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From *Kôvils* to *Devâles*:  
Patronage and “Influence” at Buddhist and Hindu Temples in Sri Lanka

By

Sujatha Arundathi Meegama

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor in Philosophy

in

History of Art

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Joanna Williams, Chair

Professor Patricia Berger

Professor Alexander von Rospatt

Professor George Hart

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## Abstract

From *Kôvils* to *Devâles*:  
Patronage and “Influence” at Buddhist and Hindu Temples in Sri Lanka

By

Sujatha Arundathi Meegama

Doctor of Philosophy in History of Art

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Joanna Williams, Chair

This dissertation examines two types of temples—*kôvils* and *devâles*—dedicated to deities associated with the two main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka: Tamil Hindus and Sinhalese Buddhists, respectively. It studies the relationships between these two temple spaces, as well as their respective histories in medieval and early-modern Sri Lanka, by examining patterns of patronage and visual dialogues between artisan workshops. The patronage of such temples by multiple patrons, such as kings, local rulers, monks, ministers, merchants, and ordinary people, suggests that people of diverse ethnic, religious, and social background were all key players in the negotiation of cultural and religious boundaries in medieval Sri Lanka. The wall ornamentation, pillars, basement moldings, and doorways of these temples indicate the presence of multiple workshops, which appropriated and transformed South Indian temple building practices; hence, this study also highlights the role of South Indian and local artisans, who negotiated cultural difference by engaging in dialogs across artistic boundaries.

However, *kôvils* and *devâles* have long been viewed in scholarship and popular writings as dichotomous religio-ethnic spaces. Studied in isolation, they have also not been seen as part of the Sri Lankan art historical canon, which is dominated by the standard narrative on the Sinhalese Buddhist majority. My dissertation questions the oppositional binaries of South Indian and Sri Lankan, Hindu and Buddhist, Dravidian and Sinhalese, and invader and native that have heretofore framed the scholarship on Sri Lankan art. Drawing on the deeply connected art-historical approaches of patronage and appropriation, which focus on specific people and their actions, I argue for a more nuanced understanding of these religious monuments, and for a more inclusive Sri Lankan art-historical canon.

The first chapter examines the Hindu temples of Polonnaruva and suggests that Sri Lankan kings, starting as early as the eleventh century, adopted a new ideal of kingship in which the patronage of temples to pan-Indic deities played a central role. The second chapter studies the incorporation of local and pan-Indic deities inside Buddhist temples in the fourteenth century by Buddhist monks and secular elites, and their appropriation of Drâvida-style architecture. The third chapter investigates the patronage of a Saivite temple by a Sri Lankan king and its plunder at the hands of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century—it provides an alternative narrative in understanding the

accusations of heresy against this king. Amidst the apparent hardening in early-modern Sri Lanka of the fluid religious boundaries that existed in earlier periods, the fourth chapter examines the localization of the pan-Indic deity Skanda Kumâra (the son of Siva), who is known locally as Kataragama, by analyzing the patronage and ornamentation of temples to him in peripheral and non-elite contexts. In the epilogue, bringing together the four case studies I presented, I offer a narrative that attempts to map out the shifting identities of *kôvils* and *devâles* in medieval, early modern, and contemporary Sri Lanka.

From Kôvils to Devâles:  
Patronage and “Influence” at Buddhist and Hindu Temples in Sri Lanka

Sujatha Arundathi Meegama

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## Introduction

In a place torn for decades by conflict between two ethnic groups, how does one create an art historical canon that is not solely dominated by the standard narrative on the majority? With the dawn of peace at last in Sri Lanka, is it not time to write an art history that recognizes the contributions of the ethnic minority? To answer these and other questions, I turn in my dissertation to two types of temples devoted to deities—*devâles* and *kôvils*—that are associated with the two main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka: the Sinhalese Buddhists and the Tamil Hindus respectively. According to scholarly and popular understandings, *kôvils* are South Indian temples dedicated to Hindu deities patronized by Tamil Hindus, while *devâles* are Sri Lankan temples dedicated to Hindu and local deities patronized by Sinhala Buddhists. These temples have long been viewed in scholarship as dichotomous religio-ethnic spaces. My dissertation, however, questions these oppositional binaries of South Indian and Sri Lankan, Hindu and Buddhist, Dravidian (i.e. Tamil) and Sinhalese (i.e. Aryan), and invader and native that have heretofore framed the scholarship on Sri Lankan art. While acknowledging the presence of South Indian Tamil cultural elements in Sri Lankan art and Buddhism, this study goes beyond the standard narrative of South Indian “influence” and instead examines patterns of patronage and processes of appropriation in the creation of medieval and early modern Sri Lankan temples. Displacing the aforementioned binary framework and drawing on these two art-historical approaches, I argue for a more nuanced understanding of these religious monuments, and for a more inclusive Sri Lankan art-historical canon.

Sri Lankan art has long been viewed as solely Buddhist and hence Sinhalese. Historically, Sinhalese kings have been seen as the country’s sole artistic patrons, and Buddhist art and architecture (especially wooden architecture) as the national style. This standard narrative owes much to the British colonial project in Sri Lanka, when a so-called “pure” or orthodox form of Buddhism was rediscovered through Pâli manuscripts along with gigantic Buddhas and *stupas* (funerary mounds) from the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva.<sup>1</sup> The Buddhism that was rediscovered at this time was accessed mainly through texts rather than on-the-ground observations of Buddhist religious practice.<sup>2</sup> These texts were interpreted as demonstrating that Hindu influence on Sri Lankan Buddhism was “a recent development and a corruption of pure Buddhism.”<sup>3</sup> In contrast to India, Sri Lanka was posited to be a Buddhist country. Continuing the Victorian fascination with Buddhism, the officially sponsored archaeological projects (both excavation and photography), as well as the unofficial tourist projects, focused on Buddhist monuments. In such an intellectual climate, it is understandable that “pure Buddhism” was also seen to be located in the earlier

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Patricia Berger for helping me discover this idea.

<sup>2</sup> For a more thorough discussion of this textual bias in Buddhist studies, see the review article by Philip C. Almond, “The Victorian Creation of Buddhism.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 22 (1996): 176-180, and Gregory Schopen, “Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism.” *History of Religions*, vol. 30 (1991): 4-15. This situation in Sri Lankan Buddhist studies has clearly been remedied as seen with the works of the anthropologist, Gananath Obeyesekere, and the Buddhologists, Richard Gombrich and John Holt.

<sup>3</sup> John D. Rogers, “Colonial Perceptions of Ethnicity and Culture in Early Nineteenth-century Sri Lanka,” in *Society and Ideology: Essays in South Asian History Presented to Professor K. A. Ballhatchet*. Ed. Peter Robb (Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 106.

monuments.<sup>4</sup> Hence, a foundation was created for an emphasis on the art of the ancient Buddhist centers of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva, while relegating the art of later periods to the background. Although remains of ancient *kôvils* and *devâles*<sup>5</sup> were also discovered within these ancient cities, they too were overshadowed by the larger Buddhist monuments and by the new intellectual framework of the colonial period.

Alongside this Buddhist image of Sri Lanka, historical narratives based on the Pâli chronicles were developed wherein Sinhalese Buddhists became the protagonists and the inheritors of the grand two-thousand-year history of the island. In a groundbreaking early article, John Rogers argues that nineteenth-century histories were predicated on the twin assumptions “that in ancient times there was a great Sinhala civilization, which later went into decline; and that distinct and often antagonistic ethnic groups existed throughout the island’s long history.”<sup>6</sup> Rogers notes that later Sri Lankan writers “failed to question either of these assumptions.”<sup>7</sup> In his subsequent works, Rogers goes on to explore the history of social identities in Sri Lanka, arguing that the British gave primacy to what we now term ethnicity over other social categories such as caste, religion, language, and territory.<sup>8</sup> Comparing British accounts in the early colonial period, Rogers notes the pronounced interest of early nineteenth-century British writers in documenting the origins of the island’s various groups: the Sinhalese were viewed as the main ethnic group, having arrived on the island before the Tamils.<sup>9</sup> In the 1830s, with the discovery of the Pâli chronicles, a new historical framework was created in which the history of the island became synonymous with the history of the Sinhalese.<sup>10</sup> Rogers observes that this “new knowledge” was “given an authoritative form by Simon Casie Chitty’s *Ceylon Gazetteer*... published in 1834,”<sup>11</sup> noting that Chitty describes “the Sinhalese as early settlers from India, and the Malabars [i.e. Tamils and Malayalam speakers] as invaders who arrived at a later date.”<sup>12</sup> This new framework differed from the ways in which earlier Sri Lankan society had understood its inhabitants.<sup>13</sup> In exploring the earlier histories of social identities in Sri Lanka, Rogers discovers that caste or occupational

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<sup>4</sup> Janice Leoshko discovers a similar problem in her work on Buddhist art from Eastern India, arguing that the bias against these sculptures from the last stage of Buddhism in India developed during the early archaeological projects. “Part of this negative assessment emerges from many of the earliest investigations of Buddhist material remains in India. Frequently, these were connected to the desire to identify an original, pure form of Buddhism that could be tied to the teachings of Shakyamuni, who had lived more than two thousand years ago. It was the evidence found in earlier texts that seemed most authoritative, casting perceived differences in later Indian practices as somehow corrupt. This perspective developed a bias for finding and studying earlier rather than later material remains.” Janice Leoshko, *Sacred Traces British Explorations of Buddhism in South Asia* (Aldershot, United Kingdom: Ashgate, 2003), 3.

<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that *kôvils* and *devâles* were not living temples in other parts of the island. Nineteenth-century photographs and literature indicate that these types of temples were also important spaces for the people on the ground.

<sup>6</sup> John D. Rogers, “Historical images in the British Period,” in *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, ed. Jonathan Spencer (London: Routledge, 1990), 87.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>8</sup> Rogers, “Colonial Perceptions of Ethnicity,” 98-99.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>13</sup> John Rogers, “Post-Orientalism and the Interpretation of Premodern and Modern Political Identities: The Case of Sri Lanka.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53, no. 1 (February 1994), 13.

status played a more significant role than ethnicity.<sup>14</sup> Racial identities existed in earlier periods, but they “were by no means the only important political identities.”<sup>15</sup> The various groups in the island, whose identities were molded by other variables such as caste, religion, and language, had now become firmly fixed within ethnic boundaries.

It is not surprising then to discover that the first scholarly work on Sri Lankan art was entitled *Medieval Sinhalese Art*, emphasizing the perceived importance of the contributions of the main ethnic group to the island’s heritage. Although written by Ananda Coomaraswamy, whose father was of Tamil descent, the work projects an ethnic and material dichotomy between wooden (Sinhalese) architecture and stone (Tamil) architecture, granting the former the status of a “national” style. Coomaraswamy notes that

the truly national and indigenous architecture has always been one of wooden building; the great stone buildings whose remains attract so many visitors to the ‘buried cities,’ were probably erected with Indian assistance and partly by Indian workmen; so were many later stone buildings (especially when for the worship of Hindu gods) such as the sixteenth century Berendi Kôvil and the unmistakable Hindu temple at Ridî Vihâra.<sup>16</sup>

Coomaraswamy’s use of words such as “national” and “indigenous” clearly implies that all non-wooden architectural forms are foreign. Moreover, he explicitly states that stone temples were built by Indians (i.e. foreigners). Although Coomaraswamy does not mention the term Tamil, by using the word Sinhalese in his title alongside such formulations about the architecture of the island, it is not difficult to see a binary structure emerging.

Following along these lines, in the post-colonial period, Senerat Paranavitana, a giant in Sri Lankan archaeology, propagated similar ideas through his books *Sinhalayo* (1967) and *Art of the Ancient Sinhalese* (1971). The titles of such publications clearly assert the supremacy accorded to the main ethnic group in narrating the story of Sri Lankan art. The content too suggests that the narrative of the island begins with the Sinhalese and with Buddhism.<sup>17</sup> In his second chapter, “The Early Anuradhapura Period,” Paranavitana, after briefly narrating the story of the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, notes, “Such is the account that we can gather from literary sources about the settlement of the Sinhalese in this Island and the establishment of Buddhism as their faith. This is corroborated in its essentials by the archaeological evidence.”<sup>18</sup> Certainly,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 13-14. Moreover, he argues, “significant changes in identities had occurred also in earlier periods.” Ibid., 13.

<sup>15</sup> John D. Rogers, “Racial Identities and Politics in Early Modern Sri Lanka,” in *The Concept of Race in South Asia*. ed. Peter Robb (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 148.

<sup>16</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Medieval Sinhalese Art: being a Monograph on Medieval Sinhalese Arts and Crafts, mainly as Surviving in the Eighteenth Century, with an Account of the Structure of Society and the Status of the Craftsmen*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 114. Ironically, Coomaraswamy himself states, “Sinhalese art is essentially Indian.” Ibid., v.

<sup>17</sup> To be fair to Paranavitana, in his chapter on “The Polonnaru Period,” he does note that a Saiva temple was built at this site. Senerat Paranavitana, *Sinhalayo* (Colombo: Lake House Investment Ltd, 1967), 33. First published in 1967, a second edition was published in 1970.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 3.



as many scholars have noted, some events described in the Pâli chronicles, the *Mahāvamsa* and *Cûlavamsa*, can be verified on the ground. However, the possibility that material remains and epigraphy of a two-thousand-year period could narrate a different story or stories is not entertained.<sup>19</sup> Paranavitana's *Art of the Ancient Sinhalese* continues this standard narrative by focusing solely on the art and architecture of the main ethnic group. However, in narrating this story, he is forced to engage with the presence of Tamil culture in Sri Lanka. He writes,

This contact, not always hostile, with the Tamils, has had little influence on the art and architecture distinctive of the Sinhalese people; but a few notable architectural monuments, and a series of superb bronzes, bear witness to the periods of Tamil supremacy. A few buildings, professedly Dravidian in style, owe their existence to Sinhalese rulers or religious dignitaries who evidently had an admiration for that type of architecture. The examples of Dravidian art and architecture found in Ceylon follow the lines of those in South India, and scarcely add anything to what we learn by a study of the great monuments of that art in India. The distinctive contribution which Ceylon has to make to study of the art of India, or of Asia as a whole, lies therefore in the art of the Sinhalese.<sup>20</sup>

Paranavitana's formulations about the influence of Tamil culture in Sri Lankan art are highly problematic to say the least. Although Paranavitana acknowledges the presence of South Indian temple culture in Sri Lanka, these contributions, according to him, have had no impact on the culture of the majority Sinhalese. Paranavitana asserts that the temples built in the Drâvida style found in Sri Lanka have nothing new to teach us. This implies that we should only engage with the Buddhist art of the Sinhalese. Such cultural formulations do not help in any way to understand the complexity on the ground. In fact, the temples built in the Drâvida style clearly show the engagement between foreign and local workshops. The form and ornamentation of wooden pillars of the Kandyan period, which are seen as part of the "national indigenous style," indicate their origins in stone pillars attributed to "foreign" or South Indian workshops. The parallel temple traditions—*kôvil* and *devâle*—of the two main ethnic groups indicate another space of commonality between the Sinhalese Buddhists and the Tamil Hindus. These observations call into question the assumption that Tamil contributions are irrelevant in narrating the story of Sri Lankan art. After all, as Senake Bandaranayake, the eminent Sri Lankan archaeologist, points out: "the existence of people with a distinct Tamil ethnic identity from a very early period is evidenced in the Brahmi inscriptions."<sup>21</sup> Being the earliest inscriptions in the island (third century BCE–first century CE), they clearly

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<sup>19</sup> Gregory Schopen in examining the bias for textual material in the study of Indian Buddhism suggests that the position taken by modern scholars of Buddhism does not allow archaeology to narrate a different story. Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 5.

<sup>20</sup> Senerat Paranavitana, *Art of the Ancient Sinhalese* (Colombo: Lake House Investments Ltd., Publishers: 1971), 6.

<sup>21</sup> Senake Bandaranayake, "The Peopling of Sri Lanka: the National Question and Some Problems of History and Ethnicity" in *Ethnicity and Social Change in Sri Lanka papers Presented at a Seminar Organized by the Social Scientists Association December 1979* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 1984), A xvii.

indicate that both groups have shared the island at least beginning from the historical period, if not even from the protohistorical period.<sup>22</sup>

In doctoral dissertations, other scholars have also continued the standard narrative by focusing on its Buddhist nature and the contributions of the Sinhalese.<sup>23</sup> Even the most important of these, Bandaranayake's own Ph.D. thesis, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture* (1971), focuses on the "surface remains of the monastic complexes in and around the royal city of Anuradhapura."<sup>24</sup> Bandaranayake's project is "an attempt to compensate for the bias towards textual and linguistic material by an archaeological approach to the architectural remains of the early periods."<sup>25</sup> His choice of Anuradhapura, the center of politics and religion for over one thousand years, is understandable in that it has "the highest concentration of religious and monastic institutions and the most substantial number of structural monuments all existing within a clearly defined area."<sup>26</sup> Although a groundbreaking study that clearly highlights the importance of analyzing material remains, it continues the earlier emphasis on the role of the Sinhalese Buddhists. Bandaranayake develops the idea of what he calls a "Sinhalese Tradition," by which he means "the dominant and distinctive indigenous cultural traits of the island, without chauvinist or racial overtones."<sup>27</sup> Much of this concentration on the role of Sinhalese Buddhists and the concern for creating a distinct history within the island by Sri Lankan scholars can also be understood as a response to colonialism.<sup>28</sup> Bandaranayake articulates it best: he argues that Monsoon Asia (i.e. South, South-East, and East Asia) is understood in terms of "purely *external* factors."<sup>29</sup>

Thus the brilliant civilizations of India and China are taken to be the sole source of the higher culture of Monsoon Asia. Or, where we find greater interest in *internal* development, this is still heavily dependent on theories of seminal influence from the ancient centres of civilization in the greater river valleys of the southern subcontinent or the eastern land mass. As far as Ceylon is concerned this tendency to conceptualise history in either explicitly or implicitly

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<sup>22</sup> The megalithic complexes found in different parts of the island from the protohistoric period indicate a close relationship between Sri Lanka and South India. See Susantha Goonatilaka, "The Formation of Sri Lankan Culture: Reinterpretation of Chronicle and Archaeological material," in *Ethnicity and Social Change in Sri Lanka Papers Presented at a Seminar Organized by the Social Scientists Association December 1979* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association: 1984), iii-vi.

<sup>23</sup> Senerat Paranavitana, *The Stupa in Ceylon* (University of Leiden, 1936); Diran Kavork Dohanian, *The Mahayana Buddhist Sculpture of Ceylon* (Harvard University, 1964); P. L. Prematilleke, *Religious Architecture and Sculpture of Ceylon (Anuradhapura Period)* (University of London, 1964); and Roland Silva, *Religious Architecture in Early and Medieval Sri Lanka: a Study of the Thupa, Bodhimanda, Uposathaghara and Pathimaghara* (University of Leiden, 1988).

<sup>24</sup> Senake Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Bandaranayake provides numerous reasons on the historical significance of this site. See pages 6-8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 9. In a long footnote, Bandaranayake briefly explains the history of this term.

<sup>28</sup> The Buddhist revival in the nineteenth-century too probably played a role in highlighting the Sinhalese Buddhists as a response to colonialism. See Kitsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750-1900: A Study of Revival and Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

<sup>29</sup> Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 9.

‘diffusionist’ categories is a distortion of which both foreign and Ceylonese historians have been guilty.<sup>30</sup>

Bandaranayake rightly points out that there is more to the story than simply influence from the outside. He criticizes Coomaraswamy and Paranavitana for formulating “the Ceylonese tradition as one that evolves from a transplantation of Indian forms and concepts at a very early date and the preservation and development of these in later periods, only marginally affected by later Indian influences.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore, Bandaranayake attempts to place more emphasis on the internal dynamics of society. However, he is quick to point out that “such a viewpoint does not negate the role played by ideas and influences as well as forms and techniques from outside . . .”<sup>32</sup> Although he may point to the “interaction between the local and the imported forms,” his emphasis lies in understanding “the central flow,” which he argues “has its own distinct character rooted in the life of the country and the people.”<sup>33</sup> Perhaps, it is possible to speak of a “Sinhalese Tradition” for the Anuradhapura period, and equate the indigenous building tradition or “the central flow) with “Sinhalese architecture.” However, for the Polonnaruva period (eleventh-thirteenth centuries) and later, it becomes harder to use such formulations. The dialogs between local and foreign workshops begin to dominate the field. Patterns of patronage begin to differ from the Anuradhapura period: kings patronize temples built for deities and not only for the Buddha, while patrons other than kings (monks, ministers, local rulers, and communities) begin to patronize temples to deities as well. To delineate what is Sinhalese and what is foreign (i.e. Tamil) becomes a futile exercise when the boundaries between religious, cultural, and artistic traditions have become fluid. Such boundaries may not have mattered to people of the past (patrons and artisans) who borrowed, transformed, and rejected traditions creating patterns of integration and differentiation. In this project, rather than only privileging the “dynamic internal processes,”<sup>34</sup> I try to capture the internal development of medieval and early modern Sri Lankan societies alongside the dialogs that patrons and artisans (local and foreign) engaged in negotiating religious, cultural, and artistic boundaries between Sri Lanka and South India.

My dissertation *From Kôvils to Devâles: Patronage and “Influence” at Buddhist and Hindu Temples in Sri Lanka* questions this Sinhalese Buddhist construction of the Sri Lankan art historical canon and brings attention to the cross-cultural dimension of Sri Lankan art. Rather than only focusing on Buddhist monuments generally associated with the Sinhalese, I examine two types of parallel temple spaces that are central to the two main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. The relationship between the Hindu *kôvil* and the Buddhist *devâle*—long studied as two separate temple spaces<sup>35</sup>—requires investigation, as do their respective histories in medieval and early modern Sri Lanka. Questioning the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 10. However, I would also add that both these scholars also developed and highlighted the idea of a Sinhalese tradition.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 11. For more on Bandaranayake’s formulations about influence and its impact on a given society, see pages 9-11.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>34</sup> Bandaranayake, “The Peopling of Sri Lanka,” A xv.

<sup>35</sup> S. Arumugam, *Some Ancient Hindu Temples in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Arumugam, 1980); S. Pathmanathan, *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka* (Colombo and Chennai: Kumaran Book House, 2006).

oppositional binaries of South Indian and Sri Lankan, Hindu and Buddhist, Dravidian (i.e. Tamil) and Sinhalese (i.e. Aryan), and invader and native that have long framed the scholarship on Sri Lankan art, I argue for a more nuanced understanding of these religious monuments, and for a more inclusive Sri Lankan art-historical canon.

Studies in Sri Lankan art have generally overlooked a central dimension of temple building, that of patronage.<sup>36</sup> In addition to constructing a Sinhalese Buddhist framework, historians of Sri Lankan art have instinctively turned to climate to locate this island's architectural tradition; but, this dissertation argues that patronage and other variables such as "influence," multiple workshops, and diverse artistic traditions also played an important role in determining the style, the material, and the nature of a temple. In questioning the centrality of climate in determining architectural materials and forms, I draw on art historical approaches, which bring attention to patterns of patronage and patterns of localization. Using patronage as a methodological approach to highlight the participation of multiple patrons, I show how not only kings, but also local rulers, monks, ministers, merchants, and ordinary people were all key players in the negotiation of cultural and religious boundaries in medieval Sri Lanka.

Alongside patronage, I engage with the notion of "influence," a concept that is considered secondary in the analytical lineage of Sri Lankan art history. However, patronage and "influence" are deeply connected approaches. Both focus on specific people and their actions. Although studies have acknowledged some degree of contact between South India and Sri Lanka, this particular project goes beyond "diffusionist theories" or "influence" studies by engaging with the concept of appropriation. One of the first critics of the term "influence" in art history, Michael Baxandall, in *Patterns of Intention*, questions the lack of agency and cause in the term "influence."<sup>37</sup> In contrast to the concept of "influence," "appropriation is not passive, objective, or disinterested, but active, subjective, and motivated."<sup>38</sup> By focusing on such active aspects of an encounter, one is able to begin to formulate reasons for the act/s of appropriation and the identities of the persons performing them. Examining the wall ornamentation, pillars, and basement moldings of stone temples that have long been seen as South Indian and hence "foreign," I bring attention to the presence of local workshops, which were appropriating and transforming South Indian temple building practices, and engaging in dialogs across artistic boundaries. Most studies focus on the role of kings and other secular or religious elites as negotiators of cultural difference; this study also highlights the role of local artisans, who also became key players by engaging in a dialog across artistic boundaries. Although they are traditional approaches to art history, the bringing together of these two

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<sup>36</sup> One exception is John Holt's *The Religious World of Kirti Sri: Buddhism, Art, and Politics of Late Medieval Sri Lanka* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>37</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 59. Baxandall brings attention to how art history is rewritten "each time an artist is influenced." *Ibid.*, 60. Moreover, he examines the rich and diverse vocabulary, which emerges when the person/object influenced is seen as the agent: "draw on, resort to, avail oneself of, appropriate from, have recourse to, adapt, misunderstand, refer to pick up, take on, engage with, react to, quote, differentiate oneself from, assimilate oneself to, assimilate, align oneself with, copy, address, paraphrase, absorb, make a variation on, revive, continue, remodel, ape, emulate, travesty, parody, extract from, distort, attend to, resist, simplify, reconstitute, elaborate on, develop, face up to, master, subvert, perpetuate, reduce, promote, respond to, transform, tackle . . ." *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>38</sup> Robert S. Nelson, "Appropriation," in *Critical Terms for Art History* Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003), 162.

concepts—patronage and appropriation—creates a new framework in which to think about Sri Lankan art, which has mostly been analyzed through categories such as climate, Sinhala ethnicity, and Buddhist religion.

This project is framed as a chronological study in order to understand the ways in which visual and religious change have occurred at different pre-modern historical moments in Sri Lanka, not only at political and monastic centers but also in the peripheries. Drawing on various colonial archival sources, vernacular manuscript traditions, stone and copper plate inscriptions, and visual analysis, my dissertation presents four case studies from different periods in Sri Lankan history revealing the role of diverse patrons and the complex processes of appropriation in creating temples to deities. This approach also connects lesser-known temples with canonical ones. By their physical location as well as their historical location, some of these monuments are on the peripheries of civilization. Some are also marginalized by their material and religion. Taking this diachronic approach, I also bring attention to the “diachronic dimension to appropriation”<sup>39</sup> focusing not only on the content but also on the process. “Acts of appropriation unfold through time, allowing for multiple mutations and transformation.”<sup>40</sup> It clearly acknowledges that the cultural encounters between South India and Sri Lanka was not a one-time event, but unfolded over an extended period of time. Thus, the chronological nature of this study lends itself to highlighting the dialogues between various visual traditions (“foreign” and local) within certain time periods, and the conversations between building traditions (stone, brick, and wood) across different time periods.

This dissertation opens with a chapter<sup>41</sup> on the medieval city of Polonnaruva (11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries) in which I examine a group of Hindu *kôvils* believed to have been constructed by the South Indian Tamil Cōla dynasty that occupied Sri Lanka from 993 to 1070 C.E.<sup>42</sup> Although the post-Cōla period is typically viewed solely as a Buddhist renaissance,<sup>43</sup> I suggest that Sri Lankan kings, starting as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century, began to patronize *kôvils* built by the Cōlas, as well as to construct new Hindu temples, called *devâles*, in and around Polonnaruva. Furthermore, Sri Lankan kings modeled themselves after the Cōlas, adopting a new ideal of kingship in which the patronage of temples to deities played a central role. Sinhala inscriptions from this period show that the patronage of Buddhist temples alone was not sufficient to fulfill this new ideal of kingship.<sup>44</sup> This initial chapter concludes with a discussion of the after-life of these temples, especially in present-day Sri Lanka, giving space to local voices that have

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<sup>39</sup> Kathleen Ashley and Veronique Plesch, “The Cultural Processes of ‘Appropriation.’” *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Winter 2002), 8. Moreover, unlike influence, which seems to indicate a particular moment, “appropriation is not a one-time act.” It tends to be a continuing process, one in which the appropriated objects may be radically transformed while triggering new and different appropriations.” *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>41</sup> A portion of this chapter has been recently published. Sujatha Arundathi Meegama, “South Indian or Sri Lankan? The Hindu Temples in Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka.” *Artibus Asiae* Vol. 70.1 (2010): 25-45.

<sup>42</sup> K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, “Cola Invasions: Downfall of Anurâdhapura,” in *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, Part 1. (Colombo: Ceylon University Press, 1959), 348.

<sup>43</sup> H. T. Basnayake, *Sri Lankan Monastic Architecture*, Studies on Sri Lanka Series No. 2 (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986).

<sup>44</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I, Vol. II, Vol. IV, and Vol. V.

negotiated the oppositional categories of Sinhala versus Tamil and Buddhist versus Hindu to create their own religious traditions around the Hindu temples of Polonnaruva.

My second chapter examines the subsequent temple culture of Gampola, which served as Sri Lanka's capital from 1341-1415 CE. This differed greatly from that of the previous two centers—Anurâdhapura (250 BCE-993 CE) and Polonnaruva—in that the religious boundaries between Buddhism and Hinduism came to be negotiated through a newly constructed visual culture. Instead of continuing to create the gigantic *stûpas* believed to contain the relics of the Buddha that dotted the built landscapes of the former capitals, Gampola's religious community created image houses for the Buddha that included sanctuaries for deities, who were of pan-Indic and local origin. These changes took place against the backdrop of numerous political, commercial, and cultural encounters between Sri Lanka and South India that have led to the dominant interpretive model of "South Indian influence."<sup>45</sup>

Arguing against this framework, I contend that starting in the Gampola period, new patterns of patronage played an important role in giving birth to a new temple culture in which the inclusion of local and pan-Indic deities in Buddhist sites became the norm. Emulating the patronage patterns of previous kings, Buddhist monks began to patronize temples not only to the Buddha but also to deities. Unlike their predecessors, these new patrons merged the Buddhist *vihâra* with the *kôvil* or *devâla* creating a new type of temple in which *both* the Buddha and a deity could be worshipped. They were not alone in their new religious beliefs as inscriptions from temples indicate the patronage of also their respective religious communities. In addition to the appropriation of deities, these new patrons moreover, appropriated Drâvida-style stone temples, which have always been seen through the lens of the "imported style." These temples in turn inspired local workshops, indicating that medieval religious communities and local artisans did not necessarily see "South Indian influence" as "foreign" or "imported."

My third chapter is historically situated during the Portuguese Encounter in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka, when the island was divided into many kingdoms that were constantly at war with one another. In the kingdom of Sîtâvaka (1521-1593 CE), King Râjasimha I built a stone *kôvil* dedicated to Bhairava, one manifestation of the Hindu god Siva. The construction of this *kôvil* (presently called the Berendi Kôvil) and its subsequent ruins gave tangible shape to the widespread belief reflected in both traditional and colonial historiography that King Râjasimha had abandoned Buddhism in favor of Hinduism.<sup>46</sup> As early as the fourteenth-century, some Buddhist monks had begun to question the validity of worshipping deities. Moreover, given the sudden arrival of the monotheistic religion of Christianity, these accusations perhaps indicate a hardening of the fluid religious boundaries that existed in earlier periods. Such narratives question the possibility for Sri Lankan kings to be both Buddhist and Hindu, and hence to be patrons of *kôvils*, *devâles*, and *vihâras*.

In this chapter, I suggest that a re-examination of the art-historical, textual, and ritualistic sources reveals a more nuanced narrative behind the patronage of the Berendi Kôvil, which was famously plundered by the Portuguese for its many treasures. I move

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<sup>45</sup> John Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu: Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

<sup>46</sup> Alan Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Sri Lanka Portuguese Imperialism in a Buddhist Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

beyond this moment of plunder and look at a subsequent rebirth of this *kôvil* through the reuse of its architectural ruins at a nearby *devâle*, questioning the preconceived architectural boundaries that exist between these two types of religious spaces. Finally, interrogating the accepted notion that King Râjasimha converted to Hinduism, I examine an alternative narrative—the rebirth of Râjasimha as a local deity in the Buddhist pantheon.

My final chapter provides a window into ways in which less powerful agents negotiated religious and visual differences outside of elite, courtly settings and on the cultural periphery. Here, I focus on the patronage, ornamentation, and localization of *devâles* to the deity locally called Kataragama, the most popular god in present-day Sri Lanka. Starting in the Kandyan period (1474-1815), numerous small *devâles* to this Pan-Indic god, who is generally known as Skanda Kumara or Murukan, were constructed in the central and southern highlands of Sri Lanka, in peripheral and non-elite contexts. At the same time, seven groups of *sandesa*, or “message poems,” were written to the deity Kataragama in Sinhala by Buddhist monks and other ordinary people mostly seeking his intervention in their everyday lives—he was not only a god sought after by the royalty, but he had become a personal deity for the commoners as well.<sup>47</sup> While the main shrine to Kataragama in Southern Sri Lanka has received much scholarly attention,<sup>48</sup> the localization of his worship through the construction of small wooden *devâles* in the central and southern highlands has rarely been addressed.

This final chapter explores the ways in which the worship of Kataragama was localized by examining the presence of South Indian literary motifs in local texts and legends about this deity, and by bringing attention to the message poems written to this deity by Buddhist monks as well as ordinary people in which he is transformed from a public to a more private deity.

An investigation of Kataragama *devâles* in the central Kandyan and Ūva provinces indicates not only the popularity of this deity, but also the localization of his worship in various regions. In addition to the very localized forms of patronage seen through the participation of local rulers and commoners, the variety in motifs and the differences in what was ornamented at such small wooden *devâles*, away from centers of power, suggest that different workshops were involved. Appropriating and transforming the shape and ornamentation found on stone pillars from the Transitional period (1215-1591) as well as stone doorways, local artisans from the Kandyan period, who worked in wood, began a dialog across artistic boundaries. This engagement with stone pillars and doorways indicates that the use of stone was not seen by local artisans as an “imported” tradition. Rather, this conversation between artisans leads to a complex art-historical canon that consists of multiple building traditions.

In the epilogue, bringing together the four case studies I presented, I offer a narrative that attempts to map out the shifting identities of *kôvils* and *devâles* in medieval, early modern, and contemporary Sri Lanka.

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<sup>47</sup> The un-translated and edited versions of these collections of poems are published in *Kataragama Devidunta Sandesa Kavi 1700-1900* (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Tisara Prakasayo, 1970).

<sup>48</sup> See Gananath Obeyesekere. “The Fire-walkers of Kataragama: The Rising Tide of Bhakti Religiosity in Buddhist Sri Lanka.” *Journal of Asian Studies*. 37:457-78. 1978.

## Chapter 1

### *Kôvils or Devâles? The Hindu Temples in Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka*<sup>1</sup>

Spread across the length and breadth of the ancient medieval city of Polonnaruva are a group of fifteen stone and brick temples built for the Hindu deities Siva, Visnû, Ganesa, and Kâli (Fig. 1.1).<sup>2</sup> These small temples nestling amidst the monumental *stûpas*, image houses, and sculptures of the Buddha are believed to have been constructed by the South Indian Côlas who invaded and occupied the Râjarata kingdom of Sri Lanka from 993 to 1070 CE,<sup>3</sup> and established Polonnaruva as their capital city in the northern part of the island.<sup>4</sup>

Because of its close proximity to the sub-continent, Sri Lanka was invaded numerous times by kings, princes, and adventurers from South India. During the closing years of the Anurâdhapura period (c. 250 BCE-993 CE), Sri Lankan rulers inserted themselves into the political struggle between the Côlas and the Pândyans, which eventually lead to the Côla invasions. This was the first historical occupation by a South Indian kingdom and the Côlas left their permanent mark in Râjarata by carving inscriptions, constructing temples, and casting bronzes, mostly to their dynastic deity Siva.

When the Côla King Parântaka I defeated the Sri Lankan troops, who aided the Pândyans in 915 CE in South India, Parântaka took the title *Sangrâmarâghava* or “Râma in battle,” signifying his victory against Sri Lanka, as well as *Maduraiyum Îlamum konda* or “the one who captured Madurai and Îlam.”<sup>5</sup> During the reign of Udaya IV<sup>6</sup>, Parântaka invaded the island in 947-948 CE: he was not trying to establish his rule but rather was attempting to seize the Pândyan regalia, which had been left behind in Anurâdhapura by

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<sup>1</sup> An altered version of this chapter has been recently published as “South Indian or Sri Lankan? Hindu Temples of Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka,” *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. LXX, No. 1 (2010): 25-45. I also wish to thank Joanna Williams for initially encouraging me to work on the Hindu temples in Polonnaruva, and Kausalya and George Hart for inviting me to present the first incarnation of this piece at the U.C. Berkeley second annual Tamil conference, “The Time of the Cholas 900-1300 C.E.” I am also deeply indebted to Padma Kaimal for her thoughtful comments on an earlier draft. In Sri Lanka, I wish to thank Professor P. L. Prematilleke for his advice and help, and Dr. Senarath Dissanayake, Director General, Department of Archaeology, for giving permission to reproduce Joseph Lawton’s photograph of Siva Devâle No.1. Rohan Gunasiri of the Central Cultural Fund (CCF) in Polonnaruva provided invaluable assistance during fieldwork, while Asoka Perera from the cartographic unit of the Post-Graduate Institute of Archaeology (PGIAR) helped create the map on the Hindu temples of Polonnaruva.

<sup>2</sup> This map on the Hindu temples at Polonnaruva consists of temples discovered by H. C. P. Bell, as well as those excavated by the CCF. I have used a different labeling system for the Hindu temples discovered in the post-colonial period. All fifteen temples can be verified on the ground.

<sup>3</sup> K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, “Cola Invasions: Downfall of Anurâdhapura,” in *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, Part 1. (Colombo: Ceylon University Press, 1959), 348.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 349. As Polonnaruva was the capital of the Côlas in the Râjarata, it has the largest number of Hindu temples from that period. However, the Côlas also built temples in Padaviya and Kantalay in the northeast, and Mantota in the northwest. See S. Pathmanathan, *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka* (Colombo & Chennai: Kumaran Book House, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Sastri, “Cola Invasions: Downfall of Anurâdhapura,” 345.

<sup>6</sup> There was another South Indian invasion around 964 CE, but scholars disagree on whether this was by the Côlas or by the Râstrakutas. W. M. K. Wijetunga, *Sri Lanka and the Cholas* (Ratmalana, Sri Lanka: Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha Publishers, 2003), 60.



the Pândyan King Râjasimha before he escaped to Kerala. In Nilakanta Sastri's words, the "real Cōla conquest"<sup>7</sup> of Sri Lanka only occurred with Râjarâja's invasion in 993 when they began to occupy Râjarata. From that time onwards, Sri Lanka was included in Râjarâja's *prasastis*.<sup>8</sup> However, the Pândyan regalia was not captured until 1017 during a new Cōla expedition under Râjarâja's son, Râjendra I. The Cōlas renamed Râjarata as Mummudi-sōla-mandalam and Polonnaruva as Jananâtha-mangalam, after a title of Râjarâja I.<sup>9</sup>

Although two extensive books have been written on the Cōla rule in Sri Lanka by W. M. K. Wijetunga<sup>10</sup> and George Spencer,<sup>11</sup> the Hindu temples in Polonnaruva have received scant attention. Nineteenth-century British histories project Polonnaruva as a Sinhalese Buddhist city plundered by South Indian invaders. The art historical discourse surrounding these temples ethnicizes the architectural elements inventing the oppositional binaries of "Sinhalese" versus "Dravidian" and "Buddhist" versus "Hindu." Moreover, as possible prototypes of the medieval Sri Lankan religious monument—the *devâle*—created to worship Hindu, Mahâyâna, and local deities in a Buddhist context, these stone and brick Hindu temples at Polonnaruva merit further attention.

In this chapter, I question the many binaries that have been used to frame these Hindu temples at Polonnaruva, beginning with the colonial narrative in which Polonnaruva is portrayed as a city of ruins plundered by South Indian invaders. I trace the art historical discourse surrounding these temples, attempting to dismantle the oppositional categories—Buddhist and Hindu, Sri Lankan and South Indian, Sinhalese and Dravidian (i.e. Tamil), and invader and native—which have been used in constructing the Sri Lankan art historical canon. Even though social categories existed in the pre-colonial period, such divisions were marked by fluid boundaries. In other words, even as late as the eighteenth-century in Sri Lanka, it was possible to be both Tamil and Buddhist,<sup>12</sup> indicating that people had not necessarily seen these identities as opposites previously; hence, it is a futile attempt to impose these many binaries on architecture of the past. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century ethnicity, religion, and language became congruent categories leading to such dichotomous depictions of the Hindu temples of Polonnaruva.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 349. Sastri observes that Cōla rule was limited to the Râjarata area in contrast to their claims, because the *Cūlavamsa* notes that Cōla rule was only limited to the Râjarata. Ibid., 350-351. Moreover, the resistance to the Cōla occupation was directed from Rohana, the southern country, and Cōla temples and inscriptions have not been found in this region, but have been limited to the Râjarata.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 349.

<sup>10</sup> Wijetunga, *Sri Lanka and the Cholas*.

<sup>11</sup> George W. Spencer, *The Politics of Expansion: The Chola Conquest of Sri Lanka and Sri Vijaya* (Madras: New Era, 1983). See also "The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh-Century Ceylon," *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. XXXV. No. 3. (May 1976): 405-419.

<sup>12</sup> For example, it was possible to be both Tamil and Buddhist as seen with the last four Nâyakkar kings of the Kandyan kingdom. For more on the patronage of Buddhism by Tamils in Sri Lanka, see Peter Schalk, ed., *Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamilakam and Îlam* Part 2 The Period of the Imperial Cōlar. Tamilakam and Îlam (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala Universitet, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion on precolonial identities and the formation of identities within a new intellectual framework in the colonial period, see John. D. Rogers, "Post-Orientalism and the Interpretation of Premodern and Modern Political Identities: The Case of Sri Lanka," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, No. 1 (February 1994).

Even though the post-Côla period has been seen solely as a Buddhist renaissance, I suggest that Sri Lankan kings, starting in the Polonnaruva period itself, began to patronize Hindu temples associated with the Côlas, as well as construct new Hindu temples. Rather than viewing such temples solely as culturally alien symbols of a South Indian enemy, Sri Lankan kings modeled themselves after the Côlas, adopting a new ideal of kingship in which the divinity of kingship and the patronage of deities played central roles. Sinhala inscriptions from the medieval period show that the patronage of Buddhist temples alone was not sufficient to live up to this new ideal of kingship.

I conclude with the after-life of these temples, especially in present-day Sri Lanka, giving space to local voices, which have negotiated the oppositional categories — Sinhala and Tamil and Buddhist and Hindu—creating their own religious traditions around the Hindu temples of Polonnaruva.

### **Of “Buried Cities”: The Colonial Narratives of Polonnaruva**

A number of recent works have shown the importance of the production of knowledge in the colonization of South Asia<sup>14</sup>—“And knowledge of history was quite central in these efforts: to know the ‘past was to control the ‘present.’”<sup>15</sup> Even though the construction of colonial histories on Sri Lanka were based on local histories,<sup>16</sup> new histories were being created as the colonial machine churned out information in various forms about their new colony to secure a firm hold of it.<sup>17</sup> As new narratives were woven around the island, its past capitals such as Anurâdhapura and Polonnaruva too were implicated in the search for this knowledge about the new colony.

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<sup>14</sup> John D. Rogers, “Historical Images in the British Period,” in *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, ed. Jonathan Spencer (London: Routledge, 1990), 87-106. Also see, Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Form of Knowledge The British in India* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Pradeep Jeganathan, “Authorizing History, Ordering Land: The Conquest of Anuradhapura” in *Unmaking the Nation: The Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka*, eds. Pradeep Jeganathan and Qadri Ismail (Colombo, 1995), 110.

<sup>16</sup> The importance of local histories in constructing British historical knowledge about the island is most clearly articulated by Sujit Sivasundaram. “Buddhist Kingship, British Archaeology and Historical Narratives in Sri Lanka c. 1750-1850,” *Past and Present* No. 197 (November 2007), 116. However, he observes, “By the mid nineteenth century British knowledge was becoming more powerful and beginning to surpass existing traditions.” *Ibid.* 116.

<sup>17</sup> The main audience for these colonial narratives was those back at home in the metropole: in addition to harnessing knowledge about the colony to effectively govern it, they were also read by those who were migrating to the new colonies. “The 1830’s saw in Britain a growing belief that emigration might be a cure for unemployment, and by the frequency of its appearance in the middle years of the century, the Memoir witnesses to the demand that existed for information regarding life in the tropical colony.” Yasmine Gooneratne, *English Literature in Ceylon 1815-1878*, *The Ceylon Historical Journal* Vol. 14 (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakasakayo, 1968): 64. Some books were also written for the local audience: Gooneratne points that “L. F. Liesching’s *A Brief Account of Ceylon* (Jaffna 1861) followed the general outline laid down by Tennent, and simplified Tennent’s arguments so that they would more effectively and easily reach the younger Ceylonese, whose formal training had left them ignorant of their country’s history and tradition.” (*Ibid.*, 85). Not only did such books reach the schoolboy, but they also found their way on to the bookshelves of the local intelligentsia. Again, Gooneratne, when writing about Tennent notes, “His phrases, together with a good many of his ideas, occur frequently in the English writing of Ceylonese . . .” (*Ibid.*, 80-81).

