

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE JAFFNA SOCIETY DURING THE DUTCH COLONIAL ERA: AN ANALYSIS OF DUTCH ARCHIVES

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Abstract

The Dutch played a pivotal role in the history of European colonialism in Sri Lanka, governing from 1658 to 1796. During this period, they administered the three Commanderies of Colombo, Galle, and Jaffna, with the Jaffna Commanderies being the most significant among them. Jaffna and its neighboring municipalities experienced considerable transformations in culture during the Dutch colonial era, including adjustments to geographical names, literary styles, and religious customs. The Dutch organized the legal system, instituted new administrative frameworks, and encouraged the dissemination of Christian literature. In addition, their presence helped to shape Jaffna's cultural heritage by encouraging a resurgence of Hinduism and the growth of Christian literature. Dutch reports serve as valuable resources for understanding the cultural transformations within Jaffna society. These documents reveal various aspects of Jaffna's identity, providing insights into the political, economic, religious, and social changes that occurred. Consequently, this study aims to assess the importance of cultural changes in Jaffna society as reflected in Dutch reports. Employing both historical and contextual analysis, the research utilizes primary and secondary data. The findings will underscore the relevance of Dutch reports and uncover several previously unrecognized facts, ultimately benefiting the Jaffna community.

Keywords: Dutch language, reports, Jaffna region, Dutch rule, cultural transformations.