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INVESTIGATION OF THE MUSLIM SETTLEMENTS IN SRI LANKA (ISLAMIC AND PRE-ISLAMIC PERIODS)

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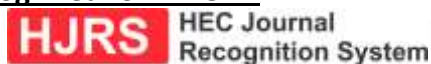
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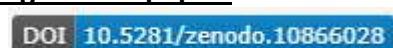
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Abstract

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The current study is significant on several levels, and its main goals are to: - fill the gap in existing research on Sri Lankan Muslim history, add to our knowledge of the trade networks in the Western Indian Ocean; and - provide light on Sri Lanka's relevance. The portrayal of the Muslim of the Muslim heritage in Sri Lanka. Many Sinhalese and Tamil historians have disputed the origins, origin stories, and historical accounts of Sri Lanka's Muslim community. Scholarly Muslims haven't spoken much about the history, customs, and practices of Muslims. The history of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka is not well-documented in Muslim historical writing. It is often said that Sri Lanka's Muslim minority lacks a history. The idea that Arab traders came to Sri Lanka before the spread of Islam is supported by a variety of archaeological and historical evidence. Additionally, Sri Lanka saw an increase in Arab and Muslim immigrants as Islam expanded across the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, it is crucial to provide historical and archaeological evidence to support the origins and history of the Muslim community. This essay is an assessment of the assertion. This study presents some historical connections to show how Ceylon's Muslims came to be and how they developed from the time before Islam until the sixteenth century.

Keywords: Arab, Muslim, History, Sri Lanka, Islamic, Pre-Islamic

Introduction

Sri Lanka is situated south of India along the maritime lanes that link the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds with East Asia and has a crucial strategic location in the Indian Ocean between East and West. Due to this strategic location of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean, throughout much of the Ancient and Middle Ages, the island was important as a trade gateway between the Middle East and the Far East in light of the economic, religious, and artistic ties that occurred in this vast region. This made it possible for the followers of all major faiths, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity to interact religiously. This is attested by ongoing archaeological digs that have uncovered several significant artifacts so far. We here make recommendations for future studies that will cover a wide range of topics to determine the age of the cultural pattern among the Indian Oceanic areas independent of Aryanization. If the term "culture" refers to the whole of human endeavors, then it stands to reason that the prehistoric inhabitants of the Indian Ocean area, where Sri Lanka is located, had their own distinct cultures but were not, in the modern sense, considered to be civilized. The affinities and similarities show that people were interacting and blending their cultures even in those ancient times. Population growth entails the spread of culture, technology, and its tangible byproducts. The Indian Ocean region has been the subject of important study in numerous sectors, which supports this claim. Long before the invasion of the Aryans by land and the maritime excursions of the Polynesians of the South Seas and the Phoenicians of the Mediterranean, civilization was transmitted and people moved about in this area. This supports other places where persons and materials have moved in similar ways.

In general, archaeological evidence shows a great deal of historical contact between Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. The present research focuses on Muslim contacts with the

island nation with particular attention to the Muslim population's historical role and development there. Various accounts mention Sri Lankan Muslim settlements as an important transit stop for travelers along the ancient Indian Ocean trade routes. The monsoons were crucial to this situation. Therefore, the current study is significant on several levels, and its main goals are to fill the gap in existing research on Sri Lankan Muslim archaeology and add to our knowledge of the trade networks in the Western Indian Ocean.

Background

Physical geomorphology's invariants had a lot more of an impact on history in earlier times than they do today. When man had not yet mastered the "wind and the waves," he was a helpless victim of nature's vagaries. A haven for weary seamen and merchants, Sri Lanka, which is located in the center of the transoceanic East-West route that connects Mombasa to Molucas, swiftly developed. The vast "Oceanic Silk Route" map is where Sri Lanka's geographical significance in this region is immediately apparent. Without a doubt, the variety of things our country had to offer from pre-Christian times should have been the draw drawing strangers to her beach. The oldest Kufic inscriptions that have been found in this country are naturally those that are close to the coast and testify to the early Arabian trips ([Siriweera, 2003](#)). Whether due to trade or poor weather, the sailing ships from Arabia and Persia and those from China and the Far Eastern archipelagoes, respectively, should have naturally halted at Sri Lankan ports. These frequent journeys helped Sri Lanka gain recognition among various nations in antiquity.

Research Objectives

1. Trace the historical roots of Muslims in Sri Lanka
2. Assess and evaluate the significance of those features that make Muslims of Sri Lanka as a distinct community compared to other communities in Sri Lanka.

Research Question

1. Why and how a further study of Sri Lankan Muslims are needed?
2. What are the unique perspectives of Sri Lanka's Muslim history vis other major inhabitants of the island, such as the Sinhalese and the Tamils?
3. How to prove substantially the unknown aspects of Sri Lanka's Muslim History through archaeological and Historical evidence.