Unlike with Polonnaruva, the changing meanings of Anurâdhapura in the British colonial period have received much scholarly attention. Elizabeth Nissan argues, “Anurâdhapura came to represent the heartland of the Sinhala Buddhist nation through the conjunction of European historical imaginings and local chronicles of history.”<sup>18</sup> Pradeep Jeganathan too in writing a history about the production of knowledge on Anurâdhapura, examines the power relations in the transfer of knowledge from the “material available” to the “orientalized field of knowledge,”<sup>19</sup> and concludes, “the very ‘self-evidentness’ of Anuradhapura today, as ancient, aesthetic and ethnic, is a product of these knowledges.”<sup>20</sup> However, more recently Sujit Sivasundaram has rightly argued that the early years of the British colonial experience of Anurâdhapura should be seen within the local historical traditions of eighteenth-century Sri Lanka. Sivasundaram traces the meanings created by the center Kandy as well as the periphery of Nuvarakalâviya in which the city of Anurâdhapura was located, and suggests that the British worked within these existing traditions, rather than completely constructing new meanings.<sup>21</sup>

Polonnaruva<sup>22</sup>, on the other hand, in local historical traditions as well as in colonial writings, never gained that status of the “heartland of the Sinhalese.”<sup>23</sup> Unlike Anurâdhapura, Polonnaruva does not contain a sacred landscape: the Buddha did not visit this city, nor does it have the famous *bôdhi* tree, a sapling from the tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. Even though Polonnaruva is dotted with large *stûpas*, it does not have a famous *stûpa* such as the Ruvanvâlisâya.<sup>24</sup> However, in writing about Polonnaruva, using local histories such as the *Mahâvamsa*, the *Cûlavamsa*, and the *Râjâvaliya*, colonial writers created a particular narrative for this city and its ruins, which can be seen in nineteenth-century histories, memoirs, and travel guides to Sri Lanka—the image of a “ruined city” built by the Sinhalese Buddhists, which was ultimately pillaged by South Indian invaders.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Nissan, “History in the Making: Anuradhapura and the Sinhala Buddhist Nation,” in *Identity, Consciousness and the Past: Forging Caste and Community in India and Sri Lanka*, ed. H. L. Seneviratne (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24.

<sup>19</sup> Jeganathan, “Authorizing History, Ordering Land: The Conquest of Anuradhapura,” 110.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>21</sup> Sivasundaram, “Buddhist Kingship, British Archaeology and Historical Narratives in Sri Lanka c. 1750-1850,” 111-142.

<sup>22</sup> Initially, Polonnaruva was only a military outpost for the city of Anurâdhapura and an occasional residence for the Anurâdhapura kings. When the Côlas chose it as their capital, it was for strategic purposes, because the most resistance to Côla rule came from Rohana in the South. The Sri Lankan kings continued with Polonnaruva as their capital, again for military reasons.

<sup>23</sup> Moreover, as in the case of Anurâdhapura, Polonnaruva has had no Walisinha Harischandra, an early nationalist, who fought for a particular image for this first royal and monastic capital of the island based on the chronicles, the archaeological evidence, and other historical writings. See Nissan, “History in the Making: Anuradhapura and the Sinhala Buddhist Nation,” 24.

<sup>24</sup> Even though Polonnaruva lacks a sacred landscape sanctified by the Buddha, the *bôdhi* tree, and famous *stûpas*, it is during the Polonnaruva period that the *daladâ*, or the tooth relic, becomes paramount over all things Buddhist, to the point that it becomes a symbol of legitimation. Ananda Wickremeratne, “Shifting Metaphors of Sacrality: The Mythic Dimensions of Anuradhapura,” in *The City as Sacred Center: Essays on Six Asian Contexts*, eds. Bardwell Smith and Holly Baker Reynolds (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1987), 57.

<sup>25</sup> This observation also holds true for Anurâdhapura. Jeganathan when writing on the British colonial encounter at Anurâdhapura notes that “The present condition of the monuments is seen once again, as a signifier of degeneration, signs of battles fought and lost with ‘Tamils’ and ‘Nature.’” Jeganathan, “Authorizing History, Ordering Land: The Conquest of Anuradhapura,” 121.

Nineteenth-century accounts of the medieval city of Polonnaruva (c. 993-1215)<sup>26</sup> begin with those of Lieutenant Mitchell Henry Fagan, when in 1820 he stumbled upon the “great monument[s] of superstition.”<sup>27</sup> The first European to visit this city, Fagan’s is a fairly neutral description of an ancient city lost to the jungle, with little understanding of the religious buildings he saw, except for the statues of “Budhoo” he came across.<sup>28</sup> However, his account participates in a colonial discourse which dominated early archaeological and photography projects: epithets such as “buried cities,” “ruined cities,” or “lost cities” seen in the publications on Anurâdhapura and Polonnaruva, alluded to the glory of past cities leading to the present decay, which justified colonial occupation.<sup>29</sup>

Polonnaruva and its Hindu temples also received attention from history books, memoirs,<sup>30</sup> European travel accounts,<sup>31</sup> guidebooks, and government reports that

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<sup>26</sup> Unlike Jeganathan and Nissan who agree that the British rediscovered Anurâdhapura in the nineteenth century, I do not subscribe to the idea that Polonnaruva was rediscovered by British colonialists. As with Anurâdhapura, Polonnaruva too may have had specific local meanings in the eighteenth century for the center in Kandy and the periphery of Tamankaduwa in which Polonnaruva was situated. Certainly, people living in Polonnaruva had their own pre-colonial traditions about the temples as can be seen by the names that were given to certain structures. For example, Siva Devâle No. 1 was called the Daladâ Mâligâwa and Siva Devâle No. 5 was called the Naipena Vihâra. Moreover, colonial historical knowledge and archaeological work was based on exchanges between the British and the locals. The names of locals who participated in the British archaeological projects can be recovered from the drawings and plans of temples in the archaeological reports. And finally, H.C. P. Bell’s work in Polonnaruva could not have been facilitated without the efforts of the Tamil coolies.

<sup>27</sup> Fagan also notes in his article that the local villagers said that he was the first European to visit since the Portuguese. Apparently, there was a belief that the Portuguese had raided Gal Vihâra and “found immense treasures.” Lieutenant Fagan, “Account of the Ruins of Topary (Pollonaruwa),” *The Orientalist* (1865-86): 87. Reprinted from the *Ceylon Government Gazette* of Tuesday August 1<sup>st</sup> 1820. The British first encountered the ruins of Anurâdhapura in 1818. For a discussion of local and British interventions in the nineteenth-century at Anurâdhapura, see Sivasundaram “Buddhist Kingship, British Archaeology and Historical Narratives in Sri Lanka c. 1750-1850,” 132-140.

<sup>28</sup> The ruins that initially attracted Fagan’s attention were the stone pillars of Siva Devâle No. 5, which is the largest Hindu temple complex in Polonnaruva, consisting of a Saivite temple as the central shrine with a smaller Vaisnava shrine beside it. “The ranges of stone pillars, which first attracted my attention, appear to have supported an open building similar to what is called an ambulum; . . . The inhabitants, of whom I inquired informed me that these ruins are called the Naigue’s palace, . . .” Fagan, “Account of the Ruins of Topary (Pollonaruwa),” 86.

<sup>29</sup> John Falconer too brings attention to this discourse in his essay “Pattern of Photographic Surveys: Joseph Lawton in Ceylon,” in *Traces of India: Photography, Architecture, and the Politics of Representation*, ed. Maria Antonella Pelizzari (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 156. Jeganathan moreover, addressing the colonial reception of the “degenerate state of nature” of the Anurâdhapura ruins notes of their reconstitution first as “the buried city,” which presents the young male colonialist an adventurous site to discover, and finally as the “ancient city,” which led to the commodification of Anurâdhapura as a “picturesque site” for tourism. Jeganathan, “Authorizing History, Ordering Land: The Conquest of Anuradhapura,” 120-127.

<sup>30</sup> First published in 1840, Forbes two-volume memoir *Eleven Years in Ceylon* contains a chapter on Polonnaruva, entitled “To the Lake of Minneria and the Ancient Capital of Polonnaruva.” Forbes briefly recounts the history of Polonnaruva rightly saying, “it appears to have been the occasional residence of several Kings.” He continues mistakenly noting that “towards the end of the eighth century [it] became the capital of the island, and the insignia of royalty were removed hither from the ancient capital of Anuradhapoorâ.” Forbes includes a sentence about the pillage of Polonnaruva, but other than for a vague reference to “foreign invaders,” he surprisingly does not provide their ethnicity or place of origin. Major Jonathan Forbes, *Eleven Years in Ceylon. Comprising sketches of the field sports and natural history of that colony, and an account of its history and antiquities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: R. Bentley, 1841), 412. Using

constructed knowledge about the new colonies. John Rogers has argued that British colonial histories were written on two assumptions: “that in ancient times there was a great Sinhala civilization, which later went into decline; and that distinct and often antagonistic ethnic groups existed throughout the island’s long history.”<sup>32</sup> Polonnaruva too was depicted in this light.

Sir James Emerson Tennent’s two volumes entitled *Ceylon An Account of the Island Physical, Historical and Topographical* includes a section on “The Ruined Cities” illustrated with maps, plans, and drawings. First published in 1859, Tennent’s comprehensive volumes overshadowed all other previous and subsequent publications on the history of the island: it was “a phenomenal success, two editions being called for in less than two months after the appearance of the first.”<sup>33</sup> He briefly recounts the history of Polonnaruva giving credit to native kings as those who established it as Sri Lanka’s new capital.<sup>34</sup> Conspicuously absent from his narrative is the name Cōla. Instead, he says that “Pollonnarrua itself was captured and sacked by those insatiable marauders [i.e. the Malabars]<sup>35</sup> in 1023...”<sup>36</sup> Through such narratives, colonial writers such as Tennent,

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evidence from inscriptions and the chronicle *Mahāvamsa*, Paranavitana argues that only four kings—Aggabōdhi IV (667-683 CE), Aggabōdhi VII (772-777 CE), Sena I (833-853 CE), and Sena V (972-982 CE)—preferred to live in Polonnaruva, and that their respective successors lived in Anurādhapura until the Cōla invasion when the latter made Polonnaruva their capital. S. Paranavitana, “The Capital of Ceylon during the ninth and tenth centuries,” 141-146.

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Baker in *Eight Years’ Wanderings in Ceylon* notes that “There is a degree of sameness in the ruins of all the ancient cities of Ceylon . . .” and brushes aside the monuments of Anurādhapura, but devotes a fair amount of space to Polonnaruva. He includes a colored lithograph of the “Ruins of Pollanaruva,” which depicts a monumental *stūpa* in the background with numerous pillars haphazardly leaning and strewn about in the foreground. Baker imagines a visit to Polonnaruva during the peak of its civilization creating a picturesque view of this medieval city with its *stūpas*, palace, and rock temple. Though he glowingly speaks of Polonnaruva’s past prosperity, his account ends with a vivid description of the present state of the city marked by words such as “dust, grave, desolation, silence, vanished, disappeared, imperishable, fallen, relics, destruction, and annihilation,” which all ultimately participates in a colonial discourse that justified colonial occupation (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), 71-79.

<sup>32</sup> Rogers, “Historical Images in the British Period,” 87.

<sup>33</sup> Gooneratne, *English Literature in Ceylon 1815-1878*, 80. James Ferguson too, when writing about Polonnaruva, turns to Tennent in his *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*. He writes, “Almost all we know at present of these ruins is due to the publications of Sir Emerson Tennent.” James Ferguson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1876), 200. Ferguson did not visit the site but worked from photographs taken by James Lawton and Col. or Capt. Hogg. *Ibid.*, 200. Ferguson was the first to bring attention to the Drāvīda style of architecture at Polonnaruva. He writes of the “Dalada Maligawa” (Siva Devāle No. 1) and the “Vishnu Deyanne Dewala” (Siva Devāle No. 2), noting that the latter “was certainly either originally, or is now, dedicated to the worship of Siva, as is testified by the presence of the bull alongside of it, and also apparently on its roof.” *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>34</sup> Sir James Emerson Tennent, *Ceylon; an account of the island, physical, historical, and topographical, with notices of its natural history, antiquities and productions*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Longman, Green, Roberts, 1860), 1021.

<sup>35</sup> Tennent created the idea of the three races of the island, one of which was the Malabar. The term “Malabar” and “Malabar Race” were used to refer to several groups of South Indian descent whose identities were conflated under this new identity. R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, “Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past: The Changing ‘Ethnic Identity’ of the Last Four Kings of the Kandyan Kingdom,” in *Pivot Politics: Changing Cultural Identities in Early State Formation Processes*, eds. Martin van Bakel, Renee Hagesteijn, and Pieter van de Velde (Amsterdam: 1994), 209.

not only inscribed nineteenth-century notions of nationality upon the people of the past, but also painted a contentious picture in which the two main ethnic groups of the island were pitted against each other.<sup>37</sup>

Stephen Montagu Burrows, a member of the Ceylon Civil Service, was the first to conduct excavations in Polonnaruwa.<sup>38</sup> In 1886, he submitted to the colonial government the first archaeological report on Polonnaruwa, in which he lists the buildings he has excavated.<sup>39</sup> In 1894, he published a travel guide, *The Buried Cities of Ceylon*, in which he writes about Polonnaruwa: “a week of ordinary travel will introduce the visitor to an archaeological treat which is perhaps unique in the East, and will enable him to arrive at a very different estimate of the Sinhalese race to that which he would form, were he to confine himself to the beaten tracks of Colombo and Kandy.”<sup>40</sup> Burrows use of the word “race” indicates the manner in which late nineteenth-century racial theories had begun to seep into colonial narratives about the island’s past.<sup>41</sup>

Alongside its writing project, the colonial machine began to put into use the newfound technology of photography: the colonial photography project continued to allude to the mythic status of the “buried or ruined cities” of Ceylon through images taken for reporting or for travel related purposes. Polonnaruwa was first photographed in the mid 1860s by James Wheeler Woodford Birch, a civil servant, whose photographs<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Tennent, *Ceylon*, 1021. Again, there is an assumption in this statement that Polonnaruwa was established as the capital of Râjarata by Sinhalese kings and not Cōla kings. See footnotes 29 and 44 for other examples of similar statements.

<sup>37</sup> However, Tennent’s own narrative of the past based on the ancient texts was “full of references to the lack of sharp ethnic divisions.” Rogers, “Historical Images in the British Period,” 91-92.

<sup>38</sup> “In 1884 S. M. Burrows was commissioned by Sir Arthur Gordon to undertake exploration at both Anurâdhapura and Polonnaruwa. . . . Burrows went on to become Director of Education in Ceylon, and his continued interest in the ruins he had explored found issue in his little guide, *The Buried Cities of Ceylon*.” Bethia N. Bell and Heather Bell, *H. C. P. Bell, Archaeologist of Ceylon and the Maldives* (Denbigh Clwyd, Wales: Archetype Publications, 1993), 37-8.

<sup>39</sup> He writes of discovering two temples to Visnû (later known as Visnû Devâle No. 2 and Siva Devâle No. 3), clearing the “original Vishnu Dewale” (later known as Siva Devâle No. 2), discovering a cluster of four small Hindu temples, and partially excavating Naipena Vihâra (later known as Siva Devâle No. 5 and Visnû Devâle No. 4). Burrows also notes that he has not yet touched the Daladâ Mâligâwa (later known as Siva Devâle No. 1). In one of the four small Hindu temples he discovered a statue of Visnû, and in another he found a statue of Durgâ (he calls it Kâli) with eight hands standing on the buffalo demon. S. M. Burrows, “A Year’s Work at Polonnaruwa,” in *Sessional Paper X of 1886*: 7-11. I believe the four small Hindu temples that Burrows refers to are Siva Devâle No. 4, Visnu Devâle No. 3, and the Kâli Kôvil.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Falconer, “Pattern of Photographic Surveys: Joseph Lawton in Ceylon,” 156. Henry Cave’s guidebook, *The Ruined Cities of Ceylon*, followed soon after and continued to portray Polonnaruwa as a solely Sinhalese Buddhist city that was established as the next capital due to the Tamil invasions that led to the downfall of Anurâdhapura. Henry W. Cave, *The Ruined Cities of Ceylon*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Hutchinson & co.,: 1904), 154-155. First published in 1897, a new edition was published in 1900 with a 3<sup>rd</sup> edition in 1904. Cave was a prolific writer who published a series of popular books on Ceylon with photographic illustrations. At the beginning of each publication he includes a page (or two) with reviews by the press of one of his previous books, which shows the level of popularity his books received in both the metropole and the colony.

<sup>41</sup> John Rogers has examined the ways in which these late nineteenth-century racial theories were internalized by local writers in their nineteenth-century historical narratives. Rogers, “Historical Images in the British Period,” 95-98. Also see Gunawardana, “Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past: The Changing ‘Ethnic Identity’ of the Last Four Kings of the Kandyan Kingdom,” 209-212.

<sup>42</sup> John Falconer notes that Birch produced 8 x 6 inch views and stereoscopic images of Polonnaruwa. Falconer, “Pattern of Photographic Surveys: Joseph Lawton in Ceylon,” 161. Ferguson says the following

were published in 1869 by Skeen & Co.,<sup>43</sup> a photography studio in Colombo. Soon thereafter, Polonnaruwa was photographed again by Lieutenant Richard Warren Stewart of the Royal Engineers,<sup>44</sup> whose views appeared as engraved reproductions in A. M. Ferguson's *Souvenirs of Ceylon* published in 1869. Ferguson included four illustrations to represent the ruined city of Polonnaruwa and one was "The Dewala" (later known as Siva Devâle No. 2).<sup>45</sup> This was the first time that an image of a Hindu temple from Polonnaruwa had been reproduced. Ferguson notes that it was Birch who identified the illustrations in his *Souvenirs of Ceylon*—perhaps the word "Dewala" was used by the local community to refer to Siva Devâle No. 2 and Birch adopted it.<sup>46</sup>

During 1870-71, Joseph Lawton created the first comprehensive series of photographs of Polonnaruwa for the Archaeological Committee. In 1868, an Archaeological Committee had been established by the governor Sir Hercules Robinson, with the goal of collecting "information respecting the different Ancient Architectural Works in the Island with a view to preserving and photographing the most important."<sup>47</sup> A commercial photographer with a studio in Kandy established in 1866, Lawton's photographs of Anurâdhapura, Polonnaruwa, and Sîgiriya were produced as two large volumes with descriptive notes accompanying the 227 photographs.<sup>48</sup>

Lawton not only documented the Hindu temples but he also photographed the Hindu sculptures at Polonnaruwa. Unlike for any other monument at Polonnaruwa, Lawton devoted a number of plates to Siva Devâle No. 1 in his album on Polonnaruwa.<sup>49</sup>

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about Birch: "He had, previously to Lieut. Stewart's visit, explored the ruins of Polonnaruwa, and was the first, we believe, to depict them by the aid of the camera . . . The series of interesting photographs by Mr. Birch can be procured, large size and as stereoscopes, from Messrs. Slinn and Co., of Colombo, and in them of course, the minutest details of Oriental architecture and sculpture come out with a fidelity which it is impossible for any engraving entirely to reproduce." A. M. Ferguson, *Souvenirs of Ceylon* (London: J. Hadden, 1869), 111.

<sup>43</sup> Initially, this photography company was called Slinn & Co but by 1869 it was renamed Skeen & Co. For a brief history of this family studio, which was established at least by 1864, see *Regeneration A Reappraisal of Photography in Ceylon 1850-1900* (London: British Council, 2000), 14-19.

<sup>44</sup> According to Falconer, the original photographs do not exist anymore. "Pattern of Photographic Surveys: Joseph Lawton in Ceylon," 161.

<sup>45</sup> The rest of the illustrations were the "Topare (Topa-we va) Tank," "Figures of Buddha" (later known as Gal Vihâra), and "Jaytawana Rami" (later known as the Lankâtilaka). Ferguson, *Souvenirs of Ceylon*, 43, 44, 49. Ferguson quotes at length from a paper provided by Birch on the ruins of Polonnaruwa, but there is no mention of "The Dewala" (i.e. Siva Devâle No. 2). *Ibid.*, 111. Birch unlike other writers of this city, does mention the Cōla occupation, even though like Forbes, he too mistakenly observes that Polonnaruwa became the capital of Sri Lanka in the eighth-century: "Aggrabodhi III. Permanently took up residence there [i.e. Polonnaruwa] in A.D. 729, and it was afterwards the chief residence of the Court till the Solean conquest in A.D. 1023, when the then king was taken prisoner, and the Government was not properly re-established till A.D. 1071." *Ibid.*, 112. See footnote 29 for Paranavitana's explanation for this assumption.

<sup>46</sup> Even though none of the colonial writings about Polonnaruwa indicate that Siva Devâle No. 2 was in worship at the time of its "rediscovery," its early identity as a *devâle* is intriguing in light of present day worship by locals at this particular temple.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in "Archaeological Curiosities and Ruined Cities" in *Regeneration*, 20.

<sup>48</sup> According to Falconer, only the set that was sent to the Colonial Office in London in 1872 has notes by Louis Frederick Liesching. Moreover, the most comprehensive record of Lawton's photographs is in four albums at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. "Pattern of Photographic Surveys: Joseph Lawton in Ceylon," 163.

<sup>49</sup> He includes photographs of one other *devâle*, Siva Devâle No. 2, which he calls "Visnu deyyanne dewale."

Lawton's photograph of Siva Devâle No. 1 (Fig. 1.2) presents the images of deities discovered at this site, arranged carefully against the background of the remains of the temple. Unlike most of Lawton's photographs of ruined monuments or sculptures in which we are presented with a fairly unmediated view, this photograph documents the Saivite pantheon assembled perhaps by Lawton himself with an image of the goddess, probably Durga, prominently placed in the center.<sup>50</sup> This photograph certainly captures the scientific view of cataloging and arranging the discoveries, though visually. As John Falconer points out, there was a tension in the colonial projects of photographing these ancient sites: "the romantic vision of the sites as picturesque symbols of human transience" and the "rigorous investigation of the island's past."<sup>51</sup>

The next colonial civil servant to arrive in Polonnaruwa was H. C. P. Bell, who became the first Archaeological Commissioner in Ceylon when the Archaeological Survey was established in 1890. At Polonnaruwa, he systematically excavated twelve Hindu temples from 1901-1908 and wrote extensive reports on most of them.<sup>52</sup> Unlike the colonial writers who preceded him, Bell saw them as Hindu temples built by foreign invaders. In 1902, he believed that they belonged to the period of Kâlinga Magha, who invaded Polonnaruwa in 1215,<sup>53</sup> but by 1906 he had decided that most if not all belonged to the Côla period in Sri Lanka.<sup>54</sup>

Bell continued with the epithet "*devâle*" rather than calling these temples *kôvils*.<sup>55</sup> The Tamil word for a temple that houses Hindu deities is *kôvil*. In Bell's report on Kegalla in central Sri Lanka, where he was first posted, he defines the monument *devâle*.

Dêvalês, connected with the Buddhism of the Island, are temples consecrated to certain gods of the Hindû pantheon, whose characters and attributes, as adopted into the Ceylon Buddhist cult, entirely alter their nature and the worship paid to them. With the Hindûs these gods are immortal, revengeful, licentious: here they are but mortal, well-behaved, guardian deities, an even candidates for Buddhahood. Shrines are erected to them, and offerings made solely to obtain temporary benefits—not by religious supplication to merit reward in a future

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<sup>50</sup> The images gathered and arranged by Lawton give us a sense of the sculptures that would have adorned the now mostly empty niches of Siva Devâle No.1. This photograph indicates that once this temple had niches with gods in perhaps the standard pattern, established in the temples of the Kâveri delta, in which images of Siva Daksinamûrti and the Goddess were included. In addition, this photograph also depicts Ganesa, Kârtikeyya, and perhaps Visnû. Most of the images gathered in this photograph are not at this site anymore.

<sup>51</sup> Falconer, "Pattern of Photographic Surveys: Joseph Lawton in Ceylon," 157.

<sup>52</sup> In 1902 Bell excavated three devales: Siva Devâle No. 4, Visnû Devâle No. 3, and the Kâli Kôvil. In 1906, he excavated Siva Devâle No. 2. In 1907, Bell excavated Siva Devâle No. 1. In 1908, he excavated Siva Devâle No. 3, Visnû Devâle No. 2, Siva Devâle No. 5, Siva Devâle No. 6, Siva Devâle No.7, Visnû Devâle No. 4, and Visnû Devâle No. 5. See chart "Hindu Temples at Polonnaruwa" in *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon. North-Central and Central Provinces. Annual Report, 1908* (Colombo: 1913), 10. In this report he notes that two more *devâles* were discovered but he does not elaborate on them any further.

<sup>53</sup> *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon North-Central and Central Provinces. Annual Report 1902*. (Colombo: Cottle, 1907), 11.

<sup>54</sup> *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon North-Central and Central Provinces. Annual Report 1906*. (Colombo: Cottle, 1910), 21.

<sup>55</sup> In ancient Tamil, *kôvil* means "king's house" or "palace." George L. Hart III, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 13.



world. This essential difference between the Hindû and Buddhist notion of the gods, common in name to both forms of worship, is rarely understood.<sup>56</sup>

Even though Bell was perhaps the first to explain this type of religious monument found in Sri Lanka, his continued use of the term “*devâle*” to refer to the Hindu temples is quite intriguing. After all, he perceived these Hindu temples as not connected to Buddhism in any way,<sup>57</sup> because in the 1908 annual report he notes that the Hindu temples that have been discovered so far suggests that “all are located quite clear of any Buddhist monastery.”<sup>58</sup> Starting in the fourteenth century, *devâles* as we understand them now are generally placed either within a Buddhist temple or near one. Birch’s and Bell’s epithet for these temples continues to this day and perhaps foretold their present-day identity in Polonnaruva.

### “Dravidian” or Sinhala? The Art Historical Discourse on the Hindu Temples of Polonnaruva

Even though there are fifteen Hindu temples that have been excavated, they have been overshadowed by the monumental Buddhist *stûpas*, brick buildings, and stone carvings of Polonnaruva built after the Cōla period. However, their small scale or foreign origins generally have not excluded them from receiving attention in tourist and scholarly publications on Polonnaruva since the British colonial period.<sup>59</sup> In such contexts, the architecture, artists, and materials of these monuments are classified along ethnic lines, and these temples are seen as markers of conquest.<sup>60</sup> Even though the island has had continuous contact with South India at least from the Mesolithic period,<sup>61</sup> the idea that these temples were intruding on a “purely Sinhala civilization” that existed before is

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<sup>56</sup> H. C. P. Bell, *Report on the Kegalla District of the Province of Sabaragamuwa. Archaeological Survey of Ceylon* (Colombo: 1904), 18.

<sup>57</sup> It is not as if Bell was not aware of the term *kôvil*. He uses both these terms in his excavation reports to refer to the Hindu temples at Polonnaruva but not interchangeably. Bell uses the word *devâle* for Siva and Visnû temples and the word *kôvil* for Kâli and Ganesa temples. He does not offer any explanation for his differentiation.

<sup>58</sup> Bell further notes, “care was taken to keep them strictly apart from the Buddhist shrines.” Bell, *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*. 1908, 9.

<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note that the only dissertation on Polonnaruva does not include these Hindu temples but focuses solely on the Buddhist monuments at this site. See H. T. Basnayake, *Sri Lankan Monastic Architecture*, Studies on Sri Lanka Series No. 2 (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986). By focusing solely on the Buddhist monuments at Anurâdhapura and Polonnaruva and claiming them to be created by the Sinhalese, one runs the risk of excluding Hindu monuments and Tamils as patrons from the Sri Lankan art historical canon. This method also feeds into present-day political tensions between these two ethnic groups in that the Tamils are seen as outsiders when in fact both groups and both religions presently associated with these two ethnic groups coexisted in Anurâdhapura and Polonnaruva.

<sup>60</sup> See Sastri, “Cōla Invasions: Downfall of Anurâdhapura,” 414. Also see Anuradha Seneviratne, *Polonnaruva Medieval Capital of Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Archaeological Survey Department, 1998), 36.

<sup>61</sup> K. Indrapala has most recently suggested that Sri Lanka and South India be seen as a single cultural region. He argues that rather than seeing the sea as a dividing factor, it should be seen as a unifier. K. Indrapala, *The Evolution of an Ethnic Identity The Tamils in Sri Lanka C. 300 BCE to c. 1200 CE* (Sydney: The South Asian Studies Centre, 2005), 28. He further notes that for the most part of the Mesolithic period, Sri Lanka was connected to the subcontinent and the archaeological record shows that “the tool technology of the Mesolithic people of Sri Lanka (whose culture is also known as the Balangoda culture) had much in common with that of the Mesolithic people of southern Tamil Nadu.” *Ibid.*, 47.

clearly present in the art historical discourse. In other words, several of the discourses surrounding these temples seem to invent oppositional binaries: Buddhist and Hindu, Sinhalese and Dravidian, Sri Lankan and South Indian, and native and invader. As noted above, nineteenth-century colonial histories painted an ancient Sinhalese civilization that had gone into decline, and imposed nineteenth-century categories of ethnicity and religion on the people of the past.<sup>62</sup> John Rogers has observed, “Sri Lankan writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries failed to question either of these assumptions.”<sup>63</sup> The residue of this thinking can be seen in the writings from the post-colonial period as well.<sup>64</sup>

Senerat Paranavitana, the first Sri Lankan Archaeological Commissioner from 1940-1956, wrote about the entire site in a small guidebook, *The Guide to Polonnaruwa*, published in 1950. He addressed two of the Hindu temples, Siva Devâle No. 1 (Fig. 1.3) and No.2 (Fig. 1.4), in this publication, briefly noting their style and time.<sup>65</sup> In a later scholarly publication, *The Art and Architecture of Polonnaruwa*, Paranavitana examines more closely these two Hindu temples and attempts to place them within the larger history of Sri Lankan art. He says,

No monument in the Sinhalese style of architecture were raised in Ceylon under the regime of the Cholas. Sinhalese sculptors and painters had no opportunity to practice their arts, for their patrons,—royalty, nobility and the Buddhist church,—had ceased to exist under the Chola rule. The invaders built shrines of their faith at Polonnaruwa. These are in the style of architecture that was in vogue in South India at the time—a style which had developed from the earlier Buddhist architecture of India and therefore exhibits certain features in common with that distinctive of the Sinhalese.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Rogers, “Historical Images in the British Period,” 91-92. According to Rogers, William Knighton, who even before Tennent, created an authoritative knowledge about the island through his publication *History of Ceylon from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (1845), says “it was the continuous wars between the Sinhala people, the ‘proper inhabitants of the island, and the Malabars, invaders from southern India, that led to the decline of Sri Lankan civilization between the ninth and fourteenth centuries.” *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>64</sup> This thinking can be seen even in the construction of the Sri Lankan art historical canon in which the Anurâdhapura period is seen as the golden age and all art that comes afterwards is compared to that of Anurâdhapura. A good example of this type of writing is seen in Senerat Paranavitana, “The Art and Architecture of the Polonnaruwa Period,” in *The Polonnaruwa Period*, ed. S. D. Saparamadu. First published as *Art and Architecture of Ceylon; Polonnaruwa Period*. Introduction by S. Paranavitana. Colombo: Ceylon Arts Council, 1954. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakasakayo, 1973), 77-101.

<sup>65</sup> Paranavitana notes that the former “is a Saiva shrine in the South Indian style of architecture of the thirteenth century, and probably dates from the second period of the Tamil domination of Polonnaruwa.” *The Guide to Polonnaruwa* (Colombo, 1950), 10. He further notes that the latter “is noteworthy not only as the earliest monument to be seen now at Polonnaruwa but also as the only shrine built entirely of stone. It is, moreover, in a very good state of preservation. In architectural style it resembles South Indian shrines of the eleventh century and on its walls are Tamil inscriptions of the Cola emperors.” *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>66</sup> Paranavitana, “The Art and Architecture of the Polonnaruwa Period,” 79. In addition to the patronage of Velgam Vehera, another Buddhist site that may have been patronized by the Cōlas in Sri Lanka is the Mahiyangana Dâgoba. According to Paranavitana, “the latest datable object found in this relic-chamber is a Cōla coin of the eleventh century.” *Ibid.*, 98.

Even though Paranavitana ethnicizes the styles of architecture present in Sri Lanka, he makes a valid observation about the common architectural features shared by Buddhist and Hindu monuments.

Certainly, the southern style has a number of features in common with the monuments carved on the reliefs from the Buddhist sites of Sânci, Bhârhut, and Amarâvati. K. R. Srinivasan in the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Architecture South India Lower Dravidadesa 200 B.C—A.D. 1324* points to a pan-Indian style from which the northern and southern styles develop.<sup>67</sup> He examines reliefs from Amarâvati, Nagarjûnakonda, Jaggayyapeta, Sannatti and Ghantasala and points to the use of *stûpikas*, *kûtas*, *sâlas*, and *kudûs*—the basic architectural features of a southern superstructure—in these early reliefs to depict Buddhist and civil architecture.<sup>68</sup> Superstructures of Buddhist temples or monastic buildings from the Anurâdhapura period do not exist, but the urinal stones of Anurâdhapura too depict relief carvings of buildings with *stûpikas* and *kûtas*, indicating that these architectural elements were used in Buddhist monuments in Sri Lanka well before the Cōla occupation.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, by locating these monuments within this wider field of South Asian architecture—the Pan-Indian style seen in civil and religious architecture—rather than attributing religious (i.e. Buddhist and Hindu) or ethnic (i.e. Sinhalese versus Dravidian) affiliations to particular architectural features seems far more constructive in analyzing these Hindu temples in Polonnaruva.<sup>70</sup>

The aesthetics of stone is also an issue that is consistently brought up in reference to these and other stone temples, underscoring the supposed separation between the architecture of the two ethnic groups—the Sinhalese and the Tamils—in Sri Lanka. After all, the complete use of stone for temple building is generally associated with South India (i.e. Tamil Nâdu). Certainly, as the Pallava inscription of Mahendra I states at the cave temple at Mandâgappattu, Tamil Nâdu, the use of stone was a new departure from the previous tradition of timber and brick.<sup>71</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy in his *Medieval Sinhalese Art*, first published in 1908, notes:

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<sup>67</sup> “Though temples in North and South India by the fifth to seventh centuries A. D. widely diverge, the forms employed by both derive from basic types of civil architecture that for the earlier period had been pan-Indian. From Buddhist caves, which replicate wooden domestic and civil architecture under the Satavahanas, and from architectural reliefs at Sânci and Bhârhut in the north, and from Buddhist sites principally in Ândhra in the south, it is possible to derive an architectural vocabulary for this pan-Indian period, and to suggest continuities between such forms and stages of mutation, encouraged by local needs and accomplished by individual genius, that led to separate formulations for Hindu temples later in different regions.” K. R. Srinivasan, “Chapter 1 Pan-Indian style: South India, c. 200 B.C.-A.D. 400 Ândhras, Iksvakus, and Literary Sources,” in *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture South India Lower Dravidadesa 200 B.C-A.D 1324*, ed. Michael W. Meister (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies and University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-20.

<sup>69</sup> For examples of urinal stones depicting carvings of miniature shrines with *kudûs* and *kûtas*, see Senake Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, Studies in South Asian Culture Vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 354-355.

<sup>70</sup> Alka Patel in discussing the Ghurid patronage of mosques in north India has recently shown that architectural features need not have religious connotations. She points out that the architectural and decorative vocabulary used in north Indian temples was shared by civil architecture. “Toward Alternative Receptions of Ghurid Architecture in North India (Late Twelfth-Early Thirteenth Century (CE),” *Archives of Asian Art* 54 (2004): 41.

<sup>71</sup> Noting that the inscription states that the temple was “brickless, timberless, metalless, and mortarless mansion” Susan Huntington goes on to point out that this is “generally taken to mean that the usual temple

the truly national and indigenous architecture has always been one of wooden building; the great stone buildings whose remains attract so many visitors to the ‘buried cities,’ were probably erected with Indian assistance and partly by Indian workmen; so were many later stone buildings (especially when for the worship of Hindu gods) such as the sixteenth century Berendi Kôvil and the unmistakable Hindu temple at Ridî Vihâra.<sup>72</sup>

The allusion that the use of stone to build a religious monument implies foreign origins is also articulated by Senake Bandaranayake in “Sri Lanka and Monsoon Asia: Patterns of Local and Regional Architectural Development and the Problem of the Traditional Sri Lankan Roof.”<sup>73</sup> Bandaranayake observes that in Sri Lanka, the dominant architectural style is timber and masonry.<sup>74</sup> He notes that stone is clearly an importation, “representing various schools of South Indian architecture.”<sup>75</sup> I agree with Bandaranayake’s overall project in attempting to define a Sri Lankan style challenging the colonial theory of diffusion in which India and China were seen as the sole innovators.<sup>76</sup> I also empathize with Coomaraswamy’s project to bring attention to a national style, as well as to monuments constructed after the fall of the two capitals in the dry-zone, but such constructions of the Sri Lankan art historical canon can be limiting in that it becomes a less inclusive tradition.

Coomaraswamy’s and Bandaranayake’s observations on stone architecture certainly holds true for the Anurâdhapura period—the sole examples of stone temples are the Pallava style Nâlanda Gedige and the Galge in Devinuvara.<sup>77</sup> For the Polonnaruva period, examples are limited to Siva Devâle No.1, No.2, No.3, and King Nissanka Malla’s tooth-relic house. However, the existence of a number of Buddhist and Hindu

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would have been a structural building, made of some of the materials enumerated in the inscription, and thus, that Mahendra I was the initiation of a new stone tradition. Whether or not this is the case, the use of stone was truly unusual at this time, judging from the lack of extant remains.” *The Art of Ancient India* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1985), 292-3.

<sup>72</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Medieval Sinhalese Art: being a Monograph on Medieval Sinhalese Arts and Crafts, mainly as Surviving in the Eighteenth Century, with an Account of the Structure of Society and the Status of the Craftsmen*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 114. Ironically, Coomaraswamy himself states, “Sinhalese art is essentially Indian.” *Ibid.*, v.

<sup>73</sup> Senake Bandaranayake, “Sri Lanka and Monsoon Asia: Patterns of Local and Regional Architectural Development and the Problem of the Traditional Sri Lankan Roof,” in *Senerat Paranavitana Commemorative Volume*, Studies in South Asian Culture, vol. 7, ed. Leelananda Prematilleke et. al. (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 22-44.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>76</sup> John Holt cites Paranavitana who “asserts that the original *galge* (“rock house”) shrine now in ruins is unrelated to any Dravidian (or for that matter Sinhala) architectural prototypes and dates it to the seventh century before the ascent of Cōla power.” *The Buddhist Visnu Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 81. However, the architecture of this stone temple indicates it is of the southern style.

<sup>77</sup> These stone monuments are not located in the capital at Anurâdhapura; perhaps, their establishment in the periphery may indicate that this type of monument was not considered standard for Sri Lankan architecture of that time. Another monument completely built of stone is the Galge or Parana Vihâra in Devanagala, which consists of only one east facing windowless chamber perched on top of the Devanagala rock. The ruins of the stone structure, possibly dating from the Anurâdhapura period, do not indicate any religious affiliations. Because of its location, it may have been a military outpost; though the lack of a window overlooking the valley is perplexing.

stone temples in the various capitals and regions of Sri Lanka in the post-Polonaruva period indicates that stone does not separate Hindu from Buddhist, invader from native, and Tamil from Sinhalese. The stone temple at Ridî Vihâra in Kurunegala, Gadalâdeniya Rajamaha Vihâra in Gampola, the Nâtha Devâle, the Adâhana Maluwa, Sellâvali, Palkumbura, and the Galmaduwa temples all sited in and around Kandy, as well as the Berendi Kôvil in Sîtâvaka all attest to the continued use of stone in both Buddhist and Hindu temples in Sri Lanka until the fall of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815. The coexistence of various modes of architecture in diverse building materials— such as timber, brick, and stone—not only indicates the presence of artisans from different regions, who trained in the materials available to them, but also new developments in patterns of patronage. The greater presence of stone temples in the post-Polonaruva period may also ultimately indicate the localization of imported building traditions.<sup>78</sup>

Another observation made by scholars in reference to these temples is the issue of whether the artisans were Sinhalese or Dravidian. As seen above, the dialogue on the identity of the Polonaruva artist was perhaps begun by Burrows, who in fact used the term “race,”<sup>79</sup> which was prevalent in nineteenth-century constructions of the Sinhalese and the Tamil peoples. Ananda Coomaraswamy continues this obsession with the identity of the Sri Lankan artist in his *Medieval Sinhalese Art*. He introduces another contentious term to this debate: “the gal-vaduvo [stoneworkers] actually living in Ceylon as subjects of the Sinhalese kings in later times, were of South Indian blood.”<sup>80</sup> Paranavitana too, as seen above, implies an ethnic identity for the Polonaruva artist: “Sinhalese sculptors and painters had no opportunity to practice their arts, for their patrons,—royalty, nobility and the Buddhist church,—had ceased to exist under the Chola rule.”<sup>81</sup> In other words, the artist in Polonaruva during the Cōla occupation was not Sinhalese but Tamil. This fixation with the identity of the artist at Polonaruva becomes even contested in the debate over the Polonaruva bronzes in which the less refined bronzes are thought to be cast in Sri Lanka, while the more beautiful ones in South India.<sup>82</sup> Certainly, Ulrich von Schroeder’s title, “Polonaruva Bronzes—Dravidian or Sinhala Works of Art?,” for his chapter on Hindu bronzes is quite provocative, implying an ethnic aspect to the bronzes through the use of terms such as Dravidian or Sinhala.

The classification on whether the artisans of these temples are Sinhalese or Dravidian has its roots in colonial scholarship. A number of scholars have touched on the

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<sup>78</sup> I examine the localization of stone temples in Sri Lankan architecture in my second chapter.

<sup>79</sup> See footnote 34 for Tennent’s construction of the “three races.” John Rogers argues that even though racial identities existed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sri Lanka, those created in the nineteenth-century were quite different. John D. Rogers, “Racial Identities and Politics in Early Modern Sri Lanka,” in *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, ed. Peter Robb (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 148-149.

<sup>80</sup> Coomaraswamy, *Medieval Sinhalese Art*, 114.

<sup>81</sup> Paranavitana, “The Art and Architecture of the Polonaruva Period,” 79.

<sup>82</sup> For a summary of this debate, see Ulrich von Schroeder, *The Golden Age of Sculpture in Sri Lanka Masterpieces of Buddhist and Hindu Bronzes From Museums in Sri Lanka* (Hong Kong: Visual Dharma Publications Ltd., 1992), 110-11. Recently, Arjuna Thantilage has shown that some of these bronzes were indeed made in Sri Lanka. See Arjuna Thantilage, *An Archaeometallurgical Investigation of Sri Lankan Historical Bronzes* (PhD diss., Post-Graduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 2008).

Aryan theory and its impact on Sri Lankan studies.<sup>83</sup> Arjun Guneratne observes in “What’s in a Name? Aryans and Dravidians in the Making of Sri Lankan Identities,” the concepts of Aryan and Dravidian were introduced to Sri Lanka by colonial intellectuals and “were also picked up [by intellectuals] in Sri Lanka, and were used to mark out a boundary between the two main cultural components of the island’s population.”<sup>84</sup> These categories in turn were mapped on to the history of the island.<sup>85</sup> R. A. L. H. Gunawardana has rightly observed, “The impact of the dichotomous categorization of people as Aryan and Dravidian was probably most acute in Sri Lanka in comparison to the other parts of South Asia.”<sup>86</sup> As seen through the observations conceived on the Sri Lankan artist, the concepts of Aryan and Dravidian crept into the writings about Sri Lankan art as well.

On close analysis of the ground plans, materials, and architectural style of these temples, the construction of the Hindu temples at Polonnaruva is a little more complex than has been seen previously by scholars. Rather than focusing on the “ethnic identity” of the artist or of the architectural style, I believe that it would be more constructive to examine the remains of these temples in order to discern patterns of patronage and artist workshops. Generally most publications that include the Hindu temples in Polonnaruva bring attention to the fairly intact Siva Devâle No. 1 and No. 2 as temples built by the Côlas. Siva Devâle No. 2, a solitary structure within the outer city, is close to the eastern gateway. The ground plan and style of architecture at this Hindu temple indicate that it is the oldest Côla temple at this site: consisting only of a *garbhagrha* (inner sanctum) and an *ardhamandapa* (half-hall), this temple has two *parivârâlayas* (subsidiary shrines) to Ganesa and Kârtikeyya.<sup>87</sup> With a *pâdabandha* *adhithâna*, which is on an *upâna* (sub-plinth molding), this temple has a *vêddi* (wall molding) above the *adhithâna* (molded base). Out of the fifteen Hindu temples excavated so far at Polonnaruva, Siva Devâle No. 2 is the only one in which the superstructure still survives: crowned by a *stûpika*, the *dvîtala* (two storey) superstructure has *kûtas* on the four corners and *sâlas* above the three main niches and the entrance.<sup>88</sup> The four headless *vr̥sas* now scattered on the grounds of

<sup>83</sup> See John D. Rogers, “Historical Images in the British Period,” 95; Gunawardana, “Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past: The Changing ‘Ethnic Identity’ of the Last Four Kings of the Kandyan Kingdom” 211; and Nissan, “History in the Making: Anuradhapura and the Sinhala Buddhist Nation,” 31.

<sup>84</sup> Arjun Guneratne, “What’s in a Name? Aryans and Dravidians in the Making of Sri Lankan Identities” in *The Hybrid Island Culture Crossings and the Invention of Identity in Sri Lanka*, ed. Neluka Silva (Colombo: Social Scientists Association, 2002), 20, 24.

<sup>85</sup> For example, Prince Vijaya, from whom Sri Lankan kings were believed to descend, was seen as Aryan because of his north Indian origins. He also came to be viewed as the ancestor of the Sinhalese and hence his descendants (i.e. all Sinhala speaking people) were seen as Aryans. See Rogers, “Historical Images in the British Period,” 95; Nissan, “History in the Making: Anuradhapura and the Sinhala Buddhist Nation,” 31.

<sup>86</sup> Gunawardana, “Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past: The Changing ‘Ethnic Identity’ of the Last Four Kings of the Kandyan Kingdom,” 211; and R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *Historiography in a Time of Ethnic Conflict Construction of the Past in Contemporary Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Social Scientists’ Association, 1995), 8.

