
The challenges faced by Sri Lankan Muslims in their economic practices in the British Period (1796 – 1948 A.D)

M J F Nilfa^{1*†}, M H A Munas¹, M R F Ahana¹

¹ *Department of Arabic Language, Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language South Eastern, University of Sri Lanka*

Abstract

Though Sri Lanka is an independent country once it was colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British. The economic field can be pointed out as an area where changes occurred during that period. The different monopoly at that time was under the Muslims. Then the purpose of this research was to find out if there were challenges to the economy of the Muslims after the arrival of the British. The review of this research was conducted using secondary sources. What was possible was that the British worked with the Muslims to gain a trade monopoly and the Sinhala rulers who were jealous of the friendship between the British and the Muslims interfered with the economic activities of the Muslims. It can be confirmed from this research that the Muslims faced economic challenges during British rule.

Keywords: British, Muslims, Economic, Sri Lanka

1 Introduction

Someone could mention Sri Lanka's history, which has a long history. Our actions from today and our words from tomorrow will both go down in history. Despite the fact that Sri Lanka was once home to many wealthy individuals, an authoritarian government prevented Sri Lanka from becoming a dictatorial state. Similarly, the research question could be stated as how Muslims dealt with economic difficulties during the British administration., Sinhalese kings ruled over Sri Lanka, which was ruled as an imperialist state by the Portuguese, Dutch, and English. The British Empire controlled many countries for a very long time under the colonial system. They

*Corresponding author.

†E-mail: fathimanilfa80@gmail.com

ruled for more than 133 years (1796-1948), until the end of the year. Prior to the British taking control of Sri Lanka, the Dutch were in charge of the country's coastal regions.

In 1796 AD, the British overran the Dutch East India Trading Company's possessions in Sri Lanka's coastal regions. (Basnayake,2005) King Sri Wickrama Rajasingha oversaw the kingdom of Kandy in the highlands during that time, when the British were occupying Sri Lanka. King Rajasingha desired to expel the Dutch, and the British's entry made it easier for him to do so. The main objective of the invaders who invaded Sri Lanka was to seize control of the trading activities in Trincomalee, where the natural port was located, as well as the local spices and pearls. The British placed great importance on Trincomalee port since it is a natural harbor and is close to India. (Basnake,2005)

Sri Lanka had a cosmopolitan society at the time. There were Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and Christians. particularly with the presence of Muslims in Sri Lanka for trade settlement. Around the ninth century AD, with the patronage of the local rulers, they were large There are pieces of evidence that there were settlements in the coastal areas. According to former archaeologist Dr. Balendra, the Arabs have a history of more than 2000 years. [?] The main sources of income for the Muslims in Sri Lanka were trade and agriculture, whereas the other ethnic groups relied on pottery and agriculture for a living. Muslims have significantly contributed to the integration of Sri Lanka into the global economy.

Sri Lanka is a significant center of commerce. Trading its orientation, A center had been formed, which periodically served as a warehouse or a location for the production of economic items. These are the natural resources that were available when the economy was based on production. was in the actual land. Gems are a wonderful resource. The distinctiveness of the gem in this conger the country is well known for its diamonds because it is featured in tales like Arabic. This an excellent illustration of how much displaying. (Devaraj,1994)

Before the arrival of the British in Sri Lanka, the economic condition of the Muslims living in Sri Lanka was the profitable and favorable condition.

William Geiger and Pilini, a famous writer, have also made similar comments. "Through them, the ancient relations established by Muslims with this country are well understood. At the same time, with the advent of Islam, they worked under the Islamic flag with disciplined commercial qualities. Fulfilling contracts properly, trading only what is good and approved (Halal materials), not hiding goods, not deceiving inferior goods, not buying and selling stolen things, and prohibiting the trading of usurious transactions so that extraordinary wealth accumulates between the poor and the rich. Methods have been introduced in the Islamic religion. They were very important in promoting fairness in business. Impressed by them, the non-Islamic peo-

ples started close and strong relations with the Arabs. The best example of this is when King Pandukabhaya (377-307 BC) allocated some land in his capital Anuradhapura to Arab traders. (Lona Devaraja, 1994).

It has been confirmed that the Muslims of Sri Lanka had a very valuable and different position even before the British rule. In 1518, when Lope de Soros de Albageria came to Sri Lanka and built a fort in Sri Lanka due to the order given by the Portuguese, the Muslims strongly objected to the king. Doing so is an example of the fact that they had a monopoly on trade in this country and that they were a powerful group at that time. Dutch national Ryclef van Goens (1663-1675) wrote about Muslims in his statement that “the Muslims of the island is an idol for the profit of our trading company” and understand the extent of the monopoly of Muslims in the trade at that time. In this way, the Muslims were also engaged in economic advisers and missions to the king, which would bring benefits to trade and industry.” (Husain, 2018).