Methodology

Multi-pronged approaches had been adopted in the study of the Muslim community's archaeological records, which incorporated among other things, unearthing new finds through field inquiries and examination of historical texts available in the country.

The important routes utilized Muslim History in Sri Lanka.

The Greeks and Romans called this island Taprobane, the Arabs called it Serendib and Seylan, and the Portuguese and Dutch called it Ceilao. The Island's contemporary name, Ceylon, was created by fusing the names Seylan and Ceilao. The so-called "Oceanic Silk Route" along which Sri Lanka finds itself should have historically preceded the Mediterranean basin, another hub of ancient commerce. In the past, conflicts over commerce in the Mediterranean area have sometimes resulted in casualties. As one country was supplanted by another since ancient times, warfare broke out. The Phoenicians were followed by the Greeks and Romans, who in turn were followed by the Arabs and Turks, who were then supplanted in the 16th century AD, by the nautical prowess of the European powers. In contrast, the Asian "Oceanic Silk Route" shared the goods and civilizations of this area while having many different nations occupy it. By the end of the 15th century AD, Arabs, Islamized Persians, North Indian Muslims, and Hindus had colonized the whole eastern coast of Africa, from Mogadishu to Mombasa. Despite the progressive European dominance of this region from the beginning of the 16th century AD, it is

noteworthy that Afro-Asian people, including Arabs, Persians, Hindus, and Muslims from Gujarat and Bengal, as well as Sinhala Buddhists, shared the economic benefits of trade and commerce in distant Zanzibar. The Israelites and Arabs are the two remaining Semitic peoples, with the Arabs being the most numerous and powerful. There were several additional Semite-related ethnic groups in the past, including the Edomites, Jebusites, Phoenicians, Nabataeans, Philistines, Assyrians, and so forth. The Phoenicians, Sabeans, and Yonas before the Arabs were well-known along this maritime silk route. We don't know what the Phoenicians named themselves. Even if historical nomenclatures created by a dominating authority are deceptive, subordinate people accept them. We are aware that the Greeks gave a Semitic nation the name Phoenicians, Phoenicia in Greek means "Land of Palms", (Shukri, 2003).

Around 1,000 BC, the Semitic Phoenicians—the ancestors of modern-day Arabs and Israelites—were a powerful maritime and trade power. They enjoyed access to the Indian Ocean during the reign of their great king Hiram thanks to the port of Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba. (Gunawardhana, 2003). This was made feasible by their strong relationship with David and Solomon, who were Hiram's contemporaries and whom the Phoenicians assisted in the construction of their temple and palace with supplies and skilled labour. These seafaring Semites existed before the Greeks. A specific and the most populous branch of the Semitic people only recently began to be referred to as Arabs - after Yareb son of Khatan - during the dawn of the Christian period and just before the advent of Islam (Shukri, 2003). These Arabs were the true inheritors of the Phoenicians' maritime expertise and trade prowess.

Sri Lanka is located almost exactly midway between the Straits of Malaya and the Horn of Africa. It is impossible to ignore the Island's importance in this region. Its importance to mariners and merchants should have been

significant in the past as a crucial entrepot and stopover. Its significance ought to have been obvious given the absence of steam power and superior navigational techniques, tools, and transmission at that time. It is separated from Kanyakumari (Cape Camorin), which is situated northwest of it in South India, by the 33-mile-wide Palk Strait. The island is 25,322 square miles in size, and at its broadest point, it is 270 miles long and 140 miles wide. (Prematilleke, 2003).

Finally, pilgrims from all over the globe and from the various faiths of the world continued to find inspiration in their religious journeys to Adam's Peak, which was the most obvious appeal to approaching travelers, particularly from its Western shore. As a result, the Island of Sri Lanka fascinated individuals from all eras and climes for a variety of reasons. Before the advent of Christianity, Arabs had contact with Sri Lanka. Even then, the primary driving factor should have been economic, primarily focused on trade and business, which ultimately led to the development of cross-cultural relationships. Arabs controlled all commerce with the Island in the second century BC. But later the Greeks, Romans, and Persians effectively overturned their authority. Beginning in the first century of the Christian period, Ceylon became a major hub for commerce with China. Arab merchants were prevalent in Canton by the middle of the eighth century (Shukri, 2003).

Historical and Cultural Review of Sri Lankan Muslims

A study of Muslim-Sri Lankan contacts must focus on the maritime and trading activities of various ethno-cultural groups restricted to the vast areas to the west of Sri Lanka, reaching the shores of East Africa, Southern Arabia, and the Persian Gulf; and to the east, reaching the Eastern archipelago and Canton. This would occur starting with the rise of Islam in the seventh century AD. By conflating the terms "Arab" and "Muslim," the European perspective that emerged after the 16th century further muddled historical understanding. One must

remember that no government, least of all the Arabs, has ever completely controlled commerce and shipping in this area (Kiribamuna, 1986).