<sup>87</sup> Bell, *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, 1906, 21. In the southeast corner is a two-roomed temple in which a slab carving of Ganesa was discovered; in the northwest is another two-roomed temple, which had a broken figure of Kârtikeyya. *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>88</sup> Most intriguing is the observation in parenthesis made by Srinivasan about the architecture of this temple: “(the shape of the *kûta*-roof differs from that on Côlanâdu temples).” K. R. Srinivasan, “Middle Côlanâdu style, c. A.D. 1000-1078 Côlas of Tanjâvur: Phase II” in *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple*

this temple were initially also part of the superstructure. The pilasters and half-pilasters adorning this temple are of the Brahmakanta type. Even though K. R. Srinivasan assigns this temple to the Middle Cōlanādu style (1000-1078), the ground plan, moldings, pilasters, and superstructure follow the general pattern seen in early Cōlanādu temples. In fact, he does note that “the temple may have been built in or before c. A. D. 988” because a donative inscription in the third year of Rājarāja I from Tiruvenkadu in Cōlanādu mentions this temple.<sup>89</sup> However, grouping temples under large umbrella terms such as the “Cōlanādu style” is rather problematic, because of the shared characteristics seen in temples built by the Muttaraiyars, Cōlas, Irrukuvels, and the Paluvettaraiyars in the Kâveri delta. Addressing such problems, Padma Kaimal has suggested that the temples in the Kâveri delta be given the term “Kâveri style” while the temples built by Sembiyan Mahâdevî be called the “early Cōla style.”<sup>90</sup> Kaimal has also recently shown by examining precise architectural features that it is possible to detect sub-styles from distinct artist workshops working for specific families in the Kâveri delta.<sup>91</sup>

Rather than only attempting to map these fifteen temples at Polonnaruva on to the “Cōlanādu style” or the “Kâveri style” of the mainland, I believe that they should also be understood within their own grouping as temples built during the Polonnaruva period. Borrowing Kaimal’s methodology,<sup>92</sup> one can detect certain features that point to a specific artist workshop at Siva Devâle No. 2. The niches for deities in this temple are arch-shaped with plain *toranas* above them,<sup>93</sup> unlike the rectangular *devakôsthas* of Cōlda period *kôvils* in South India (Fig. 1.5). The *sâlas* above the main doorway as well as the ones above the three *devakôsthas* have two *kudûs* instead of the usual one seen in the Kâveri delta.<sup>94</sup> These architectural elements may also indicate that perhaps a group of local stone carvers also worked on these temples, questioning the assumption that the Cōla temples were built by only South Indian artists, who accompanied the Cōlas in their invasions of Sri Lanka. The great efflorescence of Sri Lankan architecture with local features at Polonnaruva in the post-Cōla period also suggests the presence of a number of local artist workshops, which probably did not arise overnight.

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*Architecture South India Lower Dravidadesa 200 B.C.-A.D 1324*, ed. Michael W. Meister (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies and University of Pennsylvania Press, (1983), 259.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>90</sup> See Padma Kaimal, “Early Cōla Kings and ‘Early Cōla Temples’: Art and the Evolution of Kingship.” *Artibus Asiae* (1996): 33-66.

<sup>91</sup> See Padma Kaimal, “A Man’s World? Gender, Family, and Architectural Patronage in Medieval India.” *Archives of Asian Art* LIII (2002-2003): 26-53.

<sup>92</sup> M. A. Dhaky too speaks to the importance of details—he states that it is in the details or the “rendering of elements” that one can discern an early Cōla style. M. A. Dhaky, “Early Cōlanādu style, c. A.D. 800-1000 Cōlas of Tanjâvûr: Phase I,” in *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture South India Lower Dravidadesa 200 B.C.-A.D 1324*, ed. Michael W. Meister (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies and University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 193.

<sup>93</sup> I thank Joanna Williams for pointing out this architectural feature. Srinivasan too alludes to this anomaly: “since no lintel comes below the *torana*, the niches look curiously arch-shaped.” Srinivasan, “Middle Cōlanādu style, c. A.D. 1000-1078 Cōlas of Tanjâvûr: Phase II,” 259.

<sup>94</sup> I thank Padma Kaimal for bringing my attention to this architectural element.

The presence of stone and brick Hindu temples may also point to perhaps two main phases in the chronology of these temples in Polonnaruwa.<sup>95</sup> Out of the fifteen Hindu temples, about four are completely or partially made of stone. It is tempting to argue that the temples constructed completely or mostly of stone were built during the Cōla occupation; and the temples solely built with bricks were constructed during the post-Cōla period. After all, during the Cōla period in South India “brick and timber sanctuaries of Siva were being converted into stone temples.”<sup>96</sup> Therefore, one could ask why would the Cōlas revert to brick in Polonnaruwa when stone was seen as the new material fit for the abodes of gods. The post-Cōla period saw a renaissance in brick building in Sri Lankan art and it would seem natural that Hindu temples, patronized during that period, too began to be constructed in brick. For the present, all we can say is that the variety in material, ground plan, and architectural style points to the presence of diverse patrons working with different artist workshops.

The supposed boundary in the architectural styles of the two ethnic groups is also reinforced in the discussion of the moldings of these Cōla temples in Polonnaruwa in which the term “Dravidian” resurfaces. Unlike with Siva Devâles No. 1, 2, and 3 (Fig. 1.6), and Visnû Devâle No. 2 (Fig. 1.7), very little remains of the rest of the Hindu temples in Polonnaruwa, except for the substructures or the moldings of basal platforms in these temples. Bell was the first to bring attention to the style of moldings seen at the Hindu temples in Polonnaruwa. When writing about Visnû Devâle No. 2, he notes that the base “exhibits the now familiar moulded form of Dravidian architecture as displayed at all Hindu temples of Polonnaruwa whether built of stone or brick.”<sup>97</sup> Paranavitana too continues to point out the difference between the moldings of the Hindu temples, specifically Siva Devâle No. 1 and 2, and the rest of the Buddhist monuments at Polonnaruwa. He takes this a step further by presenting diagrams of the moldings at Siva Devâle No. 1 & 2, and by giving them the appellation “Dravidian moldings”<sup>98</sup> forcing us to ask what is so Dravidian about these moldings.

Senake Bandaranayake in *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*<sup>99</sup> provides a detailed analysis of Sri Lankan substructures in the Anurâdhapura period. Both the Sri Lankan and South Indian moldings consist of various combinations of the plinth, fillet, dado,

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<sup>95</sup> S. Pathmanathan too believes that the Hindu temples at Polonnaruwa were built not only during the Cōla period: “They belong to the period of Cōla occupation (985-1070) and that of Vijayabâhu (1070-1110) and his successors.” However, he does not follow up with further comments on his reasoning for such a conclusion. S. Pathmanathan, “Hindu Architecture in Sri Lanka Principal Characteristics and Trends,” in *The Art and Archaeology of Sri Lanka I Archaeology Architecture Sculpture*, History and Archaeology of Sri Lanka Vol. II Pt. 1 (Colombo: Central Cultural Fund, 2007): 301.

<sup>96</sup> M.A. Dhaky, “Early Cōlanâdu Style, c. A.D. 800-1000 Cōlas of Tanjâvûr: Phase I,” 193.

<sup>97</sup> Bell, *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, 1908, 9. This was not the very first instance Bell brought attention to the moldings of the *devâles*. When writing about the molding at Siva Devâle No. 3, he says, “This may be taken as the original standard type of platform for medieval Hindu temples in Ceylon.” *Ibid.*, 3. When summarizing all the discoveries of the Hindu temples at Polonnaruwa, in reference to the basement, he again notes of a “universal form.” *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>98</sup> Paranavitana, “The Art & Architecture of the Polonnaruwa Period,” 83.

<sup>99</sup> Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 313. Bandaranayake in his section on substructures refers to Paranavitana’s diagram of “Sinhalese and Dravidian Mouldings.” However, instead of using this same title he writes “Comparison of Sinhalese and Dravida style base-mouldings, Anurâdhapura and Polonnaruwa Periods (after Paranavitana).” *Ibid.*, 314. “Dravida” is certainly an improvement as “Dravidian” used alongside “Sinhalese” (i.e. Aryan) has colonial connotations to it.



cyma recta, cyma reversa, ovolo, and torus. Bandaranayake argues there is a distinct molding pattern specific to Sri Lankan architecture. Sri Lankan moldings in the Anurâdhapura and Polonnaruva periods consists of six patterns: three rectilinear and three curvilinear. The rectilinear molding consists of the plinth, which is the lowest molding; the fillet; and the dado or the vertical section of the base. The curvilinear molding consists of the quarter circle ovolo, the S-shaped cyma reversa and the semi-circular torus.<sup>100</sup> When comparing the rectilinear and curvilinear moldings of Sri Lankan architecture, either at Anurâdhapura or Polonnaruva, to the moldings found on the fifteen Hindu temples at Polonnaruva, the main difference is the *tripatta kumuda* (Fig. 1.8). It is this element in these moldings that earned it the name “Dravidian.” By giving them this appellation, again we run the risk of ethnicizing architectural styles. Rather than assigning the term “Dravidian moldings” with its colonial connotations, following Senake Bandaranayake, I suggest using the term “Drâvida,” which refers to the Drâvida school of architecture. After all, the term “Dravidian” was originally coined to refer to a language.<sup>101</sup> However, again by framing temples under these large umbrella terms, we limit our understanding of the complex ways in which artist workshops operate on the ground. The Dhavalâghara, a brick building at Polonnaruva, consists of a wall molding with the *tripatta kumuda* (Fig. 1.9).<sup>102</sup> Does this mean that this is a Hindu temple in the Drâvida style patronized by Tamils and built by Tamil artisans? The ground plan of this temple denotes that it is not a Hindu temple.<sup>103</sup> The use of this molding on the wall rather than as a basement molding forces us to rethink our assumptions on the ways in which artisans worked: the innovative use of this molding signals to borrowings and adaptations between building traditions or workshops that ultimately leads to change.

The Hindu temples at Polonnaruva were certainly not the first in the island. The archaeological record from Anurâdhapura clearly shows that Saivism existed in Sri Lanka long before the advent of the Côlas. In the Archaeological Survey Report of 1892, H.C. P. Bell briefly notes of the discovery of the “Tamil Ruins” in Anurâdhapura: “The buildings are nearly all non-Buddhistic in character, and connected with the Hindu cult.”<sup>104</sup> In 1893 he had completed the excavation of five such temples as well as the residences for the officiating priests. Built on brick basements with stone pillars, he notes that they all consist of an inner sanctum, a vestibule, and a half hall. Two *lingas* were unearthed by Bell from two of these temples.<sup>105</sup> Apart from the presence of Hinduism in

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 313-317.

<sup>101</sup> “Deriving the name Dravidian from the Sanskrit Drâvida, Caldwell first used it in 1856.” Indrapala, *The Evolution of an Ethnic Identity*, 118.

<sup>102</sup> I thank Rohan Gunasiri of the CCF in Polonnaruva for bringing my attention to this particular example.

<sup>103</sup> Parnavitana calls it a mausoleum and suggests that it may be “a representation of the Cosmic Mountain.” Parnavitana, “The Art and Architecture of the Polonnaruva Period,” 90.

<sup>104</sup> *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon* 1892, 5. This appellation too depicts how ethnicity was inscribed on temple ruins.

<sup>105</sup> Bell notes that before 1890, the Government Agent, Mr. R. W. Ievers, had discovered an image of the goddess at one of these temples. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon* 1893, 4-5. In the 1898 report, Bell writes about the discovery of the Kâli Kôvil located in a different region of the city from the earlier group of temples. He unearthed a headless seated figure of a goddess in stone from this temple. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon* 1898, 5. In 1901, again in a different part of the city, he discovers another Saivite temple in which he excavates a linga, Nandi the bull, and a stone perforated window. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon* 1901, 13. The National Museum in Colombo houses a number of stone sculptures of Hindu deities from Anurâdhapura, including a larger than life size image of Durga standing on the buffalo demon.

the first royal and monastic center of Anurâdhapura, the poems of the seventh-century *bhakti* saints Sambandâr and Sundarâr, point to the presence of a Saivite temple at Tirukkêtisvaram in Mantota. Sambandâr also sang about Tirukkônesvaram in Trincomalee.<sup>106</sup>

Even though there is this long history of Saiva temples in the island, the final observation made by scholars on the Hindu temples of Polonnaruva frames them as signs of victory. Nilakanta Sastri observes that Râjarâja may have signaled the conquest of the island by building a temple to Siva at Polonnaruva.<sup>107</sup> Anuradha Seneviratne in *Polonnaruva Medieval Capital of Sri Lanka* states, “The Siva and Vishnu temples we see at Polonnaruva signify the religious policy of the Colas wherein the idea was to exhibit the Cola domination and identity more than their religious devotion.”<sup>108</sup> Even though no inscription at Siva Devâle No. 2 clearly attributes the building of the temple directly to Côla royalty, two donative inscriptions on the Southern wall at Siva Devâle No. 2, reveal that it was named after one of Râjarâja’s queens, Vânavan Mahâdevî.<sup>109</sup> Naming temples or the deities that house them after the conqueror (or in this case Râjendra Côla’s mother) can certainly be interpreted as an act of power in which the temple becomes a mark of conquest.<sup>110</sup> In addition to this royal affiliation, the Hindu temples at Polonnaruva were also patronized by non-royals: one of the three donative inscriptions at Siva Devâle No. 2 points to a Vellâlan as the donor of a lamp.<sup>111</sup> The four donative inscriptions at Siva Devâle No. 3 point to individuals who are also not connected to royalty.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, initially when some of these Hindu temples were established it may have been simply to provide a necessary space for worship rather than only as markers of conquest. The patronage of Hindu temples by Sri Lankan kings, who succeeded the Côlas, also indicate that these Hindu temples of Polonnaruva were not necessarily signs of victory.

### **Invoking South Indian Ideals of Kingship: The Patronage of Hindu Temples by Sri Lankan Kings**

After the defeat of the Côlas by Vijayabâhu I, Buddhism was reinstated as the state religion and the tooth-relic became the palladium of the king. *Stûpas*, image houses,

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Bronze sculptures of Hindu deities have also been discovered from the Abhayagiri Vihâra and the Jetavanârâma site. Even though Anurâdhapura was built up as a purely Sinhalese Buddhist city in the nineteenth-century, these 9-10<sup>th</sup> century temples clearly show that on the ground this city was far more complex. Further research needs to be conducted on the presence of Hinduism in Anurâdhapura taking into account both the temples and the stone and bronze sculptures discovered in this city.

<sup>106</sup> See Pathmanathan’s *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka* for more on these two temples.

<sup>107</sup> Sastri also notes of the Râjarâjêsvara temple in Mantota. “Côla Invasions: Downfall of Anurâdhapura,” 414. Moreover, Sastri notes of the numerous inscriptions and the continued efforts in the building of temples in Sri Lanka by the successors of Râjarâja I as well as his officers. *Ibid.*, 414.

<sup>108</sup> Seneviratne, *Polonnaruva Medieval Capital of Sri Lanka*, 36.

<sup>109</sup> Bell, *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, 1906, 26-27.

<sup>110</sup> This practice was later adopted by the Sri Lankan king Vijayabâhu I, who immediately succeeded the Côlas. He renamed a Hindu temple and a brahmadeya that originally had Côla names with his name. Perhaps, his actions too can be interpreted as signs of victory against the Côlas.

<sup>111</sup> Bell, *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, 1906, 26-27.

<sup>112</sup> “The names recorded on the pillars are perhaps those of the individuals who gifted them.” No.1 “The prosperous Tillaikkarasu. Tyâgachintâmani Mûventavelân.” No. 2 “Karpagam, daughter of the prosperous Mugari Nâdâlvân.” No. 3 “The prosperous Nallûrudaiyân Panjanedivânan.” No. 4 “The prosperous Mûganûrudaiyân Tiruppûvanadevan.” Bell, *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, 1908, 15.

and monasteries were built and Polonnaruva became a city with a predominantly Buddhist landscape marked by the presence of mostly monumental Buddhist brick structures. Bell was the first to point out that the Hindu temples in Polonnaruva were destroyed during the reign of Parâkramabâhu II (1222-1257) and his son Vijayabâhu IV (1257-1259).<sup>113</sup> C. E. Godakumbura continues this belief in his publication about the Polonnaruva bronzes in which he points to the intentionality of the burial of these bronzes due to the oncoming armies of Vijayabâhu I (1055-1110).<sup>114</sup> Perhaps following the tradition on the mainland, the custodians of these temples in Polonnaruva hid their precious bronzes in fear of plunder by oncoming armies when Polonnaruva was thrown into turmoil, sometimes after the death of a monarch, or due to foreign invasions. However, we have no evidence to attribute this action of plunder to a specific king or army.<sup>115</sup> Rather than a story of desecration, the Pâli chronicle *Cûlavamsa* as well as Sinhala inscriptions posit a different narrative for the after-life of these and other Hindu temples in the Polonnaruva period. Adopting a new ideal of kingship, Sri Lankan kings begin to patronize Hindu temples.

In its sixtieth chapter on Vijayabâhu's "Care for the Laity and the Order" the *Cûlavamsa* notes "that which was formerly spent for the shrines of the gods he took nothing away."<sup>116</sup> In other words, Vijayabâhu I (1055-1110 CE), the first Sri Lankan king after the Cōla occupation, continued the patronage, which temples to deities had previously received, possibly from Cōla kings and other patrons during the Cōla period. Inscriptions too carve an image of Vijayabâhu as a king who patronized not only Buddhist establishments but also Hindu temples. Vijayabâhu renamed a *brahmadēya* in Kantalay called Râjarâja-caturvêdimangalam as Vijayarâja caturvêdimangalam, as well as a Saiva temple by giving it the appellation Vijayarâja-Îsvaram.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Bell, *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, 1902, 11. On the contrary, in the chapter "The Rebuilding of Pulatthinagara," the author of the *Cûlavamsa* when describing the restoration of Polonnaruva by Vijayabâhu IV states that it was "provided with all sorts of temples to deities." *Cûlavamsa Being the Recent Part of the Mahāvamsa* Part I, trans. Wilhelm Geiger (Colombo: The Ceylon Government Information Department, 1953), 88: 119.

<sup>114</sup> C. E. Godakumbura, *Polonnaruva Bronzes*, Art Series 5 (Colombo: Archaeological Department, 1964), 15.

<sup>115</sup> If one must point a finger, then perhaps that should be at Kâlinga Magha, who invaded the island in 1215 C.E. and is described as an iconoclast in the *Cûlavamsa*. In describing the havoc inflicted by Magha's army, the *Cûlavamsa* states, "They wrecked image houses, destroyed many cetiyas, ravaged the vihâras ..." *Cûlavamsa*, 80: 65. However, the local vernacular narratives of Batticaloa in the Eastern Province have a different take on Magha: during the reign of Magha, Tantonrîsvaram at Kokkaticcōlai became a center of Vîrasaivism. He is "described as a Kâlinga prince sent to the island by his father for the sake of promoting the cause of Saivism." Pathmanathan, *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka*, 287.

<sup>116</sup> *Cûlavamsa*, 60. It is possible that this observation in the *Cûlavamsa* reflects the concerns of the world of Parâkramabâhu I (1140-1173) as this section of the chronicle was written during that monarch's reign.

<sup>117</sup> Cited in Indrapala, *The Evolution of an Ethnic Identity*, 215. The reference to Vijayarâja caturvêdimangalam and Vijayarâja-îsvaram appears in a Tamil slab-inscription from Palamottai. Paranavitana who translated this inscription notes that "probably Kantalay became a centre of Hindu influence during the period of Chola rule in the eleventh century; and the Sinhalese kings who succeeded the Cholas maintained the Brahmins and patronized their shrines." *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. IV (1943), 193. Moreover, Vijayabâhu's grandson Gajabâhu II (1132-1153) was also a patron of the renamed *brahmadēya* Vijayarâja-caturvêdimangalam. Indrapala, *The Evolution of an Ethnic Identity*, 215. Nissamka Malla (1187-1196) too donated an alms hall named Pârvatî alms hall to this very same *brahmadēya*. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. II (1928), 290.

The *Cûlavamsa* also credits one of its heroes, the quintessential Buddhist king Parâkramabâhu I (1140-1173 CE), for the construction of thirteen *devâles* and the renovation of seventy nine in Rajarata,<sup>118</sup> while establishing twenty four in the southern Rohana region.<sup>119</sup> John Holt in his recent book *The Buddhist Visnû Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture* too observes that “the *Cûlavamsa*, though a Theravâda-inspired text, is articulating an inclusive or transcendent model of kingship by indicating Parâkramabâhu’s supportive disposition to Hindu cults as well as Buddhist.”<sup>120</sup> Holt’s discussion of the new ideal of kingship at Polonnaruva complements my contention that starting in the Polonnaruva period, Sri Lankan kings began to patronize both Buddhist and Hindu temples.

Not seen before at Anurâdhapura,<sup>121</sup> this new pattern of royal patronage is significant in that it points to the changes taking place in the royal rhetoric of kingship at Polonnaruva. Holt argues that a new Vaisnava ideology of kingship emerged in Polonnaruva for numerous reasons: noting the cosmopolitan nature of the Sri Lankan populace from the twelfth century onwards which can be gleaned from the chronicles,<sup>122</sup> he argues that the king’s incorporation of Hindu notions of kingship was “a measure of propaganda dished out in language that his political and military foes from South India would surely understand.”<sup>123</sup> In addition to domestic politics and foreign relations, faith too probably played a role in bringing about this new pattern of patronage. Marriage alliances, which led to the various South Indian factions at the Polonnaruva court, may have also been an important reason for the royal patronage of Hindu temples.<sup>124</sup> Some of

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<sup>118</sup> *Cûlavamsa*, 79: 22.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 79: 81. John Holt, citing Amaradasa Liyanagamage, goes on to say that these temples the *Cûlavamsa* refers to were perhaps the Saiva and Vaisnava temples built by the Côlas during their occupation of Râjarata. Therefore, he notes that the *Cûlavamsa*’s claim of Parâkramabâhu’s patronage of Hindu temples comes into question. Holt, *The Buddhist Visnû*, 38. However, as suggested above, perhaps the monuments themselves verify the *Cûlavamsa*’s statements that some of the Hindu temples at Polonnaruva were built or restored by Sri Lankan kings after the Côla occupation.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>121</sup> There is one instance of the patronage of a temple to a deity in the Anurâdhapura period included in the *Cûlavamsa*. In listing the meritorious works of Mahinda II (777-797) of Anurâdhapura, the author notes that, “He restored many decayed temples of the gods here and there and had costly images of the gods fashioned.” *Cûlavamsa*, 48. 143-144. As this section of the *Cûlavamsa* was written during the reign of Parâkramabâhu I, it could reflect the concerns of his world.

<sup>122</sup> In describing the *Mahâvamsa-Cûlavamsa*, John Holt observes that “a close reading of this spectacularly ‘pro-Theravâda,’ often melodramatic source leaves little doubt that Sri Lankan or Sinhala kings presided over a rather cosmopolitan populace from at least the twelfth through the eighteenth centuries C.E., and that many of these kings seemed disposed to accept and nurture the reality of that cosmopolitan character as part of their kingdom’s cultural makeup. Insofar as kingship often reflects the reality it rules, it is not surprising that Sinhala kingship during this era of increasing social variegation tended to become ever more eclectic in its symbolic expression, more composite or aggregate in its ideology and appeal.” Holt, *The Buddhist Visnû*, 35.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 38. Holt emphasizes this point by noting again that “the rhetoric deployed in relation to these Sinhala kings represent a co-option of their rival’s legitimating claims to power.” *Ibid.*, 43. However, the South Indian rivals of Sri Lankan kings, such as the Côlas, were Saivite rather than Vaisnavite. See Padma Kaimal, “Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon,” *Art Bulletin* (1999).

<sup>124</sup> Holt too in reference to the Côla temples at Polonnaruva states that “after the Sinhaes had regained power at Polonnaruva, these shrines served the religious orientations of the South Indian factions at court, who were possibly the relations and courtiers of the king’s South Indian queens.” *Ibid.*, 41.

these Polonnaruva kings not only had South Indian wives, but also South Indian mothers, fathers, and other ancestors.

However, given the overwhelming number of Saivite temples, it is questionable to argue for the rise of a Vaisnava ideology of kingship at Polonnaruva, which John Holt proposes in *The Buddhist Visnû*. Moreover, the close proximity in which Saiva and Vaisnava temples were built at Polonnaruva (see map of Polonnaruva) suggests that sectarian distinctions were not considered terribly important. The largest Hindu complex at Polonnaruva (Siva Devâle No. 5 and Visnû Devâle No. 4) incorporates a temple to Visnu alongside the larger temple to Siva. I would suggest therefore that the new emerging ideas about Sri Lankan kingship at Polonnaruva were at most South Indian and non-sectarian.

S. Pathmanathan, who has written extensively on interactions between South India (i.e. Hindu) and Sri Lanka (i.e. Buddhist),<sup>125</sup> was in fact the first scholar to suggest that a new rhetoric of kingship had emerged at Polonnaruva. Writing on the South Indian influence on the ideal of Sri Lankan Buddhist kingship during the Polonnaruva period, Pathmanathan argues for a combination of three ideals: “the dhammic conception rooted in Buddhist idealism, the heroic ideal depicted in the Artha sâstra and the epic tradition and the conception of the divinity of kingship as expressed in the dharma sâstra literature.”<sup>126</sup> He notes that during the Anurâdhapura period, the *dhammic* notion was the dominant ideal. However, he observes that after the Cōla period,<sup>127</sup> South Indian notions of kingship—the heroic and the divine—began to permeate Sri Lankan inscriptions and the chronicle *Cūlavamsa*.<sup>128</sup>

The royal patronage of Hindu temples perhaps indicates that divinity was perhaps the most important ideal for kingship at Polonnaruva. In the Anurâdhapura period, bodhisattva imagery had been invoked in molding the ideal of Sri Lankan kingship.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> See S. Pathmanathan, “Kingship in Sri Lanka: A. D. 1070-1270,” *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* 8 (1982): 120-45; “South India and Sri Lanka, AD 1450-1650: political, commercial and cultural relations.” *Journal of Tamil Studies* 21 (1982): 36-57; “Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka: Some Points of Contact between Two Religious Traditions circa A. D. 1300-1600.” *Kalyani: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Kelaniya* 5 and 6 (1986): 78-112.

<sup>126</sup> S. Pathmanathan, “Kingship in Sri Lanka: A. D. 1070-1270,” 126.

<sup>127</sup> Even though Pathmanathan stresses the significance of the Cōla occupation, they were probably not the only source for the new rhetoric of kingship. Pathmanathan himself points to the multiple factions at the Polonnaruva court—the Pândya and the Kâlinga. He notes that during the Cōla period, the Sri Lankan kings in the South had an alliance with the Pândyans of South India, which led to two Pândyan princes ruling in Rohana. Moreover, Mittâ, the sister of Vijayabâhu I, married a Pândyan prince, and his grandson Parâkramabâhu I, ruled the island (Ibid., 122). Pathmanathan also notes of the Kâlinga element at Polonnaruva through the chief queen of Vijayabâhu I, Tilôkasundarî, as well as his successors Vikramabâhu I and Gajabâhu II, who were of the Kâlinga faction, while the successors of Parâkramabâhu, such as Nisseamka Malla, were of Kâlinga origin too (Ibid., 122). A more detailed study, which maps out the specific influences of the Cōlas, Pândyans, and the Kâlingas on Sri Lankan kingship in the Polonnaruva period is much needed.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 121-122. Pathmanathan argues that this new ideal of kingship can also be gleaned from the epithets and royal titles of Polonnaruva kings, which signify supremacy. Ibid., 124-126. In addition, the personal names of kings from the Polonnaruva period such as Vijayabâhu, Vikramabâhu, Gajabâhu, and Parâkramabâhu are quite different from those in the Anurâdhapura period in that they do not connote Buddhist significance, but emphasize the heroic quality of kings. Pândyan kings too had names beginning with Vikrama, Parâkrama, and Vîra suggesting perhaps Pândyan influence as well. Ibid., 126.

<sup>129</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup>-century slab inscription of Mahinda IV (956-972 CE) from Mihintale contains the most concrete statement in linking the bodhisattva to the king: “non but bodhisattvas would become kings of a

After the Cōla occupation, gods too began to be consistently inserted into this royal imagery.<sup>130</sup> Kings were now not only modeled after the bodhisattva ideal but they were compared to Hindu deities as well. The Ambagamuva inscription of Vijayabâhu I and the Devanagala inscription of Parâkramabâhu I describes the functional similarity of the king to the gods.

He has surpassed the Sun in the majesty inherent in him, Mahesvara in prowess, Visnû in haughty spirit, the chief of the gods in kingly state, the lord of the riches in inexhaustible wealth, Kitisuru in happiness to living beings, the preceptor of the gods in the fertility of wisdom, the moon in gentleness, Kandarpa in the richness of his beauty and the Bodhisattva in the fullness of benevolence.<sup>131</sup>

In addition to Parâkramabâhu I, the Sri Lankan king who clearly articulated to the world this new divine aspect of the king was none other than the inscription-loving monarch Nissamka Malla (1187-1196 CE) from Kâlinga, whose Galpota inscription states, “though kings appear in human form they are divinities and must therefore be regarded as gods.”<sup>132</sup> This same inscription also notes that he “re-established offerings to gods.”<sup>133</sup> In comparison with previous monarchs at Polonnaruva, he continued with greater vigor the patronage of Hindu temples.<sup>134</sup> According to Sinhala inscriptions, Nissamka Malla propitiated the nine planetary deities in a ceremony at Siva Devâle No. 1<sup>135</sup> and donated an alms hall called Pârvatî to a *brahmadêya* in Kantalay,<sup>136</sup> which had received royal patronage from the Cōlas as well as Vijayabâhu I. Nissamka Malla was also the first Sri Lankan king to construct a Hindu temple called Nissamkesvara at Râmesevaram on the

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prosperous Lanka.” John Holt, *Buddha in the Crown: Avalokitesvara in the Buddhist Traditions of Sri Lanka* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60.

<sup>130</sup> The beginnings of the inclusion of divinity in royal imagery is in fact seen during the reign of Mahinda IV at Anurâdhapura. In the Jetavanârâma slab inscription of Mahinda IV, the king is compared to Vâsudeva who “enjoys the bliss of union with Srikântâ on the couch of [the serpent] Ananta.” *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. 1 (1912), 86. The worship of deities can also be detected from one of his tablets at Mihintale, which mentions “the house of the goddess Mininal.” *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>131</sup> Cited in Pathmanathan, “Kingship in Sri Lanka,” 138. See “Ambagamuva Inscription of Vijayabâhu I,” in *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. II, 35. Even if the king was compared to a series of Hindu deities, the bodhisattva ideal was not completely given up as can be seen by the above inscription, emphasizing the fluid boundaries between Buddhism and Hinduism.

<sup>132</sup> Cited in Pathmanathan “Kingship in Sri Lanka,” 123. For the entire inscription, see *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, 121. This idea is repeated in the Polonnaruva slab inscription at the North-gate of the Citadel. *Ibid.*, 163. Nissamka Malla is compared to deities such as Sakra and this reference, “shining like Sakra,” can be seen in the Polonnaruva slab inscription at the North-gate of the citadel (*Ibid.*, 163) and in the Polonnaruva Priti-Danaka-Mandapa rock inscription. *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>134</sup> This monarch’s inscriptions are also infused with ideas about the importance of worshipping deities: his Ruvanvalisaya *stûpa* inscription speaks of “Buddhist *devas* holding converse with him” and “the protection of Buddhist *devas* is likewise vouchsafed.” *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. II, 83. This idea of “divine protection” is also seen in the Polonnaruva Priti-Danaka-Mandapa rock inscription. *Ibid.*, 177. This is perhaps the very first instance in which a Sri Lankan king speaks of receiving divine protection from the Buddhist *devas*—an idea which becomes fully developed later in the Gampola period (1341-1396) in the form of the four guardian deities of Buddhism and the kingdom.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>136</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. II, 290.

tip of South India.<sup>137</sup> Called a *devâle* in his Sinhala inscriptions, Nissamka Malla ensures that this accomplishment is mentioned in at least six of them indicating the importance of constructing temples to Hindu deities by monarchs by the end of the twelfth century.<sup>138</sup> A Sinhala inscription of Nissamka Malla found at Râmesvaram confirms the construction of such a temple.<sup>139</sup>

Even though this medieval society at Polonnaruva had become more cosmopolitan, it was important that the king also had to be seen as a good Buddhist. Initially, the fluid boundaries between Buddhism and Hinduism may not have been a problem for the Buddhist establishment, but the fate of two Polonnaruva kings, who did not receive consecration point to perhaps a questioning of the royal patronage of Hindu temples and the new model of kingship. Sirima Kiribamune in her article “Buddhism and Royal Prerogative in Medieval Sri Lanka” examines in detail the reasons why Vikramabâhu I (1111-1132) and his son Gajabâhu II (1132-1153) were denied royal consecration. By a process of elimination,<sup>140</sup> Kiribamune finally arrives at the reason that denied both kings the royal consecration:<sup>141</sup> she argues that according to King Nissamka Malla’s Galpota inscription, non-Buddhist rulers should not rule the island, and the religious policies followed by these two rulers undermined Buddhism.<sup>142</sup>

Kiribamune garners much evidence to prove that Vikramabâhu I, the son of Vijayabâhu I, was not a Buddhist.<sup>143</sup> She notes that he patronized a Saiva temple, and that in an inscription it is said that he was blessed by Siva and compared to Visnû.<sup>144</sup> However, his father too patronized a Saiva temple and was compared to Hindu deities in an inscription. Moreover, a careful reading of the *Cûlavamsa* shows that the author criticizes all rulers (i.e. Vikramabâhu, Mânâbharana, Kitsirimegha, and Sri Vallabha) of

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>138</sup> The patronage of this *devâle* is mentioned in numerous inscriptions throughout Sri Lanka: “Polonnaruva Kiri Vehera slab inscription” in *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. II, 152; “Polonnaruva A Slab Inscription of Nissamkamalla,” in *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. II, 156; “Kantalai Gal Asana Inscription,” in *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. II, 287-289; “Dambulla Rock Inscription of Nissamkamalla,” in *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. I, 134; and the “Panduvastuvara Stone-seat Inscription of Nissamkamalla,” in *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. V, pt. 3 (1958), 443-446.

<sup>139</sup> S. Paranavitana, “Epigraphical Summary,” in *Ceylon Journal of Science* (G), 105-106.

<sup>140</sup> Kiribamune takes us through numerous reasons—such as not ruling the entire country; not being born to royal parents of equal status; not marrying consorts of equal status; and not having the custody of the tooth and alms-bowl relics of the Buddha—which could be used to deny a king the consecration ceremony. Sirima Kiribamune, “Buddhism and Royal Prerogative in Medieval Sri Lanka” in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Sri Lanka*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Chambersburg, PA: Anima Books, 1978), 109-110.

<sup>141</sup> Consecration would have enabled them to use their regnal years to issue inscriptions and new coins but “inscriptions belonging to their reigns are invariably dated in the regnal years of Jayabâhu I, whenever it was considered necessary.” Ibid., 108.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 111. As Nissamka Malla reigns after Vikramabâhu and Gajabâhu, his statement may reflect the concerns of his time. Moreover, as seen above, according to inscriptions, Nissamka Malla was the first Sri Lankan king to construct a temple to deities, therefore his definition of being a good Buddhist included the patronage of Hindu temples.

<sup>143</sup> His mother, a princess from Kâlinga, Kiribamune notes is criticized by the author of the *Cûlavamsa* for preventing Buddhist temples from being places of refuge. Ibid., 112.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 112. According to the *Cûlavamsa*, Mânâbharana spend the night at a temple dedicated to the King of the gods, where he dreams about the birth of his son, the future King Parâkramabâhu I. *Cûlavamsa*, 62:11-17. Therefore, Vikramabâhu was not the sole worshipper of deities.

that time period for not giving sufficient patronage to Buddhism.<sup>145</sup> However, the writer is particularly critical of Vikramabâhu's attitude towards Buddhism.<sup>146</sup> Perhaps the patronage of Hindu temples and invoking comparisons to Hindu deities came to be seen as non-Buddhist in a period when kings did little for the cause of Buddhism.

On the other hand, Vikramabâhu's son, Gajabâhu II, who also did not receive consecration, has a far more complex religious identity as he patronized both Buddhism and Hinduism. According to inscriptions, Gajabâhu's mother Sundara Mahâdevî, the chief queen of Vikramabâhu I, was in fact a Buddhist devotee, who had cave temples at Dimbulâgala built with sculptures and *stûpas*.<sup>147</sup> Gajabâhu himself made a grant to a Buddhist temple in Polonnaruva as well as to the Ruvanvalisaya.<sup>148</sup> Gajabâhu moreover was able to appeal to the *samgha* when he was faced with Parâkramabâhu's forces.<sup>149</sup> Gajabâhu's patronage patterns also included Hindu temples: interestingly, he donated land and pillars to a sculptor who made images of Skanda for a festival.<sup>150</sup>

Kiribamune's strongest piece of evidence against Gajabâhu is his retirement to Gangâtatâka, which was a Hindu center patronized by his grandfather as well as himself.<sup>151</sup> The religious leanings of a man at the end of his life and career perhaps speaks of his true religious identity; yet according to the *Cûlavamsa*, two years before his death, he goes to Mandalagiri Vihâra and carves a stone stating that "I have made over Rajarattha to the King Parâkrama."<sup>152</sup> His continued association with the *samgha* and Buddhist temples alongside his patronage of Hindu temples I believe suggests a more

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<sup>145</sup> See "The History of the Lives of the Four Kings," in *Cûlavamsa*, 61:48-54. Kiribamune does note though, that the *Cûlavamsa* stops short of accusing him as a non-Buddhist by saying, "thus lived all these rulers forsaking the path of (good and ancient) custom." Kiribamune, "Buddhism and Royal Prerogative in Medieval Sri Lanka," 112.

<sup>146</sup> *Cûlavamsa* 61:54-62. However, Vikramabâhu's actions against Buddhism need to be seen against the role played by Buddhist monks in the political intrigues of his time. When his father Vijayabâhu I died, his aunt Mittâ and uncle Jayabâhu, along with Mittâ's three sons (Mânâbharana, Kitsirimegha, and Srivallabha), consulted the Buddhist monks and consecrated Jayabâhu as king of Lanka. *Cûlavamsa* 61: 1-5. They appointed Mânâbharana as *uparâja* and the author of the *Cûlavamsa* notes that this was against custom. *Ibid.*, 61:4-5. Vikramabâhu should have been next in line to the throne. Perhaps, this issue of non-consecration needs to be also seen in light of the competition between the Kâlinga and Pândya factions at the Polonnaruva court. After all, Mittâ was married to a Pândyan prince, while Vikramabâhu was the son of a Kâlinga princess, and hence Gajabâhu was also seen as a Kâlinga prince. The competition between these various factions is verified by Nissanka Malla's Galpota inscription in which he states that only kings of the Kâlinga dynasty should rule the island and not those from the non-buddhistic Côla and Pândya dynasties. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, 122.

<sup>147</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, 196.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 113. However, Kiribamune questions Gajabâhu's patronage of Buddhist temples by saying that in the agreement between Gajabâhu II and Parâkramabâhu I the Buddhist monks invoked the Triple Gem while Gajabâhu did not. *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>149</sup> Kiribamune further says that Gajabâhu's rival Mânâbharana came with Buddhist monks to enlist his support, which shows that Gajabâhu trusted the *samgha*. *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>150</sup> "No. 38 Kapuruvaduoya Pillar-Inscription of Gajabâhu II," in *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. V, Pt. 3, 399.

<sup>151</sup> Kiribamune's references to the *Cûlavamsa*'s claim that Buddhism did not prosper until Parâkramabâhu's reign I think could be seen as propaganda by the author who is writing this section of the *Cûlavamsa* under the patronage of Parâkramabâhu I. Kiribamune too acknowledges this and cites the Devanagala inscription, which states that Parâkramabâhu fought against Gajabâhu and Mânâbharana in order to restore Buddhism. *Ibid.*, 114. However, this too is not sufficient evidence to question Gajabâhu's religious identity, because there were many local kings ruling during that period of forty-two years who could be all held responsible for allowing Buddhism to decay.

<sup>152</sup> *Cûlavamsa*, 71: 4-5.



complex religious identity for Gajabâhu II.<sup>153</sup> Yet his denial of consecration perhaps points to a new narrowing of definitions in which the patronage of Hindu temples was seen as outside the fold of Buddhism.

If indeed Vikramabâhu I and Gajabâhu II were denied royal consecration because of their patronage of Hindu temples, their fate forces one to question the meaning of kingship in the Polonnaruva period. Does being a Buddhist king in the Polonnaruva period mean that one could not patronize non-Buddhist institutions? The patronage patterns of Vijayabâhu I, the first Sri Lankan king after the Côlas, points to an initial acceptance of South Indian influence: Hindu temples and Hindu deities were looked upon in a favorable light. The author of the *Cûlavamsa* has only praise for this king like that for another hero of the *Cûlavamsa*, Parâkramabâhu I, who was also a patron of temples to deities. However, in Vijayabâhu's son's (1111-1132) and grandson's reigns (1132-1153), the fluid boundaries between Buddhism and Hinduism seemed to have hardened,<sup>154</sup> but only for a brief period. Certainly by Nissamka Malla's reign (1187-1196), the royal patronage of temples to deities alongside the patronage of Buddhist establishments becomes the norm.

### **Negotiating Ethnic and Religious Identities: The After Life of the Hindu Temples in Present-day Polonnaruva**

After the invasion of Magha in 1215, Polonnaruva was abandoned by the Sri Lankan monarchy. There was a brief return to Polonnaruva to restore the city in preparation for the coronation of Parâkramabâhu II (1236-1270 CE). In a description of the dilapidated state of Polonnaruva, overgrown with trees and shrubs, the author of the *Cûlavamsa* mentions "temples to deities"<sup>155</sup> amongst the many Buddhist buildings to be seen in this city. The *Cûlavamsa* also when describing the restoration of Polonnaruva by Vijayabâhu IV for his father's coronation states that it was "provided with all sorts of temples to deities."<sup>156</sup> Even after the abandonment of the city as the capital of the island, the construction of temples to deities indicates that they were considered as important religious spaces for cities. However, after the thirteenth century, unlike Anurâdhapura, Polonnaruva is rarely mentioned in the *Cûlavamsa*.

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<sup>153</sup> The words put into the mouth of Parâkramabâhu I also speak of a different concern for the absence of royal consecration for his predecessors: "My three fathers, and Monarchs, and also my mother's brother were not able to unite it under one umbrella. They divided it therefore and with the thought: if we only rule it to this extent we have done our duty, each in his province renouncing the desire customary in our family for the royal consecration, carried on the government like village chiefs whose one aim is their farming and the like." *Cûlavamsa*, 64: 33-36. Kiribamune notes that the chronicle may imply that the control of the entire country was a necessary pre-requisite, but dismisses this as a reason because there are examples of kings, such as Jayabâhu I, who received consecration, but did not rule over the entire island. Kiribamune, "Buddhism and Royal Prerogative in Medieval Sri Lanka," 108.

<sup>154</sup> Certainly this was not the first time there was a backlash against those who professed Saivism. The "other" religion in Sri Lanka has always been seen as Saivism: starting with Mahasena's destruction of *linga* shrines in the Anurâdhapura period and ending with the near assassination of Kîrti Sri Râjasimha in the Kandyan period for adorning his body with the sacred ash of Siva, there are numerous examples found throughout Sri Lanka's history in which Saivism is seen as the competing religion. I examine this in more detail in my third chapter.

<sup>155</sup> *Cûlavamsa*, 88: 94.

<sup>156</sup> *Cûlavamsa*, 88: 119.

My interest in these Hindu temples is not limited to the medieval period, or to the nineteenth century when they were written about by British travelers and archaeologists. In light of the memories of the Cōla occupation of Sri Lanka, I believe it is important to examine the lives of these monuments, especially how they are used 1000 years later in present day Sri Lanka. Gal Vihâra is certainly not the only ancient monument in worship at present day Polonnaruva. Traces of worship in the form of broken coconut shells or earthen lamps can be seen at some of the Hindu temples in Polonnaruva such as at Siva Devâle No. 1 & No. 3 and Visnû Devâle No. 2.<sup>157</sup> On a recent visit to Siva Devâle No.1, I met an ardent Sinhalese devotee of Siva, A. G. Kusumawathie, who breaks out into poetry in Sinhala about Siva when given a chance. She says she received her *varama* or warrant from Siva to function as a priestess fifteen years ago at Siva Devâle No. 2 and works on behalf of the local villagers addressing issues of fertility and the influence of planetary deities.<sup>158</sup>

The power of ruins and how an abandoned site becomes sacred once again is well-illustrated by a series of festivals at Siva Devâle No. 2, which the local Sinhala and Tamil communities have constructed, addressing the ritual calendars of both religions. In present-day Polonnaruva on Mahasiva Râtri, the Tamil and Sinhala communities come together to celebrate this night of Siva at Siva Devâle No. 2. In addition to the presence of the two ethnic groups, there is also a sharing of ritual space between a Sinhalese *Kapurâla*<sup>159</sup> or the ritual specialist at Sri Lankan *devâles*, and a Tamil Brahmin priest from the Manampitiya Kataragama Devâle near Polonnaruva. In March 2008, a Buddhist priest from the nearby Unagalâ Vehera Rajamaha Vihâra played a significant role in the religious proceedings (Fig. 1.10) as well as bringing a large group of Sinhalese Buddhist devotees for Mahasiva Râtri. A list of Tamil names, which included the name of the main patron of Siva Devâle No. 2, was read out, to entreat the deity to protect them, while the Buddhist priest also ensured that a long list of his laity was read out as well. From time to time, the Buddhist priest would speak through the microphone of ethnic harmony to the gathered devotees. When interviewed, he seemed quite excited about returning to this site for the Mahasiva Râtri festival the following year.<sup>160</sup>

In June, Siva Devâle No. 2 also participates in a Buddhist processional festival—the Poson perahâra—along with six other local *devâles*. For this particular event, the Kaduruwela Hindu Association, which consists of four Tamilians and three Sinhalese, rent processional images, the *têr*, or the vehicle in which the image is carried, traditional Tamil musicians, the *kâvadi* dance band, as well as *kâvadi* dancers. Like at Mahasiva Râtri, an elaborate *pûja* is held in which devotees partake of *prasâd* and some devotees

<sup>157</sup> Last year, while conducting some fieldwork at Siva Devâle No. 8 just outside the northern gate of the outer city, I saw a man pluck a branch off a tree and tie it to another tree. When I went up to the second tree, I discovered a stone sculpture of Ganesa in worship at the foot of the tree. This particular custom is also observed in the northern areas of the dry zone in worshipping Aiyyanâr.