From this evidence, we can see that the economy of the Sri Lankan Muslims was a stable and profitable society even before their arrival.

1.1 Objectives

- To identify the economic hardships that Muslims experienced under the British administration. (1796- 1948 A.D)

1.2 Research Questions

What were the economic difficulties Muslims encountered throughout the British era?

2 Methodology

Hypothesis testing uses the qualitative method because of research is library-based and collects primary data from secondary sources to meet its goals. The study has used secondary data gathered from the literature, such as earlier journal papers, books, and book chapters, to fulfil the aforementioned research aims.

3 Literature Review

Shukri wrote “Muslims of Sri Lanka Avenues to Antiquity.” In regard to this research, the chapter Muslims under British rule in Ceylon, which covers the period from the fourteenth

century to 1948, provides information about Muslims in Sri Lanka and their activities during that time.

Lona Dewaraj wrote the book "The Muslims of Sri Lanka: One Thousand Years of Ethnic Harmony." Additionally, hundreds of Muslims and their activities from 900 to 1915 were mentioned in that book.

Wikramaratne wrote "Contrastive Nature of British Rule in Sri Lanka." Here, the developments that took place in Sri Lanka while it was ruled by the British are examined.

"Problems of a minority community was written by M. Sameen and it includes the challenges faced by Muslims in the past.

Ukku Bandara Karunananda is the author of "North Central Province under the British (1900–1931)." The government, religious and cultural education, health, and economic circumstances of the residents of the North Central Province were described there.

Basnayaka wrote "Sri Lankawe sistacharya," a work in which the political, religious, social, and economic developments that occurred under the British administration are also covered.

Mahroof wrote the book "Exploring Sri Lankan Muslim Selected Writing," which discusses Sri Lankan Muslims' educational system, Islamic law, language, medical system, and precious stones.

Ukku Bandara Karunananda is the author of " Brithanya Palana Samaye Sri Lankawe Aarthika Ithihasya (1796-1948)" The economic situation in Sri Lanka during the British rule is discussed in detail and an idea can be obtained about economic background of that time in relation to this research.

"Problems Muslims in Sri Lanka confront" In a book by. Naufal, the difficulties faced by Muslims in various spheres are covered.

Muslims have helped to develop Sri Lanka's economy, according to A. Husain's book "The Spring of Seyilaan the contribution Sri Lanka."

"Problems of a minority community was written by M. Sameen and it includes the challenges faced by Muslims in the past.

Ahamed Husain Farook published the journal Article " Religious And Economic Impacts Of European Colonialism On Sri Lankan Muslims" This study suggests that the activities of European colonialism towards Sri Lankan Muslims and the impacts of these activities on the social development and progress of Sri Lankan Muslims. Through these studies, the friendship between the British and the Muslims can be identified.

The economic contribution of Muslims in Sri Lanka prior to the rolling period of 1815 AD M.N.M. Minaz, S.MM. Mazhir, M. J.F. Nilfa, and M. A. B. Ahamad published the study. The economic contribution of Muslims has been covered in this.

Although several books, articles, and studies on the history of Muslims in Sri Lanka and their contributions to the country's economy have been written, there is no in-depth discussion of the difficulties Muslims experienced in boosting Sri Lanka's economy during the British era. Therefore, it is expected that the examiner will research this subject

4 Discussion

Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural society. Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and Christians live there. The history of each nation's settlement in Sri Lanka is different from the others. According to our research, the Muslims involved first settled in Sri Lanka when they came to Sri Lanka for trade purposes. It is impossible to say exactly when they arrived. At the same time, when the Portuguese came here, the Portuguese recorded that there were Muslim settlements in Puttalam, Halawata, Madampe, Negombo, Colombo, Kalutara, Beruwala, Maggona, Payagala, Alutgama, Bentota, Galle, Weligama, Matara. [?] The Muslims who created a long history in Sri Lanka became stronger day by day at the economic level. Although Sri Lanka was ruled by the Portuguese and the Dutch and the English, the Muslims continued their business activities. Here the last colonial rule in Sri Lanka can be called British rule. In Sri Lanka controlled by the Dutch East India Trading Company Sea belly area, It was taken under the British in 1916. (Basnayake: 2005) And this can also be called a long-term colonial rule. One hundred and fifty- two years of British rule in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) i.e from 1796-1948 A.D Marked an era where Ceylon as a Colony of the second British Empire, gradually advanced to a nation of self-governing independent dominion under the British Common Wealth of Nations. [?]