Although it seems that the Arabs were the first to observe this (Monsoon is derived from the Arabic word for season, *Mausim*), the Greeks and subsequently the Romans were the ones to make efficient use of it, according to Hippalus. (Yusuf, 1970). Either the conventional silk route via Central Asia took a diversion at this time, or a new route through Tamluk over the Himalayas emerged. The exchange of diplomatic missions between the Romans and the Sinhalese in the first century of the Christian era may have been an effort on the part of the Romans to avoid the 'Arabs who arrived on the Island before them,' according to Emerson Tennent, who draws our attention to an implied allusion by Pliny to 'Arabs and Sri Lanka' (Pradines, 2016).

In the first century of the Christian era, literature first frequently discussed Sri Lanka's pearl fishery (Pradines, 2016). When the Persian Gulf's pearl banks were running low and Sri Lankan pearls were very valuable, the country's pearl fishery was at its peak during Pliny's time in Rome. (Tomber, 2008). Therefore, the rulers of the Near East and the Mediterranean region were aware of this country's pearl fishery long before Europeans arrived in the East in the 16th century. Even Ptolemy mentions the pearl trade. The Phoenicians, the forerunners of the Arabs, replaced the Greeks and Romans as the major maritime and economic powers in the Arabian Sea through the Gulf of Aqaba. Therefore, finding a direct or indirect route to Sri Lanka's pearl deposits is not something that these shrewd Semitic navigators could have accomplished. When dealing with the Arabs, Venetian and Genoese traders mention Taprobane (Sri Lanka). According to "20th-century Impressions of Ceylon," the Moors and ancestors of the Arabs seem to have excelled over other people in their capacity to endure being submerged while involved in diving

activities. The Moors placed second behind the Arabs among the four nations that participated in pearl diving. (Pradines, 2016).

The pre-Islamic Arab tradition must be extremely ancient indeed, dating back to pre-Christian days, for the Arabs and later the Moors to thrive in this business. As one of the most important maritime hubs in the South Asian region, Mantai in the north of the island has been considered to have played a significant part in this Arab-Sri Lankan trade. The Chola invasion of this nation approximately a millennium ago seems to have corresponded with its decline and eventual abandonment (Pradines, 2016).

Archaeological investigations by Boake (1887) and Hokan (1928) significantly contributed to establishing Mantai's significance. Boake's previous discoveries of Far Eastern glazed pottery, Near Eastern glass, and a variety of beads made of glass, shell, and cowries were confirmed by later excavations by Shanmuganathan in 1951 that also turned up Chinese and Islamic porcelain ware. All of these archaeological finds offer credibility to the literary reference of Mantai in Suntharamurti Nayanar's sixth-century epic, which is cited in Boake's Report (Pradines, 2016), which emphasizes the economic splendor of cosmopolitan Tirukkestisvaram - Mantai.

Mantai may have been the island's busiest port when Cosmas Indicopleustas noted it in the 6th century AD. There may have been a Nestorian Christian community in the harbor city of Mantai. This branch of Christianity originated in Eastern Rome and thrived there, especially in Syria, which was a part of Byzantium; this accounts for the prevalence of Near Eastern items. Whatever name they went by, pre-Islamic Semites may have visited Mantai often. Following the waning of Roman dominance in the region during the sixth and eighth centuries, Sasanian control over marine activity grew significantly. It is possible that Mantai port was the location of a Persian

outpost in Sri Lanka at this time, according to references (Pradines, 2016).

It is conceivable that the Persians, along with their Arab neighbors, who converted to Islam in the early eighth century, controlled the silk trade from China. Archaeological findings at Mantai suggest that the Arabs traded in the area with the Persians (Sasanians) and Tang China. The Near East, South India, and Tang China have been identified as the origins of these discoveries, which are dated to the 8th through the 11th century. Foreign traders presumably established permanent residences there. Early Kufic tombstone inscriptions (Elupitiya inscriptions, Puliyantivu inscriptions, and the one at Thirukeswaram) discovered in Mantai and the Mannar District are suggestive of Arab settlements (Rifai, 2021).

The Persians, Arabs, Chinese, and East Africans seem to have played a significant part in this sea and land trade that connected China with the Near Eastern nations, sharing the trade with the Indians from Gujerat and Bengal and the Malays to the farther East. Indicators of the interconnectedness of the land and oceanic silk routes, in which the Sri Lankan port of Mantai played a significant role from pre-Islamic times until the 10th century, include similarities between materials at Mantai and those in other parts of Asia, such as those at Nishapur only the overland route, at the Siraf Port in the Persian Gulf, and Eilat on the Āqaba Gulf. Legend has it that the Chola invasion at the end of the eleventh century unexpectedly brought an end to this port's prosperity (Rifai, 2021).

An important turning point in Arab-Sri Lankan relations would be the exchanges between Sri Lanka and Islamized Persia, Persianized North Indians, and their many countrymen and the Negroes of the East African coast. When this conglomeration of Persians, Arabs, and Abyssinians—all Islamized and speaking the Arab dialect—maintained a dominating position on the maritime silk route of Afro-Asia in the ninth and tenth centuries, it was often referred to as "Arab." It also

controlled the region around India. Muslims ruled over trade in the ninth century over the whole maritime route from the Red Maritime and the Persian Gulf to Canton (Fernando, 1997).