<sup>158</sup> Interview conducted by Sujatha Arundathi Meegama (March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008).

<sup>159</sup> Ranbanda, the present *kapurâla* of Siva Devâle No. 2 is Sinhalese and succeeded the Tamil priest Arunâchalar. This Tamil priest had lived opposite Ranbanda's house and Ranbanda helped him to look after the *devâle*. Therefore, Ranbanda was appointed by the Tamil priest to succeed him. Ranbanda maintains good relations with the *devâles* in Badulla (Kataragama Devâle), Matale (Pattini Devâle), Batticaloa, Manampitiya (Kataragama Devâle), and Medirigiriya (Biso Bandara Devâle). Until recently, he had good relations with the Jaffna Siva *kôvils* too. Interview with Ranbanda conducted by Indrani Meegama (February 26, 2006).

<sup>160</sup> Interview conducted by Sujatha Arundathi Meegama (March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008).

such as A. G. Kusumawathie, dance for the deity. Unlike at Mahasiva Râtri, a sharing of ritual space occurs between Siva and his son Kataragama, who is brought from the Manampitiya Kataragama Devâle. The climax of this festival occurs when the deities are carried on to the carts to join the main Poson perahâra. Both the *têr* of the father and the son move through the jungle path to join the rest of the *perahâra*. The Hindu deities bring up the rear end of the Poson perahâra, which starts in the Polonnaruva archaeological reserve and goes up the main street of the present-day Polonnaruva town: the image of Siva is followed by his sons, Ganesa, from the nearby Pulleyar temple, and Kataragama representing the Manampitiya Kataragama Devâle (Fig. 1.11). Close to the *têr* of Siva, A. G. Kusumawathie dances and accompanies her lord as he travels through the streets of Polonnaruva.

As can be seen from the participation of A. G. Kusumawathie and the Buddhist priest, there is a constant flux in the festivals, with accommodation given to various religious individuals or groups. However, what is constant is the camaraderie between the Sinhalese and the Tamils of the organizing committee, despite the changing security situation in the country. For the local community, it does not seem to matter whether the architectural style, the material, or the artisans were South Indian or Sri Lankan. They have constructed a series of festivals<sup>161</sup> in which they negotiate their religious identities and continue to worship Siva at this small Hindu temple in Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka.

The after-life of this temple certainly places this particular monument in an in-between space, where at the same time it is both a *kôvil* and a *devâle*. Though a Sinhala *kapurâla* is the officiating priest at this temple, the special days of worship are Tuesdays and Fridays, as in *kôvils*, and not Wednesdays and Saturdays as at *devâles*. Rituals are conducted in Sinhala but on festival occasions they are conducted in Tamil as the Tamil priest participates. Finally, the rituals are conducted for both Hindu and Buddhist festivals, while laity also consists of both Tamils and Sinhalese. This type of fluid space is a rare encounter in present-day Sri Lanka.

In twenty-first century Sri Lanka, these two terms—*kôvil* and *devâle*—refer to two architecturally distinct monuments and separate temple cultures. They have become ethnicized binary spaces in that *kôvils* are temples dedicated to Hindu deities, with Tamil Hindu priests and Tamil Hindu devotees, while *devâles* are for Hindu, Mahâyâna, and local deities with Sinhala Buddhist priests and Sinhala Buddhist devotees.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>161</sup> In addition to the Mahasiva Râtri festival, there are a number of other festivals held at Siva Devâle No. 2. In April, on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> when the Sinhala and Tamil New year celebrations are held, a special *pûja* is organized to bestow prosperity for the country and for all people. In May, a lamp festival is held—Wesak Pahan Pûja—as in the Gal Vihâra, to celebrate the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and nirvâna. In June, for Poson (when Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka), a small procession from the Siva Devâle joins the Poson procession at the Daladâ Maluwa. In July, like most *devâles* in Sri Lanka, Siva Devâle holds another procession—the Asala perahara. The Aluth Sahal Mangalya or the New Rice Festival is performed at Gal Vihâra in Polonnaruva. According to Siva Devale No. 2's *kapurâla*, the new rice offering was also brought to the Siva Devâle, and a *pûja* along with the boiling of milk was held. However, this practice is in abeyance now for the past two years. Interview with Ranbanda conducted by Indrani Meegama (February 26, 2006).

<sup>162</sup> As seen above with Siva Devâle No.2, there are exceptions to this dichotomous construction. Another example is the Kataragama Devâle in Kandy, which ritually places the Buddha in a supreme position as *devâles* do, but has Tamil Hindu priests, while its devotees are both Tamil and Sinhalese. The layout of the temple also shows the ambiguous identity of this ritual space: in the center is the *devâle*, while on its left

However, in the Polonnaruva period, these two kinds of monuments—the *kôvil* and *devâle*—referred to the same kind of religious space. The first instance in which the term *kôvil* is used to refer to a Hindu temple at Polonnaruva is in the Cōla inscriptions carved on Siva Devâle No. 2.<sup>163</sup> The term *devâle*, is first used in the Pâli *Mahāvamsa* in reference to Mahasena’s (274-301 CE) destruction of temples to deities.<sup>164</sup> The Pâli *Cūlavamsa*’s uses the term *devâle* a number of times in reference to temples to deities from the Polonnaruva period—archaeologically, the only temples to deities which exist in Polonnaruva are the ones built by the Cōlas as well as those perhaps built by Sri Lankan kings. The author of the *Cūlavamsa* therefore, seems to be using the same term “*devâle*” to refer to temples built by both the Cōlas as well as Sri Lankan kings. As seen above, the first appearance of the word “*devâle*” in Sinhala occurs during the Polonnaruva period in King Nissamka Malla’s inscriptions, which refer to his construction of a temple to a deity named after him at Râmesvaram. I think one can safely conclude that in the Polonnaruva period *kôvils* and *devâles* referred to the same type of monument: a temple to a Hindu deity.<sup>165</sup>

As W. M. K. Wijetunga shows in his book *Sri Lanka and the Cholas*, Sri Lanka was actively involved in South Indian politics: rather than being a passive pawn, it inserted itself into the affairs of first the Pândyans and then the Cōlas. Wijetunga points to the important role the Pândyan regalia played in the early phases of the relationship between the Cōlas and the Sri Lankans. He observes that it was the regalia, which motivated the first few invasions,<sup>166</sup> but by the time of Râjarâja I, the Cōlas had adopted a maritime policy.<sup>167</sup> Wijetunga essentially agrees with Sastri’s contention that the Cōlas were attempting to turn the Bay of Bengal into a Cōla lake.<sup>168</sup> However, George Spencer has pointed out the scant evidence that would support such a policy and considers the occupation of Sri Lanka as part of the Cōla policy of “plunder and piety.”<sup>169</sup> He frames the Cōla invasions as plundering raids which enabled “free-flowing resources” to be obtained by the Cōlas and provide an “integrative activity” for the diverse groups of the decentralized Cola kingdom.<sup>170</sup>

Whatever the reasons may have been for the Cōla incursions into Sri Lanka, Wijetunga notes of how the Cōlas are remembered: “the past memories of the Chola occupation of Sri Lanka have often been invoked, even in the present times, as a period

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side is the *vihâra*. The right side of the *devâle*, has become much like a *kôvil* in that it has small chambers for a number of minor Hindu deities as in *kôvils*.

<sup>163</sup> The term *kôvil* not only appears in Tamil inscriptions in Sri Lanka but also in Sinhala inscriptions and Sinhala message poems of later periods.

<sup>164</sup> *Mahāvamsa*, 37: 41. The commentary notes that Gokanna is on the Eastern coast, while the temple at Erakavilla and in the village of the Brahman Kalanda are in Rohana. *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>165</sup> The meaning of this term in the Polonnaruva period is possibly different from when it was used in an inscription of Bhuvanekabâhu V (1374-1408) at Lankatilaka Rajamaha Vihâra in central Sri Lanka—the compound “*vihâra-devâla*” connotes the new relationship between these two religious institutions. S. Paranavitana, “Lankatilaka Inscriptions,” in *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. xviii, Nos. 1 & 2 (January 1960): 23.

<sup>166</sup> Wijetunga, *Sri Lanka and the Cholas*, 54.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>168</sup> Sastri, “Cō\*ld\*a Invasions: Downfall of Anurâdhapura,” 348-349.

<sup>169</sup> Spencer, *The Politics of Expansion The Chola Conquest of Sri Lanka and Sri Vijaya*, 8-11.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 406.

of ruthless destruction of Sri Lanka and Sinhalese culture.”<sup>171</sup> He also emphasizes the lasting impression of the Cōla occupation in the minds of the Sinhalese medieval chroniclers, observing that the impact was so great that earlier South Indian invasions were also attributed to them.<sup>172</sup> In fact, Sri Lanka he notes had a tumultuous relationship with the Pândyans before the rise of the Cōlas.<sup>173</sup> However, it is not the Pândyans but the Cōlas who are remembered for their invasions. Perhaps these Hindu temples at Polonnaruva speak a different narrative—monuments that were first created by Cōla rulers, which Sri Lankan kings patronized, and present-day Sri Lankans—both Sinhalese and Tamils—worship. The binary oppositions that were invented in the discourses surrounding these temples have been erased by the local religious traditions, which bring together both the Tamils and the Sinhalese, the Hindus and the Buddhists of Polonnaruva.

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<sup>171</sup> Wijetunga, *Sri Lanka and the Cholas*, 1. Valentine Daniel narrates an interview he conducted in 1984 in which the past destruction of the Cōlas is invoked. The two Sinhalese brothers, who participated in the 1983 riots against the Tamils, had been resettled in the dry zone to obtain the benefits of the new hydroelectric dam. However, they were relocated too far from the diverted Mahavāli river. “The excuse given to them by the minister’s minions was that, even as the Tamil Cholas had frustrated and destroyed the flourishing glory of the Sinhala people’s hydro-agricultural past, the Tamil Tigers of today were frustrating and destroying the hydro-agricultural projects of the present and future.” E. Valentine Daniel, “Afterword: Sacred Places, Violent Spaces” in *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*. Ed. Jonathan Spencer (London: Routledge, 1990), 231.

<sup>172</sup> Wijetunga, *Sri Lanka and the Cholas*, 46.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

## Chapter 2

### **On Monks, Ministers, and “South Indian Influence”: Patterns of Patronage and the Worship of Deities at Medieval Sri Lankan Temples**

*The period under consideration [i.e. the Gampola period] is of special significance as it was then that Buddhism in the form in which it has come down to modern times attained many of its characteristics.*

S. Pathmanathan<sup>1</sup>

The temple culture of Gampola, which served as Sri Lanka’s capital from 1341-1415 CE, differed greatly from that of the previous two centers of Buddhism, politics, and artistic production: Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka’s capitals from 250 BCE-993 CE and 1017-1296 CE, respectively. During the Gampola period, the religious boundaries between Buddhism and Hinduism came to be negotiated through a newly constructed visual and textual culture. Instead of continuing to create the gigantic *stûpas* (funerary mounds) believed to contain the relics of the Buddha that dotted the built landscapes of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, Gampola’s religious communities created image houses for the Buddha that included guardian deities of pan-Indic or local origin. In addition to the appropriation of deities, religious communities appropriated Drâvida-style stone temples, which have always been seen through the lens of the “imported style.” Moreover, *sandesa*, or message poems in praise of guardian deities began to be written in the Sinhala language. These visual and literary changes took place against the backdrop of numerous political, commercial, and cultural encounters between Sri Lanka and South India that have led to the dominant interpretive model of “South Indian influence.” These dynamic changes moreover are generally overshadowed by the general notion about this period as the “era of decline.”

Yet temples from the Gampola kingdom suggest far more complex processes at work whereby two religious communities, while looking beyond its borders to South India, localized and transformed Sri Lankan art and Buddhism to create spaces in which both the Buddha and a deity/deities could be worshipped. In 1344, the Buddhist monk Dhammakîtti, together with his religious community, constructed an image house to the Buddha in stone—Gadalâdeniya Rajamaha Vihâra—which included a guardian deity.<sup>2</sup> Though this temple has always been viewed as representing the “imported style” (specifically Vijayanagara), the built landscape of the Kandyan region suggests otherwise. At least five temples—four of which are dedicated to the Buddha and one to the guardian deity Nâtha—indicate that this Drâvida style of temple architecture in stone with curvilinear roofs was appropriated and localized in the Gampola period and the subsequent Kotte period. In fact this new engagement with stone architecture can be traced back to the Yâpahuva period (1236-1296) until the fall of Sîtâvaka (1521-1591).

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<sup>1</sup> S. Pathmanathan, “Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka: Some Points of Contact between Two Religious Traditions circa A. D. 1300-1600.” *Kalyani: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Kelaniya* 5 and 6 (1986): 81.

<sup>2</sup> “Gadaladeniya Rock-Inscription of Dharmmakirtti Sthavira” in *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Epigraphia Zeylanica being Lithic and Other Inscriptions of Ceylon*. Ed. and trans. by S. Paranavitana. Vol. IV Part 2. (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 90-110.

Dominating the Sri Lankan built landscape for nearly four centuries, temples built of stone can hardly be seen as only an “imported style.”

In the same year and not too far from the former temple, Senâ Lankâdhikâra, the royal chief minister of the Gampola kingdom (1341-1415), with the help of his religious community, constructed an image house for the Buddha—Lankâtilaka Rajamaha Vihâra—which also accommodated the images of five deities to protect the island.<sup>3</sup> Built of brick, this temple, which has been renovated a few times, is architecturally seen as an anomaly for this time period. A careful examination of its ground plan and ornamentation reveal that though it was designed by a South Indian architect, according to an inscription, the “South Indian influence” present at this temple is quite complex and multi-layered. Such temples moreover indicate the presence of not only foreign workshops or architects, but also local workshops of designers and craftsmen.

No longer the purview of kings as it had been in previous centuries, the patronage of temples in the Gampola period began to be dominated by monks and ministers. The fragmentation of the country in the post-Polonnaruva period and the weakening of Sri Lankan kingship, as well as the growth of sea trade, led to the rise of powerful families who began to aspire to rule. The patronage of both Buddhist and Hindu temples were deeply tied to the new notion of kingship established in the Polonnaruva period, and hence these new community leaders began to patronize both religious spaces emulating the work of kings. Unlike their predecessors, these new patrons merged the Buddhist *vihâra* with the *kôvil* or *devâla* creating a new type of temple in which *both* the Buddha and a deity could be worshipped. They were not alone in their new religious beliefs as inscriptions from both temples indicate the patronage of also their respective religious communities. Arguing against the interpretive model of “South Indian influence,” I contend that starting in the Gampola period, new patterns of patronage played an important role in giving birth to a new temple culture in which the worship of deities at Buddhist temples became the norm. These new patrons moreover, appropriated Drâvida style stone temples, which in turn inspired local workshops, indicating that medieval religious communities did not see “South Indian influence” as foreign or imported. Though previously seen by scholars as “unceasing waves”<sup>4</sup> of South Indian influence on medieval Sri Lankan culture, the new changes in Sri Lankan art and religion cannot be merely due to a “geopolitical dimension.”<sup>5</sup> a possible reason for the rise in the worship of deities can also be located within the island.

### **The “Decline” and the “Drift to the South-West” in Sri Lankan History**

After the fall of the Polonnaruva, the history of Sri Lanka has generally been painted as an “era of decline”, which has also been the governing idea in discussions on

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<sup>3</sup> S. Paranavitana, “Lankatilaka Inscriptions,” *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 1 & 2 (January 1960), 1-45.

<sup>4</sup> John Clifford Holt, “‘Unceasing Waves’ Brahmanical and Hindu Influences on Medieval Sinhala Buddhist Culture in Sri Lanka” in *The Buddhist Visnu Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 32-57.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan S. Walters, “Vibhisana and Vijayanagar An Essay on Religion and Geopolitics in Medieval Sri Lanka.” *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*. Vol. XVII & XVIII No. 1 & 2 (1991-1992 published in 1994): 133.

Sri Lankan art post-Polonnaruva.<sup>6</sup> In writing about the periodization of Sri Lankan history, however, the distinguished archaeologist Senake Bandaranayake addresses the so-called “period of decline” and observes that this assumption might be based on the built landscape. He makes numerous valid observations about the post-Polonnaruva period or what he calls the Late Historical Period (LHP), which are quoted at length below.

It is a commonplace observation, and a significant one, that there is a quantitative reduction in monumental remains as well as in other cultural artifacts during the LHP. The reasons for this are obviously very complex. Factors of destruction and the nature of the materials used are one set of considerations. A change of some kind in the social formation itself and in the character of its cultural production is another. Our modern perception and interpretation of this art and architecture is a third.<sup>7</sup>

Bandaranayake further explores these reasons in detail. First, he notes that the region under consideration, the Southwest, has been densely populated especially after 1250 C.E. and continues to be so, which is not the ideal situation for the survival of archaeological materials. Not only was there destruction due to local occupation but also due to Western colonialism: Bandaranayake points to the large scale destruction caused by the Portuguese as well the recycling of architectural fragments by the Dutch and the British.<sup>8</sup> He also brings attention to the nature of the materials used during this period noting that they were of an impermanent nature, which again does not lend itself to a high rate of survival. Tied to this idea is patronage: Bandaranayake suggests that trade-based societies use ephemeral materials than agrarian societies, which are centered around monumental structures.<sup>9</sup> Finally, commenting on the bias in archaeological and art historical scholarship of the colonial and post-colonial periods he argues, “a closer and more qualitative look at the artistic products of this later period seems to indicate that the notion of ‘a period of decline’ cannot explain the considerable achievements of the Yâpahuva, Dambadeniya, Gampola, Kotte or Kandy periods.”<sup>10</sup> Inspired by Bandaranayake’s formulation, I shall in this chapter attempt to bring attention to what was built during this period, to the ways in which “South Indian influence” was appropriated and transformed, to the new patterns of patronage, to the new aesthetic

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<sup>6</sup> Nimal de Silva, “Sri Lankan Architecture during the Transitional Period (1200-1500 AC)” in *The Art and Archaeology of Sri Lanka I Archaeology Architecture Sculpture*. History and Archaeology of Sri Lanka Vol. II Pt. 1 (Colombo: Central Cultural Fund, 2007): 415.

<sup>7</sup> Senake Bandaranayake, “The Periodization of Sri Lankan History and some related Historical and Archaeological Problems” in *Asian Panorama: Essays in Asian History, Past and Present*. Edited by K. M. de Silva, Sirima Kiribamune, and C. R. de Silva (New Delhi: International Association of Historians of Asia, 1990), 19-20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 20. However, this observation is questionable because five temples in the Kandyan region built during the period when trade becomes an important aspect of Sri Lanka’s economy are built of the permanent material, stone. In fact, some of the archaeological material that survives from the period of the Portuguese encounter is made of stone such as the Berendi Kôvil (see chapter three).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.



interest in stone, and to the new religion nurtured by the monuments built in this period.<sup>11</sup> Bandaranayake concludes his article by justifying the importance of periodization, and convincingly observes,

What a periodization compels us . . . to see history as a continuing and dynamic process, marked by significant and periodic changes of course and character, and uneven patterns of developments, rather than a field of static or ‘evenly flowing’ epochs which are then filled with the minutiae of normative research.<sup>12</sup>

It is this dynamic process that I try to capture in this chapter by addressing a significant period of change in Sri Lankan art and Buddhism. Rather than focusing on the ideas that have dominated the writings on this period of history (i.e. the “decline” and hence the lack of monumental structures)<sup>13</sup>, in this chapter, I question these embedded narratives in the writing of Sri Lankan art history and instead ask ways to look at this period with fresh eyes—through the lens of dynamic change and creativity rather than through decline.

The reasons for this so-called era of decline are closely tied to another dominant theory in Sri Lankan history, the “drift to the Southwest.”<sup>14</sup> Numerous reasons for this shift in government from the vast dry zone plains to the coastal and hilly central regions of Sri Lanka have been put forward by scholars. Historians have not agreed on their explanations, which range from foreign invasions to the spread of malaria. Certainly the dramatic nature of this shift with its population decline and the collapse of the dry zone

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<sup>11</sup> The inclusion of Pan-Indic and local deities at Buddhist temples brought about another significant change, that of village planning. Most interestingly, villages were centered around image houses enshrining not just the Buddha but also guardian deities. The king granted lands to villagers who were obliged to conduct certain duties and rituals at the temple. This feature introduced in the Gampola period is continued throughout the Kandyan period as seen in the wooden temples of the Sabaragamuwa region dedicated to the deity Kataragama such as Soragune Devâle and Ukgal-Alutnuvara Kataragama Devâle. This new development shows the importance of the deity cult in the lives of the ordinary people.

<sup>12</sup> Bandaranayake, “The Periodization of Sri Lankan History and some related Historical and Archaeological Problems,” 21-22.

<sup>13</sup> This idea of “decline” still persists strongly in the history of Sri Lankan art as can be seen by a recent publication, *The Art and Archaeology of Sri Lanka I Archaeology Architecture Sculpture*. To quote Nimal de Silva, “The insecure situation did not provide an opportunity for the rulers to create good architecture. . . . It became a political requirement to use an easy and quick method of construction to create cities and put up buildings to fulfill different functions.” Nimal de Silva, “Sri Lankan Architecture during the Transitional Period (1200-1500 AC),” 415. On the other hand, in the same publication, this idea of decline is contested. H. T. Basnayake writes, “Generally speaking this era is considered as a period of decadence in art corresponding to the decline in economic, social, political and religious conditions of the country. In spite of the disturbed conditions, the output of sculptural works during this period is considerable.” H. T. Basnayake, “The Sculpture of Dambadeniya and Gampola Period (1232-1477 AC)” in *The Art and Archaeology of Sri Lanka I Archaeology Architecture Sculpture*. History and Archaeology of Sri Lanka Vol. II Pt. 1 (Colombo: Central Cultural Fund, 2007): 687. Basnayake compares this art to the images produced during the “golden age” of Sri Lankan art at the center of religion and politics, Anuradhapura. See page 687.

<sup>14</sup> W. I. Siriweera interestingly notes “Although this phenomenon is described by some as drift to the Southwest, there was concentration of population in the north, resulting in the emergence of an independent Tamil kingdom in the Jaffna peninsula in the last quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.” W. I. Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka from Earliest Times upto the Sixteenth Century* (Colombo: Dayawansa Jayakody & Company, 2002), 63.

civilization—i.e. the decay of monumental temples and monasteries as well as irrigation networks—cannot be lightly dismissed. W. I. Siriweera summarizes it concisely:

Several causes such as climatic change, the decline of agriculture due to soil erosion, exhaustion and infertility of soil, the spread of malaria, foreign invasions, the breakdown of the elaborate administrative and social fabric which has sustained the complicated irrigation system, and the attractions offered by the Wet Zone as against the Dry Zone have been postulated by various scholars.<sup>15</sup>

Siriweera, examines each factor carefully and concludes that “climatic changes, foreign invasions, and attractions offered by the wet zone for exploiting spices of international importance can be recognized as the main causes that led to the decline and downfall of the Râjarata civilization.”<sup>16</sup> H. W. Codrington, S. Paranavitana, A. Liyanagamage, and K. Indrapala, some of the founding fathers of Sri Lankan studies, advocated the role of foreign invasions in the decline of the two main centers of Buddhism, politics, and art from 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE through the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>17</sup> However, Siriweera, rightly points out that “foreign invasions are nothing new in Sri Lankan history.”<sup>18</sup> He digs deeper into this reason asking why this collapse occurs specifically in the latter part of the thirteenth century. He contrasts the descriptions found in the chronicles about the conditions of the country after the Cola occupation in the eleventh century and Magha’s invasion from the east coast of India in 1215 CE, noting the devastation caused by Magha’s occupation.<sup>19</sup> Adding to this chaotic situation was the invasion by Chandrabhânu in the mid-thirteenth century and he in turn was attacked by the Pândyan king Jatâvarman Sundara Pândya in 1258 CE. However, in 1263, the Pândyans again invaded Chandrabhânu’s kingdom, killing him and placing his son on the throne, which eventually led to the establishment of a separate kingdom in the north.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, rather than simply foreign invasions as a cause, Siriweera’s analysis points to the significance of a series of invasions in a short time span compounded by the rise of a competing kingdom in the northern part of the island. In fact, it is the grave threat from the northern kingdom, which most likely brings about a rise in deity worship. He further states, “The Sinhalese kings as well as the Tamil rulers probably treated the area around Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva, as a buffer region between the two kingdoms,”<sup>21</sup> leading to the desertion of the dry zone.

However, Siriweera’s most important contribution is an expansion on Michael Roberts’ observation that it was a “push-pull process” rather than merely a push process that led to the “drift to the Southwest.”<sup>22</sup> Roberts had argued that the shift to the Southwest was due to the extensive use of iron for rice cultivation and the widespread presence of the coconut palm and its culture, whereas Siriweera proposes a new factor—

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 69. Also see *Cûlavamsa*, LXXX, 56-79.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Roberts, “The Ruin of Ancient Ceylon and the Drift to the South-West,” in *The Collapse of the Rajarata Civilization in Ceylon and the Drift to the South-West. Ceylon Studies Seminar* (1971): 99-109. Reprinted from *The Ceylon Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. II, No. 1, Jan. 1971.

the “marked changes in the Indian Ocean Trade.”<sup>23</sup> This reason is relevant here because some of the new elite in this time period who patronized temples, which brought about changes in Sri Lankan art and religion, were from merchant families of South Indian heritage. He further argues,

Although there had been a demand for gems, pearls, ivory, etc, in the oceanic trade from the very beginning, international trade in spices such as cinnamon, cardamom and nutmeg witnessed an unprecedented spurt after the thirteenth century. Therefore the Sri Lankans, the rulers as well as the ruled paid greater attention to regions which produced spices.<sup>24</sup>

Siriweera’s observation of a sudden growth in trade after the thirteenth century is significant: it is in these regions, which produced the goods necessary for the Indian Ocean trade, that one sees the creation or the renovation of temples, some created at trading ports such as at Devinuvara, and others closer to regional centers of power such as Gampola.

Even though the importance of trade in bringing about drastic changes in Sri Lankan culture has been acknowledged by various scholars,<sup>25</sup> other narratives continue to exist. Out of the manifold reasons for the decline of the dry zone civilizations, the one that dominates most in the writing of Sri Lankan art history is foreign invasions, which is closely tied to the idea of “South Indian influence.”<sup>26</sup> The standard narrative suggests that because of foreign invasions, there was no political stability, which led to a decline in royal patronage of the arts. “The outcome was that the skills and knowledge on art and architecture deteriorated resulting [in] South Indian architects and craftsmen to join and inspire Sinhalese builders as found in the case of Gadaladeniya and Lankatilaka, . . .”<sup>27</sup> Sri Lankan architects and artisans are seen as playing a minor role. Due to foreign invasions, the geographical locations of the kingdoms in this period changed rapidly, which has led to the idea that only small, impermanent structures were built. Nimal de Silva notes that the environment too needs to be taken into account as well in considering the medium of the monuments.

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<sup>23</sup> Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka from Earliest Times upto the Sixteenth Century*, 74. Siriweera first explored these ideas in his dissertation, *Economic Conditions of Ceylon* (c. 1070 A.D. to 1344), Ph.D. Dissertation, University of London, 1970.

<sup>24</sup> Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka from Earliest Times upto the Sixteenth Century*, 74.

<sup>25</sup> Ananda S. Kulasuriya notes too “Commercial interests appear to have been one of the motives in the choice of the capitals in cities located on the western seaboard, . . .” Ananda S. Kulasuriya, “Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka.” *JRAS* (1976), 149. Building on the work of Siriweera and Kulasuriya, Senake Bandaranayake also observes, “external trade may well have played an increasingly important role in contrast to the relative position it occupied in earlier periods.” Bandaranayake, “The Periodization of Sri Lankan History and some related Historical and Archaeological Problems,” 19.

<sup>26</sup> Another intriguing observation is the way in which the words “Cola invasions” resurface in the writings on this period of history, which is hardly historically accurate. “With Cola invasion, the Sinhalese power declined. No new architecture was produced or the existing buildings were maintained. . . Among the rest of the Indians who influenced Sri Lanka after the 12<sup>th</sup> century were Colas, who were mostly Saivites by religion.” Nimal de Silva, “Sri Lankan Architecture during the Transitional Period (1200-1500 AC),” 415-416.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.

The climatic and geological environment in the central hills were different from the hot Dry Zone. With this change of the climatic environment, the architects were forced to adopt their architecture, materials and techniques in building to suit the new conditions. . . This process of shifting the Sinhalese capitals from Polonnaruva to Kotte through different geographical locations and climatic conditions have influenced and changed the architectural chronology in the country to a less monumental form.<sup>28</sup>

Even though a clear thread can be created between the invasions and the shift in capitals, which ultimately leads to changes in the medium of the monuments, their lack of monumentality, and the minor role played by local workshops, a closer look at the built landscape of the Southwestern regions in the post-Polonnaruva period reveals building traditions in multiple mediums and sizes. Monuments at Yâpahuva, Kurunâgala, Gampola, Kandy, and Sîtâvaka point to a new and consistent use of stone from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries. However, later, during the post-Kotte period, when the capital returns to the Kandyan highlands, a new engagement with wood begins. These observations can be clearly traced by examining the intricately carved doorframes and pillars, a trend that first begins in stone and moves to wood.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps, adaptation to new climatic environments is one possible reason for the changes seen in Sri Lankan architecture, but the preference for stone in the Drâvida style may have been due to new patrons, to the background training of the artisans, or to the localization of an imported building tradition.

I begin my exploration with the two major extant monuments from this period—Gadalâdeniya and Lankâtîlaka—and briefly examine other temples constructed in the Drâvida style, which ultimately indicate that numerous workshops were operating in this new region. Not only were there multiple workshops, but patronage was not centralized as in previous centers of power—it was more dispersed following the rise in importance of trading families. I closely examine inscriptions by the patrons of the two major monuments in trying to uncover not only the agencies or the reasons behind the creation of a new temple culture, but also to highlight a new pattern of community patronage. Why did these two patrons—the monk and the minister—and their religious communities include guardian deities in their temples to the Buddha and thereby create a new temple culture? These are some of the issues I engage with in this chapter.

### **Enshrined in Stone: A Buddhist Monk and His Drâvida Style Temples**

Gadalâdeniya Rajamaha Vihâra (Fig. 2.1) sits atop a rock in the village of Gadalâdeniya in the Kandy district. Unlike any previous image house created in Sri Lanka, this temple takes an unusual shape combining an image house to the Buddha and another to a deity. It has two entrances: the larger image house dedicated to the Buddha faces east, while the smaller one to the guardian deity named Dev-*raja* faces south. The

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 417. Nimal de Silva further states that as defense was the primary concern in choosing the various geographical locations for these short-lived kingdoms, “the designs and construction technology preferred would have been oriented for quick construction and to buildings of a smaller scale.” Ibid., 417.

<sup>29</sup> One is forced to ask why Sri Lankan artisans abandoned this engagement with stone and turned instead to wood, which is a question I address in my fourth chapter.

image house to the Buddha consists of an inner sanctum, a vestibule, and an enclosed hall, which is shared by the subsidiary shrine. Inside the inner sanctum is a large seated image of a Buddha. Above this central image is a *makara torana* ornamented with diminutive sculptures of the deities Sakra, Brahma, Sûyama, Santusita, Nâtha, and Maitri.<sup>30</sup> The shrine to Dev-rajâ consists of an inner sanctum with its own separate vestibule.<sup>31</sup> Even though this is the first instance in Sri Lanka in which deities are incorporated into a Buddhist temple, architecturally and visually the Buddha has been given more prominence than the deities.

This temple has always been viewed through the lens of South Indian influence. The entrance to the main image house is through a small flat-roofed pavilion, which is held up by two pillars (Fig. 2.2), which have received the most scholarly attention at this temple. Consisting of square and octagonal pillars with colonettes, they are seen by scholars as fully within the South Indian Vijayanagara style.<sup>32</sup> The balustrades consist of *gajasimhas*, while the three steps leading to the pavilion begin with a moonstone. Relief carvings of dancers and musicians ornament the basement of the pavilion (Fig. 2.3), which is also continued in the entrance to the pavilion in between the steps (Fig. 2.4). Often seen in Gampola period temples, this feature too is compared to the carvings on the Dibba platform in Hampi at Vijayanagara.<sup>33</sup> The moldings of the base include the *tripatta kumuda* (the rectilinear torus), which clearly indicates the South Indian roots of this temple. The facades of the back wall and the two-side walls of the first storey of the temple to the Buddha are ornamented by pilasters and two types of shrines. Though resembling the traditional niches to deities seen on South Indian temples, the recesses are not deep enough to contain images (Fig. 2.5).<sup>34</sup> The walls of the subsidiary shrine have little ornamentation with simple pilasters at the four corners. The first storey of both the main temple and subsidiary shrine ends in a curvilinear cornice marked by *kudus* (windows) above which a row of *vyâlas* (animal heads) is carved (Fig. 2.6). In the front pavilion, this row of *vyâlas* is replaced by a frieze of *ganas* (dwarves) playing music and dancing (Fig. 2.7). The façade of the second storey though relatively plain consists of shrines ornamented by square *kûtas* and rectangular *sâlas*. The final storey supports two South Indian *stupikas* or domical roofs placed above both inner sanctums. The domical roof above the subsidiary shrine takes the typical shape of a South Indian *sikhara*, unlike

<sup>30</sup> “Gadaladeniya Rock-Inscription of Dharmmakirtti Sthavira,” 106. By the fourteenth century, this type of ornamentation becomes standard practice above a seated Buddha.

<sup>31</sup> Devotees are not able to access these two spaces dedicated to this guardian deity anymore. In fact, at most *devâles* in Sri Lanka, devotees cannot see the image inside the main sanctum. Their visual contact with the deity is mediated by the image of the deity on a painted curtain hung at the entrance to the inner sanctum and vestibule. During the annual processions in which the deity is taken outside his or her abode, devotees again are not able to view the image, which is completely covered in cloth (the image in this case is not a three-dimensional figure but it is usually the weapon or the ornament of the deity). I hope to explore these issues of seeing the divine in a future monograph, *Paintings, Processions, and Posters: Seeing the Divine in Contemporary Sri Lanka*.

<sup>32</sup> Nandasena Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period (1341-1415 A.D.)* Colombo: M.D. Gunasena & Co Ltd., date?), 51.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>34</sup> Ninth- and tenth-century temples of the Pandyan region also have niches too narrow for images of deities, as well as at temples of the eleventh and twelfth centuries of the Karnata and Drâvida tradition. Crispin Branfoot, “Expanding Form: The Architectural Sculpture of the South Indian Temple C.A. 1500-1700.” *Artibus Asiae* (2002): 190.

the domical roof above the temple to the Buddha, which is polygonal (Fig. 2.8). In both domical roofs, niches face each direction, ornamented with *kīrtimukhas* (face of glory), but again too narrow to contain any images. However, the niche facing east on the main shrine remains open—a staircase leads devotees to this particular window to worship a statue, which is no longer extant (Fig. 2.9). As Nandasena Mudiyanse has pointed out, a number of aspects were modified to accommodate local religious culture: “This hollow type of *sikhara* is not found in South Indian shrines—hence it may be taken as a modification of the Dravidian plan to suit that of the Buddhist.”<sup>35</sup> However, many of the architectural features described above are typical of South Indian temples;<sup>36</sup> hence, this temple is considered to be a prime example of “South Indian influence” or the “imported style.”

Even though the presence of South India looms large at Gadalâdeniya, ascribing Vijayanagara influence is questionable. A. M. Hocart was perhaps the first to attribute Vijayanagara influence on Gadalâdeniya in the *Archaeological Summary* for 1927.<sup>37</sup> Since then, numerous scholars have continued down this path.<sup>38</sup> The strongest proponent of Vijayanagara influence is Jonathan Walters, who has suggested an interesting theory to explain the presence of South Indian influence at Gadalâdeniya by focusing on the worship of the guardian deity Vibhîsana. In the epic poem *Râmâyana*, Vibhîsana betrays his brother Râvanâ, the king of Lankâ, and helps Râmâ to gain victory; Râmâ in turn, crowns Vibhîsana as the king of Lankâ. By examining the worship of Vibhîsana at the Gampola and Kotte courts through *sandesa* poetry, Walters suggests a geopolitical dimension to the worship of this deity. He argues that Gadalâdeniya provides strong evidence to indicate a dialectical relationship between the Gampola king Bhuvanekabâhu IV (1341-1351) and kings at Vijayanagara.<sup>39</sup>

The unique architecture of this monument . . . has long been recognized as a harmonious mixture of Vijayanagar and Sri Lankan styles; it replaces the typical Dravidian *sikhara* with a stupa. The Gadaladeniya temple was in part a visual representation of the constructive relationship between Gampola and Vijayanagar that had been initiated by 1344, a visual representation of a Hindu empire (*devalaya*) with room enough for a Buddhist kingdom (*stupa*).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period (1341-1415 A.D.)*, 49.

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed description of Gadaladeniya, see *Ibid.*, 46-54.

<sup>37</sup> “It has all the characteristics of the Vijayanagara style: the horse-shoe windows (*kudu*) reduced to a wreath open at the bottom, the cyma curve of the eaves (*kapodam*), lotus shaped pendants (*podigai*), inverted cyma plinth adorned with lotus petals.” A. M. Hocart, *Archaeological Summary* (1927), 148.

<sup>38</sup> Lorna Dewaraja notes “The most characteristic of the Vijayanagara pillars has a main central shaft and a cluster of miniature pillars attached to it, so lavishly carved that the entire composition becomes a ‘figurative drama in stone.’ A much more simplified copy of this is seen in the two pillars attached on the two sides of the porch at the Gadaladeniya temple.” L. S. Dewaraja, “Some Aspects of Dravidian Architecture and Sculpture and their impact on Ceylon,” in *Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies*, Vol. 2 Madras, 1968 (Madras: I. A. T. R., 1971), 431. Also see Pathmanathan, “Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka,” 109.

<sup>39</sup> Walters, “Vibhisana and Vijayanagar,” 138. This argument also ignores the fact that the main donor of this temple was a Buddhist monk and not a monarch.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

In addition to the manner in which the architecture of this temple represents the relationship between the two religions and the two kingdoms, Walters cites John Fritz who has argued that the layout of Vijayanagara follows the sacred geography of the Râmâyana.<sup>41</sup> Based on this idea that the Vijayanagara kings saw themselves as Râmâ incarnate, Walters suggests that the Sri Lankan king was seen as Vibhîsana as in the Râmâyana.<sup>42</sup> However plausible this may seem, the religious culture at Vijayanagara in 1344 was not completely dominated by the worship of Râmâ. The site itself was sacred to the local goddess Pampa, who in turn was married to Virûpaksa or Siva.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, by 1344, when Gadalâdeniya was constructed, Vijayanagara was a nascent kingdom, and the square-octagonal columns with colonettes (i.e. composite columns) are not seen in the city of Vijayanagara until the early fifteenth century.<sup>44</sup> In fact, their origins need to be located in Tamil Nâdu.

Crispin Branfoot has conducted an extensive study of composite columns that include figural forms in South Indian temples. “The origin of the south Indian composite column lies in Tamil Nadu but the figural composite column developed further north in the Deccan, most prominently at the capital of the Vijayanagara empire in the early sixteenth century.”<sup>45</sup> The pillars at Gadalâdeniya are not figural and hence our attention should move away from Vijayanagara to Tamil Nâdu, and to the development of columns in Sri Lanka itself.<sup>46</sup> Branfoot traces the earliest examples of the composite column to the thirteenth century to the Bhojesvara temple at Kannanur and the Nilagirîsvara temple at Srîrangam.<sup>47</sup> Like the later examples in Tamil Nadu,<sup>48</sup> the pillars at Gadalâdeniya are

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>43</sup> Anila Verghese, *Religious Traditions of Vijayanagara as Revealed through its Monuments*. New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1995.

<sup>44</sup> In the early fifteenth century, the Tamil Drâvida tradition of architecture was appropriated at Hampi. Branfoot, “Expanding Form,” 193.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>46</sup> Pathmanathan too in his most recent work on Hindu architecture in Sri Lanka questions the validity of understanding Gadalâdeniya solely through Vijayanagara influence. Like Branfoot, he too sees the composite pillar as an innovation of the pre-Vijayanagara period, but he does not locate the development of the composite pillar to Tamil Nadu. He notes, “Sri Lankan art historians have generally assumed that it [Gadalâdeniya] is in the Vijayanagara style of Dravidian architecture. Besides, scholars have hitherto assumed that the composite column as a striking element in temple architecture was a Vijayanagara innovation. Such views can no longer be sustained. The temple was constructed in AC 1344 and this was almost twenty years prior to the Vijayanagara conquest of the Tamil country. So, the characteristics exhibited at Gadalâdeniya have to be considered as those representing the architectural style of the earlier period. Such a consideration presupposes that the composite pillars that are usually reckoned as a characteristic feature of the Vijayanagara style had in fact made their appearance in an earlier period. They were in fact elaborated and further refined by the architects of the Vijayanagara period.” S. Pathmanathan, “Hindu Architecture in Sri Lanka Principal Characteristics and Trends,” in *The Art and Archaeology of Sri Lanka I Archaeology Architecture Sculpture*. History and Archaeology of Sri Lanka Vol. II Pt. 1 (Colombo: Central Cultural Fund, 2007): 328. However, Pathmanathan continues to use the terms “Vijayanagara style” in his discussions of Gadalâdeniya as well as other stone temples of the Gampola and subsequent periods. See pages 327-328.

<sup>47</sup> Branfoot, “Expanding Form,” 193.

<sup>48</sup> When explaining the development of the composite column, Branfoot notes that the simple form out of which the composite column develops consists of squares at each end with an octagonal section in the center. In the next stage, the column is divided into five sections with the square and the octagonal section

divided into five parts alternating between a square and an octagonal section.<sup>49</sup> At Gadalâdeniya, the architects have taken this type of square-octagonal pillar one step further and replicated the South Indian composite column. Branfoot notes, “What distinguishes the composite column from the simple column are additional columns emerging from the same monolith.”<sup>50</sup> These attached columns or colonettes can range from one to over twenty.<sup>51</sup> The beginnings of composite columns in Sri Lanka lie at thirteenth-century Yâpahuva (Fig. 2.10).<sup>52</sup> Located at the top of the staircase, the central pillars have columns emerging from them (Fig. 2.11), though not partially detached as in Gadalâdeniya. The composite columns at Gadalâdeniya have two colonettes attached on either side of the central column. These four colonettes rest on lions, which in turn are supported by molded bases with carvings of *ganas* supporting the pillars (Fig. 2.12). The capitals of the colonettes consist of seated lions above which are inverted lotus bud brackets. But their similarities to each other end here. The square sections of the central pillars differ in their ornamentation. The right pillar has unusual subject matter for a Buddhist temple—carvings of the Hindu gods Krisna playing his flute and Siva dancing his cosmic dance (Fig. 2.13)—while the square sections of the left pillar consists of lotus blossoms. The colonettes too are attached differently: the left shafts are attached to the central column through a strip, which consists of small medallions with carvings of dancing figures (Fig. 2.14), while the right shafts are attached through a thin strip ornamented with floral motifs. The differences between the two pillars is very much in line with the variety seen in composite columns from South India: the ornamentation of columns differ even in the same temple.

But, how can one begin to understand this “South Indian influence” so strongly present at Gadalâdeniya? John Holt in *The Buddhist Visnu* argues that a new wave of Hindu influence is discernible in the post-Polonnaruva period, which was not solely limited to the rhetoric of Sri Lankan kingship but also seen in Sinhala poetry, temple architecture, and ritual practices at Buddhist temples.<sup>53</sup> He further notes, “I would suggest that Hindu permeation of Sinhala culture during this period was not just a by-product of royal scenarios of legitimization, but also a consequence of the island’s changing demography, owing to the nature of the many military campaigns that were waged, and to the transformation of the political economy itself.”<sup>54</sup> Certainly, a new demography following the various wars and due to the new economy based on trade rather than on agriculture provides the backdrop to the changes seen in Buddhist temple culture. However, key figures who played central roles in bringing about changes in

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alternating. In the sixteenth century, the octagonal section is further chamfered, creating sixteen sides. *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>49</sup> Though there are no extant remains of the square-octagonal pillar before the two from Gadalâdeniya, there are examples of the square-polygonal pillar from the thirteenth century as seen at Ridi Vihâra and Alawatura Vihâra. The square-octagonal column continued to be constructed in the Kandyan period though with wood.

<sup>50</sup> Branfoot, “Expanding Form,” 192.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>52</sup> The prototypes of the composite column in South India can be seen at the Airavatesvara temple at Darâsuram (mid- to late-twelfth century). *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>53</sup> John Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 47.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.



temple architecture and Buddhism itself, included a Buddhist monk and two ministers, one of whom was of Keralan descent.

