

Early Settlements of Eastern Province in Sri Lanka

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The modern Eastern Province includes the Trincomalee, Baticaloa and Ampara districts and covers a total area of 11,996 km². It is 15% of the total land of the Island (Department of Census and Statistics 2006). The area extends to the narrow belt of South-Eastwards from Kumana in the lower basin of Kumbukkan Oya up to the Kokilai lagoon in North-Eastern coastal belt. The western boundary of the area includes the parts of the Yan Oya, Mora Oya, Maduru Oya and Kumbukkan Oya that flows across the dry zone peneplain to the eastern coasts.

The area includes the historical administration division in the Anuradhapura kingdom called *pacina passa* in its northern area of the study and in the southern area of geographical boundary of the river Mahavali is ancient *Robana* kingdom. The information available from inscription and literary sources help identify different administrative and territorial divisions. The eastern part of the Senanayake Samudra up to the eastern coastal area is ancient *Deega[vapi] Mandala* and the area of around the Maduru Oya, ancient *Malvatu Mandala*.

The area has undulating Precambrian crystalline rocks down to the eastern Vijayan Complex which in the eastern coastal region developed into quaternary deposits. The geological formation in the eastern coastal belt has influenced the establishment of human settlements in that area. Gokannatittha due to its geographical location has been identified as the main port of the eastern coastal belt in Anuradhapura period to the colonial period. In the undulating plains of the study area were also found several peaks and rock outcrops at intervals rich with

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cultural remains belonging to different periods of Sri Lankan history.

The aim of this study on historical geography is to initially establish the geographical factors that influenced the settlement history in the Eastern Province. The relationship of cultural landscapes and the natural environment has to be assessed to fully understand human activity and the development of a micro geomorphology of a settlement area.

Keywords: geological formation, human settlements, Eastern Province, Rohana Kingdom