

In the sea of influence, a world system perspective of the Sri Lankan sea ports (period from the eleventh to the fifteenth century AD)

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Abstract:

This research focuses on how trade and economic activity in the Indian Ocean has affected Sri Lanka. In that case, it is not possible to conduct research on Sri Lanka as a single country, as it is related to the functioning of the entire Indian Ocean in the international arena of the trade economy. Also, the world system analyzes that have been published so far on the trade economy of the Indian Ocean have been presented by external researchers and Sri Lanka is automatically included in the systematic analysis of all these researchers. However, as mentioned above, based on the research conducted on Sri Lanka in relation to the impact of trade activities in the entire Indian Ocean on Sri Lanka (Kekulawala, 2017). We hope to explain this research paper in relation to Sri Lankan marine ports from 11th to 15th century A.D. Historical and archaeological evidence reveals that Sri Lankan ports became more active during this period and established trade relations with China, Southeast Asia, India and the Arabian Sea. However, the study of pre-research world systems show that the developed areas of the Indian Ocean have changed over time. The importance of Sri Lankan ports in each period was assessed based on the demand and supply of raw materials, climate change in the Indian Ocean, and hegemonic changes. From the 11th to 15th century, changes in the functioning of Sri Lankan seaports took place due to changes in the overall global economic flow (Kekulawala, 2017). Accordingly, this research paper focuses on identifying the major world systems operating in the Indian Ocean during the relevant period.

Keywords- *Hegemony, world system, seaports, Bay of Bengal, Arabic Sea.*

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Introduction

World System Theory

This article will focus on Sri Lankan contribution to the functioning of the world system and its interpretation of the nature of inter-social relations developing on an economic basis in the Indian Ocean. The Research Question is how many developed areas in the Indian Ocean were important for the functioning of Sri Lankan trade relations from 11th to 15th centuries A.D.? Wallerstein is considered the founder of the world system. In 1974, he analyzed theoretical ideas under the modern world systems that could be used to describe the structures of transatlantic reactions that took place between distant nations in the Indian Ocean. After 1500 AD, he was able to present a new perspective on the world economy based on world capitalism and the division of labor around Europe (Wallerstein, 1974). Gills and Frank also point out that the history of world systems in 1991 and 1993 goes back to the third millennium BC (Gills and Frank 1991; Frank and Gills 1993, 2000). Gills has made a concerted effort to summarize the developmental conditions represented by world systems into three main frameworks (Gills, 1993) of such as cycles, crises, and hegemonic shifts. Explaining the political changes in different states, Gills pointed out that the socio - economic rhythms generated by the competition in world systems reflect the changes in each socio - economic sphere and resource. He further attempted to show that it is more justifiable to understand the functioning of the ancient world as a mere interaction between systems (Gills 1993).

Wallerstein's world systems are divided into three sub-regions, where the entire economy is divided into core, semi and periphery. Here the goods and services of the peripheral area reach the central region through the semi-peripheral areas (Wallerstein, 1974: 406-415) (Map 1). But one could argue that Wallerstein's theory dates back to the 15th century AD. According to Wallerstein, European capitalism originated about 500 years before the 15th century AD, with the decline of the feudal system (Shannon, 1996: 25). In here Sri Lanka is pointed out as a peripheral region. The 12th-century map of Wallerstein presented by Wallerstein illustrates that urban growth in Europe was not a one-time event, but the result of a long-running process (see Kekulawala, 2017). The map systematically shows population growth and their concentration around cities, further indicating that population growth is a major factor in measuring demand for goods. Accordingly, the period discussed in this research paper includes Wallerstein's hypothesis of the 11th-15th centuries AD. However, Braudel comments on capitalism further, pointing out that capitalism was growing in Europe by the 11th century AD. It reads,

“Innovation cities of the middle ages old strained to make profits and were shaped by the strain. Contemporary capitalism has invented nothing. By at least the twelfth century. everything seems to have been there in embryo... .. bills of exchange, credit, minted coins, banks, forward selling, Public Finance, loans, capitalism, colonialism- as well as social disturbances, sophisticated labor force,

class struggles, social oppression , political atrocities (Braudel, 1984) in Frank & Gills 2000: 17 ”.

