

# DESCRIPTION of the Island of CEYLON.

[Kelly Plante](#) August 30, 2021

CEYLAN, Ceilon, or Zeilan, is an island of Asia, in the Indian sea, on this side of the Ganges, near the Cape of Comori, upon the streight of Manar or Quiloa. It lies in about six degrees of south latitude, and near 200 of longitude; and is one of the most remarkable of these seas: its length being, according to the accounts of the Hollanders, who have measured it the most exactly, about fifty-five leagues, its greatest breadth about thirty, and its whole circumference one hundred and ninety seven. Its figure is nearly that of a pear, or rather of a gammon of bacon; for which reason the Dutch have given the fort Cays, near Jaffanapatam, the name of Hammenbiel, or the Knuckle of the Gammon, a name which is perfectly expressive of the form of the island in that place.

The possession of this island lies between the Hollanders and the sovereign of the country, which is called king of Candi, or Candi-Uda. The first European settlements that were made on it were by the Portuguese, who, not contented with the possession of part of the coast, carried their incursions as far as to the capital, which they burned more than once, without sparing even the palaces or temples; in

short, they rendered themselves so formidable, that they obliged the king to pay them an annual tribute of three elephants, and to purchase peace on many other servile conditions. At length, however, that prince had recourse for assistance to the Dutch of Batavia, who joining their forces to his, entirely beat the Portuguese, and drove them out of all their fortified places, after their having possessed them for near a hundred and fifty years. The monarch, however, was little advantaged by this assistance, which was only intended to procure a like establishment for themselves: for the Dutch, on the conclusion of the war, and more especially after making themselves masters of Colombo, in 1655, positively refused to give up a conquest which they thus saw themselves in the easy possession of: ever since which time they have applied their whole care and diligence to fortify themselves on the coast. Their principal establishments are at Jafnapatam, and the island of Manaar on the north; Trinquemali, and Batticalon, on the east; the town of Point de Galla, on the south; and Colombo on the west. To say nothing of Negombo, and Calpentin, which are two other towns belonging to them, with several forts at the mouth of the rivers and the openings of mountains, for the defence of passes; so that the Dutch may properly be considered as absolute masters of much the greatest part of the coasts of this very extensive island.

*[To be continued.]*