Then, when he came to Sri Lanka in 1796, the Muslims of Sri Lanka did business and made Sri Lanka famous internationally. By selling the goods of the East in the West, the East became famous in the West. In, Sri Lanka became famous in the West even before the arrival of the Western nations to the land of Sri Lanka (Azeez, 2007).

This can be pointed out as a reason that led to the invasion of Sri Lanka because the western nations got an understanding and impression about the resources available in Sri Lanka. Both external and internal immensely benefited the country. There can be little doubt that the country's surplus wealth in the olden days came largely by way of foreign trade which needless to say was in the hands of the Muslims. (Husseein, 2018)

The main reason why the Westerners invaded Sri Lanka was because of the natural harbor, export crops, and many other resources. Then it is not a small thing to acquire power from one colony. Likewise, the British first had to spend a lot of money to occupy the coastal areas of Sri Lanka.

Due to the need to capture the port of Trincomalee, the British rushed to capture the coastal areas of the island. Because the British had to spend a lot of money for this, their expectation was to gather resources from Sri Lanka to meet those expenses. (Basnayake, 2005)

The British settlers later led to mass cultivation and profit-making of u, which was cultivated as a plantation. Before the arrival of the British, coffee cultivation was a common plantation in Ceylon, but in 1822 George Bird cultivated it as a commercial crop. After the decline of coffee cultivation in 1848, export crops such as cocoa, tea, coconut, and rubber were introduced (Basnayake, 2005).

Thus, the British were able to increase their income from export crops because the Muslims introduced spices and merchandise in the early days. When the British came to Sri Lanka and after that, the Muslims were engaged in an independent trade. The economy between the British in the Kandy kingdom and in the coastal areas was led by the Muslims. (Sameem, 1997) During the 152 years of British rule, there were changes in all areas, especially the economic areas. Many economic policies were introduced through the Colebrook Cameron reforms.

According to the recommendation of the Colebrook Cameron Constitution established in Sri Lanka in 1833, there were great changes in the political, economic, and legal rules of Sri Lanka. (Sameem, 1997) The reason the British were involved in the Sri Lankan economy was to cover their expenses. After the British occupied the coastal areas of Sri Lanka, there was a very good demand in Europe for Kurudas of the Islam type to cover the expenses of the English trading companies. (Basnayake, 2005)

4.1 The friendship between the British and Muslims

The British came to Sri Lanka and the relationship with the Muslims in this country continued. To the extent of that friendship, even if they were against the Muslims, war was declared. At a time when all the inhabitants of the Kandyan provinces took arms against the British, the Muslims maintained their loyalty to the British. [?] And the British and the Muslims did different things together. Was coconut. In the mid-19th century, they were almost the only section of the native population who drove the valuable culture with the English. [?] The Muslims got a lot of support from the British and in some cases the tax system that the Muslims had

was abolished and treaties were made. More the proclamation of 2nd March 1818 promised the payment of full compensation to every Moor who suffered person and property during the Great rebellion. [?] The British government took the Moor community into their confidence by abolishing the traditional “Uliyam” or the Capitation Tax levied on Moors. [?]

The British, who had gained a commercial superiority on the island in 1795, took over the Dutch colonies in 1802. In 1815 they captured the center of the Kingdom of Kandy and for the first time made all of Sri Lanka a British colony. Sri Lanka was under British colonial rule for one hundred and fifty-two years (1796-1948). Muslims, a minority community under British rule, underwent a change in political, social, economic and cultural processes during this period. Seeing the skills and leadership of Muslims in trade, the British carried out some activities to gain the support of Muslims. As a matter of fact, he changed some policies implemented by the Portuguese and Dutch and lifted the bans, abolished the prohibition to take land for Muslims in Colombo in 1833, and gave more importance to Muslims, who were subjected to constant oppression and persecution during the Portuguese and Dutch colonialists, than other communities in Sri Lanka. These activities led Muslims to recover themselves gradually. (Shukry:1986)

4.2 Economic challenges faced by Muslims during British rule

During this period, the Muslims contributed a lot to economic development and contributed to other fields. There were other factors that were favorable to the Muslims from the beginning of British rule. From 1820 the plantation industry opened new avenues of employment. And economic advancement and these opportunities were seized by the enterprising Muslims and certain low-country Sinhalese as well. As long as the Sinhala monarchy lasted the Muslims remained its staunch allies but after the British took over in 1815 the Muslim party because of British inducements tried to throw in their lot with the latter. (Dewaraga, 1994)

Thus, there is much historical evidence of economic barriers to the Muslims by the Sinhalese. Overall, there was an enterprising contribution to the 19th-century economic development of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, they have a problem confronting the community which arose partly from competition from foreigners and partly from the local reaction to Muslim economic dominance. [?]

