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### **The Historical Geography; Some of the Capital Cities of Sri Lanka**

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#### **Abstract:**

*Sri Lanka had a long history of settlement. The wet zone was the first to be inhabited. That is because Sri Lanka originally consisted of the south, southwest and central areas. The early Sinhala settlers after an initial attempt to settle down in the wet zone abandoned the area, except in the coastal areas and concentrated in the dry zone. The Dry Zone had a greater extent of flat land and a more regular weather pattern. Therefore, it was better for food production, leaving a grain surplus for other activities. It is probable that the wet zone was thinly populated and that there was a remarkable demographic concentration in the dry zone from about the first Century. In the Dry Zone, Brohier noted that Vilachchiya, Anuradhapura had been irrigated and lived in long ago. It had remnants of ancient tanks and rudimentary ponds. At Talawe, to augment the water supply the ancients tapped the Jaya Ganga and established a feeder channel known as the Talawe ela that started from Tirippane. It has been noted that the inscriptions of the early settlers are quite numerous in the wet zone until the first Century BC. Then there is a gap and the inscriptions begin again in the 10th Century. This suggests that the wet zone areas remained relatively unopened till the 10th Century. Here are many settlements in the south of Sri Lanka. Paranavitane stated that brown and red earth ware had been unearthed at the estuaries of Walawe, Kirindi Oya, and Kumbukkan Oya.*

**Key words: Ancient capital cities, Dry Zone, Historical Geography, Settlements, Wet**

**Introduction:** The historical Settlements of Ceylon were situated within the North-West and South-East of the Island, like what is called the Arid Zones of the Island. The North - West may be terribly flat land more by the Mannar – Oya, the Kala- Oya, the Moderagama– Oya and also the Malwatu-Oya. These rivers have engineered fairly in-depth deltas. Within the South-West, the arid region is a lot of productive there in the soil is healthier and also the rivers like the Walawe, the Menik, the Kirindi and also the Gal – Oya carried a bigger volume of water than the rivers of the North-West. In each region, the climate factor is probably the foremost influential part, within the environment (Tennent: 1856, 25). The Year may be divided into a wet and a dry season, the previous starting concerning September and ending in January. This was followed by a brief dry season in February and

March. In April thunderstorms brought rain and this was followed by a protracted dry season from cold in August. The rainfall was 25"-50" for the Year, however, it absolutely was unreliable, and drought was a lot of common, after all, Olympian two hundred days every year. Such an associate environment was in many ways favorable to paddy growers. The Deltas and also the land on the banks of the rivers were flat and provided lands naturally tailored to paddy cultivation, Paddy grows on lands which will live on, and for this reason, and Land that is, of course, flat may be a nice facility to the farmer. The downfall regime is favored because the seed might be planted within the wet season (September-December) and the harvest might be gathered within the remainder of the dry month of February. No paddy might be grown up within the remainder of the year as no rain fell. However, the Dry months of could to August were both terribly helpful in making ready the highland for the cultivation of dry grains, pulses, and oilseeds. The forests were unemployed, and the dry and dry wind distributed the flames which presently destroyed the forest. On clearings so, made, dry grains, pulses, and oilseeds were grown up in September and these were harvested in February. So, the cycle of the year helps the use of low land for wet grain paddy and high land for dry grains like millet.

The main objectives of this research paper are to examine the geophysical conditions that influenced the building of key administrative centers and kingdoms in ancient Sri Lanka. This research was conducted with a focus on the question of what the place of geophysical conditions among the factors that is influenced the creation of kingdoms and administrative centers in ancient Sri Lanka to achieve this research objective.

**Materials and Methods:** This research was conducted under the qualitative data analysis methodology. In order to collect the data, the information contained in the historical literature sources which are currently being printed was used as the primary data and the works of various scholars who later wrote with that information as the secondary source. In addition, the required data were obtained from local field studies. The data thus collected were presented through the theoretical analysis, comparative analysis and data filing methods used under the qualitative analysis methodology and the relevant conclusions and suggestions were reached.

