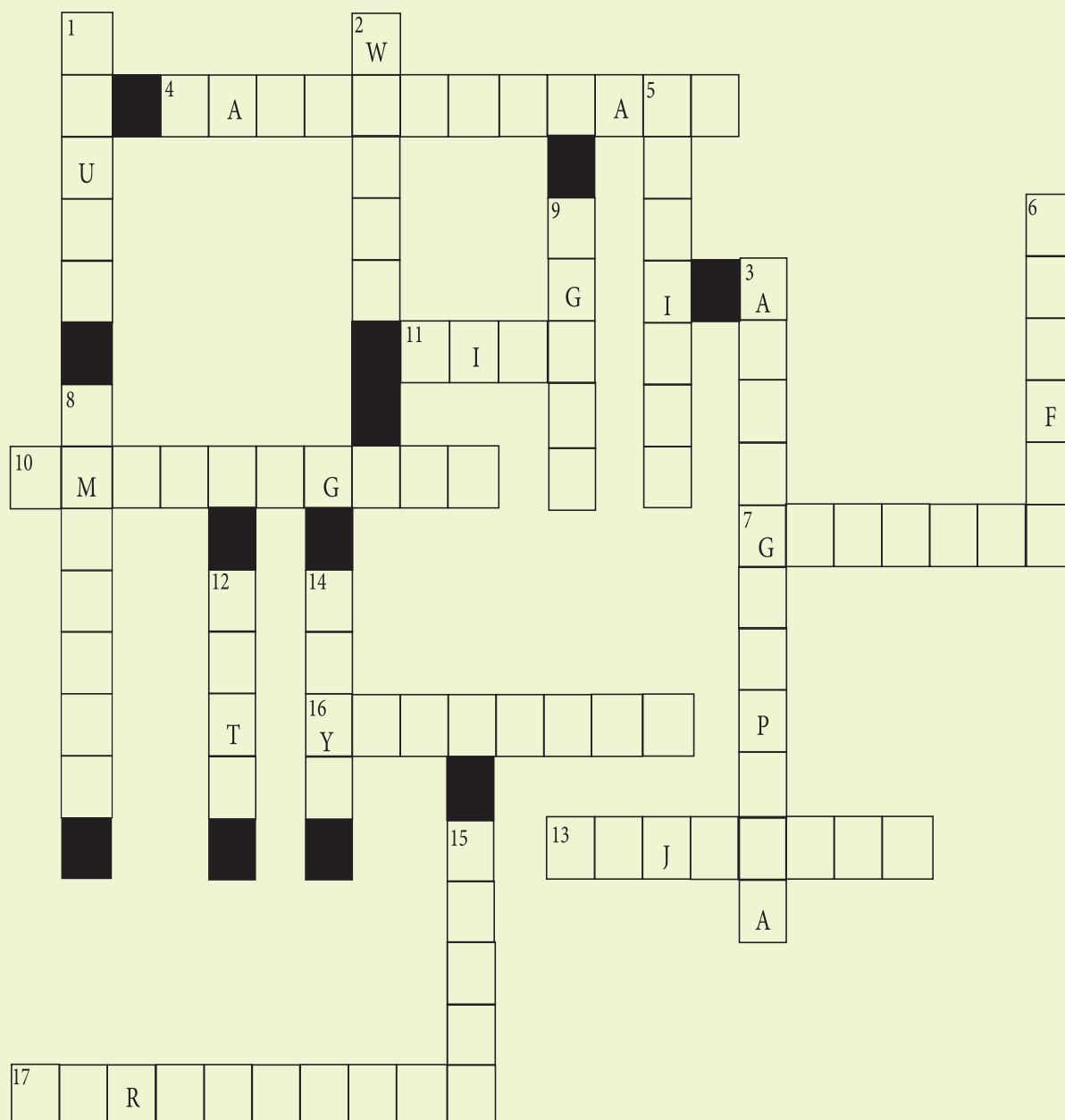
During the Gampola and Kotte eras, the Jaffna kingdom was under the rule of the main kingdom of Lanka. However, the kings of Jaffna established their power once again. By the time the Portuguese arrived in Lanka, the Jaffna kingdom was ruled by King Sankili, but the Portuguese invaded Jaffna in 1619 AD and brought Jaffna under their rule.

Summary

- 1 After the period of the Rajarata civilization, the kingdoms of Lanka were shifted from place to place after short periods of time due to security and economic reasons.
- 2 During periods of political stability, the country experienced development. During such periods, there was advancement in the fields of education and religion, too.
- 3 During these periods internal as well as external disputes for seizing power erupted.
- 4 It was during the Kotte era that a Lankan ruler unified the country for the last time.

Activity

Complete the crossword puzzle.



Down ↓

1. A synonym for mountain
2. Essential for agriculture
3. A similar term for Kurunegala
5. A royal dynasty in South India
6. The main administrative centre in the North
8. A famous shrine house (devala) for wood carvings
9. A country that had trade relations with Sri Lanka
12. The three administrative areas, Ruhunu, Pihiti and Maya were known by this term.
14. A local power centre in Sri Lanka
15. A South Indian state that invaded Rajarata area.

Across →

4. A temple that belongs to Gampola era.
7. The kingdom that existed after Kurunegala kingdom.
10. The rebellion of the nobleman Jothiya was suppressed by him.
11. A similar term for town
13. An ancient division of areas in Sri Lanka
16. The ruling centre of King Buwanekabahu I
17. Pansiya Panas Jathaka Potha was translated into Sinhala during this era.