In 1989, Abu Lughod cited Wallerstein’s criteria to describe the world systems of the book “Before the European Hegemony” (Singh, 2003). Abu Lughod’s hypothesis here is that the 13th century AD was a turning point in world history. She further points out the systematic relationship between China and Northwestern Europe as the best time for the international world economy this century (Lughod, 1989: 64). Her hypothesis about the inclusion of Sri Lanka in the two systemic regions of the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal should be considered here (Map. 2).



Map 1- Wallerstein’s World-Systems Theory (Wallerstein, 1974)

Chaudhuri’s systematic analysis of the Indian Ocean trade civilization from the beginning of Islam to the 1750 A.D. (Chaudhuri, 1985) should be examined here. Thus, Chaudhuri presents a trilogy of major systems that further show the change in these regions along the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the China Sea. In this analysis of the systems, Sri Lanka has been included at one time in the Bay of Bengal region and at other times in the Arabian Sea region, but a comprehensive description of Sri Lanka is required.



Map, 2 the 13th century world-system

Map based on Janet Abu-Lughod’s work (Lughod, 1989)

The above systems analysis emphasizes that the political dominance of Asia, the way in which the demand and supply of independent cities in Central Asia are functional, and environmental factors have influenced world systems operating in the Indian Ocean in the past. However, it is important to note that Sri Lanka, an island nation in the Indian Ocean, has been deeply concerned about the use of external factors operating in the Indian Ocean to shape its economic and political context. The relocation of the capital to Polonnaruwa and from there to Kotte, and the increasing importance of ports in each period, should be investigated as to whether external factors in the Indian Ocean were more active than internal factors. It is necessary to look in depth at what happened in the Indian Ocean and its suburbs from the 11th century to the 15th century outside Sri Lanka. It is important to focus on the developed nature and trade relations of Sri Lanka's coastal ports.

Result and Discussion

Evidence of Sri Lanka's naval ports adapting to trade activities in the Indian Ocean has been found since ancient times. The Sri Lankan port was an ideal hub for ships sailing through the monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean. The period relevant to this research paper, from the 12th to the 15th century AD, has been found to be important in the naval port of Sri Lanka in the trade between the East and the West. Examples of this can be found in local literature sources, foreign records, inscriptions and archaeological excavations.

The ports of Ceylon have been involved in trade in the Indian Ocean since prehistoric times. Archaeological excavations at Manthai by Carswell and Prickett in 1984, especially with the discovery of a Nestorian cross from the Sasanian period (224-651 AD) and a Persian inscription, further confirm its significance (Carswell and Prickett, 1984). The port was an ideal place for ships sailing across the Arabian Sea on monsoon winds. Islamic ceramics found in Manthai date back to the middle Ages. According to Tempoe (Tempoe, 1989, 100), these are similar to those found at Shiraf and Sohar ports of Arabian sea. Excavations at the port have also uncovered fragments of glassware dating back to the early Middle Ages (Ibid). But our hypothesis shows that there is little evidence of Arabic ceramics at the port since the 11th century AD. The items found are kept in the Archaeological Museums in Anuradhapura, Yapahuwa, Galle and Buduruwagala. Prickett points out that the northwestern Manthai port in Ceylon was temporarily used by the middle of the 11th century AD (Prickett, 1980, 22). But based on these facts, one cannot argue that Arab trade relations with this port did not exist from the eleventh century to the thirteenth century. After the 11th century AD, there is ample evidence that Arab traders engaged in trade with ports such as Chilaw, Negombo and Colombo on the west coast of Sri Lanka, as well as ports on the east and south coasts of Sri Lanka. According to Yamamoto, most of the Chinese ceramics dated to Manthai date back to the 9th and 10th centuries AD (Yamamoto, 2004: 61).