**Results and Discussion:** Very presently the inhabitants completed that if the water of the September to December amount may well be held on, then it absolutely was potential to lift a second crop of paddy. The first was ashore fed by the rain, the harvests of that were gathered in February. In April the storm, the rain helped to plow the fields and sow the seed. The growing plant would then be fed within the dry months of could to August by water from the storage tanks and as this supply may well be regulated it absolutely was higher for the paddy plant than the availability of fresh water that man couldn't control, to fulfill the needs of the paddy plants (Journal of historical geography: 2017:205-212).

The harvest from the tank fed fields was gathered in August. Thus, irrigation enabled to harvests of paddy. These, in turn, supplied additional food and more dues to the

king and because the Sinhalese was primarily a farming people, their prosperity was closely connected with paddy cultivation and this, in turn, was loosely connected with irrigation. The first settlements created within the Arid Zone step by step expanded into the dry zone. Here conditions were higher for the associate degree farming community. The rainfall was greater being on the average 50"-75" for the year. The incidence of drought was less, and also the soils were a lot of productive. The early Sinhalese thus occupied the present Anuradhapura and Thamankaduwa Districts and also the alluvial plains of the best rivers of the Southeast. Anuradhapura was the center of the Nuwara Kalawiya Districts, the name being derived from the Nuwara- wave, Kalawewa, and Padawiya. By 1215 A.D the cultivatable regions of the North and East were abandoned and drift to the center and Southwest began. Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa were abandoned and "rock citadels" were chosen as places of refuge for the kings who tried to stem the onset of the attacks of South Indian rulers. Such places were Dambadeniya, Yapahuwa, and Kurunegala. These are situated during a transition belt between the Dry and Wet zones of Ceylon, and because these areas weren't as rich as the dry zone itself, within the cultivation of grain, the kingdoms in the transition period, were feeble and poor.

The rise the Kingdoms of Kotte and Sithawaka herald the approaching of Sinhalese principalities within the Wet zone, whereas that of metropolis indicates that a Kingdom had been born within the hill country. The climate of the Dry zone is in some ways quite in contrast to the wet zone. The latter is wet, and rain falls almost all year spherical. It is so not the climate for grains and during this region, a former grain growing community was compelled to regulate its mode of life to alien geographical factors. In place of grain, the climate created possible the cultivation of palms, and as the vegetation grew smartly all the year spherical, plants whose bark, sap and leaf were useful to man would thrive during this region. Creepers and vines were conjointly natural to the climate. In such an environment, economic enterprise took the part of the production, not of food crop however money crops. Cinnamon which grew wild provided a superb cash crop and Iban Batuta tells us that at Salwat (Chile) he saw bales of Cinnamon awaiting shipment. Thus, began the Island's export economy and with it the increase of seaports. This modification was strange to a paddy growing people like the Sinhalese, who for centuries had practiced a type of Subsistence agriculture and who for centuries had very little to try and do with trade across the seas. Beside this agricultural product, the Wet Zone was conjointly made with gems and these too became a most respected article of export. Gems and Spices fitted in a most praiseworthy with the trade of thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as these could stand the transport over long distances in small ships. Being costly, however not large these were the exports of the day.

Next came the Arecont that had a market in South India. This trade was initially in Muslim hands, however, within the course of time, the Portuguese and therefore the Dutch in their flip created it a monopoly. Beneath the Dutch, the products of the Coconut-palm – coir, oil, vinegar, and arrack became articles of commerce. Under British rule, low and later Tea and Rubber were additional to the list of exports. The Portuguese were the first of the

foreign rulers to create Colombo the capital of their possessions in Ceylon. Under an export economy, Colombo continues as the capital to the present day.