Holt in attempting to discover the new routes of cultural diffusion and its related processes cites S. Pathmanathan, who has argued for the importance of matrimonial alliances between Sri Lankan royalty and “locally established families of South Indian extraction”<sup>55</sup> in order to explain this new wave of South Indian influence. Holt focuses on the Alakesvara/Alagakkônâra family, who for generations were ministers to Sri Lankan kings.<sup>56</sup> Paranavitana was the first to note the origins of this family in Kerala<sup>57</sup>; subsequently, Ananda Kulasuriya examined the economic and political reasons behind the rise of this merchant family.<sup>58</sup> The most interesting figure in this family is Nissanka Alagakkônara, who became the chief minister of Vikramabâhu III in 1374 and continued in this position during the reign of King Bhuvanekabâhu V (1374-1408) as well. Alakesvara in his fight against the Arya Cakravartti kingdom of Jaffna built a fortification at Kotte. Within the fortress, he built four *devâles* for the four guardian deities of that time: Vibhîsana, Saman, Upulvan, and Skanda.<sup>59</sup> That *devâles* were essential monuments for a city is echoed in the earlier building practices when Polonnaruva was restored after the invasion of Magha. Perhaps, what is most significant in the instance at Kotte is their location in the four corners of the fortress, echoing the place of quadrant deities of Vedic origin in an older form of Buddhism. Neither these four *devâles* nor the famous Kitsirimevan Kalani Vihâra at Kelaniya renovated in 1344 by the Alakesvara family,<sup>60</sup> exist today, due to their destruction during the Portuguese encounter (a major Buddhist temple of recent times exists in present-day Kelaniya). Even so, the Alakesvara family has always been recognized for their dramatic role in Sri Lankan politics and culture.<sup>61</sup> Therefore in this chapter, I turn to two patrons of temples

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 52. However, Kulasuriya may have been the first to bring attention to this idea of matrimonial alliances.

<sup>56</sup> Nissanka Alagakkônara, Vîrabahu, Kumâra Alakesvara, and Vîra Alakesvara all played important roles. The final Alakesvara was captured by the Chinese General Tcheng-Ho in 1411 and taken to China. Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka from Earliest Times upto the Sixteenth Century*, 81.

<sup>57</sup> S. Paranavitana, “The Pedigree of the Alakesvaras” *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon* Vol. 1. Pt. II (1959): 653-659. At least two inscriptions from this period mention that he hails from Vanci.

<sup>58</sup> Kulasuriya, “Regional Independence and Elite Change,” 144-151. Also see, Amaradasa Liyanagamage, “Keralas in Medieval Sri Lankan History: A Study of Two Contrasting Roles,” *Kalyani* 5 & 6 (1986): 61-77.

<sup>59</sup> Holt notes of this important detail in the construction of the fortress by citing Somaratne, who in turn cites the *Nikâya sanghrahaya*. Holt moreover says, “What I am suggesting is that the Alakesvara family, with its roots in Hindu Kerala, played a significant role in propagating the cosmological idea that four divine guardian deities protected the island from invasion. The idea itself seems to have surfaced for the first-time in the mid-fourteenth century Lankatilaka inscription, when the Alakesvaras had already begun to assert their power over the weakening Sinhala Kingship of the Gampola era.” Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 54. However, Lankatilaka was built in 1344, earlier than the fortress in Kotte, which was most likely built sometime between 1359-1369. Therefore, to emphasize the role of the Alakesvara family in promoting the idea of the four guardian deities is misleading. It would be more correct to claim that both monks and ministers propagated this new belief in the guardian deities.

<sup>60</sup> H. C. P. Bell and A. Mendis Gunasekara Mudaliyar, “Kelani Vihara and its Inscriptions.” *The Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register* Vol. 1 Pt. III (Jan 1916): 140-154.

<sup>61</sup> Understandably, local texts such as the *Alakesvarauddhaya* and *Râjâvaliya* speak of the military victories of this family. C. R. de Silva in *Sri Lanka A History* has a section entitled “The Rise of the Alagakkônaras” in his chapter “The Drift to the South West and the Emergence of the Jaffna Kingdom.” Chandra Richard de Silva, *Sri Lanka A History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition (New Delhi: 1997), 102-103. Kulasuriya is rare in that he

in the Gampola period—Dhammakîtti, the Sangharâja or the chief monk appointed by the Sri Lankan king, and the minister Senâ Lankâdhikâra, who I believe were the first patrons to incorporate deities in the Buddhist temple setting in Sri Lanka, even before the Alakesvaras. Rather than attempting to present larger cultural diffusion patterns at work through the changing demography or the new economy, or turning to relations with Vijayanagara, I suggest examining carefully sources closer in time and space.

The earliest Sinhala inscription at Gadalâdeniya, reveals new patterns of patronage quite different from Anurâdhapura and Polonnaruva. It portrays a community of believers redefining themselves through new visual, religious, and social practices. It tells of a religious community headed by a Buddhist monk, Dhammakîtti Sthavira, who has galvanized support from various persons to build a *vihâra* for the Buddha and a shrine for the king of gods.<sup>62</sup> A number of the names have titles attached to them indicating the various occupations and social standings of the patrons: feudal lords, princes, bankers, and heads of the army.<sup>63</sup> Among the long list of patrons is Senâ Lankâdhikâra, a powerful minister, who is the main patron of the nearby temple Lankâtilaka, which was also built in the same year.<sup>64</sup> Conspicuously absent from the list of donors is King Bhuvanekabâhu IV (1341-1351), though the inscription is dated to the third year of his reign.<sup>65</sup> Before individual names are listed, the inscription notes early on that the image house was made of stone and a general list of donors or devotees are cited: “lords of the earth such as kings, sub-kings, officers of state, commanders of the army, judges, .... chiefs ..... chiefs, scribes, high and low folk such as *ksatriyas*, *brahmanas*, *vaisyas*, and *sudras*, ..... army, such as Sinhalese and Tamils .... being made.”<sup>66</sup> This long list of donors joining Dhammakîtti in his donation may sound somewhat exaggerated, but it projects a utopian community of worshippers, one that includes *both* high and low people, and *both* Sinhalese and Tamils. As parts of this sentence are fragmentary, Paranavitana interprets this list to mean, “Dharmakîrtti secured the co-operation of various dignitaries of state, as well as ordinary men, in the work of building the shrine.”<sup>67</sup> However, the absence of the king from the later list of donor names may indicate that this sentence could be interpreted as a list of devotees: in other words, the stone image house was built for the worship of all the people in the community. Whether this sentence indicates a list of donors or ideal devotees, what the inscription points to is the support Dhammakîtti gained from a community of believers for a new type of image house for the Buddha: one built of stone, in the Drâvida style, with an image house to the Buddha as well as a shrine to a guardian deity to be worshipped by all. The actions and

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does bring attention to both the Alakesvara and Senâ Lankâdhikâra families. But, he does not discuss the monks as part of the new elite, who like these ministers had means to build monuments.

<sup>62</sup> Paranavitana, “Gadaladeniya Rock-Inscription of Dharmmakîrtti Sthavira,” 107.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 106. The mentioning of monarchs tends to leave the false impression that temples were patronized by royalty alone. Roland Silva states “When considering these Buddhist-Hindu shrines as viharas or devalayas we notice that Lankatilleka and Gadaladeniya have been constructed by the same king Bhuvanaikabahu IV in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.” “Architecture and Integration of Buddhist-Hindu Shrines of Sri Lanka.” *Sri Lanka Today* Date? Page?

<sup>66</sup> Paranavitana, “Gadaladeniya Rock-Inscription of Dharmmakîrtti Sthavira,” 106.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

statements revealed in this inscription are a first in many ways in Sri Lankan art history and religion.

Romila Thapar's observations about patronage and community are useful in understanding the significance of collective patronage at Gadalâdeniya.<sup>68</sup> She states, "patronage as a deliberate act of choice can be seen when a community decides to donate wealth and labour towards the building of a monument which encapsulates its religious beliefs and social values and activities and where the patron is not a single person but a recognizable group."<sup>69</sup> Even though the list of donors at Gadalâdeniya includes specific individuals who do not constitute a recognizable group unlike the ivory carvers at Sânci, the choice of patronizing one temple makes them a distinct community.<sup>70</sup> The list of names along with that of the main patron carved in stone, points to a community of believers, who made a decision to donate land, cattle, buffaloes, slaves, produce from family lands, a house and a garden for the upkeep of their local temple.<sup>71</sup> This action not only enhances the socio-political standing of these various individuals, but as Thapar notes, "such a act is a public declaration of belief."<sup>72</sup> This shared belief in the Buddha and a guardian deity by the monk and his followers is publicly inscribed on the rock that supports the temple. Thapar further notes of the important "distinction those objects of patronage which are intended to benefit both monks and nuns and the laity and those intended only for the former. Contributions towards the construction of railings and the adorning of the gateways and pillars of the *stûpa* was an act of piety involving the entire

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<sup>68</sup> The elaborate donations made by the religious community centered around Gadalâdeniya are not the very first instance of community patronage in Sri Lanka. As in India, inscriptions of donations made between the third century BCE and the first century CE indicate mostly non-royal donors. Caves donated to the *sangha* were sometimes gifted by families who jointly owned the cave. Individuals mentioned in donations range from a brahmana, a merchant, a minister, a treasurer, a village headman, chiefs, men, and women. W. M. A. Warnasuriya, "Inscriptional Evidence bearing on the Nature of Religious Endowment on Ancient Ceylon Part I The Earliest Phase." *University of Ceylon Review* (April 1943) Vol. 1, No. 1. 71-73. Between the first century BCE and the fourth century CE, the *sangha* are gifted with resources that help enable them to maintain themselves. These religious endowments in the form of property were begun by royalty, but ministers, merchants and villagers too were donors. W. M. A. Warnasuriya, "Inscriptional Evidence bearing on the Nature of Religious Endowment on Ancient Ceylon Part II The Second Phase." *University of Ceylon Review* (November 1943) Vol. 1, No. 2. 74-75. During the fourth and fifth centuries CE another type of religious endowment is seen due to the growth in trade, which in turn led to a rise in the use of currency and mercantile guilds. A deposit was made with a guild in order for the interest to be gifted to the monks for performing a religious service. Some of these donations were made by the sons of ministers. H. W. Warnasuriya, "Inscriptional Evidence bearing on the Nature of Religious Endowment on Ancient Ceylon Part II The Second Phase." *University of Ceylon Review* (November 1944) Vol. II, No. 1 & 2, 92-94.

<sup>69</sup> Romila Thapar, "Patronage and Community," in *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture* ed. Barbara Stoller Miller (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 19.

<sup>70</sup> This action of donating for the maintenance of the temple ultimately "articulates the cohesion of the community making the donation." *Ibid.*, 22. At Gadâlâdeniya, a sense of community is created in diverse ways: firstly, conceiving an ideal community of worshippers; secondly, through the action of donation to maintain the local temple, which encompasses the religious beliefs of the donors while creating a new social status for them; and thirdly, the acceptance of Dhammakîtti as their religious authority. Certainly, the use of Sinhala too binds this community through language, though at the contemporary Lankâtîlaka, both Sinhala and Tamil are used.

<sup>71</sup> For a list of donations, see Paranavitana, "Gadalâdeniya Rock-Inscription of Dharmmakirtti Sthavira," 107-110.

<sup>72</sup> Thapar, "Patronage and Community," 25.

community of believers.”<sup>73</sup> Even though Gadalâdeniya has a main patron, the upkeep of the temple does not only benefit the Buddhist monk Dhammakâtti but also the laity or the entire community of worshippers. Community patronage is particular to this period in Sri Lankan history and it not only indicates the emergence of new social groups with wealth and power such as monks and ministers, but it also portrays a community of worshippers centering themselves around a new temple culture.

Of course, it is not the first instance in the history of Buddhism in which a Buddhist monk has brought about a change in the religion through the introduction of images (in this case that of a guardian deity). The buddhologist Gregory Schopen has challenged the age-old assumption that monks were not capable of innovation but only reacted to “the pressure of popular, lay ‘feeling’; it was the laity, it seems, who stimulated change and innovation.”<sup>74</sup> By examining carefully donative inscriptions, he has shown that the early donors of images of the Buddha in India were monastic.<sup>75</sup> He concludes that “the connection between the beginnings of the image cult and learned monastics is everywhere, so to speak, carved in stone.”<sup>76</sup> Likewise, the donative inscription from Gadalâdeniya indicates the beginnings of the deity cult with a learned monastic, one who composed works in Pâli and Sinhala.<sup>77</sup> As we shall see later through the Lankâtilaka inscription as well, changes in religious practice was supported by elite ascetic groups. As Schopen notes in his discussion of the Indian Buddhist monk, a true picture of the medieval Sri Lankan monk emerges from temple inscriptions and literary works from this period.<sup>78</sup>

Sîlavamsa Dhammakâtti was no ordinary monk: he was the patron of perhaps four temples, the author of three Pâli compositions,<sup>79</sup> and was the Sangharâja or the Supreme Patriarch from around 1369-1395.<sup>80</sup> Initially, Dhammakâtti was based at a temple called Alawatura Vihâra (Fig. 2.15),<sup>81</sup> which is a cave temple in Beligal Korale in the Kegalle District. Mudiyanse, who was the first scholar to write a comprehensive book on the art of the Gampola period, dates this cave temple to the late Kurunegala period (1293-1341).<sup>82</sup> Built on a rock, the temple is approached by climbing a flight of two hundred and fifty steps, which begin at a stream at the foot of the slope. Located on a terrace, the

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>74</sup> Gregory Schopen, “On Monks, Nuns and ‘Vulgar’ Practices: The Introduction of the Image Cult into Indian Buddhism” *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 49, No. 1/2 (1988 - 1989), 154.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>77</sup> I plan in the future to read all of Dhammakâtti’s compositions to understand how and if he reconceived Buddhism in new ways.

<sup>78</sup> Schopen, “On Monks, Nuns and ‘Vulgar’ Practices,” 167.

<sup>79</sup> Karamada, De. Ko. Jayatissa, “Gampola Yugaye Pâli Sâhityaya” in *Sâhityaya* 1972, 42-44.

<sup>80</sup> In 1351, when the convocation occurred, the sangharaja was Amaragiri Vasa Vâsi Vanarathana Mâhimi.

<sup>81</sup> Mudiyanse notes that this temple is included in the eighteenth-century *Nam-Pota*, and is also called Ganegoda Vihâraya after the village in which it is located. Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 17.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 17. Mudiyanse, citing an oral tradition, writes of a Sinhala poem, which speaks of columns from the time of King Valagamba at Alawatura and an image of the Buddha in stone. Ibid., 18. Also see Pandita Theripaha Sômânanda, “Gampola Prâdeshaye Purâvruṭṭa ha Janakavi,” *Sâhityaya*, 1972, 57. Mudiyanse notes of another oral tradition, which tells how this site was abandoned during the reign of Râjasimha I (16<sup>th</sup> century). Apparently, the boy who was left behind to look after the temple, married a local girl and his descendants claim the lands, which were donated to the temple. Ibid., 18. The oral tradition that this temple held lands also indicates that this site was an important one.

cave temple is entered through a stone-based *mandapa*, above which overhangs a cliff. The beginnings of Gampola period architecture and continuations from Yâpahuva can be observed by the two *gajasimhas* that adorn the entranceway, in the treatment of the pillars, and through the carvings on the basement moldings. Partially destroyed by a landslide, H.C. P. Bell attempted to restore this temple in the 1890s and wrote about this site in his *Report on the Kegalla District* of 1892.<sup>83</sup> With the help of the locals in the nearby village, he recovered some of the *vyâlas* (Fig. 2.16), which would have either adorned the basement moldings or the cornice of the roof of the *mandapa*.<sup>84</sup> Bell also pieced together three polygonal pillars (Fig. 2.17) with rectangular and square sections, three octagonal pillars supported by crouching lions (Fig. 2.18), and two more octagonal pillars (Fig. 2.19) with molded bases.<sup>85</sup> This variety in style of the pillars indicates a stage in the development of medieval Sri Lanka pillars, which is between Yâpahuva and Gadalâdeniya. The three polygonal pillars at Alawatura, which are composed of rectangles and squares, are more in the tradition of Yâpahuva (Fig. 2.20). The rectangular bases are ornamented with foliage as at Yâpahuva. The squares contain carvings of various flowers, a peacock, as well as a figure of a seated Buddha under a *torana* (Fig. 2.21). The upper rectangular portion of the pillar is unadorned. At Alawatura, large lions support the three octagonal pillars—a similar idea is also seen at Gadalâdeniya in which the four colonettes are supported by four crouching lions. The frontally seated lion motif is often seen in Gampola period temples on moldings and even on the cornice of the roof (Fig. 2.22). Pillars supported by a row of small lions are seen at Yâpahuva (Fig. 2.23), including a pilaster supported by a seated lion seen frontally (Fig. 2.24). Unlike at Gadalâdeniya, the octagonal pillars at Alawatura are not broken up by square panels—they are plain, except for the pearl-string ornament at the very top. A vase-shaped sub-capital with faint carvings form the top of the extant pillars. The variety in pillars seen at this small cave temple is intriguing—though certain columns are similar in form, careful analysis shows that the ornamentation differs. This emphasis on difference may indicate that a number of stone carvers worked on different pillars, or that it was desirable to not create completely similar pillars but different ones. This visual comparison of pillars from Yâpahuva, Alawatura, and Gadalâdeniya also show that within a period of two hundred years, various imported elements were adopted, transformed, or rejected, creating localized forms.

The carvings on the basement molding at Alawatura depict a procession of musicians and dancers (Fig. 2.25), which also appeared in the Yâpahuva period.<sup>86</sup> Such friezes of dancers and musicians becomes a hallmark of Gampola period architecture and

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<sup>83</sup> Mudiyanse notes that there are no inscriptions at Alawatura, but Bell speaks of an inscription dated to 1161, which he believed was a forgery. H. C. P. Bell, *Report on the Kegalle District of the Province of Sabaragamuwa* (Colombo: George J. A. Skeen, 1904), 34. The inscription still exists at Alawatura, but I have not been able to locate a translation of it.

<sup>84</sup> Atabage Piyananda Himi believes that these images are more likely lions. *Gampala Yugaye Murti Silpaya* (Colombo: Central Cultural Fund, 1996), 66.

<sup>85</sup> Bell, *Report on the Kegalle District*, 34.

<sup>86</sup> Atabage Piyananda Himi provides an excellent summary of the interpretations suggested by scholars on the procession of figures found on Gampola period temple moldings. He rightly argues that these carvings need not only be interpreted as evidence of South Indian influence and points out numerous similar examples in Sri Lankan art from the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva periods. *Gampala Yugaye Murti Silpaya*, 50.

can be seen at Gadalâdeniya, Niyamgampâya (Fig. 2.26), and Horana Rajamaha Vihâra. Unlike at these three sites, the figures at Alawatura include only drummers and dancers. The unusual motif of three figures sharing two legs seen at Yâpahuva (Fig. 2.27) is also depicted here.<sup>87</sup> Though inspired by Yâpahuva, the actions of the central figure are different: at Alawatura, the centrally placed female dancer has both her hands outstretched, while the female dancer at Yâpahuva has only her left hand outstretched. At Yâpahuva, the flanking figures, which share the legs of the central dancing figure, hold drums, while at Alawatura all three are dancing. Unlike at Yâpahuva, the figures are small, and there are no flautists or players of other instruments except for drummers. The dancers too hold simpler dance poses and not dramatic, acrobatic ones. But like at Yâpahuva, the figures at Alawatura are framed with foliage, though again the rendition is not an exact replica. The differences seen in the pillars and the carved figures in the basement moldings of this transitional period from Yâpahuva to Gampola indicate that the variety cannot be attributed to one monolithic wave or for that matter even “unceasing waves” of “South Indian influence” in the post-Polonaruva period. The moldings at Alawatura too indicate that local workshops coexisted alongside the foreign workshops, and at times perhaps were in dialogue with one another.

Based on the pillars and the basement moldings at Alawatura, Bell concludes that “the entire design of the *mandapa* is Dravidian.”<sup>88</sup> The base molding consists of plinths, cyma reversa, fillets, torus, dado, and coping. The cyma reversa and the inverted cyma of the coping are ornamented with lotus petals. However, unlike at Yâpahuva and Gadalâdeniya, there is no *tripatta kumuda* at Alawatura (Fig. 2.28) indicating a more ambiguous situation than simple “South Indian influence.” The stone moldings follow the curvilinear stone moldings of the Anurâdhapura and Polonnaruva periods. According to Bandaranayake, a curvilinear style in stone had fully evolved by the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century with a rounded profile of the torus.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps a local workshop was involved in constructing Alawatura, bringing into question the assumption that all post-Polonaruva period architecture in stone is of the “imported Dravidian” style built by South Indian architects. Dhammakîtti may have hired a South Indian architect to design Gadalâdeniya but for Alawatura he probably turned to a workshop, which had its roots in the local tradition as well as in Yâpahuva.

While residing at Alawatura, Dhammakîtti wrote the *Pârami Mahâ Sataka*, a Pâli composition, which consists of one hundred and five verses.<sup>90</sup> According to this piece, the reigning monarch was Vijayabâhu V (1335-1347). A clearer picture of Dhammakîtti emerges from his pupil, Devarakkhita Jayabâhu Dhammakîtti’s composition *Saddharmâlankâra* and *Nikâya Sanghrahaya*, as well as Siddhartha Dhammadinnâcharya Vimalakîrti’s *Saddharmaratnâkaraya*.<sup>91</sup> According to the *Saddharmâlankâra*, his first name is Sîlavamsa and his last name is Dhammakîtti, while his lineage name is

<sup>87</sup> Bell, *Report on the Kegalle District*, 34.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>89</sup> Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 320. For more on the evolution of the curvilinear moldings, see *ibid.*, 317-320.

<sup>90</sup> Karamada De. Ko. Jayatissa, “Gampola Yugaya Pâli Sâhityaya,” 42.

<sup>91</sup> I am greatly indebted to Mendis Rohanadeera’s seminal work on the *sangharâjas* of Sri Lanka as it includes a detailed section on Sîlavamsa Dhammakîtti. *The Dynasty of Mahâsâmi Sangharâjas of Sri Lanka* Part I (Battaramulla: Mendis Rohanadeera, 1996), 93-102. Mudiyanse too provides a brief history of Dhammakîtti. See the *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 11-13.

Palâbathgala Dhammakîtti.<sup>92</sup> Both the Gadalâdeniya inscription and *Saddharmaratnâkaraya* mention the construction of a stone temple by Dhammakîtti at Dhânyakataka in South India. After his pious activities in India, he is believed to have returned to the Malaya region of Lanka and written the *Pârami Mahâ Satakaya* in a village called Kadôgha.<sup>93</sup> Before Dhammakîtti arrives at Gadalâdeniya in 1344, he moves to a temple on a mountain called Mâlathimâla at Gampola where he writes the *Janânurâga Caritaya*.<sup>94</sup> His final abode seems to have been Gadalâdeniya.<sup>95</sup> His construction of Gadalâdeniya is not only verified through the inscription at the site, but is also written about in the texts *Saddharmâlankâraya*, *Nikâya Sanghrahaya*, and *Saddharmaratnâkaraya*.<sup>96</sup> Though the inscription on site calls the temple “Dhammakîtti,” the *Nikâya Sanghrahaya* calls it “Saddharmatilaka,” and calls the village Gadalâdeni.<sup>97</sup> Sources from this time period indicate that Sîlavamsa Dhammakîtti became the Sangharâja here as well. According to the *Nikâya Sanghrahaya*, in 1369, Dhammakîtti presided over a convocation of the *sangha* sponsored by the minister Alagakkônara.<sup>98</sup> According to the *Mayura Sandesa* or the “Peacock’s Message,” written during the reign of King Bhuvanekabâhu V (1371-1391), Dhammakîtti was the Sangharâja.<sup>99</sup> Rohanadeera suggests that he may have been the Sangharâja from around 1369 until his death at one hundred and ten years of age in around 1395.<sup>100</sup> Dhammakîtti’s career not only shows him to be a monk capable of writing Pâli texts and of monastic leadership as the Supreme Patriarch or Sangharâja, but it also indicates that he was an important patron of temples to the Buddha and deities.

Dhammakîtti was not the only monk capable of constructing a temple in the Gampola period. Vilgammula Maha Himi, another Sangharâja, repairs the Kitisirimevan Kalani Vihâra with the help of the minister Alakesvara in 1344 C.E.<sup>101</sup> The Gampola period is certainly not the very first instance when we see monastics as donors in Sri

<sup>92</sup> The first Dhammakîtti in this lineage was the head monk of the Vanavâsi sect during the reign of Bhuvanekabâhu II (1293-1295) of Yâpahuwa and lived until about 1312. According to Sîlavamsa Dhammakîtti (*Parami Maha Satakaya*) and his student Devarakkhita Jayabâhu Dhammakîtti (*Saddharmalankara*) the first Dhammakîtti was his teacher. *Mahâsâmi Sangharâja*, 93. Mudiyanse provides a slightly different history of Dhammakîtti’s lineage. Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 11.

<sup>93</sup> Citing Madauyangoda Vimalakitti, Rohanadeera points out that the Pâli name “Kadogha” was used instead of the Sinhala name “Alawatura.” *Ibid.*, 95. Mudiyanse notes that the Pâli equivalent of the Sinhala word Alawatura should be Kandogha. Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 17.

<sup>94</sup> Even though this text does not exist anymore, the *Saddharmalankâra* notes that it was written during his stay at Mâlâtîmâla. Rohanadeera, *The Dynasty of Mahâsâmi Sangharâjas*, 96.

<sup>95</sup> Both the *Saddharmalankâra* and *Nikâya sanghrahaya* mention that he lived at the temple he constructed. *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 96, 98. However, the same author, who wrote this text, also wrote the *Saddharmalankâra* and in that text the temple is called Gadalâdeni. *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 100. The poem asks Upulvan to bless king Bhuvanekabâhu, queen Chandrâvati, Alagakkônâra, the heir-apparent, Lord Dev-himi, the king’s bodyguards, the royal army, and various administrative officials including ministers. In addition to all these political officials, Dhammakîtti as well as the monks of the gamavâsi and vanavâsi fraternities. Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 112-113.

<sup>100</sup> Rohanadeera, *The Dynasty of Mahâsâmi Sangharâjas*, 101.

<sup>101</sup> Rohanadeera, *The Dynasty Mahâsâmi Sangharâjas of Sri Lanka*, 108-110. This inscription was first published by Bell and Gunasekara Mudaliyar in “Kelani Vihara and its Inscriptions,” 145-154.

Rohanadeera has provided a corrected version of certain letters and words.

Lanka—the *Mahāvamsa* retells a story of a monk who attempted to donate a brick, which he himself had shaped, to construct the Mahâ Thûpa (to the distress of the royal patron, reluctant to share the merit). However, it is only in the Gampola period that we see monks who have significant means to construct or repair entire temples. These monks are not alone in their patronage of temples; they patronize along with the help of numerous lay people, who participate by donating land and other wealth to the temples. The fourteenth century can be seen as a pivotal moment in which monks collaborated with ministers and members of the trading classes to patronize religious centers.<sup>102</sup> Ananda Kulasuriya rightly points out “the growth of the new elite was paralleled by another that emerged in the monastic order in which the former found their supporters and allies.”<sup>103</sup> Though he brings attention to Vilgammula he does not mention Dhammakîtti. The close relationship between the new elite and the Sangha is also indicated by the family ties between the two social groups. During the reign of Vikramabâhu III, the priest at Lankâtîlaka, Lankâ Senevirat Piriven Mahâ Sthavira, was the fifth grandson of Senâ Lankâdhikâra. He wrote the *Vimukti Sangrahaya* and was a pupil of Vilgammula Maha Himi, who had restored the Kitsirimevan Kalani Vihâra.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps Dhammakîtti was an unusual monk in that he was able to patronize a number of temples, but these new patterns of patronage clearly show that patronizing temples was not the prerogative of monarchs anymore.<sup>105</sup> Yet monarchs are not completely absent as donors from the record. What is different at Gampola from the previous centers of Buddhism is that monarchs do not construct temples or shrines to the Buddha or to the deities, but support such building projects through donations in land and labor.<sup>106</sup> Monks and ministers became the main founders of temples in the Gampola period. In a period of sixteen hundred years, the role of monks had changed from renunciants to landlords to

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<sup>102</sup> Kulasuriya too says “There was a close link between the trading classes, members of the monastic order, and the centres of religious worship.” “Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka,” 149.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>104</sup> Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 30.

<sup>105</sup> The strong role of monarchs as patrons in previous periods forces one to ask why the royalty played such a minor role in the Gampola period. H. W. Warnasuriya notes that the “various political setbacks handicapped kings from lavishly endowing the Sangha.” Warnasuriya, “Inscriptional Evidence bearing on the Nature of Religious Endowment on Ancient Ceylon Part II The Second Phase,” 96. Kulasuriya notes that the weak state of Sri Lankan kingship is best chronicled through the rapid change in location of the royal capital: between 1271-1394 (roughly hundred years) it had moved to six different locations—Polonnaruva, Dambadeniya, Yâpahuva, Kurunâgala, and Dâdigama—with two new centers emerging at Kotte and Rayigama by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Kulasuriya, “Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka,” 138. The weak state of the monarchy can also be inferred from the lack of temple patronage by Sri Lankan kings in the Gampola period. Warnasuriya in his writings on the nature of religious endowment in Sri Lanka notes the increase in private donations from the thirteenth century onwards. He also notes that the Gadalâdeniya inscription “shows to what degree co-operative effort had become necessary to maintain the priesthood.” Warnasuriya, “Inscriptional Evidence bearing on the Nature of Religious Endowment on Ancient Ceylon Part II The Second Phase,” 96.

<sup>106</sup> But a resurgence of royal donations to the *sangha* in the Kotte period and its continuation in the Kandyan period indicates a stronger monarchy even though colonial powers had begun to arrive on the island.



patrons of temples.<sup>107</sup> In the case of Dhammakîtti, his taste for Drâvida style temples was adopted by the region to house the Buddha and the guardian deities.

The architecture at Gadalâdeniya was replicated in the Kandyan highlands in the next few centuries. Stone temples in the Drâvida style was used for *both* Buddhist temples and *devâles* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, again calling into question the idea of understanding these temples only through the framework of an “imported style.” Pathmanathan rightly observes that “the architectural design and style that emerged at Gadalâdeniya seem to have gained general acceptance and prevailed over a long period of time.”<sup>108</sup> Nandasena Mudiyanse, the first scholar to write about the history of Gampola period temples has pointed out that both the Nâtha Devâle and the Âdahana Maluwa in Kandy belong to the “same Dravidian school of architecture as that of Gadalâdeniya.”<sup>109</sup> Close examination of architectural features of the latter temples indicate that though inspired by the Drâvida style at Gadalâdeniya,<sup>110</sup> different workshops (both foreign and local) were involved in their construction.

Considered to be the oldest building in Kandy, the Nâtha Devâle (Fig. 2.29) comprises of an inner sanctum and a vestibule, which in turn is enclosed by a wall that creates a circumambulatory path around the inner sanctum.<sup>111</sup> A visual analysis of the basement moldings and the wall ornamentation of the inner sanctum indicates that the Nâtha Devâle was constructed by a different workshop from that of Gadalâdeniya and of the Âdahana Maluwa.<sup>112</sup> Like at Gadalâdeniya, the moldings of the base include the *tripatta kumuda* (the rectilinear torus), which clearly indicates the South Indian roots of this temple (Fig. 2.30). Moreover, the facades of the back-wall and the two-side walls of the first storey of the temple are ornamented by pilasters and three shrines.<sup>113</sup> Unlike at

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<sup>107</sup> Monks even began to function as intermediaries between deities and kings, beseeching them to protect the island and its monarch. Thus Dhammakîtti was not unusual in creating a temple for the worship of a deity.

<sup>108</sup> Pathmanathan, “Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka,” 109.

<sup>109</sup> Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 58. Pathmanathan cites Nandasena Mudiyanse.

<sup>110</sup> In addition to the architectural style, the name of the architect, Ganesvaracâri, suggests that he is South Indian. The choice of materials and style therefore may have been solely decided upon by the architect trained in the South Indian Drâvida style. Branfoot when discussing the transmission of the Tamil Drâvida tradition to Vijayanagara, also notes that Tamil stoneworkers built images houses in Sri Lanka: “This migration both north and south may have been due to a lack of major temple construction in the fifteenth-century throughout much of Tamil Nadu; few temples can be securely dated before the last decade.” Branfoot, “Expanding Form,” 194.

<sup>111</sup> A pillared-hall built much later precedes the older building.

<sup>112</sup> In order to conduct a visual analysis of the basement moldings and the ornamentation of the inner sanctum of the Nâtha Devâle, I requested permission from the Basnâyake Nilame (lay chieftain) and the *Kapumahaththaya* (lay priest) of the Nâtha Devâle to enter the courtyard of this temple in July 2009. But, my request was denied. Most recently in August 2010, the Director General of Archaeology, Dr. Senerath Dissanayake, granted me written permission to access the courtyard to photograph the exterior walls of the inner sanctum; however, he added that even with his permission, I would not be able to access the site due to my gender. Pollution plays an important role at *devâles*. See Hans Dieter Evers, *Monks, Priests, Peasants. A Study of Buddhism and Social Structure in Central Ceylon* (Leiden: Brill, 1972). Therefore, the Director General has arranged for a male photographer of the Department of Archaeology to document the inner courtyard of the Nâtha Devâle. I am extremely grateful to the Department of Archaeology for obtaining detailed photographs of the inner courtyard of the Nâtha Devâle.

<sup>113</sup> Gadalâdeniya is a bigger temple and hence the larger number of pilasters and miniature shrines on a given wall.

Gadalâdeniya, the recesses of these shrines are fairly deep (Fig. 2.31).<sup>114</sup> Above each niche is an elaborate shrine that is quite different from the barrel-shaped shrine found above the niches at Gadalâdeniya. The first storey is decorated in the center with the *astamangala* (eight auspicious signs) and two *kîrtimukhas* on either side. Above this section are two pilasters at the edge and a flower in the center. The shrine is topped off by a *stûpika*, which is ornamented by a large *kîrtimukha* with foliage spouting from its mouth (Fig. 2.32). The first storey of the inner-sanctum ends in a curvilinear cornice ornamented by *kîrtti-mukhas* and not *kudus* as at Gadalâdeniya. Above the cornice is a row of *vyâlas* (Fig. 2.33). The façade of the second storey is sectioned off by plain pilasters and consists of four semi-circular architectural features protruding at the four corners (Fig. 2.34). The final storey supports a South Indian *stûpika* or domical roof placed above inner sanctum (Fig. 2.35). Unlike the domical roof above the temple to the Buddha at Gadâlâdeniya, the domical roof at the Nâtha Devâle consists of a smooth semi-circular surface. As at Gadalâdeniya, small niches face each direction, ornamented with *kîrtimukhas*, and the niche facing east remains open, indicating that the dome is hollow.

Many of the architectural features described above are typical of South Indian temples; hence, this temple is also considered to be a prime example of “South Indian influence” or the “imported style.” The similarities in the architectural features and the presence of the *kîrtimukha* motif in the wall ornamentation indicate that the Nâtha Devâle was clearly inspired by Gadalâdeniya and is closer in date to Gadalâdeniya than the other four stone temples in the Kandyan region. However, the differences in the architectural features and the wall ornamentation indicate a different foreign workshop from that of Gadalâdeniya, and perhaps a different patron.

Even though patronage during the Gampola period was dominated by the new elite (monks and ministers), when the monarchy reasserted itself in a more powerful position during the Kotte period, kings began to patronize temples once again. Oral tradition ascribes the Âdahana Maluwa (Fig. 2.36) to King Vikramabâhu (1474-), who was probably the first to make Kandy a center of political power. This temple is believed to have been built over the ashes of this king’s mother, in the tradition of enclosing relics of holy people within a *stûpa*. Today a Buddhist temple, it was also the cemetery of the Kandyan kings. Though certainly inspired by Gadalâdeniya, the Âdahana Maluwa was constructed by a different workshop. Unlike Gadalâdeniya, this shrine has a fairly simple ground plan and consists only of an inner sanctum and a vestibule indicating that it was created to house only one central image. The basement moldings at Âdahana Maluwa lack the *tripatta kumuda*, which is characteristic of moldings of the Drâvida style.<sup>115</sup> This curvilinear molding consists of the plinth, fillets, cyma reversa, torus, dado, and cyma recta (Fig. 2.37). Generally in curvilinear moldings, the torus or *kumuda* is semi-circular. Bandaranayake notes “The curved forms of the *cyma* and the *torus* progressively come to dominate Sinhalese base-moldings from the Late Anuradhapura Period onwards, until the post-Polonaruva epoch when they cover a substantial part of the adhithâna.”<sup>116</sup>

<sup>114</sup> In fact, the small ledge running along three-sides of the inside of the niche demarcates a space in the center, which may indicate that these recesses possibly contained small images at one point in the history of this temple.

<sup>115</sup> However, Mudiyanse states that the molding at Âdahana Maluwa are similar to those at Gadalâdeniya. Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 61.

<sup>116</sup> Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 317.

But, the *kumuda* at the Âdahana Maluwa is rectilinear. At the later stone temples of this region—Kobbekaduwa Vihâra (Fig. 2.38) and Sellâvali Vihâra (Fig. 2.39)—the torus, which interrupts the dado, is completely abandoned.<sup>117</sup> In addition to the moldings, the ornamentation on the walls at Âdahana Maluwa also differs from Gadalâdeniya. On three walls, the Âdahana Maluwa too has shallow niches with half pilasters on either side (Fig. 2.40). Above the niche is a temple like structure with a barrel-shaped roof ornamented by a *kîrtti-mukha* spouting foliage from its mouth. Though inspired by the barrel shaped temple above the niche at Gadalâdeniya (Fig. 2.41), the details differ: the larger *kîrtti-mukha* at the center of the barrel-shaped temple is given more attention, while the number of pilasters under the barrel-shaped roof increase (Fig. 2.42). Moreover, instead of *kudus* ornamenting the cornice, at Âdahana Maluwa, the extended cornice is decorated by two *kîrtti-mukhas* spouting foliage. It is in such details that we see a different workshop.

In attempting to understand the presence of the Drâvida style at Gadalâdeniya, Pathmanathan writes

The Gadaladeniya monument represents a distinct stage in the evolution of the Sinhalese architectural tradition characterized by the adoption of the architectural design of a Hindu temple with suitable modifications for the purposes of Buddhist religious worship. It is also significant that such a development synchronized with a phase of development in Buddhism characterized by the incorporation of the cult of the guardian gods and *devâle* worship into its tradition.<sup>118</sup>

Pathmanathan's observations on Gadalâdeniya clearly move beyond the general rhetoric of "South Indian influence"—his point about the simultaneous incorporation of deities alongside the new architectural vocabulary is intriguing. However, apart from the Nâtha Devâle in Kandy, the rest of the temples, which were inspired by Gadalâdeniya are completely Buddhist temples. Perhaps it is helpful at this moment, to remind ourselves of Alka Patel's formulations on the use of local features in north Indian mosques patronized by the Ghurids. Patel argues that architectural features need not have religious connotations and points out that the architectural and decorative vocabulary used in north Indian temples were shared by civil architecture.<sup>119</sup> Though the Drâvida style was used extensively for Hindu temples, its use for a Buddhist temple need not necessarily have religious connotations. After all the deity who is enshrined at Gadalâdeniya is a local deity, probably Upulvan, who only later in the seventeenth century is understood as Visnu by Sri Lankans.<sup>120</sup> Later temples such as Nâtha Devâle, Âdhahana Maluwa, Palkumbura, Kobbekaduwa, and Sellavali show that patrons, architects, and artisans did not see the Drâvida style as solely Hindu architecture. K. R. Srinivasan's observations on a pan-Indic period are also valuable in understanding the presence of the Drâvida style at Buddhist temples. He points out that both the North and the South share architectural

<sup>117</sup> At Palkumbura, the basement moldings consist only of two plinths. However, the later renovations may have covered the original moldings.

<sup>118</sup> Pathmanathan, "Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka," 109.

<sup>119</sup> Alka Patel, "Toward Alternative Receptions of Ghurid Architecture in North India (Late Twelfth–Early Thirteenth Centuries CE)," *Archives of Asian Art* 54 (2004): 41.

<sup>120</sup> Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 116-153.

forms from an earlier period, whether they are domestic, civil, or religious.<sup>121</sup> The use of stone and these architectural forms for *both* Buddhist temples and *devâles* in the same region indicate that patrons and artisans did not necessarily see the material and style as containing any religious connotations. An examination of ground plans, basement moldings, and the ornamentation on the exterior walls indicate that alongside the “wholly imported” temples, local workshops existed.

### **“South Indian Influence?” A Minister’s Brick Temple to the Buddha and to the Guardian Deities**

Innovations in Sri Lankan art and Buddhism were not solely determined by royalty and the religious elite; the laity also brought about changes. In the very same year that the monk Dhammakîtti chose to emphasize the worship of Upulvan by constructing a subsidiary shrine dedicated to him inside a major Buddhist temple of the period, Senâ Lankâdhikâra, the chief minister to the early Gampola kings (c.a. 1341-1374), chose to include images not only of Upulvan, but also of Vibhîsana, Saman, Skanda Kumâra, and Ganesa at the Buddhist temple of Lankâtilaka. Though built in the same year and not far from Gadalâdeniya, Lankâtilaka Rajamaha Vihâra (Fig. 2.43) is neither built of stone nor in the Drâvida style.<sup>122</sup> However, like Dhammakîtti, Senâ Lankâdhikâra represents a new kind of patron—one who is not a monarch but is emulating “the work of kings” by constructing temples to the Buddha and the gods. Who was this patron and how can we understand this brick temple in an age with a preference for stone and Drâvida style monuments?

Lankâtilaka Rajamaha Vihâra is also built on top of a rock in the village of Handessa in the Kandy district. Dedicated to the Buddha, the core shrine takes the shape of a square and faces East. Most likely the original plan only contained an inner chamber preceded by a vestibule. Behind the centrally seated Buddha at the rear of the main chamber is a flight of steps ascending to the top floor, which is at present not in use. Like Gadalâdeniya, the core shrine (i.e. the square) is adorned by niches to deities, but unlike the former temple, Lankâtilaka’s deep niches contain actual sculptures of deities. The first two niches on either side of the main entrance to the Buddhist temple are dedicated to Ganesa (left) and Skanda (right), while the niches facing north, west, and south are dedicated to Upulvan, Vibhîsana, and Saman respectively. Like most temples, Lankâtilaka was renovated several times. An outer wall was constructed around the core shrine creating a circumambulatory path around the five niches to the guardian deities, while multi-tiered roofs were added to cover the many storeys of the original temple.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> K. R. Srinivasan, “Pan-Indian Style: South India, c.200 B.C.–A.D. 400, Ândhras, Ikshvaku, and Literary Sources,” in *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture: South India, Lower Dravidadesa, 200 B.C.–A.D. 1324* (hereafter EITA SILD), ed. Michael W. Meister (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies and University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 3.

<sup>122</sup> Pathmanathan too has observed, “Although they were established at the same time and are in close proximity to each other they are dissimilar in design and appearance.” Pathmanathan, “Hindu Architecture in Sri Lanka Principal Characteristics and Trends,” 324.

<sup>123</sup> Hocart points out that the existence of basement moldings on the walls of the square inner sanctum indicates that the outer wall was not part of the original design. He further suggests that the outer wall may have been constructed to create a temple for the gods in the niches. Hocart, “The Kandyan Lankatilaka,” in *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon* Vol. II, (Colombo: H. Ross Cottle, Government Printer,

In many ways, Lankâtilaka is an anomaly for this time period. Not built of stone, it also lacks the architectural features that we saw at Gadalâdeniya and Alawatura: it has no frieze of *vyâlas* above the cornice or a procession of dancers and musicians on the basement moldings.<sup>124</sup> The ground plan does not include an open *mandapa* like Gadalâdeniya.<sup>125</sup> To increase the anomaly, during one of its many renovations,<sup>126</sup> Kandyan style roofs were added over the original superstructure making it impossible to view the first superstructure.<sup>127</sup> A number of scholars have attempted to locate this temple's pedigree including the later renovations. Senake Bandaranayake focusing on the roofs sees it as part of what he calls the "Sinhalese architectural tradition."<sup>128</sup> Noting the cruciform nature of the ground plan at Lankâtilaka, Mudiyanse compares it to the

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Ceylon, 1926), 19-20. Mudiyanse (*The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 64) notes that while the basement moldings are of granite, the inner face of the outer brick wall curves in creating a semi-vault roof for the circumambulatory path. The outer wall is adorned with pilasters and sixteen elephants, very much like those adorning the Vijayotpaya at Gadalâdeniya (The latter structure was clearly not built at the same time as the image house and it has not been dated as yet. A comparison between the outer walls of Lankatilaka and the Vijayotpaya may perhaps indicate that the same workshop was involved in building both). As part of later additions, a connecting passage and an arched entrance hall were added to Lankatilaka's inner chamber and the enclosed vestibule. In more recent times, another hall has been added on the western side of the shrine. Even though the inscription claims that the temple consisted of four floors, only the ground floor and first storey are visible. The roofs too do not belong to the original design but do belong possibly to the Kandyan period. For a more detailed description of this temple, see *Ibid.*, 63-70.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>125</sup> Adding a *mandapa* to the *gandhakuti* image house according to Bandaranayake is "quite foreign to Sinhalese architecture." Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 199. It "is more characteristic of Brahmanical shrines or of Buddhist temples that are directly influenced by or wholly derived from the subcontinental tradition—as in the case of the Nâlanda gedige and the image house at Velgamvehera." *Ibid.*, 199. The only image house at Anurâdhapura with a *mandapa* is the Trident Temple in the Thupârama. Though found at Anurâdhapura, Bandaranayake dates the Trident Temple to the eleventh century because of its similarity to Velgam vehera, which was reconstructed by the Colas as Râjarâjâperumpalli in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. *Ibid.*, 203. In an important footnote, Bandaranayake suggests that the Trident Temple and the Velgam vehera plays a role in the development of Buddhist image houses in the post-Polonaruva Period. *Ibid.*, 199. He firmly believes that the architecture of the typical Sri Lankan Buddhist temple was influenced by the Hindu *kôvil* (which he calls the Hindu Devale) as early as the Polonnaruva period. Of course, the existence of Nâlanda gedige indicates that the Southern Drâvida style with the inner chamber and a *mandapa* was used much earlier in the Anuradhapura period for a Buddhist temple.