The ceramics found in the Alahana Pirivena are clear examples of the development of trade relations along the eastern ports of Sri Lanka. By the 11th century AD, trade relations between Sri Lanka and China had developed, as evidenced by the large number of Chinese ceramics found at the Alahana Pirivena. A comparative study of Chinese ceramics found in Alahana Pirivena with Chinese ceramics found in Anuradhapura explains that the ceramics found in Polonnaruwa are significantly more unique than the ceramics found in Anuradhapura (Prematilleke, 1990: 235). All but a few items of Islamic artefacts found at the Alahana Pirivena site have been identified as Chinese ceramic pots. This monastery complex belongs to the 12th century AD and belongs to the reign of Parakramabahu the Great (1153-1186 AD). It is very clear that these goods were brought to Polonnaruwa, the second capital of Sri Lanka, through the Eastern Maritime Ports of Sri Lanka.

A study of the naval ports pointed out to the Lankathilaka Inscription (Paranavitana, 1960: 16-26), which dates back to the third year of the reign of King Bhuvanekaba IV (1272-1284 AD) during the period when the Gampola Kingdom was the capital of Sri Lanka. This article mentions a donation made by the Merchant Society for the construction of the Lankathilaka Temple. Accordingly, this article contains the importation of goods from 18 countries through nine ports in Sri Lanka (ibid). This commodity circulates in the country through *thavalam* and returns lightly from the ports. Import or export commodities were taxed according to their value and clear information on how an interchange trade network was revealed. This reveals how Sri Lanka maintained trade relations with many parts of the Indian Ocean by the 13th century AD. In addition, the terms *Velupura* (ports), *Pattanana* (coastal area) and *Katikait-tavalam* in Sri Lankan Tamil inscriptions illustrate the relationship with the international market. For example, all three verses are mentioned in the Viharahinna Inscription (Karashima, 2002:249).

“The eulogy of the Viharahinna inscription states that possessed 500 charters called *Vira-Sasana*, were brave, who are adorned by Lakshmi.....eighteen *Pattanam* (costal area), thirty- two *velapura* (ports) and 64 *katikait-tavalam*”.

This inscription is dated to 1150 A.D., it was clear that Sri Lanka was a very famous trading hub for international trade. There is no doubt that this situation developed and functioned in parallel when the Lankathilaka inscription was written in the 13th century. Here we need to emphasize with which areas the Indian Ocean trade relations took place.

Manthai, Gokanna, Vankalai and Uraturei or Kayts are some of the unique ports located in the northwestern and Eastn Coast of Sri Lanka. Literary sources of the medieval period also mention the ports of *Gotapabbatha*, *Dondra*, *Nilwala Thitta (Matarata)*, *Mahavalukagama* (Weligama), *Gimha thiththa* (Gintota), *Bhimatiththa* (Bentota) and *Kalathitta* (Kalutara). The Deduru Oya is easily connected to the Chilaw port on the west coast of Sri Lanka. That is why the Deduru Oya is so significant in making connections with the *Dakkinadesa*. The period from the 13th to the 15th century AD is important for the trade economy of the kingdoms of Dambadeniya, Yapahuwa, Kurunegala and Gampola,

the capitals of Ceylon. This was due to the expansion of trade in the Arabian Sea after the 13th century AD. Waththala, Kaluthota, Beruwala, Colombo, Bentota, Dondra and Panadura ports are important here. The Culavamsa describes all the ports in Sri Lanka (except the Bentota port) from the *Kalathitta* (Kalutara) port to *Mahanagahula* present day Ambalantota (Cv LXXX: 80-81).

