

Tale of the Colombo-Kandy Road (A1) construction: beside travelling and transportation

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Abstract

The subjected road of this study is called Colombo-Kandy A1, which was an alternative to the early Colombo-Kandy route which passes through Hanwella, Ruwanwella and Balana. After defeating the Uva-Wellassa uprising in 1818; the Governor of the Ceylon Lieutenant General Sir Edward Barns determined to construct a road (Colombo-Kandy A1) from the capital city of the country to the newly conquered up country. The objective of this research was to explore the impact of Colombo-Kandy A1 road in the formation of Socio-economic condition of Sri Lanka from 1820 to 1840. The study revolved around major contributors of the construction process and subsequent uses of the road as an instrument for socio-economic upward mobility. The research problem was “what were the impacts of the road construction to the socio-economy of the country other than its obvious functionality of travelling and transportation”. Predominantly, data was collected using maps, autobiographies, biographies and travelers’ diaries written in the 19th Century. Further, books and papers published on the British Colonial period of Sri Lanka have been referred. It was identified that under the visionary guidance of the Governor of the Ceylon, four other personals namely, Lieutenant General John Fraser (1790-1862), Don Solomon Dias Bandaranayaike (1774-1859), Thomas Skinner (1804-1877) and Captain Dowson (?-1829) led the road construction. It is observed that these officers contributed for the construction through their different capabilities, eventually the local leader could establish as one of most influential political families of the country. In 1830s the first ever road constructed by the British in the Ceylon became an instrument of socio-economic upliftment for other social classes in the low country. There were six bridges along the newly constructed Colombo-Kandy road. Toll rents and Tavern income at those locations became a source of prosperity for the rising class. In Conclusion, A1 road not only connected two geo-locations; but also confronted communities and provided opportunities for socio-economic upward mobility.

Key Words: Road construction, Social mobility, Transportation

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