The well-protected ports of Southern Arabia and the Gulf served as hubs for East-West commerce that connected the world's overland and maritime silk routes in addition to serving as transit places and entrepote. And despite being a tiny island, Sri Lanka became an equally important connection between Hadramaut and the Far East due to geography. Ports in Sri Lanka and South Arabia were used to store and re-export goods from China, the Eastern Archipelago, and the Subcontinent. Hadramaut was in charge of the strategic location on the marine highway between East and West Asia, which was bordered by the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Additionally, it was connected to the overland caravan route that traversed Mecca, Medina, and Wadi Shiran on its way north to the Mediterranean Sea. Additionally, the ports of South Arabia were linked to Cathay (China) to the East through Persia and the ancient silk route across Central Asia. They also connected via the Sulaiman Range passes that go to Pakistan in northwest India. Before Bartholomeusz Diaz and Vasco de Gama discovered the Cape route, this commerce was completely under the jurisdiction of the South Arabian kings through whose territory the interconnected caravan routes went (Yusuf, 1970).

By 1453, Mohammed II's assault on Constantinople succeeded, and after the Battle of Panipat in 1526, Berber authority over India had been firmly established. The reunification of the traditional commercial routes as a consequence of the Islamic wars greatly increased trade. Merchants followed soldiers and sailors, who were later followed by pilgrims, preachers, and holy people. As a consequence, Arab and Islamic cultural influences were eventually brought about via their international caravan routes, which were primarily motivated

by financial motives. The rise of Arab and Muslim dominance in trade that followed, notably in Asia and the Far East, will next be shown. After the seventh century, Arab commercial activity in Asia and Sri Lanka had a significant role in the growth of Islam and the political domination of Muslims in Asia. Piracy and brigandage are barriers to the expansion of commerce. It demands the protection of persons, property, and transportation routes. They can only come if they have a lot of focused power. Muslim dynasties were able to ensure their safety for a brief period (Munasinghe, 2017).

Furthermore, via their commerce activities, these Arab immigrants entered the interior during the second phase. Muslim Saints and Mystics may have journeyed to this area while posing as hermits and joining the throngs of pilgrims that came from North India, Persia, and Arabia. The Farsi-inspired writing on the Balangoda cave wall and the Adam's Peak rock both provide evidence for this. According to legends preserved by Ibn Battuta, Abu Abdulla-al-Kafifi, a well-known Persian Saint who lived in 982 AD was the pioneering leader of the first caravan of Muslim pilgrims (the latter is Darwesh, Duniya Mohammed in Persian, which means a wandering mystic; Mohammed refers to the Messenger of God (Rifai, 2021).

The records of Ibn Battuta from half a century later (1344 AD) (Hussain, 1953) testify to the supremacy of Arab trade in this region and Sri Lanka at this time. Following that, Arab communities began to grow in prominence from Colombo to Galle. As a result, Ibn Battuta was able to visit several of these cities on his route to Galle, pausing at Beruwela along the way, where it is reported that he paid a visit to the tomb of a Persian saint (Hussain, 1953). The cordial reception he got from the Tamil and Sinhala kings is further proof that there were Muslims. Arya Chakravarti, the king of Jaffna, allegedly talked to Ibn Battuta in flawless Persian. The regional trade languages of the period may have been Persian, Tamil, and

Chinese. Before Islam was introduced to this nation by the first Arab inhabitants in the region, trade, and business were the primary drivers of ongoing connections between Arabs and Sri Lankans. The strong commercial links developed into stronger cultural ties before Islam arrived.

The Arabs themselves did not have a nation-state before the advent of Islam. Islam is to be credited for bringing the tribes together to form a unified nation with a goal and giving them the stature of a civilizing force. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that economic concerns dominate Sri Lanka's continuous contact with the Arab world. Muslim merchants had established a colony in Ceylon before the seventh century came to an end. These Muslims maintained commerce and cultural contacts with Baghdad and other Muslim countries while maintaining peaceful, thriving settlements along Ceylon's coast. Notably, the Abbasid Caliphate flourished at the same time as the conventional era of Sinhalese hegemony. (Kiribamune, 2003).

Thus, this pre-Christian interaction between Sri Lanka and the Arab world, which may have been limited to commerce simply (Perera, 1951), developed into a cultural and religious bond that reached its zenith in the 14th and 15th centuries AD. In addition to hurting the Arab immigrants in this nation, the fall of Baghdad in the 13th century AD, the subsequent chaos in Iran and North India, as well as the beginning of European intervention in Asia in the 16th century AD, all contributed to the deterioration of relations between the country and the Arab territories. These Arab settlers likely became the basis of the Moor Muslim community in Sri Lanka because the early Arabs were attracted to this island by its alluring trade goods and vessel maintenance facilities, and because a sizeable portion of them had settled down primarily in the ports and made the island their home away from home. They were not adhering to a foreign religion when they embraced Islam; rather, they were adhering to a faith that originated in their own country and had been embraced by the vast majority of Arabs. Additionally, it is thought

that many Hashemite Arabs immigrated to this nation with their families throughout the first century of Islam to avoid persecution by the Umayyads (Kiribamune, 2003).

