

COLOMBO: A LANDSCAPE IN TRANSITION
A STUDY THROUGH COLONIAL MAPS AND IMAGES



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Abstract

Colombo: A Landscape in Transition - A Study Through Colonial Maps and Images

Colombo has seen an accelerated programme of urban renewal in the period since 2009 and work is underway to improve the living environment of the city. Steps have been taken to enhance Colombo's existing green spaces, to restore its colonial architecture and to revive old waterways and in some cases, to expand them.

Given this environment of rejuvenation of the city of Colombo, and that the focus of many of these projects are relics of the colonial period such as the Dutch Hospital in the Colombo Fort, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine the transformation of the landscape of Colombo, and sometimes its suburbs, during approximately four and half centuries of colonial rule. The lens through which this change is observed is the pictorial representation left behind by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonisers. The changes due to the transfer of influence to each colonising power and the needs of the indigenous people is observed in the resulting hybrid landscape.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1: The urban renewal of the city in contemporary times.

Chapter 2: The arrival of the Portuguese and the construction and fortification of the fort of Colombo.

Chapter 3: Dutch urban planning and traditions of landscaping. The Dutch contribution to the field of botany.

Chapter 4: Changes to the City during the British Period. British streetscapes in the Fort and other significant areas in Colombo.

Conclusion: Sri Lankan landscape traditions and the effect of colonial influence.

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