The Nikaya Sangrahaya mentions that the port of Madupadatittha was important by the 13th century AD (Nikaya Sangrahaya, 23). Nicholas points out that this is now known as Ilupakadavai (Nicholas, 1990: 81). But it is difficult to identify some of the ports mentioned in the chronicles, such as *Manthikaratittha*, *Pulachcheri*, *Balatittha*, *Debarapatan* (Mv: LX: 34; LXXXIII, 17; Pujavaliya, 34-511). There is another port called Pallavanka in the northeastern part of Sri Lanka, which was named Codrington (Codrington, 1939:69). With the selection of Polonnaruwa as the capital by the rulers of Sri Lanka, the importance of the eastern and northeastern ports increased as a developed trade network centered on South Asia and Asia around the Bay of Bengal. For example, the value of the Gokanna may have been particularly important in the Bay of Bengal trade. The Mahaweli River in Sri Lanka flows into the sea from Gokanna or Trincomalee. The Hattavanagalla Viharavamsa (Hattavanagalla Viharavamsa 78) mentions thousands of Chola, Kerala and other hostile people living in Pulasthipura. Silva is of the opinion that the Chola king made connection the port of Gokanna as his eastern port in his trade (Silva, 1959-1973:112).

There is evidence that the Weligama also developed into a very important trading center by the 12th century. Accordingly, traders have arrived at the Mahawalukagama (Weligama). For the convenience of traders traveling in the Indian Ocean, the port on the southern coast of Sri Lanka may have been used for accommodation as well as for the purchase and exchange of merchandise. Mostly Southeast Asian, Chinese and Indian traders have used this port to navigate around Sri Lanka and enter the Arabian Sea. Ships coming from the east of the Indian Ocean through the Nicobar Islands, the natural harbor on the southern coast of Sri Lanka was an ideal stop for entry into the western Indian Ocean. In particular, it is clear that the location of the Kushtarajagala statue near the Weligama port was based on trade relations. South and Southeast Asia is important as an area where the Mahayana Dhamma was prevalent. Accordingly, the Weligama port was maintained as a place of attraction for traders from the East Indian Ocean to the west of the Indian Ocean. According to the Kalyani inscription, a ship sent to Sri Lanka by King Bames arrived at Weligama (Buddadatta 1959: 23). According to the Thisara Sandeshaya, Paravi Sandeshaya and Kokila Sandeshaya poems, Weligama was a very prosperous port by the 15th century AD (Thisara Sandeshaya, V.43; Paravi Sandeshaya, 103-104; Kokila Sandesaya, 55-57).

By the beginning of the 13th century AD, the ports of Wattala, Negombo, Puttalam and Chilaw were important for maritime trade. The port of Chilaw is said to have been a shipyard in the 12th century AD, and Paronavitana describes how the Cholas docked at the port of Chilaw based on a story from the Mahavamsa (Paronavitana, 1929:385).

Dambadeni Asna indicates that foreigners were staying at this port (Dambadeni Asna: 62). According to the Nikaya Sangraha, in the middle of the 14th century AD, the Aryan Chakravarty made temporary accommodation at Colombo, Wattala, Negombo, Puttalam and Chilaw (Nikaya Sangrahaya, 36). Ibn Battuta's report also gives clear information about some of these ports. When Battuta arrived in Sri Lanka, he accidentally landed at the port of Battala. At that time the houses of the Aryan emperors could be seen. After his ship arrived at the port, the sailors were reluctant to land there. At the time of Battuta's arrival, Aryan Chakravarty was examining pearl diving resources (Ibn Battuta, Vol. IV, 79). By the 13th century AD, the development of the Arabian Sea region, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the developed eastern coastal areas of Africa may have contributed to the development of the South-western, western, and north-western ports of Sri Lanka.

Urathota or Kayts port can be identified as a place where Arab trade took place in the past. The Nainativu Tamil inscription, written in the Dravidian language by King Parakramabahu the Great (1153-1186 AD), describes how the cargo ships arrived at the port of Urathota (Indrapala, 1963:63). These merchant ships come from the Arabian Sea and are the best evidence of the progress of the elephant and horse trade during this period. The inscription location at the port facing the Arabian Sea indicates the connection between the western and north-western ports of India and the northern ports of Sri Lanka.