The Arab conquest of Sind in 710 AD is related in some manner to the Arab presence on this Island, and historical crosscurrents in this area give significant insight into the Arab-Sri Lankan connections. The narrative that follows is taken from Tennent's Ceylon. Beladory, who lived in the court of the Caliph of Baghdad in the ninth century, relates the odd circumstance that an attack by Indian pirates on a group of Muslim women, the daughters of Arab traders who had died in Ceylon and whose families King Dathopatissa II (700 AD) was sent to their homes in the Tigris Valley, served as a justification for Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq, to order the first invasion of India (Dewaraja, 2000).

The earliest reference to Muslims in Ceylon, according to Codrington (1924), occurs in the seventh century. Western parts of the island have yielded gold coins from Egyptian and other Asian kingdoms throughout that time, mainly during the 12th and 13th centuries. The most important lures were the country's priceless stones, pearls, and ivory, along with the wind patterns and vagaries of the weather that drove them to seek anchorage in Sri Lankan ports. The island's pearls, precious stones, ivory, and spices, according to legend, have drawn tourists from far and wide. Trading relationships with this island were established by early peoples such as the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Persians, and Arabs. They called it the "Island of Gems" or "Jazirat-al-Yakut," among other names. In the eighth century, Chinese seamen started to compete with the early merchants, and the Arabs, more so than the others began to show a keen interest in Ceylon (Gunawardhana, 2003).

Sri Lankan Muslims from the 7th century onward

The peaceful infiltration and settlement of Muslims from Arabia and other regions of the Muslim world marked the beginning of the long history of Muslims in the nation. This introduced

to the country new types of cultural practices, including religion, art and architecture, law, and traditions. (Mohan, 1985).

Before the Portuguese and Dutch arrival, Muslims in Sri Lanka were prominent traders, claims Nuhman (2007). They lost their economic strength due to the influence of the Portuguese and Dutch, who also expanded Christian authority. Muslims were severely persecuted, particularly under the Portuguese. Muslims were compelled to resume small-scale commerce, such as farming, fishing, and gem-making. However, Muslims had become a prominent socioeconomic community on the island by the fifteenth century AD (Azeez, 1986).

Sri Lanka's Muslim Ethnological Perspective

Early Islamic antiquity consists of traveler's accounts, Islamic money, a few dispersed tombstones, and a few Arabic inscriptions. However, certainly, the pre-Islamic seaborne trade between South and Southeast Asia and the Middle East had a role in the development of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka. Early visitors to the island were both Arabs and Persians (Ali 1981; Effendi, 1965; Kiribamune, 1986). Muslim Arab traders from ports on the Red Sea and the Gulf began to control commerce across the Indian Ocean with the Arabization of the Arabian Peninsula in the early 7th century AD and the subsequent conquest of Persia. The Muslim impact on the shores of South India and Sri Lanka from the 8th century AD onwards was predominantly Arabic in culture and commercial in intent, in contrast to the Persian and Turkic conquests of North India which produced substantial nations and empires. It was a component of the same historical process that resulted in Southeast Asia's islands adopting Islam (Wink, 1990).

The Muslim population of Ceylon is divided ethnographically into two main groups and several smaller groups as well (Azeez, 1960). The

majority of Muslims are Moors and Malay, with minorities including Arabs, Persians, and Afghans, as well as Sinhalese, Tamil, and Burgher converts and Muslims of other nationalities. This thesis' major focus is on the Moors. Firstly, however, the name Moor has to be explained. First of all, it is one of the terms used to refer to the vast majority of indigenous Muslims in Ceylon. Among the others, the names *Conahar* in Tamil and *Marakkala Minissu* in Sinhala are more often used. The Sinhalese and Tamils sometimes refer to Muslims using epithets such as *Tambi*¹, *Nana*, and *Kakka*².

The Muslims, on the other hand, often dislike these usages because they believe they reflect contempt. In Tamil, a particular subgroup of the Moors is referred to as *Cammarkarar* and *Hambankaraya*, respectively. We will go through the definitions of these two names later on. The word "Moor" has well-known etymological roots. Its name is derived from the Latin word *mauri*, which was used to refer to the populace of the Roman province of Mauretania, which covered the modern-day countries of Western Algeria and North-East Morocco. (Ali, 1984).

