

Historical importance of the trade of horses in ancient Sri Lanka from 6th B.C.E to the 10th C.E

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Sri Lanka's location and its wealth and resources were also the promptings, behind many of foreign invasions. The two Damiḷas, Sēna and Guttaka, sons of a freighter who brought horses hither, conquered the king Sūratissa, at the head of a great army and reigned both (together) twenty-two years justly. As mentioned in the Sri Lankan Chronicles, Tamils came to the island as horse traders. The king Gajabāhu had built a big hall for the horses in the city.

In *Āvāmadāyikā Vimāna Vaṇṇanā* in the *Vimānavatthu Aṭṭhakathā (Paramattha Dīpanī)* when a dhamma word explained the following example has been given. The gruel dāna is worth than one hundred *kahavaṇu*, one hundred horses belonging to the clan of Aśwarata, one hundred chariots and the jewelleries of one hundred thousand women. This may give some indications on the trade of horses. The high breed of horses belonged to the *Aśwarata*. One story in the *Vērañja Kāṇḍa* in the *Vinayaṭṭhakathā (Samantapāsādikā)* mentions that the horse traders have come from the Uttarāpatha in India with the five hundred horses. It is further mentioned that the Uttarāpatha is good for breeding horses.

Strabo on the authority of Megasthenese, states that during the Mauryan period there was a royal monopoly on the ownership of horses. There was an active private trade in horses, though unlike other commodities, it was the king who decided the price of the animal (*Taṇḍulanāli Jātaka*). The horse was not a common possession and only a few chiefs are described as possessing horses and chariots. The *Arthaśāstra* describes that the best quality of horses as those from Kāmbōja, Siṇḍhu, Aratta and Vanayu Kāmbōja. In this research all the aspects are going to be discussed.

Key words:

Resources, foreign invasions, monopoly, commodities, trade