By this time, not only were merchants of various nationalities involved in the administration of Sri Lanka, but it is clear that this international trade was controlled by the King of Sri Lanka. Among these are important facts about the Arabs. The Culavamsa mentions that King Parakramabahu I (1153-1186 AD) ordered the ministers to make chiefs for the *Vessa* and *Yavana* (Cv:76: 264). Also, King Javaka invaded Sri Lanka twice in the 13th century AD for economic as well as religious purposes. He is from Tamralingaya or Malay Peninsula. However, the book *Yalpana Vaipava Malai* shows that under the then king Vijayabahu I (1055-1110) the *Yavakar* army lived on a salary from the king (*Yalpana Vaipava Malai*, 33). It is clear that the ruler of Sri Lanka has made a huge income from these trades. This revenue was derived not only from coastal ports but also from inland trade (Paranavitana, 1960:16-26). The discovery of a part of an inscription in Arabic dating to the 13th century AD on a rock reveals further evidence that Muslims lived in the area. This inscription mentions a blessing from an Arab scholar. Sri Pada, located in a gem-rich region of Sri Lanka, had become Muslims attraction area at that time (Alexander Johnstone, Vol.I:Part, I).

There is information about Colombo, a very important port facing the Arabian Sea by the 11th century AD. The location of this port was important for the accommodation of ships during the monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean. According to Nicholas, by the 10th century AD, Colombo had become a Muslim-dominated place (Nicholas, 1959:121). Ibn Battuta reports that Kolomthota is one of the best cities in Serendib. Five hundred Abyssinians served here under a ruler known as Jalasthi (Ibn Battuta, 223-224). Abyssinians are slaves in Africa who are involved in cargo loading and unloading. It means that they were participating in trade activities in the Indian Ocean. Ibn Battuta called the

ruler Jalasthi “Prince of the sea”. By this time the Muslims had reached to Colombo and built their warehouses here (Silva, 1951:22). Accordingly, Colombo or Kolomthota can be pointed out as another port for exchanging commodities to the western Indian Ocean or the Arabian Sea. It is revealed that Beruwala was another port where Muslims occupied. According to Sandesha poems, Beruwala is known as a Muslim trading center and a destination for foreign ships. The narrator describes “*Baburun*” as an Arab woman living in this city (GS, V.104, 105). The narrator describes ‘Baburun’ as an Arab woman living in this city (G.S.V.104, 105). Dambadeniya Asna refers to “*Barbaran*” (DA 34). Kokila and Gira Sandesha point to the Muslim women *Yonliyan* and the Mahavaligama inhabited by Muslim settlers (K.S., V 59 and G.S., V.104). Also, the Trilingual inscription in Galle, written in Persian in the 15th century AD, shows the Muslims who traded at this port (EZ Vol.III: No.36). The linguistic trilogy mentioned in the inscription further indicates that the port was a frequent haunt of Chinese, Muslim and South Indian merchants by the 15th century AD.

Conclusion

Based on the data obtained from the study of pre-systems and relations with the ports of Sri Lanka, the analysis confirms that Sri Lankan economic relations with the two major systemic regions of the Indian Ocean were active from 11th to 15th century AD. The first is the Bay of Bengal, which includes eastern and southern India, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaya, Java and Sumatra. The other region is the area centered on the Arabian Sea. After the 13th century, a large trade network was created, especially around the Arabian Sea. These include the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the north-western and western parts of India, and the eastern parts of Africa. We acknowledge that the shift of the capital to Polonnaruwa by the 11th century AD and the shift of the capitals to the southwest by the beginning of the 13th century centered on these two main world systems. Thus, the two systems can be identified on the map (Map 3).



Map 3 - Systems determining the economic and political background of Sri Lanka (11th to 15th century AD) (Kekulawala 2017)

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