

CANAL DEVELOPMENT

Spread of the Canal Network

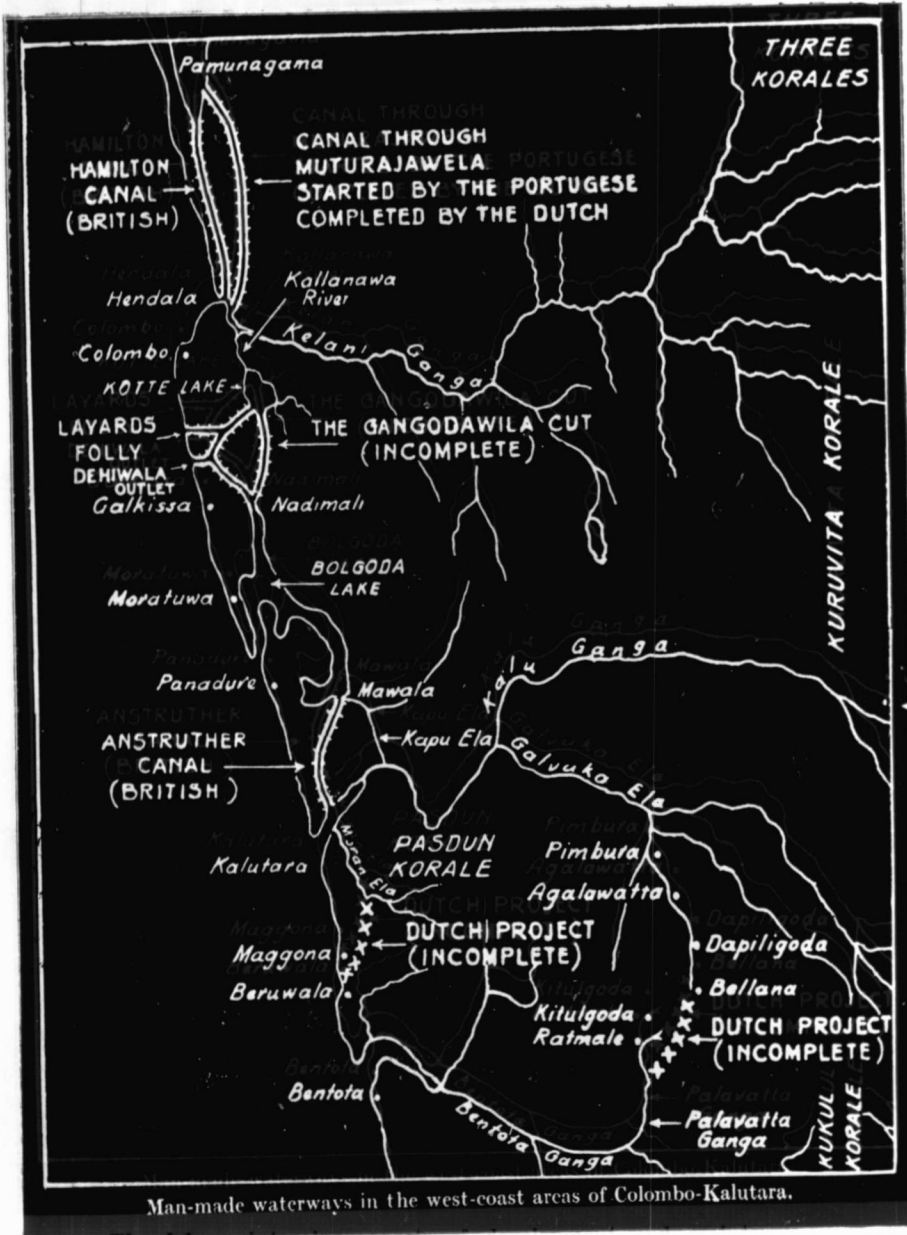
"All but two of the larger rivers of Ceylon have their source in the central mountain mass. When surcharged by monsoon rains, they make a short swift descent laden with sand and alluvium. Gradually losing velocity as they meander over the plains, the accumulation of sand and soil brought down, instead of being carried out to sea, is heaped up and forms bars at the river's mouth. These obstructions force the sluggish riverwaters to flow behind the obstructions they have created in search of new outlets. Thus they form chains of tortuous lakes and shallow lagoons for considerable distances along the coasts. Such conditions are present both on the east and the west side of the Island.

The Dutch saw in these sheltered sheets of water the opportunity to establish lines of water-ways which provided both easy and cheap transport of goods from outlying areas to their ports.

The first canal they probably built was from the Kelani Ganga (north of Colombo) through the Mutturajawela (swampy paddy-growing country) to Pamunugama, (see Diagram). Apparently this project had been started by the Portuguese, but left unfinished. The Dutch completed it, and taking advantage of the Negombo Lagoon to which it led established communications over the 23 miles between their stations at Colombo and Negombo".

SOURCE: Links between Sri Lanka and The Netherlands By R. L. Brohier.

The map shows Man-made waterways in the west-coast areas of Colombo-Kalutara.



Man-made waterways in the west-coast areas of Colombo-Kalutara.

The labour intensive aspects of development and maintenance