The Sinhalese established a free state within the Kandyan hills. The forest that encircles the central mountains became a wall of safety against the foreign invaders and by royal decree; no roads were built in the Kandyan Kingdom. Nowhere were the capital and the nice a part of the Canadians lived on the plateau below the 3,000 contours. The Kandyan kingdom had its wet and dry zone. The latter was east of a line joining Matale, Kandy, Nuwaraeliya, and Horton Plains. During this region the rainfall was seasonal and wherever night temperatures weren't low paddy could be full-grown. The hill slopes had first to be raced to produce the necessary flat land and on these two crops were raised. One was fed by the rains of September- December giving the harvest in February. The other was dependent on irrigation. Within the rugged lands of the hill country, no tanks were constructed, however the mountain streams were led by suggesting that of canals to the fields. One such canal took its origin within the Horton Plains and fed the fields in the Welimada basin (Journal of historical geography: 2017:200-212).

Cities were few in the days when society existed in the production of paddy. However, as soon as cash crops became the basis of life, cities began to grow. First seaports, then market centers. Within the earlier kind of society, every village was self- dependent for food and any providers of grain was for the payment of dues or for barter. Under neath such conditions, towns' wouldbefew asaresultof the city inhabitant might carry on the excess of grain produced within the country. Wherever this surplus was tiny. Cities were inevitably few. Thus, in the period prior to 1017, Mantota was the great port and Anuradhapura was the great city. If we tend to examine the location of Anuradhapura closely, we shall realize that it had been within the center of a region of Agricultural production. The Nuwerwewa and the Padawiya were the three great reservoirs and the Nuweragampalatha the Kalagam- Palatha and the Hurulu- palate were the sources of food production. This area is separated from the basin of the Mahaweli River by an extended line running from Matale east to Trincomalee.

The city itself was built on the left bank of the Malwatu-Oya on a rock ridge. Perhaps this gave the town some degree of protection from the flood, whereas the distance of the river has access to supplies of water. Canals from the river led water to the left bank into the gardens to the south of town. Later, when the city grew giant, the "City Tank" or Nuwara – wewa was built to supplement the water provides of the Tissa- wewa. The water during this tank was increased by water from the Kala- wewa which flows into it along the "Jayaganaga".

**City Arrangement in Dry Zone:** The arrange of the city was simple. Within the center was the "inner city" protected by a wall and a moat. This was really not a "City" however the fortified section among that the king lived and the temple of the Tooth was settled. To the North, South, East and West were parks and gardens and within these in the course of time, monasteries were built, and religious buildings place up by pious kings. The foremost,

most notable of those were the Mahamegha Garden to the South containing the Maha Vihara. To the North was the Abayagiri Vihara, within the West the "Western monasteries" with the Jethavanarama and Toluvara Monasteries to the east.