<sup>126</sup> Though not built by royalty, numerous inscriptions issued by various kings from the Gampola period as well as from the Kandyan period attest to the importance monarchs placed in this temple: Bhuvanekabâhu IV (1341-1351), Vikramabâhu III (1359-1374), Bhuvanekabâhu V (1374-1408), Kîrti Srî Râjasimha (1747-1782) Râjâdhi Rajasimha (1782-1798). It is possible that the numerous renovations were carried out by one of these kings.

<sup>127</sup> These types of roofs were created over Gadalâdeniya (later removed by the Department of Archaeology), Âdhana Maluwa, and Kobbekaduwa. Unlike the rest of the stone temples in the Kandyan region, Palkumbura and Sellâvali were completely enclosed by later monuments. Nineteenth-century postcards show that only the superstructure of the Nâtha Devâle was not covered by such a roof. The custom of adding roofs over the original superstructures has been seen by Sri Lankan scholars as a local response to prevent water leakage in a region that has high rainfall. Therefore, the original superstructure is seen as foreign and not local. In such analyses, the possibility that adding or renovating a temple is a way of gaining merit is completely overlooked.

<sup>128</sup> Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 371. He does acknowledge the presence of South Indian influence, but notes that "its multi-tiered, rectilinear, tiled roofs so dominates its overall design that the temple takes its place very naturally in the Sinhalese architectural tradition." *Ibid.*, 371.

Ananda temple in Pagan.<sup>129</sup> However, we can locate the lineage of this temple within Sri Lanka without going as far as Burma.

Even though Pathmanathan critiques the efforts of previous scholars in tracing the local roots of Lankâtilaka,<sup>130</sup> the initial ground plan of this image house follows the basic shape of the *gandhakuti* image house of Anurâdhapura.<sup>131</sup> A popular type, it consists of a square inner sanctum and a vestibule.<sup>132</sup> This type of image house is also found at Polonnaruva: Hocart sees some resemblance between the Lankâtilaka and the Thûpârâma image house at Polonnaruva not only due to the material and ground plan, but probably also because of the similarity in the superstructure.<sup>133</sup> Apart from Siva Devale No. 2, the Thûpârâma temple (Fig. 2.44) is the only monument from the Polonnaruva period with an extant roof. It consists of a four faceted dome in the center with a row of *kûtas* and *sâlas* on the periphery of its entire roof, very much like at Gadalâdeniya and at Âdahana Maluwa.<sup>134</sup> In understanding Thûpârâma, Bandaranayake locates its superstructure within the Drâvida tradition, while the ground plan, material, and base moldings are seen

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<sup>129</sup> Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 64. Mudiyanse concludes his observations on the architecture of the Gampola period by suggesting that there were three styles that co-existed alongside each other. He points out that Niyamgampâya, with its small square inner sanctum and a small vestibule in front, is a continuation of the Anurâdhapura style. *Ibid.*, 70. However, Niyamgampâya does not have an enclosed vestibule but an open *mandapa*. Mudiyanse, next notes of the continuation of the Polonnaruva style with some Burmese influence as seen at Lankâtilaka. Finally, he points to Gadalâdeniya as an example of the Drâvida style. *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>130</sup> Pathmanathan in attempting to understand Lankâtilaka observes, “Although Sri Lankan art historians have, on superficial grounds, attempted to trace its pedigree from earlier forms of buildings, the Lankâtilaka had no prototypes. It represents a new experiment in the field of monumental architecture.” Pathmanathan, “Hindu Architecture in Sri Lanka Principal Characteristics and Trends,” 325.

<sup>131</sup> The remains of around twenty or so images house at Anurâdhapura point to the existence of at least three designs—the *gandhakuti*, the image house with a *mandapa*, and the *ginjakavasatha* or *gedige*. See Bandaranayake, “Shrine and Sanctuaries” in *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 189-213. The variety found in ground plans for image houses in a specific location during a particular phase of Sri Lankan art, such as the Anurâdhapura period, point to the possibility that multiple workshops can function even when a particular type dominates. This variety in ground plans may also indicate the possibility for a variety of roofs.

<sup>132</sup> The remains of some *gandhakuti* type image houses indicates that circumambulatory passages were incorporated into this basic design such as at Pankuliya, Puliyanukulam, Pacinatissapabbata, Toluville, and Vessagiriya. *Ibid.*, 192-193.

The later additions at Lankatilaka, which enclose the chamber and the vestibule creating a circumambulatory path also reflect the ground plan of the *gedige* style image houses of Anurâdhapura. Bandaranayake points to three extant examples of *gediges* at Anurâdhapura: the Gedige, Building A, and Gedige, Jetavanavihara. Built of brick with vaulted superstructures, these temples have projecting bays on each side similar to the Gampola period Lankâtilaka. Both the “Gedige” and “Building A” have stone staircases leading to an upper storey. *Ibid.*, 204-207.

However, more than to the ground plan, the term *gedige* points ultimately to the type of roof. Paranavitana argues that the “term *gedige* was first applied to brick-built vaulted structures but, at a later date, the distinguishing characteristic of a *gedige* was taken to be the vaulted construction of the roof and not the material of which the edifice was built.” S. Paranavitana, “Gedige” *Journal of Royal Asian Society (Ceylon)* Vol. XXXVI No. 99 (1945) 228. The term came to be used for both brick and stone built vaulted image houses. However, it is difficult to determine whether Lankatilaka is a vaulted image house as one cannot access the upper storeys, nor can one see the original superstructure.

<sup>133</sup> But he notes that unlike the inner chambers of these image houses enclosed by a more rectangular shaped outer wall, the one at Lankâtilaka is square in shape. A. M. Hocart, “The Kandyan Lankatilaka,” 19.

<sup>134</sup> However, at both Gadalâdeniya and Âdahana Maluwa *kûtas* and *sâlas* ornament the periphery of the inner sanctum and not the entire roof.

as a continuation of the “Sinhalese tradition.”<sup>135</sup> Hocart’s comparison between Lankatilaka and Thuparama, therefore, is not too farfetched; after all, Lankâtilaka, like the Drâvida style temple, Gadalâdeniya, was built in 1344, and hence the possibility of it having a similar superstructure becomes more likely.

The actual and conjectural elevation of Lankâtilaka drawn by the draughtsman Ambrose and provided by Hocart in his essay on the Lankâtilaka is intriguing to say the least. It indicates a dome-shaped roof with a series of *stûpa* shaped *kûtas* placed below alluding to the temple roofs of the Drâvida style. Hocart claims that the “reconstruction is confirmed by an old sketch of the elevation. This sketch is in the possession of the priest; the High Priest of Malvatu Vihâra in Kandy kindly lent it to us and allowed us to take a photograph which is here published.”<sup>136</sup> Though Bandaranayake is reluctant to accept Hocart’s theory,<sup>137</sup> the possibility of the existence of a curvilinear roof at Lankâtilaka is also confirmed by a copperplate inscription of the Kandyan period, which describes the superstructure of the temple. According to the copperplate inscription of Bhuvanekabâhu IV, Senâ Lankâdhikâra, along with the two communities of monks, “placed golden pinnacles on the four *dâgâbas* at the four corners and on the *dâgâba* on the summit.”<sup>138</sup> The supposition, therefore, that Lankâtilaka has a curvilinear superstructure like the stone temples built in the Gampola and Kotte periods becomes a little more plausible.<sup>139</sup>

Though aspects of Lankâtilaka can be traced back to the Polonnaruva image houses, which already have a degree of South Indian influence, Lankâtilaka also has other features, which perhaps point to a new engagement with South India. The Sinhala inscription notes that the temple was designed by an architect called Râyar, who has always been seen as a South Indian,<sup>140</sup> and the temple also has a Tamil inscription, which

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<sup>135</sup> Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 353.

<sup>136</sup> A. M. Hocart, “The Kandyan Lankatilaka,” 20. See also, *ibid.*, plate LXI.

<sup>137</sup> He points out that the curvilinear superstructure of Lankatilaka depicted in the drawing is similar to those found on Kandyan mural paintings, which are not found in the built landscape of the Kandyan region. He also notes that based on the style of the drawing and the fact that its on paper suggests that it can be dated to the nineteenth century. Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 371.

<sup>138</sup> Paranavitana, “Lankatilaka Inscriptions,” 35. The inscription further notes of a library within the *dâgâba* on the summit in which the tripitaka was transcribed and deposited. *Ibid.*, 35

<sup>139</sup> Of course, as the copper plates were inscribed in the Kandyan period and not in the Gampola period, there is a possibility that the description of the roof may refer to a later renovation—later temples such as Palkumbura and Kobbekaduwa do not have kutas and salas on the periphery of their roofs but like the description in the copperplate, they too have a dagaba in the summit with smaller dagabas on the periphery. However, unlike with the description of Lankatilaka, the location of the smaller dagabas on their respective peripheries differ: at Palkumbura, two small dagabas are placed at the two back corners of the superstructure, while at Kobbekaduwa, three small dagabas are placed on the roof at the center of the three sides of the inner sanctum.

<sup>140</sup> Paranavitana, “Lankatilaka Inscriptions,” 11. Mendis Rohanadeera argues that both Gadalâdeniya and Lankâtilaka were built by the same workshop and that Dhammakîtti was involved in bringing the South Indian architects responsible for the construction of these two temples. He provides numerous reasons to buttress his argument: the Drâvida names of the two architects, Ganesvaracâri and Râyar; the fact that these two names are mentioned in two inscriptions in the same year; and the close proximity of the temples to each other. Moreover, Rohanadeera believes that these artisans were responsible for the construction of an image house in South India patronized by both Dhammakîtti and Senâ Lankâdhikâra. The Gadalâdeniya inscription states that Dhammakîtti built a temple in Dhânyakataka. The *Nikâya Sangrahaya* mentions that Senâ Lankâdhikâra sent great wealth for the construction of a stone image house at Kânci. Rohanadeera believes that these two references may refer to the same incident: as at Gadalâdeniya, Senâ Lankâdhikâra

more or less has the same contents as the Sinhala one. Pathmanathan moreover rightly points out that the temple is “a new experiment”—certainly the incorporation of life size sculptures of local and Hindu deities on the outer walls of the inner chamber is not seen before in Sri Lankan art. “In this respect, the architect who designed the temple was adopting an element in the architectural scheme of a Hindu temple.”<sup>141</sup> The only other Buddhist image houses with sculptures of deities adorning its walls are the monumental image houses at Polonnaruva: Lankâtilaka and Tivanka. But these deities are diminutive, probably bodhisattvas and generic minor celestial figures and not local or Hindu deities. The South Indian influence at the Gampola period Lankâtilaka is more complex and multi-layered than at Gadalâdeniya.<sup>142</sup> Though designed by Râyar, Lankâtilaka cannot be located in the Drâvida tradition alone.

In attempting to understand stone and brick masonry structures, Bandaranayake notes the “different degrees of foreign influence on brick and stone masonry”<sup>143</sup> in Sri Lankan architecture. On the one hand, there are what he calls “wholly imported monuments” such as Nâlanda Gedige and Gadalâdeniya, which are both built of stone, and on the other, monuments of brick masonry, which consist of “a mixture of foreign and local forms.”<sup>144</sup> Like Thuparama, Lankâtilaka belongs to this latter category. Though it includes numerous references to South India, the ground plan, purpose, materials, and ornamentation does not reflect *contemporary* South Indian temples. Rather than a *sâla* or barrel shaped miniature temple decorating the space above the five niches to deities, the Lankâtilaka has a *makara torana* (Fig. 2.45) above the niches with two *kudus* ornamenting the cornice. Similar to the localized feature at Siva Devâle No. 2 in Polonnaruva,<sup>145</sup> this ornamentation along with the basement moldings (Fig. 2.46), which does not have the Drâvida style rectilinear torus, indicate that a local workshop was involved in constructing the Lankâtilaka. Bandaranayake’s observations about the Thûpârâma at Polonnaruva is useful in further understanding the South Indian presence at Lankâtilaka.

[T]he fact that the Thuparama does not reflect *contemporary* South Indian design and that it embodies certain essential features which are distinctly Sinhalese

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donates to the building of a temple in South India by Dhammakîtti. Rohanadeera, *The Dynasty of Mahâsâmi Sangharâjas of Sri Lanka* Part I, 97-98. Though it is plausible that Dhammakîtti and Senâ Lankâdhikâra were involved in the same temple building project in South India, the suggestion that both Gadalâdeniya and Lankâtilaka were built by the same workshop is questionable. Even though the names of both architects are considered to be South Indian, the ground plan, medium, and style clearly indicates that Lankâtilaka was built by a different workshop from that at Gadalâdeniya. The Lankâtilaka inscription moreover clearly gives the name of the architect as Râyar. If it were the same workshop, then the inscription would have given the same name as at Gadalâdeniya—Ganesvaracâri.

<sup>141</sup> Pathmanathan, “Hindu Architecture in Sri Lanka Principal Characteristics and Trends,” 325.

<sup>142</sup> Gadalâdeniya was designed by Ganesvaracâri. Parnavitana, “Gadalâdeniya Rock-Inscription,” 106.

<sup>143</sup> Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 371.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 354. Bandaranayake’s formulations about stone and brick masonry monuments holds true for the Anurâdhapura and Polonnaruva periods. However, during the Gampola and Kotte periods, stone monuments came to localized and hence cannot be seen as “wholly imported monuments.”

<sup>145</sup> See chapter 1 for a discussion of ornamenting the niches to deities, which similarly point to the presence of a local workshop at Siva Devale No.2.



suggests that this South Indian influence had been absorbed, at least in part, at an earlier date, and re-interpreted in the terms of the local tradition.<sup>146</sup>

This formulation may help in understanding Lankâtilaka—though designed by probably a South Indian architect, its ground plan, materials, superstructure, and ornamentation can be traced back to an earlier period (i.e. Polonnaruva) in which South Indian influence was absorbed and reinterpreted, indicating the possible presence of a local workshop. At the same time, the more direct references to South India—the architect, the Hindu deities, and the Tamil inscription—indicate that the architect and the artisans were inspired by not only already localized building traditions but new South Indian ones as well. Ultimately, differences in basement moldings, in the ornamentation of the walls, in the treatment of the roof, and in the incorporation of deities in relation to the Buddha between Gadalâdeniya and Lankâtilaka indicate different workshops present in the Southwest region.

As at Gadalâdeniya, Lankâtilaka also has an extensive inscription<sup>147</sup> describing the nature of the building, the images, the donations, as well as the donors.<sup>148</sup> The inscription provides the names of the donors for each floor—the lower most, which includes the Buddha and the gods, was built by Senâ Lankâdhikâra.<sup>149</sup> Who was this

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<sup>146</sup> Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 353. It is not clear what he means by an earlier date. It could refer to the Cola occupation of Polonnaruva when South Indian workshops created temples, or it could refer to the Pâllava influence as seen at Nâlanda Gedige.

<sup>147</sup> Though the temple was built with Senâ Lankâdhikâra as the main patron, the inscription is issued by the then reigning king Bhuvanekabâhu IV (1341-1351). Another rock inscription at Alavala in the Kurunegala district also provides an account of the building of Lankâtilaka and the donations that were made to it. This too has been issued by a king, probably Bhuvanekabâhu, and it is mostly about his donations to this temple (the date and the king's name are missing as sections of the record have been destroyed). It records the construction of a dam, which would irrigate nearby paddy fields—the income from the fields is to be divided between the three jewels, the five *devâles*, and the descendants of Senâ Lankâdhikâra, who are expected to continue maintaining the *vihâra* for the future. Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 136-137. Though much shorter than the inscription at Lankâtilaka, the wording in the Alavala inscription is extremely important in shedding light on how deity worship was understood at this time period.

<sup>148</sup> As at Gadalâdeniya, a long list of donors is mentioned forming a particular community of believers. The other donors of the image house include the monks of the two orders (forest and village dwelling), the chiefs, and the army. The sons and ladies of Senâ Lankâdhikâra's household donate a bronze sculpture to be placed in a *mandapa*. Unlike Gadalâdeniya, the reigning monarch plays an important role in the construction of this shrine. His inscription notes that Senâ Lankâdhikâra requested an endowment for the future of this great *vihâra*—the king moreover states that the chiefs, the army, Senâ Lankâdhikâra, and himself spent thirty six million in *masuran* constructing the image house from its base molding to the finial as well as in giving paddy, gold, silver, and cloth to the artisans. A number of other dignitaries are also mentioned as donors to this new temple, but they mostly donate fields: Vasa Lanka-vari-adhikâra, Satruvan patirâja, Divana, and Jayasimha-patirâja. Paranavitana, "Lankatilaka Inscriptions," 4-5. Though high officials mostly dominate the donor list, of special interest is a field, which was prepared by constructing dams and clearing roots, and "granted conjointly by everybody high and low in the two townships of Singuruvâna." The inscription also claims that this *vihâra* was constructed by the "people of Lanka in their own name" to continuously offer rice, flowers, and lamps to the gods and the Buddha. Even though there is a main donor, the inscription implies that the temple was built by the people of Lanka for the people of Lanka. As with the Gadalâdeniya inscription, an ideal community of devotees is projected through the Lankâtilaka inscription as well, one that is even more far reaching. *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

minister Senâ Lankâdhikâra, who took on the role of Sri Lankan kings, by building temples to the Buddha and to the deities?

The new elite of this era included not only monks but also powerful and wealthy ministers. Senâ Lankâdhikâra's position as the chief minister, who was also the chief of the army, clearly enabled him to advance his social status and become a patron of temples.<sup>150</sup> Though he is referred to as the *indrah*, *mantrisvara*, *senevirat mantriya*, or *agamâti* in inscriptions and vernacular texts,<sup>151</sup> what is consistent is the name Senâ Lankâdhikâra and historians generally accept him as the chief minister to the early Gampola period kings.<sup>152</sup>

Ananda S. Kulasuriya points out that the new elite were from unknown families, whose pedigrees were reinvented by contemporary writers to connect them to important clans of the past, who in turn were associated with Sri Lanka's Buddhist history.<sup>153</sup> According to the *Nikâya sanghrahaya*, Senâ Lankâdhikâra was born to the Mehenavara clan.<sup>154</sup> The Mehenavara family was involved with the famous historical transport of the *bôdhi* tree to Sri Lanka.<sup>155</sup> Though separated by nearly sixteen centuries, this narrative clearly presents this family as Buddhist, thereby dismissing any doubts about their ancestry or religious affiliations.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Kulasuriya notes that "They [i.e. their careers] may also help us to understand the means by which they [the new elite] advanced their claims and seized power and the manner in which they retained it. . . ." Kulasuriya, "Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka," 142.

<sup>151</sup> Kulasuriya points out that the name Senâ Lankâdhikâra was not a personal name but a title. Ibid., 142. In a Sanskrit verse in the Lankâtilaka inscription, he is called "lord" (*indrah*) Senâ Lankâdhikâra. Paranavitana, "Lankatilaka Inscriptions," 9. The *Nikâya sanghrahaya* refers to him as Senâ Lankâdhikâra Senevirat, who is the "lord of ministers" (*mantrisvara*). D. P. R. Samaranyake, ed., *Nikâya sanghrahaya* (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1966), 82. The *Saddharma ratnâkaraya* describes him as *senevirat mantriya*, or the "chief minister who is also the head of the army"; and the *Tisara Sandesa* calls him Senâ Lakadiyara who is the "prime minister" (*agamâti*). Kulasuriya, "Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka," 142. The *Sinduruvânâ Kadaim pota* calls him Lamka Senevirat Bandara Maharaja. H. W. Codrington, "The Gampola Period of Ceylon History," *JRAS* (Ceylon) Vol. XXXII (1933),: 267. It provides an interesting account of his life: he is seen as a *bandâra*, who is a descendant of Udunuvara Maha Biso of Urulavatte Gampaha. Ibid., 266.

<sup>152</sup> The idea that he was king is seen in a few documents, including the *Sinduruvana Kadaim pota*. The *Unambuve paramparava* calls him *Senadhipati raja*. Ibid., 267. Scholars have pointed out that in the Kitsirimevan Kelani inscription, Alakesvara makes no mention of the reigning king and sees him as ruling that region. Perhaps, Senâ Lankâdhikâra too was seen in some later local traditions as the ruler. Though he outshines other dignitaries of that time period in patronizing temples, Codrington notes that in the Gadalâdeniya inscription he is mentioned third, while in the Vîgulavatta inscription he is mentioned second. Ibid., 267.

<sup>153</sup> Kulasuriya, "Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka," 141.

<sup>154</sup> *Nikâya sanghrahaya*, 82. The *Saddharma ratnâkaraya* notes that Senâ Lankâdhikâra is from the Menavara family. Sinhala writers connected the name "Menavara" to Mehenavara. Kulasuriya, "Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka," 142.

<sup>155</sup> The family is considered to be descended from prince Bodhigupta, a brother of one of King Asoka's queens. Ibid., 42. Kulasuriya citing Paranavitana notes that the name Menavara only appears in the inscriptional and literary records of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Ibid., 142.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 143. The *Saddharma ratnâkaraya* also uses the more general name Ganavâsi to refer to this family. Ibid., 147. Interestingly, Dhammakîti too in the Gadalâdeniya inscription claims to have been "born in the family of Ganavasi which has come to the island of Sri Lanka bringing the holy Mahabodhi (tree)." Paranavitana, "Gadalâdeniya Rock Inscription," 106. The name Ganavâsi is first mentioned in the *Pûjavalîya*. Kulasuriya, "Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka," 142. The possibility that both these important patrons of this period came from the same clan is

Kulasuriya also focuses on the means by which the new elite advanced their political positions overshadowing the reigning kings of Gampola and Dadigama. He believes it was primarily wealth that enabled them to become the new ruling elite—he notes that their wealth and their ancestry as merchants are unabashedly mentioned in contemporary records.<sup>157</sup> Unlike the previously mentioned Alakesvara family with its merchant roots in Kerala, Senâ Lankâdhikâra’s family as seen above does not originate as merchants.<sup>158</sup> Their roots are projected back to the Anuradhapura period associating them with Buddhism and royalty.<sup>159</sup> Though there is no evidence that Senâ Lankâdhikâra’s family was directly involved in the lucrative Indian ocean trade, the Lankâtilaka inscription alludes to that trade, noting that a quarter percent tax should be charged on “merchandise purchased or sold by merchants coming from the nine seaports or the eighteen countries” at both the Inner and Outer Customs Houses.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, these revenues were meant to be divided between the Triple Gem, the gods, and the descendants of Senâ Lankâdhikâra, who would continue to maintain the temple.<sup>161</sup> Certainly, his position as the chief minister would have enabled him to decree such a tax in order to benefit his temple, but it may also indicate his involvement with trade. After all, in this time period it was through the engagement with trade that one could accumulate the wealth necessary for the construction of temples and not through the surplus of large scale irrigated paddy fields.<sup>162</sup> Senâ Lankâdhikâra’s connections to trade might also be indicated by the manner in which he associated himself with the famous port city of Devinuvara, home to the popular guardian deity Upulvan. The *Tisara Sandesa*, written during the reign of Parâkramabâhu V (1341-1359) of Dadigama,<sup>163</sup> mentions that Senâ Lankâdhikâra built a three-storeyed mansion at Devinuvara, echoing the patronage practices from Parâkramabâhu II’s reign in which his son patronized this temple after his victory over Magha.<sup>164</sup> Though the two major extant temples from the

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intriguing, but there is no other evidence to further understand their relationship: both built the largest extant Buddhist temples with deities for their time period, and claimed to have patronized ones in South India as well.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 148. Of course, the patronage of Buddhism by merchants is nothing new. After all, the Buddha’s first lay disciples were Tapassu and Bhalluka, two merchants, who received the hair relic from the Buddha and are believed to have enshrined it at the Girihandu Seya in Tiriyaï, in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. Merchants appear as main characters in numerous *jâtaka* stories. Early Buddhist sites such as Sânci in Madhya Pradesh, in Central India, were constructed along ancient trade routes.

<sup>158</sup> Kulasuriya notes that Senâ Lankâdhikâra or his ancestors came from Kânci but he provides no evidence for this assumption. Ibid., 143.

<sup>159</sup> The Ganavâsi family is believed to have ruled. Ibid., 143.

<sup>160</sup> Paranavitana, “Lankatilaka Inscriptions,” 12.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 13. Though there is little evidence, Kulasuriya argues that the new elite must have participated in the sea-born trade and notes of the flourishing mercantile communities in both Rayigama and Kotte found in the descriptions of the *Mayura Sandesa*. Ibid., 149.

<sup>162</sup> However, inscriptions indicate that most donors had only access to fields from which the income was used for the maintenance of temples.

<sup>163</sup> C. E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature* (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries’ Co., Ltd., 1955), 184. The *Tisara Sandesa* or the “Swan’s Message” is the oldest extant Sinhala *sandesa* poem. Written by a monk who lived in Devinuvara, this poem was written to convey a message to the then king Parâkramabâhu V of Dadigama to inform him that a monk at Devinuvara was praying to god Upulvan on his behalf. Ibid., 184. Again, this is another instance in which monks, emulating brahmins have taken on the added role of praying to deities on behalf of kings.

<sup>164</sup> This tradition of royal patronage continued through the Portuguese encounter with the patronage of Bhuvanekabâhu VII and Sîtâvaka Râjasimha (see chapter three).

Gampola period were not built at port cities, wealth accrued from trade may have played a role in funding them.<sup>165</sup>

On the other hand, Kulasuriya also notes that wealth alone would not have enabled the new elite to achieve their political positions. “However wealthy they might have been, their *Vaisyas* origins and foreign antecedents were factors to be reckoned with when it came to a matter of political leadership.”<sup>166</sup> As also noted by Pathmanathan, matrimonial alliances to local families became the standard way to insert themselves into the ruling families. Senâ Lankâdhikâra married the sister of King Bhuvanekabâhu IV (1341-1351) and King Parâkramabâhu V (1341-1359), the two brothers who were ruling from Gampola and Dadigama respectively.<sup>167</sup> Interestingly, in this period, Kulasuriya notes that “the succession to the throne was not continued through a son of either Bhuvanekabâhu IV or Parâkramabâhu V, but through their nephew, i.e. sister’s son, . . .”<sup>168</sup> Vikramabâhu III (1359-1371) who succeeded to the throne at Gampola was none other than the son of Senâ Lankâdhikâra, who had married the sister of the previous king.<sup>169</sup> Matrimonial alliances definitely secured positions of power for the new elite.

In addition to titles, pedigree, wealth, and matrimonial alliances, the patronage of temples enabled the new elite to highlight their role as protectors of Buddhism, which was the traditional role played by the monarchy. Inscriptional and literary records of the Gampola period clearly reveal that kings were not the main patrons of temples:<sup>170</sup> as seen with Gadalâdeniya earlier, monks as well as ministers had become the new patrons. This aspect of constructing or renovating temples publicly promoted their claims as leaders in the larger community and enabled some to become de facto rulers, pushing the reigning king into the background. In fact, the ministers carried out the purifications of the order, which were usually conducted under the auspices of kings—Senâ Lankâdhikâra presided over one in 1351<sup>171</sup>, while Alakesvara did so in 1369.<sup>172</sup> While Alakesvara may have projected himself as a protector of the kingdom,<sup>173</sup> Senâ Lankâdhikâra created an image

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<sup>165</sup> In Sri Lanka, the building of *kôvils* at port cities had occurred very much earlier as seen with Tiruketisvaram at Mahâthiththa and Kônesvaram at Gôkanna possibly in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The temple for Upulvan at Devinuvara, which came into prominence in the 13<sup>th</sup> century too was at a port city.

<sup>166</sup> Kulasuriya, “Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka,” 151.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>169</sup> Perhaps following along the lines of Senâ Lankâdhikâra, the Alagakkônâra family also began to insert themselves into the ruling family. Vikramabâhu III’s sister, Jayasrî was married to three brothers from the Alagakkônâra family: Nissanka Alagakkônâra, Arthanâyaka, and Devamantrî. *Ibid.*, 151. Their son, Bhuvanekabâhu V (1374-1408) was the last king of Gampola. The Alagakkônâras had clearly overshadowed the family of Senâ Lankâdhikâra. Kulasuriya notes that this type of matrilineal succession ends with the accession to the throne by Parâkramabâhu VI at Kotte, who was a descendent also of Vijayabâhu V (1335-1341) of Kurunagala, but from the male line. *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>170</sup> An exception is an inscription from Magulmahâ Vihâra in the Eastern province, which indicates the patronage of a Buddhist temple by queen Vihâramahâ Devi, the wife of the two brothers, king Bhuvanekabâhu IV of Gampola and Parâkramabâhu V of Dadigama.

<sup>171</sup> Rohanadeera, *The Dynasty of Mahâsâmi Sangharâjas in Sri Lanka*, 81.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>173</sup> Certainly, taking a prominent role in warfare too is a clear path through which political power can be gained. Though Alakesvara is mostly known for his prowess in warfare, he as well as other members of the family also patronized temples, but not to the extent of Senâ Lankâdhikâra. His famous ancestor, Nissanka Alakesvara, renovated the Kitsiri Mevan Kelani Vihâraya probably in 1344. The Karagala slab inscription of 1346 issued by Vijayabâhu V records that a *vihâra* was built by “Arthanâyake Dalasengamu Migantaru

of himself as a protector of the religion and the kingdom modeled after Sri Lankan kings. Kulasuriya notes “it was this minister whose name is associated with the building and renovation of many important architectural monuments.”<sup>174</sup> This image still lives on in that local tradition ascribes the building of Kobbekaduwa Vihâra, a small stone temple in the Kandy district dedicated to the Buddha, to Senâ Lankâdhikâra. As mentioned earlier, the *Tisara Sandesa* written during the reign of Parâkramabâhu V (1344-59), who ruled at Dadigama, speaks of Senâ Lankâdhikâra’s temple building activities—he built a three-storeyed image house at Devinuvara, as well as a large image house at Akbô Vihâra in Weligama.<sup>175</sup> The Vîgulavatta inscription of 1362 notes that Senâ Lankâdhikâra along with four other officials donated land to the tooth relic.<sup>176</sup> As mentioned earlier, like the monk Dhammakîtti, Senâ Lankâdhikâra is also believed to have built a stone image house in South India—according to the *Nikâya sanghrahaya*, he sent much pearls, gems, and wealth to Kâncipura to build this temple.<sup>177</sup> Whether or not these South Indian temple building projects were ever realized is beside the point. Perhaps they can be understood as a way in which the new elite, monk or minister, showed their enormous wealth, piety, and power—not only can they patronize temples in Sri Lanka but also in South India. In addition to patronizing Buddhist establishments, but the new elite also patronized the deity cult modeling themselves after Sri Lankan monarchs, who had begun this tradition in the Polonnaruva period. Unlike previous monarchs though, the new elite brought the deities inside the Buddhist temple.

The introduction of the deity cult at Buddhist temples can be traced back to the Gampola period,<sup>178</sup> specifically to the two patrons Sîlavamsa Dhammakîtti and Senâ Lankâdhikâra. The Lankâtilaka inscription describes the image house in great detail along with the images included—the first storey consists of the main seated image of the Buddha, as well as divine images of Maitri bodhisattva, Lord Lôkesvara Nâtha, Sûyama, Santusita, Sakra, Brahma, Visnu, and Mahesvara, including all their wives, as well as the image of the divine king who protects Lanka Kihireli Upulvan, and the images of the

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for the devotions of Padmâvatî, sister of His Honor Alagakkônâra who was (staying) with him.” Kulasuriya, “Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka,” 144. The Sagama inscription of 1381 records the donation of fields to Lord Nâtha of Senkadagala by the two brothers Alakesvara and Devamantrîsvara. Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 188-189.

<sup>174</sup> Kulasuriya, “Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka,” 142.

<sup>175</sup> *Tisara Sandesa*, v.48.

<sup>176</sup> Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 186-187.

<sup>177</sup> Codrington notes of a Baudapalli in Kânci citing the *Madras Annual Epigraphy Report*. Codrington, “The Gampola Period,” 266.

<sup>178</sup> Hocart notes that “As late as the twelfth century there is no evidence that the gods had any special place of worship provided for them inside Buddhist monasteries. The destination of the various buildings attached to Buddhist monasteries is not always known; yet if we take an important group of Buddhist shrines, such as the Quadrangle at Polonnaruva, we can say with certainty that it did not include any temple of the gods, though the very close proximity of a Siva temple in Pandyan style, that is XIIIth century, seems to foreshadow the Hindu invasion of the Buddhist monastery.” Rather than foreshadowing a Hindu invasion, I think it shows a practice in which the two different religious traditions and their respective monuments existed side by side at the same sacred location. Devinuvara, Kôneswaram, and Kataragama are examples at which *vihâras* and *kôvils* existed side by side. Most recently, John Holt has argued that the inclusion of Hindu deities does occur in Polonnaruva at the Gal Vihâra. Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 39. However, the attributes held by the two attendant deities on either side of the seated Buddha are difficult to discern.

divine kings Sumana, Vibhîsana, Ganapati, and Kandakumâra.<sup>179</sup> Here, unlike Gadalâdeniya, a number of other deities have been incorporated and their images are still extant and worshipped.

However, both Sîlavamsa Dhammakîtti and Senâ Lankâdhikâra were not alone in their religious beliefs about the Buddha and the gods. Inscriptions at both temples indicate that two distinct religious communities also participated in establishing and maintaining this new temple culture.<sup>180</sup> Worshipping both the Buddha and the gods was not simply an elite practice limited to monks, ministers, and monarchs. But, why did the “people of Lamka both high and low” suddenly begin to worship deities in a Buddhist temple setting?

Both Sîlavamsa Dhammakîtti and Senâ Lankâdhikâra give specific reasons in their respective inscriptions on why they include a shrine to a deity, or images of deities in their Buddhist temple.<sup>181</sup> Dhammakîtti’s inscription states “[Thinking] that there should be protection for this *vihâra*, he caused a shrine of . . . , the king of gods, too, to be built.”<sup>182</sup> Dhammakîtti’s intention though is different from Senâ Lankâdhikâra’s—it is to protect the temple, while Senâ Lankâdhikâra’s seem more politically motivated. In the Lankâtilaka inscription, the word protection is used only in relation to Upulvan: “the divine king Kihireli Upulvan, who has taken (upon himself) the protection of Lamka.”<sup>183</sup> The Alavala Amuna inscription is a little more elaborate: “figures of gods, the protectors of the world such as Brahma, Visnu, Mahesvara, the Four Varam (Maharajas), Kihirali Upulvan, Saman, Vibhisana, Ganapati and Kanda-kumara.”<sup>184</sup> In the two inscriptions connected to Lankâtilaka, the protection sought by the patron extends beyond the temple precincts and moves to Lanka and to the rest of the world. In addition to these two inscriptions which speak of protection, the *sandesa* poems, a poetic genre which begins in the Gampola period, is also concerned with the protection of the monarchy and in extension that of the kingdom. Interestingly, monks wrote most, if not all of the *sandesa* poems to deities from the Gampola period until the fall of the Kandyan kingdom. As at Gadalâdeniya where the main patron of the temple is a monk, the *sandesa* poems depict a

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<sup>179</sup> Paranavitana, “Lankatilaka Inscriptions,” 5. Out of the four floors, only the first and second floors are extant. The first floor is still in use.

<sup>180</sup> Though the two temples and their respective inscriptions point to two distinct communities that chose to patronize two separate image houses, a number of aspects indicate them to be intersecting religious communities redefining themselves through new visual, religious, and social practices: firstly, the belief in the Buddha and the gods; secondly, the social practice of giving to the temple as a group of donors; and finally, the role of the minister Senâ Lankâdhikâra, who donates to both temples.

<sup>181</sup> The inclusion of local and pan-Indic deities in Buddhist temples in medieval Sri Lanka is not unusual, because this phenomenon is seen from South Asia to East Asia. However, the ways in which deities are incorporated and the reasons for their inclusion by various patrons are different. Pathmanathan too notes “The pattern of their interaction [Hinduism and Buddhism] and the developments resulting from it assumed different forms in different societies and were reflected in architectural forms, iconographic tradition, literary themes and social institutions. There has been no uniform and consistent trend in their interaction even within each country.” Pathmanathan, “Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka,” 76. Therefore, I believe it is important to bring attention to the various moments in which deities are assimilated, transformed, and rejected even within one country.

<sup>182</sup> Paranavitana, “Gadaladeniya Rock Inscription,” 107.

<sup>183</sup> Paranavitana, “Lankatilaka Inscriptions,” 11.

<sup>184</sup> Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 133.

close relationship between monks and the worship of deities.<sup>185</sup> The *Tisara Sandesa*, the oldest extant poem of this genre includes a few verses on Senâ Lankâdhikâra, one of which states that “Sena Lakadiyara took the four measures to protect Lanka.”<sup>186</sup> Why was there a sudden need for protection of temples, of the king, and of Lanka?

The most powerful enemy for this weak kingdom in the south was not outside the island in South India, but was the northern kingdom on the island itself. Even before the beginning of the Gampola period, the capital had shifted numerous times within a short span of a hundred years, indicating the unstable nature of the southern kingdom.<sup>187</sup> As Kulasuriya points out, the northern kingdom played a central role in determining the location of the southern capital.<sup>188</sup> In 1344, the year in which Gadalâdeniya and Lankâtilaka were built, Ibn Batûta arrives in Sri Lanka and is the first to mention an Ârya Cakravarti as a ruler of the island.<sup>189</sup> By the reign of Vikramabâhu III (1357-74), the northern kingdom had forced a peace treaty on the Gampola kingdom—a Sinhala inscription found at Galgane Vihâra in Madavala in the Kandy district dated to 1359 speaks of how “Marttândam-perumâlun-vahanse placed certain Brahmins in charge of the *madigaya* of the districts of Singuruvâna, Balavita, Mâtala, Dumbara and Sagama-tunrate—territories under the direct rule of the Gampala king.”<sup>190</sup> The Sinhala *Rajavaliya* written in the seventeenth-century states that there were three seats of power: Alakesvara at Rayigama, Vikramabâhu III at Gampola, and Ârya Cakravarti at Yâpâpatuna. It further says “Arya Chakravarti, whose army and wealth were superior to those of the other kings, caused tribute to be brought to him from the hill and low districts and from the nine ports.”<sup>191</sup> With the northern kingdom encroaching on its backyard and demanding taxes collected from the merchandise coming in from the outside, it is not surprising then that Senâ Lankâdhikâra took divine measures to protect his kingdom.<sup>192</sup> It is true that the Ârya Cakravarti enforced the peace treaty in 1359, fifteen years after the building of Lankâtilaka. However, the belief that guardian deities provide protection to the kingdom is again articulated in relation to the Ârya Cakravarti through the building of the four temples to deities at the fort “Abhinava Jayawardana” built by the next chief minister Nissanka Alakesvara. According to the *Nikâya sanghrahaya*, to protect the four directions, Alakesvara built on the ramparts of the fort, four temples to the four deities who have undertaken the protection of Lanka—Kihireli Upulvan, Saman Boksai,

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<sup>185</sup> Holt too notes of this significant development within Sri Lankan Buddhism—“an eminent monk is portrayed as appealing to the powers of a divinity in order to insure the protection of kingship. . . the veneration of gods by Buddhist monks for this-worldly (*laukika*) political concerns had become regarded, perhaps, as an acceptable or unexceptional practice” Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 109.

<sup>186</sup> *Tisara Sandesa*, verse 48.

<sup>187</sup> Kulasuriya, “Regional Independence and Elite Change in the Politics of 14<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lanka,” 138.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>189</sup> S. Paranavitana, “The Arya Kingdom in North Ceylon,” *JRAS* (Ceylon) Vol. VII, Part 2 (New Series), 1961: 174.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>191</sup> *Râjâvaliya*, B. Gunasekara, ed. (Colombo: George J. A. Skeen, 1900), 66.

<sup>192</sup> Holt too points to the important contender of power from the north during this period: “When the political circumstances of the mid-fourteenth century are recalled, specifically the precarious situation that Sinhala kings faced in relation to the forces of the Aryacakravarti of Jaffna, it is clear that the intention of the poem [i.e. the *Tisara Sandesa*] speaks directly to the troubled political context at hand.” Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 109.

Vibhîsana, and Skanda Kumâra.<sup>193</sup> Siriweera notes that “towards the middle of his reign [i.e. Vikramabâhu’s], Senalankadhikara gradually fell into a secondary position and Nissanka Alagakkonara attained the position of chief minister.”<sup>194</sup> Though Senâ Lankâdhikâra rose to prominence only for the short time span of twenty years, his legacy of acknowledging multiple deities as protectors of the island, of the monarchy, and of Buddhism lived on in the next capital of Kotte, as well as in the Kandyan kingdom.

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<sup>193</sup> This text does not use the word *devâle* but *devasthâna*. *Nikâya sanghrahaya*, 84.

<sup>194</sup> Siriweera, *History of Sri Lanka from Earliest Times upto the Sixteenth Century*, 80.



## Chapter 3

### The “Heretic” King and His *Kôvil*: The Patronage and the Plunder of the Berendi *Kôvil* in Sîtâvaka, Sri Lanka

Even though in the fourteenth-century, a monk and a minister had incorporated guardian deities in their temples to the Buddha, this trend did not continue after the fifteenth-century. However, patrons continued to acknowledge multiple deities as protectors of the island, of the monarchy, and of Buddhism in the next capitals of Kotte, Sîtâvaka, as well as in the Kandy. In the Kotte and Sîtâvaka periods, Buddhist monks began to question the worshipping of deities, and this chapter attempts to address this issue through the royal patronage of a *kôvil* to Siva in sixteenth-century Sri Lanka.

When the Portuguese arrived on the shores of sixteenth-century Sri Lanka, this tiny island was divided into many kingdoms, which were constantly at war with one another. In one such kingdom, the kingdom of Sîtâvaka (1521-1593), King Mâyâdunne and his son Râjasimha I built a stone *kôvil* dedicated to Bhairava, the fierce manifestation of the Hindu god Siva, on the banks of the Sîtâvaka River (Fig. 3.1). Presently called the Berendi *Kôvil*, the construction of this *kôvil* and its subsequent ruins gave tangible shape to the widespread belief that Râjasimha had abandoned Buddhism in favor of Saivism. Traditional and colonial historiography, as well as local legends, paint Râjasimha not only as a heretic but also as a parricide. Generally depicted as a dark age in Sri Lankan history, the Sîtâvaka kingdom has received scant scholarly attention.

Certainly, it is intriguing to consider why this king and his father decided to construct a *kôvil* to Bhairava, rather than to one of the four guardian deities: Upulvan, Saman, Vibhîsana, and Skanda Kumâra. Like many of his royal peers in other kingdoms, who converted to Christianity, did Râjasimha convert to Saivism? Why did Buddhist monks begin to question the worship of deities? Five hundred years later, after the Portuguese Encounter, in which this *kôvil* like many other religious monuments was destroyed, it may not be possible to suggest answers to these questions. In this chapter, I suggest that a re-examination of the art historical, written, and ritualistic sources reveals a more complex narrative behind the construction and plunder of the Berendi *Kôvil*, and the memory of its patron.

Against the standard narratives of destruction and degeneration, I examine the issue of patronizing a *kôvil* in sixteenth-century Sri Lanka by the Sinhala warrior king Râjasimha I, who was most famous for his fearless battles against the Portuguese. The ultimate destruction of this *kôvil* at the hands of the Portuguese raises the issue of politics of plunder: I address this aggression towards sacred sites during the Portuguese Encounter by examining narratives of plunder. Moving beyond the moment of plunder, I look at the subsequent rebirth of such religious spaces through the reuse of architectural ruins. Finally, questioning the accepted notion that Râjasimha converted to Saivism, I examine an alternative narrative—the rebirth of this king as a local deity—exploring how the patron of the Berendi *Kôvil* is remembered in Sri Lankan temple culture.

## Constructing Nationalist Histories? Narratives of Plunder from the Portuguese Encounter in Sri Lanka

Historians of Sri Lanka have viewed the Portuguese era as an age of plunder, which destroyed vestiges of state power as well as the religious and cultural institutions of the country. This view has lately been contested by historians from the West, and found its clearest formulation in an international conference held in Paris in 2005 to commemorate the Portuguese Encounter with Sri Lanka. A Year later, the proceedings at this conference were published in the form of a book—*Re-exploring the Links: History and Constructed Histories between Portugal and Sri Lanka*. This book claims to walk the tightrope between “historical paradigms created in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century”<sup>1</sup> and “political and national constructions developed in the second half of the 1900s.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, the editor of this book, Jorge Flores, states that the central concern of this project is one that “does not conform to nationalist models of historical interpretation and refuses both the rhetoric of discovery and the rhetoric of aggression.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it should be of no surprise to the reader that plunder is one of the least concerns in this book.

However, some attention is given to this aggressive encounter between the Portuguese and the Sri Lankans in John Holt’s contribution—“Buddhist Rebuttals: The Changing of the Gods and Royal (Re)legitimization in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century Sri Lanka.” Holt observes, “given that religious conversion had become an expression of political expedience, it is no surprise that sacred places and sacred symbols (temples, churches, pilgrimage sites, relics, etc.) became sites of veritable contestation and violence as well, for these markers of religio-social identity were simultaneously indices of political domain or hegemony.”<sup>4</sup> Holt brings in John Strong’s recent work on relics of the Buddha as an entry point into a discussion on how sacred objects take on a new life after their destruction. “In every case of relic destruction that Strong examines, he finds that subsequent Buddhistic accounts were eventually formulated to extend somehow the miraculous life of the sacred relics in question.”<sup>5</sup> Holt argues that in a similar vein the guardian deity Upulvan, once his temple was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1587, took on a new life—as the Buddhist Visnu. This approach gives us an opportunity to examine how local religious communities have responded to such acts of plunder.