The Spanish name *Moro*, which is derived from the Latin word *mauri*, was used to refer to the Muslims who occupied Spain and Morocco after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century AD (Ali, 1984). Tennent (1860) claims that the Portuguese "borrowed" this phrase in the sixteenth century and "bestowed" it on the Arabs and their descendants, who were already well-established as traders in every port along the Asian and African coasts. The Muslims of Ceylon were referred to as "Mouros" by the Portuguese historian Fernao De Queyroz because "they... were from Mauritania" (De Queyroz, 1975). As a result, the name Moor was created by

¹ The Tamil term for younger brother is *tambi*. However, Europeans in Ceylon, especially the British, misinterpreted it to mean any travelling trader. The "*Sinhalese Tambeys*," "*Moorman Tambeys*," "*Bombay Tambeys*," "*Brahmin Tambeys*," and "*Madras Tambeys*"

were among the classifications given by them. "Tambeys of Ceylon" may be found in The Chambers Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Art, no. 781.

² *Kakka* is also a Tamil word for crow but among the Muslims of the Tamil Districts it means an elder brother.

anglicizing the Portuguese word, which was originally the Spanish word Moro. (Majul, 1962).

The Muslim community did not give it its ethnic approval until the last quarter of the 19th century as a result of a speech delivered by the Tamil member P. Ramanathan in 1885 at the Ceylon Legislative Council. This 16th-century designation, which was "previously unknown among the Muslims themselves," was popular in colonial political circles. While addressing the council on the "Mohammadan Marriage Registration Ordinance" of that year, he made a point about the Tamil ancestry of the Moors of Ceylon. In a presentation he gave to the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland three years later, he expanded on his theory (Ali, 1984).

Despite having some elements of realism (Mahroof, 1995), Ramanathan's argument posed a danger to the community's ambitions of electing a Muslim member to the Legislative Council (De Silva, 1973). He said that since all of the Moors in Ceylon spoke Tamil and were descended from Tamils, it was not essential to have a separate Muslim member. As a result, it was necessary for prominent Muslims like M. C. Siddi Lebbe (1838–1898), a pioneering Muslim journalist and reformist in Ceylon, and I. L. M. Abdul Azeez (1867–1915), a journalist and intellectual, to show that the Moors were an entirely different race with Arab origins. Ramanathan's nefarious agenda was opposed by the Muslim Nesan newspaper published by Siddi Lebbe among others. However, the battle was won when M. C. Abdul Rahman was chosen by Arthur Gordon, Ceylon's then Governor to serve as the Legislative Council's first Muslim member (Barron, 1988).

However, from today's perspective, the most significant outcome of this incident is not that the Muslims were elected to the Legislature, but rather their steadfast clinging to the name Moor, which later led Ramanathan to implore the Legislative Council "not to deprive them of the pleasure and honour of that name." (Leathard, 1990). After the Ceylon Citizenship

Act was passed in 1949, it at last found a place in Ceylon's body of law.

However, it is unclear from its literal meaning if the word *marakkala minissu* refers to Mauritians, Graeco-Romans, Arabs, Indians, or even Malays who all arrived in Ceylon by boat. Nevertheless, in actual use, it has evolved to signify in Sinhalese the same ethnic group as the Tamil *Conakar* and the English name *Moor*.

According to Ramanathan (1916), the terms *hamban* in Sinhalese and *campan* in Tamil are supposed to have descended from the Malay word *sampan*, which similarly refers to a small boat. Therefore, linguistically speaking *hambankaraya* and *cammarkarar* must refer to the same people as *marakkala minissu*. But whereas the last is used to denote all the Moors, in general, the first two are employed to refer only to those "Mohammedan immigrants from the east coast of India . . . not permanently settled in Ceylon . . . (who) do not, as a rule, bring their wives and families to the island . . . [but] sojourning in it for a year or two at a time for purposes of trade ... return periodically with their savings to South India (Ramanathan, 1916).

Confusion develops when the names and populations of two Ceylonese towns—Sammanturai on the east coast and Hambantota on the south—are contrasted. The latter contains a significant Malay colony that was established under the early nineteenth-century authority of the first British Governor Lord Frederick North, and the former is a thickly populated Muslim town that is almost totally under the control of the Ceylon Moors. (Taeuber, 1949). According to legend, the names of these two settlements have Malay roots. However, none of these locals are referred to as either *Cammarkarar* or *Hambankaraya*. If so, it is a historical puzzle as to how and why the Indian Moors came to have a name with Malay roots.

However, Ramanathan's explanation that *Cammarkarar* derives from *camankarar*, which means traders in goods (Ramanathan, 1888),

does not explain its Sinhalese counterparts. Further details beyond those offered by etymology alone are needed to adequately explain the ethnology of Ceylon Muslims. Since the Portuguese popularized the word, some of Sri Lanka's Muslim population has been referred to as "Moors," including populations derived from Arabs and Persians. While all Moors are Muslims, not all Muslims are Moors. Malays, Afghans, Bhoras, and Memons are among the substantial numbers of other ethnic groups that practice Islam; there were also important Khoja and Coast Moor settlements in the recent past. (Shukri, 1986).

