

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE
SOUTHWEST COASTLINE OF SRI LANKA**

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This study attempts to understand the nature and the rate of coastline changes that have taken place during the past 18 decades by focusing on the chronology of selected coastline segments such as Seenigama, Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna, Piyandigama and Aranawala. Historical maps which belong to 1800 (for some segments), 1840, 1905-

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15, 1917, 1934, 1945 and 1972 were enlarged into a larger scale, then superimposed by using the Kegel reflecting projector and were finally made into polyline maps. The land lost by sea erosion is estimated by a grid system especially for the 20th century, which is the period of the one inch series.

Results show higher progradation rates than aggradation rates. For example, larger headlands such as Seenigama, Midigama, Unawatuna with their long promontaries were destroyed during the 19th century. Aranawala which had a headland in 1840 was eroded and converted into an islet known today as Yakinigeduwa. Defunct headland beaches have lost their equilibrium afterwards and large portions of land have been subsequently eroded. Also extensive sandy beaches and hinterlands with unconsolidated beach materials have been washed by the sea. The total land lost during the 20th century has been computed. The cause of this land loss seems to be due to eustatic changes and resultant altered processes.