

SUGGESTED MEANINGS OF SOME PLACE NAMES IN THE HAPUTALE AREA

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Introduction

People have been interested in place-names from very early times. Whether as the idle curiosity of simple folk or the scholarly concern of learned men, such names continue to exercise the human mind. In our own land, the literary records show that people's interest in the names of places where they lived or travelled or otherwise came to be associated with, date from at least the 14th century A.C. But, as an independent branch of study, toponymy or place-name study is comparatively young. The subject has not been listed in any of the standard encyclopaedias. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gives some information on it in the article on names (in linguistics) while the *Encyclopaedia Canadiana* contains a brief article on the subject of Geographical Names. The *Encyclopaedia Americana* (1956 edition) had nothing on the subject though the latest edition (1976) contains an article giving details *inter alia* of the work done in the field in the U.S. It carries an article entitled Place Names.

The work done in England by the English Place-Name Society deserves special mention. The results of a nation-wide survey, embodied in the Society's Survey of English Place-Names (1924-) demonstrates the fruitfulness of ordered and sustained investigation.

Place-name studies, comparable in scope and method with that of the English Place-Name Society, have been undertaken and carried out in only a few other countries, notably Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

The giving of place-names seems to depend on two considerations (1) a recognition that a place is an entity which possesses an individuality differentiating it from other places, and (2) a realization that a place is useful and therefore worth naming. These requirements are not confined to the more intelligent and educated sections of a human community but operate at all levels of society. They were nations held even by primitive peoples. Place-names must, therefore, have arisen at a very early period, and occur in all recorded languages.

Place-names are generally formed of two (or more) entities which taken, separately are each a common noun. (*Sudu-villa*) (-"white sand") and *Hunupitiya* (-"lime-field") are examples. The second of the two elements usually refers to a land-mark or natura