From the British coast to the Kandy kingdom, the economy was run by Muslims. The Sinhalese, who were jealous of Muslim dominance, imposed economic barriers on the Muslims. In 1803 there were rifts between the others and the kingdom of Kandy (Sameem, 1997). Due to these rifts, the Sinhalese had to face many challenges to the Muslim traders Some of the Muslim

traders forcibly took the goods of the idols and kidnapped them and the Muslims faced many hardships. [?]

Thus, due to economic rifts, Muslims had to leave the area where they were engaged in business activities.

Green loyal to the British throughout the great rebellion of 1817-18 modes became the greatest benefactor. Received they are a reward in a proclamation dated 2nd March 1818. All moors in the Kandyan provinces were excluded from the executive and judicial jurisdiction of the Kandyan chiefs and it was arranged that all cases to which they were a party should be tried by British officers only, while the appointment of their headman was vested in the Resident. [?]

During British rule, Muslim traders were engaged in their free trade but had to pay tribute. As Moors complained to the Governor that the Sinhalese Chiefs extorted certain articles such as salt from the Muslims without payment and they would like to have a Muhandiram of their own race, Browning Hadjee an influential member of that community. [?] Although relieved from the Capitation Tax in 1830, Moors were still subject to Rajakariya where the Sinhalese headmen supervised their services. It was brought to the notice of Colebrook that in Galle the Moorman were oppressed by the Headmen and worked without pay or even the subsistence allowed. Criminal prisoners were subject to corporal punishment and reduced to poverty and distress by being taken from their occupations. [?]

Thus, the British played tricks on the Muslims declared war on them from Peni, and conquered the Uplands in 1815. (Basnayake, 2005) It has also been confirmed that the Muslims have been in good company based on their cunning and strategic reasons. Sri Lankan Muslims were deprived of their economic power, made into political orphans, and made into a backward group in education (Sameem, 1997). Muslims have been used as pawns for economic convenience. As in India the Muslims became a powerful weapon for the British; an ally who could be used to their advantage to undermine the power and influence of the king of Kandy. (Dewaraga, 1994)

Thus, it can be studied that the Muslims faced some economic challenges during British rule.

5 'Conclusion

Even before the arrival of the British in Sri Lanka, Muslims have been involved in the economy of Sri Lanka and after the arrival of the British, they have continued their economic activities in the same way. And the British provided many economic concessions externally, but they used the Muslims internally. After the arrival of the British, they launched the economic wel-

fare program for Sri Lanka in many areas such as highways, irrigation, and intercropping, and engaged in economic activities with the Muslims. The main reason for this is to gain monopoly power in trade. Thus, it can be reviewed from this research that Muslims have been challenged economically by the upland Sinhalese who was jealous of the British and Muslims doing business in harmony.

References

- [1] H. Basnayka. *Sri Lankawe Sistachaty -3*. Colombo:As Godage Sahodaryo.
- [2] M.L.A. Cader. *Exploring Sri Lanka Muslims: Selected Writings of M.M.M. Mahroof*, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka.
- [3] L. Dewaraj. *The Muslims of Sri Lanka*. The Lanka Islamic Foundation, Colombo.
- [4] M. Hussain Farook. Religious and economic impacts of european colonialism on sri lanka muslims. *Journal Iksad*, page 498– 504.
- [5] A. Hussein. *Springs Of Saylan*. Neptune Publications (Pvt) Ltd, Battarmulla.
- [6] U. Karunananda. *Brithanya palana samye sri lankawe aarthika ithihasya 1796-1948*.wallampitiya: As godage sahodaryo.
- [7] U. Karunananda. *Brithanya Yatathe Uturumada Palatha 1900-1931*. As Godage Sahodaryo, Wallampitiya.
- [8] Ameen M.I.M. *Sri lanka Pratisanskarana Walta Muluowan*. Hemmathugama, Hasnath.
- [9] M. Minaz, S. Mazahir, M. Nilfa, and M. Ahamed. The contribution of muslims towards the economic. *Sri Lankan Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*,13.
- [10] M. Sammem. (1997).*Oru sirupanmei Samoohathin Pirchchinigal*. Rizana Publishers, Colombo.
- [11] M. Shukri. *Muslims of Sri Lanka Avenues to Antiquity*. Jamiah Naleemia Inst, Sri Lanka.
- [12] K. Silva. *A History of Sri Lanka*. Penguin Books, India.
- [13] U. wikramarathna. *The Conservative Nature of The British Rule of Sri Lanka*. Navrang,Boosellers and Publishers, India.