Many Muslims have chosen Tamil as their primary language of communication, particularly those of Arab and Indian descent. Even though Islam abhors caste differences, some Muslims do so in Sri Lanka. On the island, different regions speak differently, dress differently, have different marital and social norms, and have different eating habits. Muslims are unified in their allegiance to Islam despite the variety within their group. Muslims made up a significant share of Sri Lanka's population in the 1980s, and their social structure is quite distinct from other populations according to Azeez (1986). They reside in their towns or town lets that are mostly Muslim, where their homes are clustered alongside shops and nearby mosques. Additionally, they have a highly developed kind of traditional medicine known as Unani (Azeez, 1986). In the Western region of Sri Lanka there is a lot of animosity between the Muslim and Buddhist groups. Other ethno-cultural groups now living on the island alongside Muslims are the Borahs, Memons, and Afghans. For the sake of commerce, they came from India to Ceylon in the 18th century AD, and are comparatively underrepresented compared to other ethnic groups there.

Chronology of Muslim Heritage in Sri Lanka

Pre-Islamic Period

Rom/Byzandian The Greek and Roman participation in trading and sailing in the Western Indian Ocean, and their connections with Sri Lanka, have been examined to some extent by historians and archaeologists (Boperachchi, 1990). According to Mahāvamsa, King Pandukabhaya allocated some areas in Anuradhapura for Yonas (Ārabs) in the pre-Islamic period. (Srima Kiribamune, 1986).

Persian Early Islamic glass fragments from the Late Roman period have been found in the Abhayagiri vihara in Anuradhapura (Bouzek, 1993).

Islamic period

Early Islamic period: 7th-10th centuries Dating from the beginning of the 10th century to the second part of the 7th. The majority of the 306 West Asian shreds in Anuradhapura ASW2 date to the 9th to 10th century and include lusterware, counterfeit luster pottery, white tin-glazed ware, lead-glazed wares, and blue-glazed ware that were produced in Iraq and Iran during the Abbasid era. Siraf and Kilwa both have analogs for each of them. A Sasanian or Early Islamic dating, corresponding to the 5th to 9th century, is also given to the buff pottery.

Middle of the Islamic era: the 11th and 12th centuries Mantai's Ārab settlement and harbor. Inscriptions on medieval Kufic tombstones found in Mantai and the Mannar District, such as those from Thirukeswaram, Puliyantivu, and Elupitiya, suggest Ārab colonies.

Late Islamic period Late Islamic period: 13th -16th centuries Al-Haj Abu Uthuman led an embassy that Puvanakabahu, the king of Yapahuwa, sent to the Ārab court in Egypt in 1283. Ārab merchants were present in Sri Lanka during this period, according to Ibn Batuta's (AD 1344) records.

Analysis

The development of an increasingly sophisticated ocean-oriented economic market

in the Indian Ocean is seen from around the Christian era. The Greek and Roman participation in trading and sailing in the Western Indian Ocean, and their connections with Sri Lanka, have been examined to some extent by historians and archaeologists (Boperachchi, 1990) the great increase in this commerce during the classical period. Spurred mainly by the demand from Rome, was channeled through three main routes to the Mediterranean region. Goods shipped from Sri Lanka, whether local in origin or transshipped from further east, seem to have traveled mainly along two routes: the sea-and-land route along which goods were transported by ocean up to the Persian Gulf and Iraq, and thence overland to Palmyrah and the Mediterranean region, Carrying of fir quantity of trade, especially under the aegis of the Parthians, and the ocean route via the Red Sea described later by Cosmos Indicopleustus and Procopius in the 6th century. The third route was the overland silk route plying between China and the Mediterranean, too far north to have received an input of goods from Sri Lanka.

This trade expanded into the Axumite (Ethiopian) and Sasanian (Persian) controlled trade during the later classical period (4th -6th centuries AD), operating from the Red Sea and Persian Gulf regions respectively. It is clear that western Indian Ocean sailing, whether from the Red Sea region or the Persian Gulf. Generally ended at the west of the Indian subcontinent in the immediate pre-Islamic era. From this port, sailing to the eastern zone was undertaken mainly by Sri Lanka and Indian ships.

Settlement Perspective of Muslims in Sri Lanka

This study, which focused on how Sri Lanka's Muslim history can be established via archaeology, has at the same time shown the potential advantages of a multidisciplinary research approach. The gaps in the knowledge of Muslim archaeology and Muslim heritage, in general, were an important cause of concern when this investigation first began. Due to the dearth of literature on Muslim archaeological

investigations in Sri Lanka. Arab trade settlements were eventually built along the coast, which is now supported by archaeological evidence of Islamic pottery in Mannar and even farther inland, as shown by the Abayagiri excavations (Pradines, 2016). Numerous Kufic inscriptions from the 9th to the 11th centuries, including those from Puttalam (Pomparippu inscriptions), Mannar (Puliyantivu, Vettiamarippu, and Ellupitiya inscriptions), Trincomalee (two Trincomalee Kufic inscriptions found nearby), and Colombo (inscriptions of Imam Abu Bakaya), confirm the longevity of early Arab settlements. There has been speculation that an Arab cemetery may have been located near Chapel Hill in the Trincomalee Dockyard. According to the Anuradhapura Puttalam Road and the Puttalam-Kurunegala Road Kufic inscriptions, the number of these settlements should have grown as a result of the expansion of Arab trading activities and the spread of Islam in this region (Shukri, 2003).

