

## **The Existence of Traditional Discourse Communities in 21<sup>st</sup> century Sri Lanka: The Blacksmiths of Hatanpola**

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The village Hatanpola has a long oral and a substantial written history of blacksmithing. Rajakari bound to the UggalAluthnuwaraDevalaya, the community now consists only of six families, a minority of whom persevere with their traditional craft. Interestingly, two families have recently reopening their closed down workshops. In addition to being skilled blacksmiths, the community has its own treatment for burns as a byproduct of blacksmithing. The present research seeks to understand the community's survival strategies in the face of the rapid decay in the Rajakari system and fierce competition by modern market forces. The community's technology upgrades have led to hybridization but it still retains the new generations in the craft despite the economic conditions and state regulations that deprive them of some privileges such as the right to fell *maran* trees for the production of charcoal, a key material in their craft. The current generations could be the last practitioners of this centuries-old iron craft as a result of families becoming impoverished by losing traditional privileges and access to agricultural and forest lands, and as a result of the close system of endogamy that produces a high ratio of disabled children. This underscores the urgent need to document this community's unique cultural practices.