In the North, South, east and west of these outlying gardens were the "suburbs" of the city within which the common people lived. Fa-Hien, who visited Ceylon, within the fourth century A.D. tells us that the town had well-paved roads with trees within the travelers' shade. At the great junctions were preaching halls. In an exceedingly separate quarter lived the foreign merchants, of whom the form (the Sabeans) had the finest dwelling houses. These were built of timber and had several stories. We can conjointly believe that there have been special sections within the city for various traders. In these respects, Anuradhapura resembled ancient cities in other components of the world. In 1017 A.D. Mahinda V was defeated and taken unfortunate by the Cholians, who created the Rajarata a component of their Empire. They were aware that the Sinhalese in Ruhuna would sometime attempt to recover the Rajarata. To forestall such attempts and keep a watch across the river, the Cholians created Polonnaruwa their headquarters. It is reasonable to believe that a fortress stood here a lot of earlier, for within the Gemunu story one reads of his army crossing the river at Magantota and storming the fortress of Vijithapura. Mahagamtota was his great "Crossing place" across the river and Polonnaruwa is concerning four miles from the spot. The Cholians captured this city and command it until 1072 when it had been captured by Kirti who became King as Vijaya Bahu I. From 1072 to 1215 Polonnaruwa was the capital of the Kings of Ceylon (University of Ceylon: 1959. 326). No doubt these Kings, together with the strongest of them, Parakrama Bahu, had reason to worry attacks from the Barons of the Ruhuna, and Polonnaruwa continued to fill the role of a frontier capital. Beijing in China, Purushapura (Peshawar) and Indraprastha (Delhi) in India are similar capitals. However, Polonnaruwa was more than a frontier fortress. It had been also the center of a region of agricultural production. The heart of this was the great reservoir, the Parakrama Samudra, and canals had the water when way because the Tambalagam Bay. (Journal of historical geography: 2017:205-212) The Tamankaduwa, as this district is now known as, has clays which are most suitable for paddy cultivation. It had been the produce of this great basin maintained the Royal city of Polonnaruwa. From 1215 onwards the drift of people within the South- West began. Its first stage was the transition zone between the Deduru- Oya and Kala-Oya and the capitals were in places such as Yapahuwa, Dambadeniya, and Kurunegala. Of these was "rock Citadels" or places defended naturally. Natural rocks served as "Castle" and these were created stronger by the addition of walls and moats (Pathirana: 1980, 75-85). Yapahuwa is perhaps the simplest example of those fortress cities. The natural rock that raises sort of a castle higher than the plain was selected for the Royal residence. The approach to the rock was defended by an inner wall and a moat and an outer wall and moat.

It is interesting to speculate why the rulers of the Rajarata moved to the South- West. The transition zone between the Kala-Oya and Deduru-Oya was a part of an ancient principality the Maya-rate. Within the twelfth century A.D. it had been referred to as the

"Southern Country" and underneath Parakaramabahu I as prince this area was highly developed. The climate is most suitable for paddy and is to the present day a region of paddy cultivation. It's part of the Kurunegala District, which has these days the very best land area under paddy. Thus, when the Polonnaruwa Kingdom fell, there should be considerable numbers living within the "Southern Country". It had been for this reason that the rulers moved into this a part of the country after 1215 A.D. it should be asked why the rulers of Polonnaruwa did not move into the Ruhuna-rata. The explanation might be that when 1215 A.D., the Ruhunu- rata had become a desolate region. War raged here from 1111 A.D., once Vijayabahu I died, to concerning 1160 A.D. The Chulavamsa tells the mournful tale of those civil wars and therefore the ruin they brought to his people. It tells us, however the rival princes, caused villages to be burnt, forest trees to be cut down, tanks to be breached and people crushed as the "mill crushes the sugar cane". If this often be a real account one can realize why the Ruhunu- rata ceased to be what it had been once, a prosperous region (University of Ceylon:1959.,314). Cities of Wet Zone: With the 13th century A.D., we tend to return to the cities of the Wet zone. Most of them arose as centers of defense against stronger powers and within the Wet Zone, forest, river, and marsh provided effective defenses. Therefore, Kotte was selected because of it absolutely was a hillock encircled by the river and marsh— a kind of "Island of Ely" Sithawaka was conjointly a city protected by rivers and forests. Kotte is representative of a Sinhalese capital built at a time when export provided Kings with their revenue.

The city was designed on a hillock rising higher than the flood waters of the Kelani and therefore the land around it absolutely was marshy and not possible to traverse on foot. On either side of the hillock flowed the Kolannave-ela and therefore the Diyavanna-Oya, the latter broadening resolute type a lake of still water. The two streams were joined on the south side by a deep moat in order that the hillock was converted into an island. Therefore, the city was "insulated" against attacks; however it absolutely was not isolated from the outer worlds. Beneath Parakrama Bahu VI, Kotte became the capital not only of the Southwest however of the entire island as well as Jaffna. Wealth came from the trade cinnamon and for this reason Kotte had to possess a port. Such a port was Kolontota currently Colombo. Here merchants from the West, particularly Muslim came here and founded their Bangasalas or store houses later referred to by the Europeans "factory". Barges laden with cinnamon would sail down the Kolonnave-ela to the Kelani River and enter Kolontota via its distributors. One among these entered the harbor of Kolontota past, the present Khan tower within the Pettah. Near this is often "Bankshall Street" that could be a Curious transformation of Bangasala Vidiya. Alternative distributors created they are thanks to the sea, to the south of the present fort past the houses of Parliament.