Arab trade was only allowed to take place in a small area to the west of the Straits of Malacca as a result of the Canton revolt in 762 AD, which resulted in the mass murder of foreign merchants, the majority of whom were Persians and Arabs. The course of events that followed this transformation made Sri Lanka well-known as a hub for trade between the Chinese, Arabs, Persians, East Africans, and Indians. The political collapse of foreign businessmen in China had no impact whatsoever on regional commerce. Just a few entrecoates in Southeast Asia were affected, including the Indonesian archipelago, the Malayan Straits, South India, and Sri Lanka. This was followed by the Arab empire's dissolution in the century that followed (Prematilleke, 2003).

The internal conflicts that followed the death of the great Caliph Haroun-al-Rashid (786–809) negatively impacted the political unity of the Arabs. After Baghdad was destroyed by the Mongols in the 13th century, Arab-Muslim trade ceased to be dominant, but Muslims of various nationalities united under a

single faith continued their commercial endeavors alongside Hindus, Malays, and Chinese who also participated in the oceanic trade of this region. Hadramaut had the advantage of connecting the most important overland and sea routes in the globe, whereas Samarkand, Ghazni, and Farghana had been significant focal points interconnecting the ancient caravan commerce from China, South Asia, and West Asia. The Arab supremacy of South Asia was also intimately related to Arab interaction with Sri Lanka up to the fall of the South Arabian kingdoms. With the growing dominance of Europe and its exploration journeys around the start of the 15th century, this hegemonic position of the ancient world in Afro-Asia fell apart (Siriweera, 2003).

These exploration journeys were a part of the European Renaissance, or general enlightenment, which in the 17th and 18th centuries sparked a scientific and economic revolution that cemented Europe's supremacy over the rest of the globe. Because they were accommodative and friendly in their business interactions with the many nations Afro-Asia, Arab, and Muslim kingdoms held the hegemony of the maritime trade routes in the East. The Portuguese had declared their presence at the Gates of India in 1526, and they would be followed by the Dutch, French, and British. This was as Babur the Moghul was finishing off his crucial victory at Panipat. Albuquerque had the bright insight to see that the only way to govern the Indian Ocean was to seize control of the Arab Oceanic Empire from the Moluccas to Hormuz. Sri Lanka, which is located in the middle of the Far East and the East Coast of Africa, became an essential connection in their plan. Additionally, this strategy was the first time that military conflict was a factor in the marine and commercial ties of Asian countries. As a result, Arab-Sri Lankan ties deteriorated as European dominance over the island grew through time starting in 1505 (Prematilleke, 2003).

The vast expanses of Steppes and deserts in Afro-Asia had been "waterless seas" for millennia, which prompted the development of caravan commerce. The replacement of the ocean for the Steppe as the primary means of verbal communication was a revolutionary Western creation (Siriweera, 2003). This sounded the death knell for Asian dominance in commerce and the condition of cultural coexistence in the multiethnic oceanic area, and it was inevitable that this would have terrible effects on ties between the Arabs and the Sri Lankans for the five centuries that followed.

Conclusion

Muslims are thought to have arrived in Sri Lanka in the 7th century, primarily as Arabian traders who conducted business in the Indian Ocean region and married local women. However, recent archaeological investigations in Anuradhapura and Mantai reveal that Arab-origin pottery and other artifacts have been discovered that date back to the 4th century and continue until the 13th century. This evidence suggests that people of Arab origin had established themselves in Sri Lanka and were participating in trade and commerce for many centuries before the commonly accepted arrival date. The defeat and dissolution of the Roman Empire in the 3rd century created a trade vacuum that Arab and Persian sea traders in Southeast Asian countries subsequently filled, as suggested by historians. The evidence points to Sinhalese kings having had contact with Arabs during the formative period of Islam, and they allowed Arab settlements in Ceylon to protect their trade and business interests.

Innovative Aspect:

The Historical and archaeological evidence suggests that Muslims arrived in Sri Lanka as early as the 4th century and were involved in trade and commerce. The arrival of Muslims in Sri Lanka is generally associated with Arab traders who engaged in trade and commerce in the Indian Ocean and married local women. Archeological investigations carried out in the Anuradhapura and Mantai areas show that

Islamic pottery and other archaeological traces have been found dating from the 4th century to the 13th century. This evidence suggests that Muslims had settled in Sri Lanka and were involved in trade and commerce for several centuries before the commonly assumed arrival of Muslims in the 7th century.

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