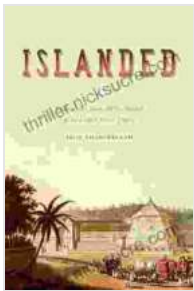


Britain, Sri Lanka, and the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony

The Indian Ocean has long been a crossroads of trade and empire, and its shores have witnessed the rise and fall of many great civilizations. In the 19th century, the British Empire emerged as the dominant power in the Indian Ocean, and Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon) became one of its most important colonies.



Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka, and the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony by Sujit Sivasundaram

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 23132 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 381 pages
Lending : Enabled



Sri Lanka's strategic location at the southern tip of India made it a vital refueling stop for ships traveling between the Middle East and East Asia. The British were also attracted to Ceylon's abundant natural resources, including tea, rubber, and spices.

In 1815, the British East India Company defeated the Kandyan Kingdom and established colonial rule over the entire island. The British introduced a

plantation economy based on tea and rubber, and they also built roads, railways, and schools.

However, British rule in Ceylon was not without its challenges. The British faced opposition from local nationalists, who resented the loss of their independence. There were also economic problems, as the plantation economy was vulnerable to fluctuations in world commodity prices.

In 1948, Ceylon gained independence from Britain. The new nation faced a number of challenges, including ethnic tensions between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities. However, Ceylon (renamed Sri Lanka in 1972) has made significant progress in the years since independence, and it is now a stable and prosperous democracy.

The Establishment of British Rule

The British first arrived in Ceylon in the 16th century, but they did not establish a permanent presence on the island until the 19th century. In 1796, the British captured the Dutch colony of Ceylon, which had been established in the 17th century.

The British East India Company initially administered Ceylon, but in 1802, the island became a crown colony. The British introduced a number of reforms, including a new legal system and a system of land tenure. They also began to develop the island's infrastructure, including roads, railways, and schools.

In 1815, the British defeated the Kandyan Kingdom, which had ruled the interior of the island. The British conquest of Ceylon marked the beginning of a period of colonial rule that would last for over a century.

The Impact of British Rule

British rule had a profound impact on Ceylon. The British introduced a plantation economy based on tea and rubber, and they also built roads, railways, and schools. These developments led to economic growth and improved living standards for some Ceylonese.

However, British rule also had a negative impact on the island. The plantation economy was vulnerable to fluctuations in world commodity prices, and it led to the displacement of many Ceylonese farmers. The British also discriminated against the Tamil community, which led to ethnic tensions.

The Struggle for Independence

The Ceylonese people began to resist British rule in the early 20th century. In 1919, the Ceylon National Congress was founded, and it quickly became the leading force in the independence movement.

The British government initially resisted the demands for independence, but it eventually agreed to grant Ceylon self-government in 1948. Ceylon became a republic in 1972, and it adopted the name Sri Lanka.

The Legacy of British Rule

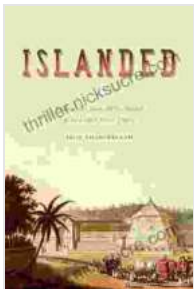
The legacy of British rule in Sri Lanka is complex. On the one hand, British rule led to economic growth and improved living standards for some Ceylonese. On the other hand, it also led to the displacement of many farmers, ethnic discrimination, and the loss of independence.

The British Empire officially ended in 1947, but its legacy continues to shape Sri Lanka today. The island's legal system, education system, and

infrastructure all bear the mark of British influence.

The British Empire was a powerful force in the Indian Ocean for over two centuries. Its presence in Sri Lanka had a profound impact on the island's history, both positive and negative. The British introduced a plantation economy, built roads and railways, and established a modern education system. However, they also discriminated against the Tamil community and led to the loss of Sri Lanka's independence.

Sri Lanka gained independence from Britain in 1948, and it has since become a stable and prosperous democracy. However, the legacy of British rule continues to shape Sri Lanka today, and the island's history is a reminder of the complex and often contradictory nature of empire.



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