In contrast to the narrative presented in Holt’s piece, the tone of a series of workshops begun in 2004 by the Royal Asiatic Society in Colombo Sri Lanka, which

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<sup>1</sup> Jorge Flores, “Preface,” in *Re-exploring the Links: History and Constructed Histories between Portugal and Sri Lanka. Maritime Asia 18*. ed. Jorge Flores (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2007), xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xii. Flores following the historians Jorge Canizares-Esguerra, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Serge Gruzinski believes that the colonial encounter was more than simply oppositional binaries. *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>4</sup> John Holt, “Buddhist Rebuttals: The Changing of the Gods and Royal (Re)legitimization in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century Sri Lanka” in *Re-exploring the Links: History and Constructed Histories between Portugal and Sri Lanka. Maritime Asia 18*. ed. Jorge Flores (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2007), 149.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

culminated in an international conference on the Portuguese Encounter in December 2005, highlights the aggressive aspect to the Portuguese Encounter. A paper by D. G. B. de Silva on “Religious Places Destroyed by the Portuguese from Beruwala to Devinuvara,” argues that the reasons for the plunder of Buddhist and Hindu temples by the Portuguese was multifaceted.<sup>6</sup> Most recently, Alan Strathern, author of *Kingship and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Sri Lanka*,<sup>7</sup> notes too that the Portuguese destruction of sacred sites “is now attracting a great deal of attention in Sri Lanka.”<sup>8</sup> How does one then address this deep concern of Sri Lankan scholars and laymen without constructing a nationalist narrative? Perhaps, one way is to recognize the moment of plunder as local scholars would prefer to, as well as move beyond it as seen in John Holt’s work, by examining the subsequent narratives of rebirth associated with sites that were destroyed.

The plundering of the Upulvan Temple at Devinuvara (the City of the Gods) has received much attention in Portuguese sources, in British colonial histories, and now in academic writing. In 1587, during the siege of the Colombo fort by Râjasimha I, the temple of Upulvan was sacked. The destruction of this temple, even though generally seen by writers and scholars as a singular event, was in fact part of a Portuguese rampage to break Râjasimha’s “spirit”.<sup>9</sup>

Even though the plundering of Devinuvara has received much attention, the Berendi Kôvil was one of the first religious monuments in the island to be plundered by the Portuguese.<sup>10</sup> For the Sîtâvaka kings, the Berendi Kôvil was the only royal temple in their capital, located across the river from the royal palace. I quote from *the Savul Sandesa* or the “Rooster’s Message,” which is a message poem from the early 1580s, written by Râjasimha’s court poet Alagiyavanna Mukaveti, which indicates the importance of this temple to the king and to the city in which he resides.

That great city, filled with all pleasures, which brings happiness to the mind, is like a noble woman,  
The temple of the god and the king’s palace are like her breasts,  
Crossing that beautiful river, which is like her fine black line of hair flowing between her breasts, [Oh friend,] enter the dancing hall of the temple of the god.  
Verse 92 *Savul Sandesa*

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<sup>6</sup> D. G. B. de Silva argues that sacred spaces were destroyed for the following reasons: a religious policy directed by the Goa Ecclesiastical Council; a war strategy; a method to compensate the soldiers; and excesses of Portuguese officials. He briefly examines the history and rebirth of the following regions in which Buddhist and Hindu religious establishments were destroyed by the Portuguese: Wattala, Bentota, Totagamuva, Weligama, and Devinuvara. 5-9. D. G. B. de Silva, “Destruction of Religious Places of Worship from Wattala to Devinuvara.” Final version: 03/01/08/. Obtained from the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka on 06/04/09.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Sri Lanka Portuguese Imperialism in a Buddhist Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Strathern, “The Conversion of Rulers in Portuguese-Era Sri Lanka,” in *Re-exploring the Links: History and Constructed Histories between Portugal and Sri Lanka. Maritime Asia 18*. ed. Jorge Flores (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2007), 141.

<sup>9</sup> *The History of Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 A.D. as related by Joao de Barros and Diogo do Couto*. Trans. and ed. Donald Fergusson (New Delhi: Navrang, 1993), Dec. X., Bk. X, Chap. xiii, 363.

<sup>10</sup> The very first to be ransacked was the Temple of the Tooth in Kotte in 1551. Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 243.

The comparison of the temple and the palace to a woman's breasts clearly shows that these two monuments were the most important structures in the city of Sîtāvaka. The location of this temple in relation to the royal palace implies that it was a religious space important for the local king. Such royal temples were the residences of deities who protected and legitimized the king. Hence its destruction in 1552 by a Portuguese-Kotte invasion should be of no surprise.

Sîtāvaka was first plundered in 1550 as a punishment to King Mâyādunne for again attacking his brother King Bhuvanekabâhu VII of Kotte.<sup>11</sup> However, the Portuguese chronicler Diogo do Couto notes that the Berendi Kôvil was not touched. When describing the city of Sîtāvaka, Couto says that the king's palace was on the southern bank of the river, which divided the city, while on the northern bank lay the temple to Bhairava. He describes the temple as

the most superb and sumptuous pagode that exists in the whole island, which is dedicated to an idol of theirs called Paramisura. The architecture of this pagode is strange, and it is asserted that nearly twenty years were expended on it, more than two thousand workmen being employed on it continuously.<sup>12</sup>

Even though Couto does not refer to the deity as Bhairava, he uses the term "Paramesvara," an epithet of Siva. Couto goes on to describe the pillage that took place.

Dom Jorge de Crasto with his soldiers in that part of the city, which was put to sack by our men, who found much gold, drugs, and wares of all sorts, with which they loaded themselves well. Then, they passed over to the other side, and did the same, without touching the pagodes, as Dom Jorge de Crasto had ordered them for the sake of the king of Cota, who sent and placed guards over them.<sup>13</sup>

These precautions taken by Bhuvanekabâhu VII in protecting the Berendi Kôvil suggests that he too was a devotee of Bhairava. An ivory casket from c. 1543 depicts a king, presumably Bhuvanekabâhu VII, worshipping Siva, who rides Nandi the bull.<sup>14</sup> Queyroz, another Portuguese chronicler, notes that Bhuvanekabâhu was buried in Trincomalee, which is famous for another Saivite *kôvil*, Tirukônesvaram, perhaps the oldest in the island. These three instances indicate that the belief in Siva was not outside the mainstream religious culture of a Sri Lankan monarch in sixteenth-century Sri Lanka.

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<sup>11</sup> In 1539, accompanied by five hundred Portuguese, Miguel Ferreira marched to Sîtāvaka with the king of Kotte; Couto states, "entering Madune's territories, they began to commit great injuries and cruelties." *The History of Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 A.D.*, Dec. V., Bk. V., Chap. viii, 105. Later in the text, Couto notes that Ferreira threatens to "go right into Ceitavaca in search of him" [i.e. Mayadunne]. However, as Mayadunne appeased him, he did not go ahead with his threat. *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>12</sup> *The History of Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 A.D.*, Dec. VI., Bk. VIII., Chap. vii, 139. Strathern notes that, "it is possible that Couto (writing this decade in 1596) was using eyewitness accounts of Sîtāvaka post-Râjasimha's Saivite turn to imagine the scene in the 1550s." Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 185. I question this observation because of the Portuguese text—*The Inventory of the Treasures of the King of Ceylon*—by Simao Botelho, which details the looted objects from the Berendi Kôvil, clearly showing that the Berendi Kôvil existed in 1552. This incident also ultimately questions the idea that Râjasimha turned to Saivism later in his reign.

<sup>13</sup> *The History of Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 A.D.*, Dec. VI., Bk. VIII., Chap. vii, 139.

<sup>14</sup> Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 185.

This action of protecting the Berendi Kôvil by Bhuvanekabâhu, which has been mostly ignored by scholars,<sup>15</sup> shows that Upulvan and other guardian deities such as Saman, Vibhîsana, and Skanda Kumâra were not the only deities important to the Sri Lankan monarchy during this turbulent period.<sup>16</sup>

Strathern brings attention to another action of Bhuvanekabâhu in which he protected the famous temple to Upulvan: in 1550, a church, which had been built on the precincts of the temple to Upulvan in Devinuwara, was destroyed by a group of locals and the king refused to punish them. The church had been built without the permission of the king and Strathern notes that this would have been perceived by Bhuvanekabâhu as a challenge to his authority.<sup>17</sup> Strathern argues that this action of Bhuvanekabâhu highlights “the idea that the Upulvan cult had a particular role in representing—and manifesting—the political-cum-religious resistance of the Sinhalese to the Portuguese...”<sup>18</sup> In a similar vein, Bhuvanekabâhu’s protection of the Berendi Kôvil could perhaps be understood as an action that shows that the worship of Siva played a larger role in the protection of the Sri Lankan monarchy and not just the Sîtâvakan monarchy and their resistance to the Portuguese.

In the following year 1552, the Berendi Kôvil was destroyed by the Viceroy of India, Dom Affonso de Noronha when he invaded Sîtâvaka along with the forces of the newly anointed young King Dharmapâla of Kotte.

The viceroy entered the city of Ceitavaca without resistance, and took up his quarters in Madune’s palace, and the king of Cota near the *pagode*, and he at once ordered guards to be placed at the entrances to the city, which was then sacked, both by our people and by those of the king, of Cota, and many prizes were found in it. The viceroy ordered the whole of the royal palace to be dug up, to see if he should find the treasures, which he did not, and he did the same with the great *pagode* that was there, in which were found many idols of gold and silver, large and small, candlesticks, basins, belts, and other things, all of gold for the service of the *pagode*, and some pieces of jewelry set with stones, all of which was incharged upon the *veador da fazenda* Simao Botelho: all these pieces are entered without valuation, and for this reason we do not estimate what they were worth. All this the viceroy collected together, without giving half to the king of Cota as had been agreed, besides what was concealed and secreted, and God only knows how much that was.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> C. R. de Silva does note that “the temples were spared due to Bhuvanekabahu’s express wishes.” Chapter III “The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Sîtâvaka (1521-1593) in *University of Peradeniya History of Sri Lanka* Vol. II (Peradeniya: The University of Peradeniya, 1995), 80.

<sup>16</sup> I am certainly not questioning the popularity and importance of the Upulvan Temple at Devinuwara. After all, Bhuvanekabâhu’s chaplain had described it as the “chief pagoda of Ceilao” and Couto’s narrative described Devinuwara as the greatest site of pilgrimage after Adam’s Peak. Cited in Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 187. However, the notion of the guardian deities of the island in existence since 1344 indicates that multiple deities were considered important for the protection of the polity and its monarch, even if one of them gained a more supreme position in religious and literary culture.

<sup>17</sup> Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 110-111.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>19</sup> *The History of Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 A.D.*, Dec. VI., Bk. IX., Chap. xvii, 152.

The orders to pillage the temple came from the Viceroy, but Couto does not give us details on who exactly carried out the plundering of the temple. It is interesting to note that the plunderers did not discover any treasures in the palace but found many in the temple. An intriguing Portuguese document—*The Inventory of the Treasures of the King of Ceylon*—lists the objects taken from the Berendi Kôvil, indicating that at one time it was one of the richest temples in Sri Lanka.<sup>20</sup> Unlike his grandfather, who insisted on protecting the Berendi Kôvil, the young King Dharmapâla, who had become the monarch of Kotte only months before, was perhaps too intimidated by the viceroy, who only a few days ago had ransacked his palace and the Temple of the Tooth in Kotte in search of his grandfather's treasure.<sup>21</sup> These two instances of plundering in 1552 had little to do with the policies of the ecclesiastical council at Goa.<sup>22</sup> As soon as the Viceroy heard about the death of Bhuvanekabâhu VII, he seemed to have had only one goal in mind: to gain the treasures of the dead king.<sup>23</sup> Motivations for plundering temples were certainly multi-faceted and even included the avarice or the excesses of Portuguese officers.

In the early 1580s, the *Savul Sandesa* describes the Berendi Kôvil once again in all its glory. The temple was reconstructed to probably once more house the deity Bhairava, whom the poet introduces as a god who had destroyed the great army of Asuras.

Gaining victory against the opposing Asura armies without any less,

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<sup>20</sup> Sousa Viterbo, *O Thesouro do Rei de Ceilao* (Lisboa: 1904), 19-28. Interestingly, this Portuguese text has not been translated into English either by Portuguese, Sri Lankan, or other scholars working on this period for the past 100 years. I hope to commission a complete translation of the text in the near future. Such a translation will provide an opportunity to compare objects offered to the Temple of the Tooth, a Buddhist temple, and those donated to the Berendi Kôvil, a Hindu temple. Such a comparison may elucidate further the nature of religious interactions in sixteenth-century Sri Lanka.

<sup>21</sup> When the viceroy arrived in the city of Kotte, he tortured the *modeliares* in order to find out about “the treasures of the ancient kings.” As they did not reveal anything, he ordered the palace to be searched and “carried off all his [the king's] gold money, including five hundred and sixty *portuguezes* of old gold, silver, jewels, and precious stones . . .” *The History of Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 A.D.*, Dec. VI., Bk. IX., Chap. XVII, 150-151.

<sup>22</sup> Though the Portuguese may not have explicitly invoked the policy of 1567 each time they set out on a plundering expedition, Strathern notes of the important role that the decree of 1567 from the Council of Goa played in the destruction of sacred sites, and also of an ancient Christian practice: “In previous decades there had been calls for programmes of pagan temple destruction within Portuguese-held territory, but the express pronouncements of the Council of Goa on the issue gave the policy a more general legitimacy. From here on the activities of theological warfare were violently concrete. Whether surging out of Colombo in raiding counter-attacks, launching opportunistic naval sorties, or reclaiming areas of the south-west for their command, the Portuguese (and sometimes Kotte) forces destroyed Buddhist and Hindu sites at Kalaniya, Trincomalee, Madampe, Rayigama, Negumbo, Munnesvaram and the Upulvan centre of Devinuvara. Some of these places may also have had a strategic importance, but there was much more going on here than the application of military logic or the prosecution of ecclesiastical decree. It represents an ancient Christian urge to scourge the land of abominations, perhaps further stimulated by a reaction against Vidiye Bandara's destruction of churches.” Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 197. One must quickly note though that before Vidiye Bandara, the father of King Dharmapâla, began his rampage in 1553, the Portuguese had already destroyed the Temple of the Tooth and the Berendi Kôvil in 1552.

<sup>23</sup> C. R. de Silva notes that “De Noronha's army was the largest Portuguese force ever to land in Sri Lanka but his primary ambition does not seem to have been to capture Sri Lanka but rather to seize the Kotte king's treasure. Bhuvanekabahu's frequent loans to the Portuguese had fostered a legend of his riches, riches that de Noronha considered well worth seizing to finance his own schemes for the expansion of Portuguese power in India.” “The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Sitâvaka,” 84.

Like the relative of the Kairava flower (i.e. the moon), which blooms at night, this  
god has great fame,  
Worship at the Bhairava Kôvil,  
Oh friend, watch the dancing offered to the god and bring your mind at peace and  
go quickly.

Verse 93 *Savul Sandesa*

Alagiyavanna moreover advises the bird to go and see the paintings inside the *kôvil*.

The Mahabharata war, as well as the Râma-Râvana war, and the war against the  
Asuras, which Skanda, the one who is endearing to the mind did previously,  
Many paintings have been drawn [of these wars],  
Oh friend, [look at these and] fill your mind with happiness and go.

Verse 94 *Savul Sandesa*

One cannot help but note the appropriate theme of this temple for a period marked by  
incessant wars. The *kôvil* was probably destroyed once again in late 1593 during the final  
assault on Sîtâvaka by Aritta Kivendu Perumâl.<sup>24</sup>

### **Narratives of Rebirth: The Reuse of Ruins at the Madagoda Pattini Devâle**

After its destruction at the hands of the Portuguese, the Tirukônesvaram Kôvil  
was reborn as the Âtikônanâyakar Cuvami Kôyil—or “the temple of the original Lord of  
Konam”—at Tampalakâmam, which is twenty-four kilometers south of the present-day  
town of Trincomalee (Fig. 3.2). The Tamil text *Tirukônâcala Purânâ*, written in the  
18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>25</sup> nearly hundred years after the destruction of Kônesvaram in 1624, retells  
this narrative of destruction and rebirth from a local and vernacular perspective. S.

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<sup>24</sup> The destruction of temples by the Portuguese in South India has not received as much attention unlike in Sri Lanka: Tennent, citing Faria e Sousa, mentions that in 1544 an expedition was organized to “plunder the Hindu temples on the south coast of the Dekkan.” Sir James Emerson Tennent, *Ceylon; an account of the island, physical, historical, and topographical, with notices of its natural history, antiquities and productions*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Longman, Green, Roberts, 1860), 28. Faria e Sousa notes the name of the temple, which was intended to be pillaged: “the Pagod of Tremele, which is twelve Miles up the Inland of St. Thomas Meliapor, in the Kingdom of Bisnagar: . . .” Due to bad weather, the author notes that “the Governour was persuaded to plunder other Pagods, where it was thought there was no less Treasure.” He mentions the name of another temple which was plundered: “the Pagod of Tebelicate, near Calecoulam” and describes the local response to this event. “the Pagod and Town flames, and Two hundred Nayres set out to Revenge this Loss, Commanded by the Keeper of the Pagod. They appeared on an Eminence over our Men, who marched through a Defilee, and poured their Shot and Arrows upon them, which killed Thirty. The Governour had been in danger, had he not dismounted. Our men being got into the open Field, put the Nayres to flight.” Faria e Sousa, Manuel de. *The Portugues Asia: or, The history of the discovery and conquest of India by the Portugues*. Translated into English by Cap. John Stevenes. Volume 2. London, 1695. *The Making of the Modern World*. Gale 209. Gale, Cengage Learning. Vol. ii. Pt. i. ch. Xiii. p83-84. Accessed: April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009. <http://galenet.galegroup.com>.

<sup>25</sup> Pathmanathan assigns it to the 18<sup>th</sup> century because of its style and content. S. Pathmanathan, “The Portuguese in Northeast Sri Lanka (1543-1658): An Assessment of Impressions Recorded in Tamil Chronicles and Poems” in *Re-exploring the Links: History and Constructed Histories between Portugal and Sri Lanka*. *Maritime Asia* 18. ed. Jorge Flores (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2007), 39.

Pathmanathan briefly addresses this text in his article “The Portuguese in Northeast Sri Lanka (1543-1658): An Assessment of Impressions Recorded in Tamil Chronicles and Poems.” He notes that the *Tirukônâcala Purânâ* is an “attempt to link up the traditions pertaining to two temples, Kônësvaram and the Âtikônânâyakar temple of Tampalakâmam.”<sup>26</sup> According to Pathmanathan, unlike any other Tamil source, this text contains the strongest indictment of the Portuguese in Sri Lanka. Retelling the after-life of the community post-1624, the text speaks of the religious community moving first to Kalanimalai and then to Tampalakâmam, which was under the Kandyan kingdom, establishing a temple there, and continuing the worship of Siva and his consort in their new home.<sup>27</sup>

Unlike Tirukônësvaram, the Berendi Kôvil was never resurrected. With the death of Râjasimha in 1593, the defection of his final commander in chief, Arrita Kivendu Perumâl, the capturing of his grandnephew by the Portuguese, and the collapse of the kingdom of Sîtâvaka,<sup>28</sup> this royal temple was forgotten until the nineteenth-century when British writers began to visit the site and write about it.<sup>29</sup> However, certain architectural remnants of the Berendi Kôvil were probably reused in a Pattini *devâle* not too far from the original site.

The Madagoda Pattini Devâle is located in the Dehigampala Korale on the banks of the Kalani river (Fig. 3.3). The bronze *sannasa* from this *devâle* states that a king patronized<sup>30</sup> the temple and donated paddy fields in 1577 C. E. to continue worship at this devâle.<sup>31</sup> Local legend tells of Râjasimha I, who when he was traveling upstream

<sup>26</sup> He further notes “written in elegant verse and in strict conformity with poetic conventions, the traditions, legends and myths pertaining to the temple of Konesvaram are narrated in twenty sections called *patalam*. In some portions of this text attention is focused on traditions pertaining to the history of the region of Tirukonamalai. On the whole the text is Saivite in orientation and in respect of the Portuguese it reflects the feelings and impressions of Hindu society of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Such impressions are coloured by deep grievances and a sense of alienation with regard of the Portuguese conquistadores.” *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 43. It would be important to examine this text in detail to obtain a local perspective on the destruction and subsequent rebirth of the temple and deity.

<sup>28</sup> See C. R. de Silva’s discussion on the final days of the Sîtâvaka kingdom. “The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Sîtâvaka,” 102-104.

<sup>29</sup> There are probably numerous reasons as to why this temple was never rebuilt in the following period: first of all, it was not a Buddhist temple, nor a devâle, but a kôvil to a deity who was not one of the four guardian deities; Kirti Sri Râjasimha’s anti-Saivite policy surely was not of help to revive a temple associated with Siva; unlike Munneswaram and Tirukônësvaram, which were resurrected by their respective religious communities, there was no large Tamil community in this region until the 19<sup>th</sup> century British tea estates; and finally, the complex memory of this king and the fear of the place, which is still spoken about, may have contributed to its abandoned state.

<sup>30</sup> There were nineteen titles with landholdings that were given but very few who live in these properties continue with the *râjakâri* or the king’s work. See *Sîtâvaka Urumaya* “5.3 Madagoda Pattini Devâle” for a list of the title names and the accompanying duties provided by the main kapumahaththaya or lay priest, Ranasinghe Mudiyansele Gamini Ranasinghe, on January 8<sup>th</sup> 2005. Eds. Prishantha Gunawardena and Gamini Adikari (Colombo: Prishantha Gunawardena and Gamini Adikari, 2009), 242. When I first visited this devâle in January 2007, the *perehara* tradition had been abandoned due to a conflict with the then basnâyake nilame. The *devâle* was awaiting the results of a court case and the appointment of a new basnâyake nilame.

<sup>31</sup> Even though the *sannasa* does not name the king who donated it, the letter “Sri” embossed on the bronze plaque indicates that it was indeed donated by a king. The only king in this region during 1577 was Mâyâdunne. However, according to local legend, as Râjasimha is believed to have been the patron of this devâle, he is considered to be the donor and not his father. Though it is dated to 1577, there are other dates



was not able to pass the rapids near the *devâle*; after he invoked the goddess at this *devâle*, he was able to continue with his journey with no difficulty.<sup>32</sup>

H. C. P. Bell in his *Report on the Kegalla District* from 1904 brings attention to the dispersion of the architectural remnants of the Berendi Kôvil: in describing the Madagoda Pattini Devâle he notes “The *dig-ge* roof is supported by three stone pillars, 7ft. in height, two squared to 10 in., and the third a pillar very elaborately carved, which was in all probability brought from the Berendi Kovil after the fall of Sitawaka, as no other pillars of the kind remain *in situ* or are known to exist elsewhere.”<sup>33</sup> Further on in his discussion of this *devâle* he notes that the short posts, which hold up the *devâle* were also probably removed from the Berendi Kôvil.<sup>34</sup>

A brief comparison of the architectural remnants at the Berendi Kôvil and the pillar posts show that indeed there is a relationship between them. The strings of beads carved on the cornice of the Berendi Kôvil (Fig. 3.4) are similar to those found on three of the pillar posts at the Madagoda Pattini Devâle. The *nâga dâla* carvings seen on a fragment, now missing from the Berendi Kôvil, is repeated on four of the pillar posts from the Pattini Devâle (Fig. 3.5).

The reuse of these architectural fragments is ultimately a form of local looting and hence they can be seen as “spolia.” According to Dale Kinney, “spolia must be seen as products of at least two artistic moments, and of two different intentions.”<sup>35</sup> Though suggesting a form of rebirth for the Berendi Kôvil, the intention behind the reuse of ruins from the Berendi Kôvil at the Madagoda Pattini Devâle is not entirely clear. In *Patterns of Intention*, Michael Baxandall argues that intention “is not a reconstituted historical state of mind . . . but a relation between the object and its circumstances.”<sup>36</sup> As the *devâle* was already associated with Râjasimha, perhaps it was thought that architectural fragments from one of his more famous royal temples—the Berendi Kôvil—would enhance this relationship. Certainly, the use of the short posts to hold up the inner sanctum enclosed by a railing created a new architectural type in Sri Lanka—the *tampita devâle*. In addition to the Madagoda Pattini Devâle, there are two more Pattini *devâles* in the neighboring region, which are also *tampita devâles*: the Kabulumulla Pattini Devâle and the Undugoda Tiyabarahena Pattini Devâle—which may point to a local style used for Pattini *devâles* of this particular region.

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for this temple: it is believed to have been renovated by Râjasimha I in 1582, while another local legend says it was built in memory of his junior queen Malvathi Devi, who died in 1588.

<sup>32</sup> Variations of this legend, imply that the *devâle* was built by him as a vow he made on the way to the Petangoda Park.

<sup>33</sup> H. C. P. Bell, *Report on the Kegalla District of the Province of Sabaragamuwa*. Colombo: 1904), 58.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>35</sup> Cited in Finbarr Barry Flood, “Image Against Nature: Spolia and Apotropaia in Byzantium and the *dâr al-Islâm*,” *The Medieval History Journal* 9, 1 (2006), 46. Flood notes “In general, art historians have not dealt well with the reuse of architectural material, and the privileging of an original (or originary) moment in the ‘biography’ of such material is manifest across a range of scholarship. The emerging field of what might be termed ‘spolia studies’ promises to broaden the terms of analysis, but even here there is a tendency to emphasize synchronic aspects of the phenomenon, to privilege the moment of reuse in the biography of the fragment.” *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>36</sup> Cited in Finbarr Barry Flood’s “Image Against Nature,” 146.

The more common type of temple on pillars is the Buddhist image house—the *tampita vihâra*—which became the standard in the Kandyan period.<sup>37</sup> The Madagoda Pattini Devâle follows the usual *tampita vihâra* model with its circumambulatory passage around the *mâligâva* or inner sanctum, enclosed by a wooden railing (Fig. 3.6). In her discussion of *tampita vihâras*, Sirima Kiribamune points out that “it is not unusual to find that the stone pillars in these buildings have been taken from older structures which were in ruins.”<sup>38</sup> This idea seems to have been followed by the Madagoda Pattini Devâle as well, though in this case it was not from a temple that had fallen into disuse, but a temple that was destroyed and never rebuilt. In attempting to date the emergence of this type of Buddhist temple, Kiribamune states “The noticeably wide distribution of the *vihârage* on pillars during this period also suggests that it was not a recent innovation or borrowing. Structures of this type have been noticed in an extremely wide area covering the present districts of Kandy, Kurunagala, Ratnapura, Colombo, Matale, Matara, Kagalle and Anuradhapura.”<sup>39</sup> She notes though of the *tampita vihâra* at Suriyagoda, which dates back to the Kotte period, suggesting that this type of temple was first constructed in the fifteenth-century.<sup>40</sup>

Dating the beginnings of *tampita devâles* is a little more challenging. First, there are not as many *tampita devâles* as *tampita vihâras* and some *devâles* do not have inscriptions and *sannas*, which would help with dating. The *sannasa* of the Madagoda Pattini Devâle from 1577 points to the existence of this *devâle* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. But, this *devâle* too may have suffered at the hands of the Portuguese and Kotte forces in the 1590s when Sîtâvaka was plundered for the final time—therefore the date of incorporating the pillars may have been in the 1600s or even later. Even though the date, the patron, and the intention behind this reuse of ruins are not clear, it suggests a form of rebirth for the Berendi Kôvil.

### From a “Heretic”<sup>41</sup> to a God: The Multiple Images of Râjasimha I

Most scholars have accepted Râjasimha’s supposed conversion to Saivism without questioning the validity of this accusation thrown at him by the Portuguese and

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<sup>37</sup> The *tampita vihâra* is a Buddhist image house, which stands on short stone pillars. In her excellent discussion of *tampita vihâras*, Kiribamune summarizes the various theories that have been brought forward to explain the sudden popularity of this temple type. Some believe that it was inspired by the traditional granaries, which were raised on low pillars to protect them from termites. Another theory relates the *tampita vihâra* to the watch-huts of farmers, which they use to guard the fields at night. Finally, Southeast Asia is seen as a source of inspiration. Sirima Kiribamune, “Sri Lankan Art and Architecture During the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” In *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon*. Ed. K. M. de Silva. Vol. II From c1500 to c 1800 (Peradeniya: The University of Peradeniya, 1995): 491-530.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 497-498.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 500-01.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 500-01.

<sup>41</sup> The words “misaditu” or “heresy” is used in verse 55 of the *Mandarampura-puvata* to describe Râjasimha’s conversion to Saivism. *Mandarampura-puvata*, ed. Labugama Lankananda. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Colombo: Department of Cultural Affairs, 1996), 7. Kitsiri Malalgoda has argued that this Sinhala historical poem is an apocryphal Buddhist chronicle. He notes that the significance of this text is in “relation to the period when it was really written and not in relation to the ones in which it purports to have been written.” Kitsiri Malalgoda, “Mandârapura Puvata: An Apocryphal Buddhist Chronicle,” in *The Anthropologist and the Native: Essays for Gananath Obeyesekere*. Ed. H. L. Seneviratne (Firenze: Societa Editrice Fiorentina; Delhi, India: Manohar, 2009), 319. However, this argument does not impede my use of the text as my interest is in the varied reception of Râjasimha by different writers in subsequent periods.

Dutch chroniclers, as well as by the Sri Lankan Buddhist establishment. C.R. de Silva who was the first to write about the history of the Sîtâvaka kingdom in English, states “Rajasimha abandoned Buddhism for Saivite Hinduism in later life.”<sup>42</sup> Alan Strathern who has most recently taken up this issue of Râjasimha’s conversion in his book *Kingship and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Sri Lanka* suggests that Râjasimha turned to Siva for protection after the destruction of Upulvan’s temple at Devinuvara by the Portuguese in 1588.<sup>43</sup> John Holt believes that Râjasimha had already converted to Saivism before the destruction of the Upulvan temple.<sup>44</sup> Though all agree he converted, no one seems to be entirely sure when, why, and what evidence entailed Râjasimha’s renouncement of Buddhism.<sup>45</sup> In popular memory too, Râjasimha I is remembered as a king who killed his father to usurp the throne, asked the Buddhist *Samgha* to help redeem this sin, and when they refused, turned to Saivism and persecuted Buddhism.<sup>46</sup> However, a re-examination of the literature written in this period, the patterns of patronage, and the narrative of Râjasimha’s rebirth as a local deity, depict a more complex religious identity for this king.

Unlike his supposed conversion to Saivism, the accusation that he killed his father has been questioned by modern scholars. After all, he was more or less in the fore-front of all the battles fought by Sîtâvaka for nearly twenty years before he formally came to the throne in 1581, and hence the unlikely-hood of Râjasimha killing his father. C. R. de Silva observes that it is Couto and the author of the *Cûlavamsa* who claim that Râjasimha killed his father in addition to van Linschoten and van Spilbergen.<sup>47</sup> Certain Sinhala sources such as the *Râjâvaliya*<sup>48</sup> and the *Asgiriye Talpatha* do not mention that he was a parricide, and nor does the other Portuguese chronicler Queyroz. More recently, Strathern suggests that this story on parricide “looks suspiciously like a monastic cover-up of a more plausible reason for Rajasimha’s antipathy to the *samgha*, namely their role

<sup>42</sup> C. R. de Silva, “The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Sîtâvaka,” 96. H. B. M. Ilangasinha, though casting doubt on the parricide story, does not question the conversion story either. See *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica Series No. -77 (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992), 119-123.

<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, Godakumbura when commenting on the *Savul Sandesa* notes that Râjasimha turned to the god Saman because the temples to Upulvan and Vibhisana had been destroyed by the Portuguese. C. E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature* (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries’ Co., Ltd, 1955), 200.

<sup>44</sup> Holt, “Buddhist Rebuttals: The Changing of the Gods and Royal (Re)legitimization in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century Sri Lanka,” 151.

<sup>45</sup> In verse 55 of *Mandarampura-puvata*, he is said to have applied ash on his forehead when he began to worship Siva. *Mandarampura-puvata*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> Râjasimha’s persecution of Buddhism is still remembered to this day through the oral histories of some families who claim of ancestors been persecuted by Râjasimha, as well as by the beliefs in the village of Kabulumulla. In this village, *pirit* is not chanted by Buddhist priests but by laymen because of the fear of Ganegoda Devata.

<sup>47</sup> He further says, “Do Couto’s own account is so biased against both Mayadunne and Rajasimha that he would have had few qualms about accepting adverse reports against either. Nor was the author of the *Culavamsa*, a Buddhist monk, unbiased because Rajasimha abandoned Buddhism for Saivite Hinduism in later life. The story that Rajasimha killed his father was certainly current in India at the end of the sixteenth century for both van Linschoten and van Spilbergen record it. However, Fernao de Queyroz, who was no defender of Rajasimha, explicitly states that Rajasimha received the news of the death of his father on his return to Sîtâvaka after the siege of Colombo 1579-81.” C. R. de Silva, “The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Sîtâvaka,” 96.

<sup>48</sup> Ilangasinha too mentions that this motive is suspicious as sources such as the *Râjâvaliya* written closer to Râjasimha’s time does not mention this. *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, 120.

in a conspiracy against him.”<sup>49</sup> Couto speaks of the *Samghanayaka* of Sîtâvaka and some of Râjasimha’s relatives plotting against him.<sup>50</sup> The only local source that clearly speaks of the *samgha* being party to a plot is a letter from a Buddhist monk to Râjasimha found at the Mâniyamgama Rajamaha Vihâra in Sîtâvaka.<sup>51</sup> Whether these stories of monastic conspiracies are the merging of Portuguese and local narratives needs to be further examined.

Perhaps the accusation that Râjasimha converted to Saivism needs to be also seen against the background of debates that had arisen between Buddhist monks about worshipping deities in the previous Kotte period. Vîdâgama Maitreya’s *Budugunâlanakâraya*, written in 1475 extols the virtues of the Buddha, while criticizing the worship of deities.<sup>52</sup> Another text, the *Bhakti Sataka*, written slightly earlier during the reign of Parâkramabâhu VI (1412-1467), also criticizes the worship of deities.<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, it was written by a brahmin, Râma Candra Bharati, a pupil of Srî Râhula, a great proponent of deity worship. This Sanskrit text, praises the virtues of the Buddha, while criticizing various Hindu gods. It clearly place Hindu deities in an inferior position in relation to the Buddha. Another text, the *Hamsa Sandesa*, also written during the Kotte period, gives a more prominent place to the power of *Buddhist rituals*, especially chanting, as a method to approach deities.<sup>54</sup> Clearly more research needs to be done on such monastic debates, for all three texts indicate that there were varying degrees of criticism.<sup>55</sup> Another possible answer might lie in the introduction of Christianity by the Portuguese in sixteenth-century Sri Lanka. C. R. de Silva has suggested that “Buddhism (and Hinduism) might have become more explicitly defined due to the interaction with missionary Christianity.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, there may have been a further hardening of boundaries between the two religions, which perhaps led to the portrayal of Râjasimha as a devotee of Siva.

Scholars generally see Râjasimha as a good Buddhist at the beginning of his reign and believe that it was only towards the latter part of his reign that he converted to

<sup>49</sup> Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 185.

<sup>50</sup> Strathern further notes, “the monk was stoned and cut to pieces. For those who want a political motivation for his religious policies, revenge against an institution plotting his demise ought to do.” *Kingship and Conversion*, 187. Also see C. R. de Silva for a brief discussion of the opposition to Râjasimha’s ascension to the throne. He also notes, “It is not known whether the opposition of the *samgha* was a cause or a result of Rajasimha’s conversion to Hinduism.” “The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Sîtâvaka,” 96.

<sup>51</sup> This particular source is considered to be unverified by Alan Strathern. According to Illangasinha, the *Mandârapura-puvata* mentions of another plot by the *samgha* of Udarata (122). However, a rereading of the said verses shows that those who gathered in Gampola to plot against Râjasimha were people of high positions perhaps referring to the aristocracy (v. 66-71). As mentioned earlier, the authenticity of this text has also been questioned by Kitsiri Malalgoda.

<sup>52</sup> Punchibandara Sannasgala, *Simhala Sâhitya Vamsaya*, second ed. (Colombo: Lake House, 1964), 283.

<sup>53</sup> Pandit Hara Prasad Sastri “Bhakti Sataka One Hundred Slokas on Reverence and Love.” *Journal of the Buddhist Text Society of India* 1.2 (1893).

<sup>54</sup> *Hamsa Sandesa*, trans. Edmund Jayasuriya (Colombo: Central Cultural Fund, 2005), 21.

<sup>55</sup> Most recently, C. R. de Silva suggests that a comparison of the texts, which were studied in various periods might illustrate the “changes in indigenous religions due to a clash with a new exclusivist doctrine.” Such a study may also show the attitudes of various monks and *pirivenas* towards deity worship.

<sup>56</sup> Chandra R. de Silva, “Portugal and Sri Lanka: Recent Trends in Historiography” in *Re-exploring the Links History and Constructed Histories between Portugal and Sri Lanka*. ed. Jorge Flores (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 11.

Saivism.<sup>57</sup> Strathern, unlike any other modern scholar has carefully examined the relevant texts to piece together the complex story of Râjasimha's religiosity. Even though the Berendi Kôvil exists from the 1550s, he believes that Râjasimha may have turned to Saivism not only because of the destruction of Devinuvara in 1588, but also due to his standing among South Indian rulers to whom he turned to for help.<sup>58</sup> Strathern, moreover cites the *Alakesvarayuddhaya*, which says that Râjasimha passed on to Kailâsa after he died.<sup>59</sup> However, to be fair to Râjasimha, what was the religious worldview of Râjasimha painted in the two most contemporary documents coming out of his court and kingdom, the *Savul Sandesa* and the *Sîtâvaka Hatana*?

Even though Râjasimha has been seen as a warrior king, he was also a literary connoisseur. Though accused of destroying Buddhist books and bringing about a dark period in Sri Lankan literature,<sup>60</sup> unlike with the contemporary kingdoms of Kotte and Kandy, Sîtâvaka can boast of a substantial number of literary works. One of Râjasimha's court poets, Alagiyavanna Mukaveti, was the author of the *Savul Sandesa*, *Subâshitha*, *Kusa Jâtaka*, and *Dahamsoda Kava*. In the *Savul Sandesa*, or the "Cock's Message" the poet sends an entreaty to god Sumana of Sapparapura to protect the Buddha Sâsana, the seven worlds, King Râjasimha, his ministers, and his army (v. 202). The exact date of this literary piece is not known, but there is scholarly consensus that it was written in the earlier part of Râjasimha's reign.<sup>61</sup> Specific verses from this poem depict the religious world of Alagiyavanna, and I would suggest in extension that of Râjasimha, to be one that consists of various deities who are directly or indirectly praised. The poem opens with a verse in praise of the cock, who adorns the flag of god Kataragama (v. 2). Continuing the praise of the cock, the poet says that unlike Sakra, Siva, and Visnu, the cock does not carry any weapons, but only Ananta can describe his abilities (v. 4). In describing the city of Sîtâvaka, the walls are compared to the body of Ananta that encircle the city in which Visnu resides (v. 11). The waterway in front of this wall is like the river, which fell from the sky during Siva's dance (v. 12). The royal palace of Sîtâvaka is like that of Brahma's (v. 27). The many luxuries and glories of this city can only be seen by the thousand-eyed Sakra (v. 31). Visnu has turned blue because his wife Sri has gone to live with King Râjasimha (v. 35). Like King Râma, King Râjasimha also destroys his enemies (v. 68). Various aspects of a river is compared to the body of Uma (v. 153). When describing the body of the god Saman, the poet asks who else but Ganesa can describe it? (v. 201). There are numerous such references to Hindu deities showing that Râjasimha's religious world was an inclusive one in contrast to the exclusive journey that Dharmapâla began when he converted to Christianity in 1557. Of course, the

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<sup>57</sup> Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 184.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>60</sup> Sannasgala Punchibandara, "The Sîtâvaka Period," in *Sinhala Sâhitya Vamsaya* (1964), 295. Also see *Sulu Râjâvaliya*. Sannasgala also notes that from the arrival of the Portuguese (1505) until the end of Sîtâvaka Râjasimha's reign (1593), it was a very dark period in the history of Sri Lankan literature. Ibid., 295.

<sup>61</sup> C. E. Godakumbura observes "By this time the shrines of Upulvan and Vibhisana were destroyed by the Portuguese, and the poet had to resort to a god who was in a safer region" implying that the poem was composed after 1588. *Sinhalese Literature*, 200. However, Stephen Berkwitz, who is presently writing a monograph on Alagiyavanna Mukaveti, believes that it was composed sometime in 1582-84. Personal communication, June 2009.

Buddha and Buddhism are ever present in the rooster's journey: when he departs the city at the auspicious hour, he is advised to remember the Buddha (v. 98). At Delgamu Vihâra, the rooster is advised to worship the tooth-relic (v.123), the image of the Buddha (v.124), and the head priest of Delgamu Vihâra, Mahindâlankâra (v. 118). When he reaches his final destination, Saparapura, the bird is instructed to first worship at the Buddhist *vihâra* and then only god Saman (v. 169),<sup>62</sup> implying that the deity cult is in the service of Buddhism.

The *Sîtâvaka Hatana*, written in 1585, about Râjasimha's great battles, is the first *hatan kavi* or war poem in Sinhala literature. This particular poem tells us about the special relationship the royal family at Sîtâvaka had with god Kataragama. Mâyâdunne promises to give over the island of Lanka to Kataragama, if he gives him a son who can defeat the Portuguese. In his pilgrimage to Kataragama, which extends into a tour of the island, Mâyâdunne worships Kataragama, Ganesa, and Valli Amma (v. 242, v. 243). Following his father, Râjasimha too makes this pilgrimage to Kataragama (v. 590). These two texts suggest that the religious world of Râjasimha I was more diverse than has been seen in previous scholarship. Even though there is a scholarly consensus that Râjasimha was a good Buddhist only in the early part of his reign, the presence of Hindu deities in Râjasimha's religious world alongside the Buddha as seen through his court poet Alagiyavanna Mukavati in the *Savul Sandesa* points to the problems in such an evaluation of Râjasimha's religiosity. Moreover, the existence of the Berendi Kôvil very early in Râjasimha's reign, and even during his father's reign, point to the possibility that Râjasimha was indeed worshipping Siva for most of his life. Rather than seeing him as a convert, perhaps Râjasimha can be seen as another Sri Lankan monarch, who was practicing a religious policy held by Sri Lankan royalty from the Polonnaruva period onwards—that of worshipping the Buddha alongside local, Hindu, and Mahâyâna deities.

Next, I briefly turn to patterns of patronage, which amplifies the complexity of Râjasimha's religious identity. The manuscript, *Alutnuvara Deviraja Sirita*, states that Râjasimha endowed Upulvan's temple in Alutnuvara in 1559 and in 1569.<sup>63</sup> Verses from the *Maha Bamba Kolama* suggest that Rajasimha patronized the Maha Saman Devâle in Ratnapura.<sup>64</sup> The Madagoda Pattini Devâle *sannasa* suggests that Râjasimha endowed it with land in order for continuous worship in 1577.<sup>65</sup> Oral history suggests that he also patronized the Kadadora Pattini Devâle in Ruwanwella—certainly, the *râjakâriya* or the king's duties at this *devâle* suggests that a king from this region endowed it with much land for the continuous worship of Pattini. In fact, local legend has it that Râjasimha constructed forty-eight Pattini *devâles*.

<sup>62</sup> There are at least eight message poems written before the *Savul Sandesa* and it would be important to examine those to see whether the prominence given to the various Hindu deities is seen continuously from the Gampola period onwards or whether it suddenly arises in the Sîtâvaka period.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 188. Ilangasinha cites a different manuscript *Alutnuvara Devâle Karavîma* in which Râjasimha is said to have made dedications not only to the devâle but also to the monastery attached to it. 6608 (123). *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, 119.

<sup>64</sup> Madalagama Vajirabuddhi Himi, *Deva Purânaya Saman Devindu hâ Saman Devola* (Sridevi Printers, 2007), 198.

<sup>65</sup> This *Sannasa* does not provide the name of Rajasimha I, but on the left hand side is the fairly large letter *Sri*, which is found on royal *sannasas*. As this was granted in 1577 in an area located within the kingdom of Sîtâvaka, it has always been assumed the Râjasimha I donated it.

Râjasimha's relationship with Pattini *devâles* needs to be further explored. In contrast to Râjasimha's rebirth in Kailâsa suggested by the Sinhala text *Alakesvarayuddhaya*, the Sinhala manuscripts *Devâle Upatha* and the *Dewa Nîtiya* both state that he was reborn as the local deity Ganegoda Devata,<sup>66</sup> who is still worshipped today in certain Pattini *devâles* of this region. Râjasimha's rebirth as a local deity incorporated into the polytheistic pantheon of the goddess Pattini, I believe again questions the narrative that projects Râjasimha solely as a Saivite convert. Even though his inclusion may not reflect his popularity but the fear of his prowess and potency, this alternative narrative constructed by the local people of this region I suggest is a parallel story to his rebirth at Kailâsa.<sup>67</sup>

At the Madagoda Pattini Devâle in Avissawella and the Kabulumulla Pattini Devâle in Ruvanwella, the daily prayers to Pattini begin with the mentioning of Sidda Ganegoda. However, in both *devâles*, Ganegoda Devata is not represented through the form of an image. At the Madagoda Pattini Devâle, he is remembered by lighting an oil lamp. At the Kabulumulla Pattini Devâle, he is celebrated during the annual Asala perehara of this *devâle*, with a special *daval perehara* or a procession held during the day. Like at most *devâles* in Sri Lanka, Ganegoda Devata's presence is through his "ayudha" or weapons, which are carried in procession three times around the *devâle* by the Kapumahaththaya, or lay priest, while verses on the birth of Ganegoda Devata are chanted (Fig. 3.7). Râjasimha's military prowess is also enacted by the lay priest in the *kadu palis natuma*, or the dance with the sword and shield, at the annual festival.<sup>68</sup>

In Sri Lanka as in other South and Southeast Asian countries, it is believed that those who have had a violent death or an unjust end are generally deified in order to pacify them. Râjasimha I died from a wound caused by a bamboo splinter and the Dodampe Ganitaya is believed to have introduced some poison. Though this deification of Râjasimha falls in line with local religious beliefs, the imageless tradition is rare. However, the fear of seeing a powerful deity is not new in Sri Lanka. The deity Kumâra Bandâra at Lankâtilaka Rajamahâ Vihâra met his death too in a violent way and so is always hidden behind a curtain and never shown, because whoever sees him is believed to either die or go blind. The tradition of not representing this deity also falls in line with the beliefs surrounding the power of seeing gods at Sri Lankan *devâles*. Unlike at *kôvils*, where the worshipper can see the deity and be seen by the deity during the *pûja*, at Sri Lankan *devâles*, the deity is generally screened off by a curtain. His or her presence is mediated through the weapons, the main object representing the deity, enshrined in the

<sup>66</sup> Paul E. Pieris notes that the Ganegoda Devâle in Hapitigam Korale is believed to have been constructed by Râjasimha I and therefore he may have received this name. Pieris also notes of another name "Adharmista Deiyo" to refer to Râjasimha I. *Ceylon, The Portuguese Era: being a History of the Island for the Period, 1505-1658*, Ceylon Historical Journal Monograph Series, v. 6, 7 (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Tisara Prakasakayo, 1983), 266.