Kotte was therefore a "new type" of the city, its geographical foundation being "defense" and "proximity" to ports. Cities that were the "centers of paddy cultivation" cease to exist with the decay of the opposite farming society. A brand-new society was slowly returning into existence. This was supported cultivation of commercial crops and therefore the prosperity of such a society is predicated on trade. The society that

had big within the Dry zone with its basis in grain production now modified in any form of society dependent on the geographical possibilities of the Wet zone. A brand-new orientation was to require place from ‘and Indian” to a European, from a geographically east and North- East to South- West. Ports of long ago such as Mantota disappear and harbors within the South- West came into prominence. Such were Chilaw, Negombo, Colombo, Beruwala and Galle. These own their rise to their harbors and to the providers of cinnamon obtainable within the neighborhood (Pathirana: 1980, 75-85).

The port of Kolontota became a capital once the king of Kotte on the recommendation and no doubt pressure from his Portuguese allies transferred the royal residence from Kotte to Kolontota. The King of Kotte, Don Juan Dharmapala sought the assistance of the Portuguese to defend Kotte against King Mayadunne of Sithawaka. The Portuguese based mostly their strength of sea power and that they found that their forces defensive Kotte can be enclosed and bring to a halt from their base of supplies, namely, Colombo. According Dharmapala and his Portuguese friends abandoned and destroyed Kotte and fell back in Colombo. The harbor of Colombo was small and was shaped by a bay protected on the South-West by a small headland from that the present breakwater begins.

This headland became the first fortified spot control of the Portuguese. Later, when the kingdom of Kotte was bequeathed to them by Dharmapala, the fort was enlarged. Moats were constructed wherever today we discover, within the North, St. John’s Street, Kayman’s gate (crocodile gate), gas Works Street and within the South wherever the present spill exists south of the houses of parliament. The construction of those moats and spills keep a certain quantity of water, facilitate up water on the side to form the current Beira Lake.

The Portuguese Fort of Colombo was not just a military establishment. It had regarding 600 families of ranks, several artisans, and churches and convents. Around the fort was low land covered with marsh and water; however rising above these were hillocks on that were the “parishes” of town of Colombo. The town of Colombo owes its origin to the small harbor in addition on the hillock on that the city stands. This hillock enabled homes to be built above the level of the Kelani floods. The existence of a “waterway” to Kotte enabled the easy transfer of Cinnamon and other produce over land which was wet of forested.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:** When the Dutch in 1656 A.D. captured Colombo, they maintained it as their Capital. The city was linked up with productive areas by “waterways” and therefore the Beira Lake began its career as an inland harbor. From the Beira one might in Dutch times, travel by boat to the Kelani and so at Wattala travel North by canal as way as Puttalam. Salt, rice, dried fish; arecanut, coir, vinegar, arrack, and cinnamon came down this “waterway” to Colombo. “Produce” from the Hanwella, Kaduwela areas came to Colombo over the Kelani- River. Produce from Rathnapura mini field the Kalu- River and so via Bolgoda, the Panadura –river to Colombo. During this method Colombo began its history as a collecting center of products for shipment overseas. Today the shape has modified, however the function remains. Goods and methods of

transport have modified. Tea, Rubber, and coconuts come into Colombo by road and rail. Steamship has taken the place of the sailing ship and names like the “Fort” are solely memories of the past.

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