<sup>67</sup> Strathern notes that Râjasimha's post-mortem deification was seen by Couto in "the Catholic language of sainthood, which might suggest a popular sympathy." But, he observes that "in the Indic world, deification need not reflect one's popularity but one's prowess; it need not entail an endorsement of one's spiritual vision, but an acknowledgement of one's supernatural potency." Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 192. Certainly Ganegoda Devata is feared just as much as Râjasimha I was feared during his lifetime. In the village of Kabulumulla, only *gihî pirit*, or *pirit* chanted by laypersons is allowed due to the fear of his wrath--the *samgha* are not invited to chant *pirit*. However, simply because Râjasimha's deification may not reflect his popularity, we should not dismiss this narrative of his rebirth as a local deity.

<sup>68</sup> The Kapumahaththaya who knew this dance form passed away in July 2009.

*mâligâva* or inner sanctum of the *devâle*. The weapons are brought out for the annual procession, but they are wrapped in cloth and are never shown.<sup>69</sup>

Though there is no image of Ganegoda Devata at the *devâles* in which he is worshipped, in 2008, soon after the *daval perehâra*, a new statue of Râjasimha I was unveiled at the Kabulumulla Pattini Devâle. Located on either side of the flight of steps to this *devâle* (Fig. 3.8) are two road-side shrines for Pattini and Râjasimha I. Platters of flowers and fruits, along with incense were offered to this image as if it were indeed a deity. The *Kapumahaththaya* or lay priest and the artist who created this image, Nimal Paliskara, both broke coconuts in front of this new image of Râjasimha I, like at *devâles* and *kôvils* (Fig. 3.9). This deification process of Râjasimha I did not begin in the twenty-first century, but began even before his death in 1593<sup>70</sup>: towards the end of the *Sîtâvaka Hatana*, Râjasimha is at least twice referred to as “Rajasimha devi.”<sup>71</sup> In this particular artistic rendition, we see a king, a left-handed one, ever-ready to draw his sword to defend his kingdom.

Though painted as a heretic and a parricide, Râjasimha has been salvaged and a particular image of him as a national hero has been constructed by Sri Lankan kings and politicians. Strathern observes, “Rajasimha might seem a nice candidate for a national hero, yet he has a somewhat awkward place in nationalist memory by virtue of his notoriety as a convert to Saivism.”<sup>72</sup> However, the current President of Sri Lanka would disagree: in his address to the Sri Lankan parliament, President Mahinda Rajapakse after the victory against the LTTE invoked both Mâyâdunne and Râjasimha. “As much as great kings such as Mayadunne, Rajasingha I and Vimaladharmasuriya, it is necessary to also recall the great heroes such as Keppetipola and Puran Appu who fought with such valour against imperialism.”<sup>73</sup> The current president is certainly not the first to have seen Râjasimha I as a national hero. The memory of Râjasimha has been variously etched in the minds of not only of the local population but also as C. R. de Silva notes “It was no coincidence that the successor but one of Vimaladharmasuriya took upon himself the name of the second ruler of Sîtâvaka.”<sup>74</sup> The name “Râjasimha” was continued to be used by the last four Nâyakkar kings of Sri Lanka until the fall of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815.

Perhaps the most intriguing of images of Râjasimha I is that of the Maha Bamba from the annual Saman Devâle *perehara* (Fig. 3.10). Believed to be the depiction of Râjasimha I, the giant larger than life size puppet who leads the procession, has two faces: one represents good and the other evil. As it travels through the night around the *devâle* precincts, it slowly turns around, showing both his faces to the crowds who throng

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<sup>69</sup> I propose to explore this issue further in a future monograph on seeing the divine in Sri Lanka.

<sup>70</sup> Strathern notes “Again we are told that Rajasimha employed the trick of the loquacious deities in order to manipulate his people, and with this they held him for a saint and worshipped him; and so far did his folly go that he commanded many golden images to be made in his name, and ordered them to be distributed throughout all the kingdoms and to be placed among the idols, that adoration should be offered to them even as to these.” *Kingship and Conversion*, 191. None of these images survive.

<sup>71</sup> Strathern observes, “His self-deification had apparently begun by 1585, because as the action of the *Sitavaka Hatana* reaches a climax Rajasimha takes on an epithet awarded to no other king: *dêvi*.” Note that it should read “*devi*.” *Kingship and Conversion*, 191.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 183-4.

<sup>73</sup> “Address by President Mahinda Rajapakse at the ceremonial opening of Parliament yesterday” *The Island*, May 20, 2009, 10.

<sup>74</sup> C. R. de Silva, “The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Sîtâvaka,” 104.



the temple precincts. Perhaps, this is truly an image of Râjasimha I in all of his complexities.

## Chapter 4

### In Praise of Kataragama: The Patronage, Ornamentation, and Localization of Kataragama Devâles in Early-Modern Sri Lanka

When the worship of guardian deities was begun in fourteenth-century Sri Lanka, temple inscriptions indicate that the pan-Indian god Skanda Kumâra, the son of Siva, had already been appropriated into one of the four Buddhist guardian deities of Sri Lanka.<sup>1</sup> By the sixteenth-century, this deity began to be known as Kataragama in local sources.<sup>2</sup> Today, the most popular deity in Sri Lanka, the rise in the worship of Skanda Kumâra did not begin in the twentieth-century. Starting in the Kandyan period (1474-1815), numerous small *devâles* to this god, who is locally known as Kataragama, were constructed in the central and southern highlands of Sri Lanka. At the same time, seven groups of *sandesa*, or “message poems,” were written to the deity Kataragama in Sinhala by Buddhist monks and other ordinary people mostly seeking his intervention in their everyday lives—he was not only a god sought after by the royalty, but he had become a personal deity for the commoners as well.<sup>3</sup> While the main shrine to Kataragama in Southern Sri Lanka has received much scholarly attention,<sup>4</sup> the localization of his worship through the construction of small wooden *devâles* in the central and southern

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<sup>1</sup> S. Paranavitana, “Lankatilaka Inscriptions,” *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 1 & 2 (January 1960), 11.

<sup>2</sup> See *Sîtâvaka Hatana*. Ed. Rohini Paranavitana (Colombo: Central Cultural Fund, 1999), verses 242, 243, and 590. I am not entirely clear as to the when the pan-Indic deity Skanda Kumâra merges with or emerges as the local deity Kataragama. In other words, I do not know at this point whether they are two different deities, or whether they are one and the same. Historical records from the Polonnaruva period until the Kotte period speaks of Skanda Kumâra, Kanda Kumâra, Kandasâmi, and Mahasen. However, after Kataragama in the deep south of Sri Lanka emerges as a great pilgrimage site starting in the fifteenth-century, this deity is referred to as Kataragama after the location of his main temple. However, in the *sandesa* poems of the Kandyan period, he is not only called Kataragama Surindu, but also Mahasen, Savat Surindu, Kanda Surindu, Kanda Kumaru, and Sammukha. The various names seem to point that the writers of these poems saw these two deities as one and the same. I hope to explore the identity of this deity in detail at a later.

<sup>3</sup> *Kahakurulu Sandesa* or “the Oriole’s Message;” *Nilakoba Sandesa* or “the Blue Dove’s Message;” *Katakirili Sandesa* or “the Hornbill’s Message;” *Diyasavul Sandesa* or “the Black Swan’s Message;” and *Mayura Sandesa* or “the Peacock’s Message;” and *Vatu Sandesa*. The un-translated and edited versions of these five collections of poems are published in *Kataragama Devidunta Sandesa Kavi 1700-1900* (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Tisara Prakasayo, 1970). The untranslated and edited version of the *Kirala Sandesa*, or “the Lapwing’s Message” is published in *Kitalagama Devamitta Himiyange Kirala Sandesa ha Valihitiyâve Sumana Himiyange Mayura Sandesaya* (Kolamba: Gunasena, 1961).

<sup>4</sup> See Gananath Obeyesekere. “The Fire-walkers of Kataragama: The Rising Tide of Bhakti Religiosity in Buddhist Sri Lanka.” *Journal of Asian Studies*. 37 (1978): 457-78, Bryan Pfaffenberger. “The Kataragama Pilgrimage: Hindu-Buddhist Interaction and its Significance in Sri Lanka’s Polyethnic Social System.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 38.2 (February 1979): 252-270, William La Fleur, “Points of Departure: Comments on Religious Pilgrimage in Sri Lanka and Japan.” *Journal of Asian Studies*. 38.2 (February 1979), 271-281, and Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, “Chapter 5 Kataragama, a Center of Hindu-Buddhist Syncretism” and “Chapter 12 Sinhala Firewalkers and the Buddhist Appropriation of Kataragama” in *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1988) 176-199 and 411-463.

highlands has rarely been addressed.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Sinhala textual tradition associated with this deity in Sri Lanka has hardly received any attention.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which the worship of Kataragama was localized in the Kandyan and Ûva Provinces by examining the presence of South Indian literary motifs in local texts and legends, and by bringing attention to the message poems written to this deity by Buddhist monks as well as ordinary people in which he is transformed from a public to a more private deity. The appeal of this deity was widespread as early as the eighteenth-century in the center as well as in the peripheries, questioning the overemphasis that the rise in the popularity of this deity is a twentieth-century city phenomenon.<sup>6</sup>

Although most of these message poems are written to this deity at his central shrine in Kataragama, other message poems highlight the importance of local shrines and not just the central shrine of the deity. Moreover, the construction of Kataragama *devâles* in the Kandyan, Ûva, and Sabaragamuva provinces indicate not only the popularity of this deity, but also the localization of his worship in various regions. In addition to the very localized forms of patronage seen through the participation of local rulers and commoners, the ornamentation at such small wooden *devâles* in various locales away from centers of power indicate that different workshops were at work. A visual analysis of the architecture of these shrines indicate that a generic style was adopted and replicated throughout these various regions. However, the variety in motifs and the difference in what was ornamented indicate that different workshops constructed each of these wooden temples. Appropriating and transforming the shape and ornamentation found on stone pillars from the Transitional period (1215-1591) as well as stone doorways, local artisans from the Kandyan period, who worked in wood began a dialog across artistic boundaries. Although the stone tradition was mostly abandoned in this period, this engagement with stone pillars and doorways indicate that stone was not seen as foreign or an “imported” tradition by local artisans. Rather, this conversation between artisans indicate a canon that consists of multiple building traditions.

### **From a Public to a Personal Deity: The Patronage and Localization of Kataragama**

The eminent anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere has written numerous articles about Kataragama, mostly focusing on the worship of this deity at his central shrine at Kataragama. In addition to the main center of worship at Kataragama, his research also includes the Kataragama Devâle in Kandy. Even though Obeyesekere notes of the popularity of this deity in the Kandyan period,<sup>7</sup> his project examines “the modern

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<sup>5</sup> There is one article again by Gananath Obeyesekere on the Kataragama Devâle in Kandy, but it does not examine the patronage of local *devâles* and their ornamentation, nor does it examine the *sandesa* poems written to the deity Kataragama. See Gananath Obeyesekere, “Social Change and the Deities: Rise of the Kataragama Cult in Modern Sri Lanka.” *Man* New Series, Vol. 12, No. ¾ (December, 1977): 377-396.

<sup>6</sup> See Gombrich and Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*. In this book, they shift their site of fieldwork from the village to the city and examine the socio-economic reasons for the changes in Buddhism.

<sup>7</sup> Obeyesekere, “Social Change and the Deities,” 384. But, before Obeyesekere, a number of scholars had already observed that Kataragama had become the most popular deity in the Kandyan period. However, their observations have been solely based on literary activity in the Kandyan period. C. E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature* (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries’ Co., Ltd, 1955), 201.

ascendancy of Skanda as a consequence of social change”<sup>8</sup> as well as the “making of new myths”<sup>9</sup> centered around this deity. In contrast, this chapter focuses on the sudden popularity of this deity in the Kandyan period (1592-1815) through the examination of local devâles in the Kandyan and Ūva provinces, patterns of patronage, poems, and local narratives that point to localization of this deity in various locales and his popularity amongst the ruling elite and commoners.

In his earliest article on god Kataragama, Obeyesekere traces the history of this deity in Sri Lanka beginning with the story in the *Cūlavamsa*<sup>10</sup> until the role he played in the 1817 rebellion against the British after the fall of the Kandyan kingdom.<sup>11</sup> In summarizing his findings, Obeyesekere suggests that the worship of Kataragama “rose into prominence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a result of south Indian immigration and became a major cult in the Kandyan kingdom.”<sup>12</sup> He notes of the arrival of the *pantârams*, non-brahmin priests from south India in the thirteenth and in the fifteenth century, as well as the *ândi*, who were “low caste mendicant devotees of Siva, especially Skanda.”<sup>13</sup> Certainly, the popularity of Murukan in fifteenth-century-south India is attested by the poems of Arunakiri-nâtar, who also sang of this deity enshrined at Kataragama.<sup>14</sup> The term *pantâram* does emerge in the story of origins about one of the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>9</sup> He has extensively worked on the transformation of myths about this deity at the central shrine in Kataragama. See Gananath Obeyesekere, “Myth and Political Legitimization at the Sacred Center in Kataragama, Sri Lanka,” in *The Sacred Center as the Focus of Political Interest: Proceedings of the Symposium held on the Occasion of the 375<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the University of Groningen, 5-8 March 1989*. Groningen Oriental Studies Vol. VI. Ed. Hans Bakker (Groningen: E. Forsten, 1992), 219.

<sup>10</sup> Obeyesekere, “Social Change and the Rise of Deities,” 383. The *Cūlavamsa* narrates an interesting encounter between a prince named Mânavamma and the deity Kumâra. Once the prince was chanting magic verses when Kumâra appeared on his peacock. The peacock pecked at the offerings but flew into a range when it found that water had leaked from the coconut shell. It went at the prince’s face and the prince offered his eye—the peacock was able to quench its thirst. Kumâra, pleased with this offering, granted the prince’s wish, and departed. *Cūlavamsa* 57: 5-11.

<sup>11</sup> Obeyesekere, “Social Change and the Rise of Deities,” 385. After the fall of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815, there were many rebellions. In 1817, Vilbave, a former monk claimed that god Kataragama had appointed him as king to lead the country into victory against the British. K. N. O. Dharmadasa and H. M. S. Tundeniya, *Sinhala Deva Purânaya* (Kolamba: Rajaye Mudrana Nitigatha Samsthava, 1994), 35-36.

<sup>12</sup> Obeyesekere, “Social Change and the Deities,” 377. Lorna Dewaraja also notes that the popularity of this deity is due to South Indian influence. “The god Kataragama and the goddess Pattini are two other deities who had shrines dedicated to them in the city [i.e. Kandy]. They owed their popularity and prestige undoubtedly to the Tamil influence at that time.” “Religion and the State in the Kandyan Kingdom: The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries” in *University of Peradeniya History of Sri Lanka*, Vol. II, (Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 1995), 466.

<sup>13</sup> Obeyesekere, “Social Change and the Deities,” 379?. Lorna Dewaraja points out that “From the end of the fourteenth century the inscriptions and literary records use the word *bandara* (sometimes *bhandara*) to denote princes and nobles as well.” Lorna Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka 1707-1782* 3<sup>rd</sup> reprint (Pannipitiya, Sri Lanka: A Stamford Lake Publication, 2008), 55. This term was not only used in the Kandyan region but also in Kotte and Sitavaka. For more details on this term, see Ibid., 55.

<sup>14</sup> S. Pathmanathan, “Skanda/Murukan and Kataragama Symbols of a Shared Heritage,” in *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka* (Colombo-Chennai: Thirukketheeswaram Temple Restoration Society & Kumaran Book House, 2006), 316. Another Tamil poem, *Kadiramalai Pallu*, in praise of Kataragama, was written at the court of Singai Pararâjasekeran (1478-1519), the King of Jaffna. K. N. O. Dharmadasa, “Literature in Sri Lanka: The Sixteenth Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *University of Peradeniya History of Sri Lanka*, Vol. II, (Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 1995), 479. I hope to translate these Tamil poems on Kataragama in order to further understand the similarities and differences in the way this deity was

temples dedicated to Kataragama, Embekke Devâle, in the form of bandâra. Therefore, the influence of immigrant priests cannot be taken lightly. However, local Sinhala poems and narratives indicate more tangible connections with South India through the use of South Indian literary tropes.

The origins of Embekke Devâle are retold in the narrative ballad—*Embekke Alankâraya*—which includes the structure and motifs often encountered in South Indian *sthalapurânas* (a Sanskrit word for “site histories”) of Hindu *kôvils*. *Embekke Alankâraya* narrates the story of a warrior, who was a great devotee of Kataragama. Written by a poet named Delgahagoda Mudiyanse,<sup>15</sup> this work describes the origins of Embekke. Consisting of fifty-two poems,<sup>16</sup> the *Embekke Alankâraya* claims great antiquity for the Embekke Devâle, to the time of Vikramabahu III of the Gampola period. However, certain literary signs point to the late Kandyan period.<sup>17</sup>

According to the manuscript, near the village of Embekke, there lived a warrior, who would go on pilgrimage once a year to the main shrine of god Kataragama at Kataragama in the deep South.<sup>18</sup> When he became old, he was unable to travel anymore

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envisioned by South Indians and Sri Lankans (both Sinhala and Tamil) in the early modern period. In fact, Arunagiri Nâtar in his poetry focuses on the role of Valli, the hunter’s daughter. Kamil Zvelebil, “Valli and Murugan—A Dravidian Myth.” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 19 (1977): 244. In Sri Lanka, Valli is seen as the daughter of the indigenous hunting tribe, the Veddas. It is hard to trace how ancient this belief is among the Veddas of Sri Lanka, but this idea of Valli and her important role in the life of the deity Kataragama may have been brought to Sri Lanka during the fifteenth century. After all, the sacred center of Kataragama in the deep South, where the deity is believed to have met Valli, is noticed in documents in the fifteenth-century. In addition to Arunagiri Nâtar, the fifteenth-century Thai chronicle, *Jinakâlamâli*, mentions this shrine. Pathmanathan, *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka*, 315.

<sup>15</sup> Nandasena Mudiyanse, the first to write a comprehensive account of Gampola period temples, brings attention to a text called *Ambakke Varnanava*. He notes that this was written by Delgahagoda Mudiyanse and that “it is an incomplete manuscript, which from the point of language and diction may be assigned to the Kandy period.” *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period (1341-1415 A.D.)* (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd., 1963?), 23. However, in a later publication, he points out that the author of the poem calls it *Ambakke Alankaraya*. Nandasena Mudiyanse, *Satriya Lipi Sanghrahaya* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd., 1971), 37. He reproduces the same chapter in Nandasena Mudiyanse, *Ambakke Varnanava saha venat lipi* (Colombo: S. Godage and Sons, 2002), 23-37. Also, see verse 9 on page 26.

<sup>16</sup> However, Sannasgala Punchibandara notes that *Ambakke Alankaraya* consists of around 100 verses. *Sinhala Sahitya Vamsaya* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Colombo: Lake House, 1964), 453. Hugh Nevill notes that his copy of *Aembaeki alankâra* has one hundred and forty eight verses. *Sinhala Verse (Kavi)* ed. P. E. P. Deraniyagala (Colombo: Ceylon National Museums, 1954), 209. Even though Mudiyanse published an edited version of this text, I will need to compare the four extant manuscripts, especially since the verses missing from the standard edition describes the god Kataragama, his wife Gomara Bandâra, and son Sapumal Bandâra, arriving in procession at Embekke from Kataragama in the deep South. See verse published in *Sinhala Sahitya Vamsaya*, 453. Also, H. M. S. Tundeniya cites three more verses, which mention the wife and son of god Kataragama, not found in the standard edition. H. M. S. Tundeniya, *Udunuvara Âmbekke Devâlaya Udunuvara Âmbekke Devâlaya Pilibanda Vimasumak*. 2<sup>nd</sup> print (Colombo: S. Godage and Brothers, 2002), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Mudiyanse believes that it was written for King Kirti Sri Rajasimha as he believes that Embekke Devâle was restored during Kirti Sri’s restoration projects of Buddhist temples. Mudiyanse, *Ambakke Varnanava saha venat lipi*, 23. Tundeniya believes that the poem was written for King Râjâdhi Râjasimha, who according to local legend had a connection to this region. Tundeniya, *Udunuvara Ambakke Devalaya*, 92. Sannasgala dates the text to the period 1780-1815 and notes that the final three verses are in the form of a *stotra*, which is also seen in the text *Ingirisi Hatana* written for King Sri Vikrama Rajasimha after his victory against the British in 1803. Sannasgala, *Sinhala Sahitya Vamsaya*, 451.

<sup>18</sup> In a local legend, the warrior is replaced by a drummer from the village of Araththana. The god had cured his skin disease and he would play for god Kataragama at the annual procession at the main temple to

to Kataragama. After telling god Kataragama his dilemma, he went to sleep. The god appeared in a dream and told him “I will show you a sign through a tree. Go there and start drumming.”<sup>19</sup> In the village of Embekke, a flower garden was been cleaned up. When a knife struck a *kaduru* tree, blood gushed out. The warrior began drumming and made a place of worship for god Kataragama out of leaves and flowers. Then, he offered food to the deity.<sup>20</sup> When king Vikumba heard about this miracle, he sent his ministers to build a temple for the deity.<sup>21</sup>

A number of literary tropes appear in this story of origins, which suggests that in addition to the influence of immigrant priests, there is an influence through South Indian literature, which ultimately localizes the deity. K. N. O. Dharmadasa, who has written an excellent overview of literature in Sri Lanka from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, notes of the influence of South Indian literature on various genres in the Kandyan period.<sup>22</sup> Although not observed before, the literary motifs in this particular narrative are similar to those found in south Indian *sthalapurânas* that sanctifies a religious site. In particular, the motif of the bleeding tree in the discovery of the sacred site of Embekke is similar to the story of origins at south Indian Hindu *kôvils* in which the bleeding of an object denotes the sanctity of the site.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the motifs of sacrifice and divine marriage, central to stories in south Indian *sthalapurânas*, also emerge in the local legends about the origins of Embekke Devâle.

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Kataragama in the south. The existence of this procession can be traced back to as early as reign of Narendrasimha (1707-1739) as seen from the *Kahakurulu Sandesa. Kataragama Devidunta Sandesa Kavi*, 21, verse 163. The Government Agent’s Diaries from 1852-1939 also indicate that Kataragama was a popular pilgrimage site. See *Kataragama The Esala Festivals from the Government Agents Diaries 1852-1939*. The Ceylon Historical Journal Monograph Series, Vol. 25 (2004).

<sup>19</sup> Mudiyanse, *Ambakke Varnanava saha venat lipi*, 28, verse 20.

<sup>20</sup> A brahmin called Nanda also offers rice to the deity.

<sup>21</sup> The poet provides a detailed description of constructing the shrine. After having the area cleared, the ministers have walls built around the precinct. At an auspicious moment, the *magul kap* is installed and a three-storeyed shrine is built. Pavilions, kitchens, and storage houses are built as well. Establishing a *bodhi* tree, an image house for the Buddha is also built. At the end of the path of the perehara, a two-storey house is built. *Ibid.*, 29-30, verses 29-31. Once the road between Embekke and Gampola is cleared and decorated, at the auspicious moment, the king arrives to worship the god. *Ibid.*, 30, verse 33. Next, the poet describes the arrival of the image: first it is placed on the *simhâsana* and the *sangha* chant *pirith*. The brahmins too conduct rituals. The image is bathed and offered food. Then only does the image of Kataragama enter his new shrine amidst much fan fare. *Ibid.*, 32, verses 39-40. Then, king Vikumba and his ministers offer gifts in hopes of receiving the god’s blessings, especially in destroying their enemies and eradicating all diseases. The king donates land and elephants to the new *devâle*. *Ibid.*, 32, verses 41-42. The rest of the poem describes the birth of the annual procession, *Āsala perehâra*, at this *devâle*. *Ibid.*, 33-34, verses 44-49. The poem ends with a *stôtra* in praise of Kataragama. *Ibid.*, 34-35, verses 50-52.

<sup>22</sup> In summarizing this article, Dharmadasa notes “In the Sinhalese literature of the period one of the most noteworthy features is influence of Tamil literature.” Dharmadasa, “Literature in Sri Lanka: The Sixteenth Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” 489. He points to the borrowing of not simply Tamil words, but also of translations of Tamil stories, and the adoption of Tamil genres. Some popular Buddhist narrative poems such as *Mahâ Padaranga Jâtakaya* were translations from Tamil literature. Panegyrics, war poems, and love poems of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries indicate the influence of Tamil literary forms such as the *viruttam* and *parani*. The influence of Tamil classics such as the *Tirukkural* is seen in Alagiyavanna’s *Subhâsitaya* and Ranasgalle’s *Lôkôpakâraya*. *Ibid.*, 489-490.

<sup>23</sup> David Dean Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 93.

The *Embekke Alankâraya* also devotes two verses to a queen called Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra. Although it is not possible to historically verify her existence through inscriptions or through a more centralized text such as the Pâli *Cûlavamsa*, this local text and oral histories portray her as an important figure connected with Embekke Devâle. Verse fifteen in *Embekke Alankâraya* introduces Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra as the Queen of King Vikumba of Gampola. Verse forty-three notes that she received a position at Embekke Devâle from god Kataragama to cure all kinds of diseases. Apart from these two verses, there are no other textual references to her. However, there are many local legends about her and they are not only limited to this locale.<sup>24</sup> Born of a *beli* fruit, Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra has many miraculous stories about her. It is in her flower garden that the *kaduru* tree bleeds and in some traditions, she is believed to have built Embekke. She rejects all her suitors, and becomes the wife of Vikramabâhu III. God Kataragama, struck by her beauty, strangles her, and makes her one of his wives. Her body is placed in a log, which floats down a river and is pulled up at Kahatapitiya in Gampola. Eventually, her body is cremated and the ashes are deposited in a mound over which a small *devâle* is built. During the annual *Āsala perehâra*, the processions from the five temples—Embekke, Lankâtilaka, Gadalâdeniya, Vallahagoda, and Vegiriya—meet at the small *devâle* for the water cutting ceremony, which traditionally concludes the *perehâra*.<sup>25</sup> The lay priest from Embekke Devâle, carrying the weapon of the god, is cloaked in black in memory of Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra.<sup>26</sup> The death or sacrifice and divine marriage of the devotee and patroness Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra to the deity Kataragama is similar to stories found in the *sthalapurânas* of *kôvils* in South India: the deity takes a local bride.<sup>27</sup> Finally, in ancient Tamil literary culture, the king, the woman, and the low-caste drummer also play a central role<sup>28</sup> paralleling the characters in Embekke’s story of origins. All of the above observations suggest strong literary connections between South India and Sri Lanka to produce such a story of origins embedded in Tamil beliefs for Embekke. And yet, the poems associated with the origin stories of Embekke Devâle, localizes the deity and portrays him arriving from Kataragama in Sri Lanka rather than from South India, along with his wife, Gomara Bandâra, and son, Sapumal Bandâra.<sup>29</sup> Traces of the memory of the immigrant *pantâram* priests may live on through the use of the word *bandâra* for persons of princely and godly status.<sup>30</sup> However, the main roles are played by commoners or local rulers, and through the use of South Indian literary motifs, Kataragama is completely localized.

<sup>24</sup> For a stories on Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra from the region of Kotmale, see Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 41-43.

<sup>25</sup> Holt suggests that the *perehâra* and the water-cutting ceremony are water-increasing rituals. John Clifford Holt, *Buddha in the Crown: Avalokitesvara in the Buddhist Traditions of Sri Lanka* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 188-198.

<sup>26</sup> Mudiyanse, *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*, 40-44.

<sup>27</sup> Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*, 268.

<sup>28</sup> George L. Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 119-129.

<sup>29</sup> Though these verses are not found in the edited version of *Embekke Alankaraya*, they are included in the entry on this manuscript in the Sannasgala’s *Sinhala Sahitya Vamsaya*, 453. Moreover, Tundeniya includes four more verses again not found in the edited text of *Embekke Alankaraya*, which mention the wife and the son of Kataragama. Tundeniya, *Udunuvara Ambakke Devalaya*, 92-93.

<sup>30</sup> However, according to the *Embekke Alankaraya*, the priests who conduct rituals at this temple are brahmin.

Obeyesekere, moreover brings attention to the royal patronage of the worship of Kataragama. South Indian Nâyakkars from Madurai ascended the Kandyan throne in 1739 due to the practice of Kandyan kings marrying south Indian princesses.<sup>31</sup> Obeyesekere suggests that, “it is very likely that they extended extensive patronage to the Skanda cult and the shrine in Kandy.”<sup>32</sup> However, there is little evidence that connects the Kandyan Nayakkars with the rise in popularity of this deity. The *sandesas* literature written to the deity Kataragama in the Kandyan period clearly shows that he was becoming more of a personal god than solely a public deity, who looks after king and country. The first *sandesa* devoted to Kataragama, the *Kahakurulu Sandesa*, is written during the reign of a non-Nayakkar king, Narendrasimha (1710-1739), by the Buddhist priest Dikvelle Sâmanera.<sup>33</sup> He was requesting the god to protect Narendrasimha, to bless the queen with a son, and to cure a disease on the writer’s face. Unlike previous *sandesas*, which focus solely on protecting the kingdom and the elite, in this poem, the writer asks the deity to intervene on a private matter. Sannasgala Punchibandara believes that the main concern of the writer is securing a cure for his skin disease.<sup>34</sup> This trend from public entreaties to private ones was followed by the next *sandesas* as well. The *Nilakobo Sandesa* was written by Bharana Ganithaya, a famous astrologer of southern Sri Lanka. He too writes to this deity asking him to cure his skin disease.<sup>35</sup> The next poetic composition, *Katakirili Sandesa*, is unusual in that god Saman is portrayed sending a message to the deity Kataragama, requesting him to protect the country.<sup>36</sup> The name of the author is not mentioned, nor the name of a specific king. However, it clearly shows

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<sup>31</sup> The Nâyakkars were Telegu chieftains from Andra Pradesh, who ruled Tamil Nadu on behalf of the Vijayanagara kings. But they go on to become independent rulers ruling from Madurai, Tanjore, Gingee, and Ikkeri. Even though they were of *sudra* origin, the Nâyakkar princesses and their relatives in Sri Lanka were considered *ksatriya* by the Kandyans. Lorna Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka 1707-1782*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. 1988 (1972; repr.; Pannipitiya: Stamford Lake, 2008), 44.

<sup>32</sup> Obeyesekere, “Social Change and the Deities,” 385. Moreover, Obeyesekere notes, that “it is also likely that the establishment of Brahmin priests in the Kandy Skanda shrine was due to the religious needs of this group since elsewhere the priests are Sinhala Kapuralas.” *Ibid.*, 385. However, the ancestors of R. Somaskanda Aiyar, the Tamil head priest of the Kandy Kataragama Devâle, bought the rites to the priesthood of this *devâle* in the late 1800s from Sinhala lay priests. Interview with venerable Pahamune Sri Sumangala, the head Buddhist priest of the Buddhist temple at the Kandy Kataragama Devâle. June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008. In a later article, Obeyesekere states, “the Nayakas developed the pilgrim route from Kandy to Kataragama.” Obeyesekere, “Myth and Political Legitimation,” 223. . A pilgrimage route from Kandy to Kataragama is evident in the poetic ballad *Embekke Alankâraya*, which mentions that the central character conducted an annual pilgrimage to Kataragama and it also provides a description of the arrival of the deity from Kataragama to Embekke Devâle. However, to ascribe Nayaka patronage to the development of pilgrimage routes to Kataragama is questionable, especially since the first *sandesa*, which is a form of pilgrimage, is written during the reign of a non-Nayakkar king. Moreover, five of the *sandesas* written to the god illustrate pilgrim routes mostly on the Southern coast. One exception is the *Katakirili Sandesa*, which takes a message to the god from Srî Pada in the Sabaragumuva province to the main shrine at Kataragama in the Úva province.

<sup>33</sup> Sannasgala notes that this poetic composition was written after a break in one hundred years of writing message poetry. *Sinhala Sâhitya Vamsaya*, 400.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 401. The writer mentions his request for a cure earlier on in the poem.

<sup>35</sup> As he does not mention the name of a king, nor the name of his teacher venerable Dhammajoti, Sannasgala believes that this composition was written after the demise of King Kirti Sri Rajasimha, as well as the priest Dhammajoti. Therefore, he dates it to the reign of Râjâdhi Râjasimha (1780-1798). *Ibid.*, 451.

<sup>36</sup> Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, 203.



the power of Kataragama in that another guardian deity of an older order, Saman,<sup>37</sup> is made to acknowledge the power of this deity. In 1813, a Buddhist priest, Thalarambe Yatinda, writes the *Diyasavul Sandesa*, which is considered to be one of the best message poem in this period.<sup>38</sup> He too, like the authors of the *Kahakurulu Sandesa* and *Nilakobo Sandesa* requests the deity to cure him from a disease. As seen in the *Kahakukurulu Sandesa* and the *Diyasavul Sandesa*, public concerns are not completely ignored. But, the majority of requests to this deity are more personal in nature indicating that the popularity of this deity in the Kandyan period had little to do with the Kandyan Nayakkars and more to do with ordinary people.<sup>39</sup>

Another interesting phenomenon seen in the late Kandyan period is the construction of local *devâles* devoted to Kataragama and the rise in importance of such *devâles*. Although Obeyesekere notes of the popularity of Pattini in the Western, Southern, Sabaragamuva, and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka,<sup>40</sup> numerous local temples were also built for the deity Kataragama.<sup>41</sup> Even though I have only examined *devâles* dedicated to this deity in the Kandyan<sup>42</sup> and Uva provinces,<sup>43</sup> the Sabaragamuva province

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<sup>37</sup> The guardian deities of the Gampola, Kotte, and Sîtāvaka periods were Upulvan, Saman Boksai, Vibhîsana, and Kanda Kumâra. However, in the Kandyan period, this combination was replaced by Nâtha, Visnu, Kataragama, and Pattini. John Holt, “Buddhist Rebuttals: The Changing of the Gods and Royal (Re)Legitimization in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century Sri Lanka,” in *Exploring the Links History and Constructed Histories between Portugal and Sri Lanka*. ed. Jorge Flores (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, 2007), 152-165. Holt argues “When considering the identities of the new formulation of guardian deities that replaced the old, it would appear that, collectively, they signify the major trajectories of religion in South India that had existed and thrived in the previous millennium of cultural history: Saiva (Kataragama), Vaisnava (Visnu), Sakta (Pattini), forms of Hinduism and Mahayana (Natha) Buddhism.” *Ibid.*, 162. Holt sees the importance of the Nayakkars in formulating this new order of the guardian deities. Holt notes that with Râjasimha II (1635-1687), Sri Lankan kings resumed an old practice of marrying South Indian princesses, in this case, specifically from Madurai. Such alliances provided support against the Portuguese and the Dutch, as well as kept the Kandyan nobility in check. Therefore, he suggests that the popularity of Visnu and Pattini in Kandyan religion mirrors the changes taking place at the royal court of Kandy. *Ibid.*, 163. Certainly, there were many temples built to Pattini all over Sri Lanka, but apart from the rebuilt Devinuvara temple, the Visnu Devâle in Kandy, and the Visnu Devâle in Hanguranketa, there are no other prominent temples built to Visnu in the Kandyan period. Perhaps, the worship of Visnu in the Kandyan period was limited to the royal court, while the worship of Kataragama was more widespread in that royalty, local rulers, Buddhist priests, and commoners participated through the writing of poetry, constructing temples, or going on pilgrimage.

<sup>38</sup> Sannasgala, *Simhala Sâhitya Vamsaya*, 465-466.

<sup>39</sup> There are two more *sandesas* written to Kataragama post-1815, showing that even though the rebellion of 1817 failed, he was still seen as a powerful deity, who could perhaps more successfully intervene in personal problems. The *Mayura Sandesa* was written in 1859 by the famous poet and Buddhist priest, Vâlihitiyâve Sumana, requesting the deity to cure an eye disease of a lay farmer devotee named Babun Appu, who lived in the village of Diguvalâ. Sannasgala, *Simhala Sâhitya Vamsaya*, 565. In 1894/5, Don Gabriel Appuhâmi writes the *Vatu Sandesa* requesting the deity to bless the Ratemahathmayâ of Mahavalathâna and his wife Kumârihâmi with a baby boy. Unlike previous poems, the bird takes a new route—it travels from Balangoda to Kataragama across Bintenne in the Sabaragamuva province. *Kataragama Devidunta Sandesa Kavi*, 39.

<sup>40</sup> Obeyesekere, “Social Change and the Deities,” 381.

<sup>41</sup> Certainly, they do not add up to the number of Pattini devâles built during the late Kandyan period. However, together with the *sandesa* literature and the local *devâles*, it is safe to say that Kataragama by far was the most popular deity in the Kandyan period.

<sup>42</sup> In addition to Embekke Devâle and the Kandy Kataragama Devâle, there is Vallahagoda Devâle and Ganegoda Devâle.

too boasts a number of *devâles* devoted to this deity constructed during the late Kandyan period: Ammaduwa Kudâ Kataragama Devâle, Uggal Alutnuwara Kataragama Devâle, Bamunugama Kataragama Devâle, and Nivithigala Kudâ Kataragama Devâle. The construction of such local *devâles* away from centers of power clearly indicate a rise in the popularity of this deity amongst ordinary people. Some of these local shrines even began to acquire an important status, so much so that the main shrine at Kataragama in the deep south was not the only place of pilgrimage.

The local legends about pilgrimage, the *sandesa* poems, and the government agent's diary indicate that Kataragama in the south was a popular religious site by the early modern and British colonial periods. All six journeys mentioned above in the *sandesa* literature are to the southern shrine in Kataragama. However, the *Kirala Sandesa* narrates a journey from Kandy to Embekke Devâle asking the deity Kataragama to bless the chieftain Ahâlepola, who was aspiring to the Kandyan throne. Written during the fall of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815, this poem was composed by the Buddhist priest Devamitta from the village of Kitalagama.<sup>44</sup> Another exception is the *Astanâri Sandesa*, which narrates a pilgrimage by eight women from the village of Nâthagane to a temple of Kataragama in Diddeniya in the Kurunâgala district. Godakumbura believes it was written by the astrologer, Silpâdhipati, who also wrote the *Nârisat Sandesa*, which narrates the pilgrimage of seven women from the village of Nâthagane to Dambulla.<sup>45</sup> In the *Kirala Sandesa*, the deity at a local shrine is approached on behalf of a request that is more public in nature, while the *Astanâri Sandesa* describes the journey of ordinary people, who were devotees of god Kataragama, to worship him at a local *devâle*. The rise in the importance of these two local *devâles* indicates another level of localization. Central shrines, which are usually associated with centralized patronage systems, were not the only significant places of worship. The construction of local *devâles* and pilgrimages to them indicate not only a rise in the popularity of this deity, but also the participation of local patrons in establishing local *devâles* away from the center.

The concerns of these literary compositions—requesting the deity to address the plight of private individuals rather than the more public concerns of protecting the king—parallels the localized forms of patronage at Kataragama *devâles*. The origin stories of Embekke Devâle as well as Soragune Devâle, both dedicated to Kataragama, point to the participation of local rulers and ordinary people in establishing the shrines, rather than the patronage of Kataragama *devâles* by a centralized patronage system. A number of these local shrines devoted to Kataragama are known for their exquisite wooden carvings. L. K. Karunaratne rightly suggests “In the Kandy period, economic factors and the dependence on local rather than central patronage must have contributed substantially to the return to the basic architectural style of the country in its ‘purest’ form.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> In addition to the Badulla Kataragama Devâle and Soragune Devâle, there are two more *devâles* in the Badulla District: Kotabowa Kataragama Devâle and Bintenne Kataragama Devâle.

<sup>44</sup> Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, 204.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>46</sup> L. K. Karunaratne, “The Traditional Wooden Architecture of Sri Lanka,” in *The Art and Archaeology of Sri Lanka I Archaeology Architecture Sculpture*. History and Archaeology of Sri Lanka Vol. II Pt. 1 (Colombo: Central Cultural Fund, 2007): 569. I find it problematic to speak about a “return to the basic architectural style of the country in its ‘purest form’” as I see the architecture of this island as one that encompasses multiple traditions. Moreover, the so-called “living tradition,” which seems to be the evidence for scholars who are proponents of a timber style as the indigenous style of the country, is limited

Karunaratne's observations about the breakdown of central patronage (i.e. monarchical) and the rise of local patronage to explain the prevalence of wooden architecture is intriguing to say the least. Holt's study of King Kirti Sri Rajasimha shows that royal patronage did exist in the Kandyan period:<sup>47</sup> his patronage of Buddhist temples needs to be seen within the larger picture of the Buddhist revival under the monk Saranamkara in the late Kandyan period. Kirti Sri's patronage patterns point to the refurbishment of wall paintings at existing Buddhist temples; when a temple was established under his patronage, it was Buddhist. Although he patronized the Munnesvaram Kovil,<sup>48</sup> he is not directly associated with the patronage of local *devales*.<sup>49</sup> Local traditions and textual sources indicate that ordinary people, were involved in establishing small wooden *devâles* along with the participation of local rulers.

The traditions surrounding the origins of Embekke Devâle indicate that there may have been more than one patron. Although the main devotee in the poem is the warrior, a number of other characters are involved in establishing the shrine. Local legends and manuscripts ascribe its origins to a warrior, drummer, a farmer, a queen, and a king. The unstable nature of this patronage may point to a form of community patronage as various segments of society are involved in establishing the *devâle*: one tradition says that the field, in which the *devâle* is established, belongs to a farmer, while another says it was the flower garden of a queen. At times, the main devotee is a warrior or a drummer, while at other times, the main devotee is a queen. In both local legends and in manuscript traditions, local rulers participate at some level.<sup>50</sup> It is not possible to place a fixed identity for the patron, and that ultimately may indicate the popularity of this deity amongst the ordinary people as well as the local monarchy, who have all claimed Kataragama as their personal deity.

As mentioned earlier, the Queen Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra is also a great devotee and a patron of Embekke Devâle. What is most relevant to us in our discussion of localized patronage is the portrayal of this queen as a patron of not just Embekke but also of other temples. As mentioned earlier, she is associated with a number of temples in the Gampola and Kotmale regions. A wooden image of her existed at Vagama Rajamaha

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to the Southwest region. Certainly, the shift in population to the Southwest region is most likely the answer to the lack of structures wooden structures from the Kandyan period in the dry zone. However, if the climate or "monsoon Asia" is the main deciding factor for a timber tradition for the entire island, then we need to take into account the difference in climate between the dry zone and the wet zone. Surely, the architecture cannot be the same in these two very different regions?

<sup>47</sup> John Clifford Holt, *The Religious World of Kirti Sri: Buddhism, Art, and Politics in Late Medieval Sri Lanka* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> N. Somakandhan, "Munnêsvaram," in *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka* (Colombo-Chennai: Thirukketheeswaram Temple Restoration Society & Kumaran Book House, 2006), 263-264.

<sup>49</sup> One exception is Râjasimha the II. He is believed to have rebuilt Upulvan's temple in Devinuvara as a Visnu temple. Holt, "Buddhist Rebuttals," 164. Local legend also ascribes his patronage of the Kataragama Devâle in Badulla. Dharmadasa and Tundeniya, *Sinhala Deva Purânaya*, 34.

<sup>50</sup> The association with royalty is not only through narratives but some of the architecture too is seen as having royal connections. C. E. Godakumbura notes that "some of the woodwork utilized for the 'drummer's hall' came from an abandoned Royal Audience hall at Gampola." C. E. Godakumbura, *Âmbâkke Devâlayê Kâtayam Embekke Devale Carvings Art Series 1* (Colombo: Ceylon Archaeological Department, date?), 3.

Vihâra in Rahatungoda near upper Hevâhâta.<sup>51</sup> She is associated with Pusulpitiya Vihâra in Kotmale as that is where she is believed to have been strangled by god Kataragama.<sup>52</sup> Hendeniya Vihâra in Udunuvara, Ilupandeniya Vihâra in Gampola, Kande Vihâra in Kadugannawa, and Hindagala Vihâra in Mâvela are all believed to have been built by Hena Kanda Biso Bandara.<sup>53</sup> Again, there are no textual references for any of these temple building activities,<sup>54</sup> but she lives on in the memory of the locals through oral traditions as well as recent portrait paintings. A contemporary painting at Hendeniya, portrays her holding a *beli* fruit in her right hand and a lotus flower in her left hand (Fig. 4.1). Below her portrait, an inscription states, “this is Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra, who constructed one thousand temples, including the old cave temple of Hendeniya Rajamaha Vihara.” Though she is clearly a female in this rendition, a portrait painting at Hindagala, depicts a male figure holding a staff (Fig. 4.2).<sup>55</sup> Local legends speak of her genderless character and her power to transform her gender every two weeks.<sup>56</sup> It is difficult to understand how this figure came to be known as a great patron of temples, but she is remembered for her religious activities and her devotion to god Kataragama. The patronage of Buddhist temples and *devâles* in the early modern period therefore was not limited to kings at centers, but famous local personages such as Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra too patronized, in addition to ordinary people such as a warrior or a drummer. Though these figures cannot be historically verified, their existence in local texts and oral histories point to the importance of local figures in the patronage of temples in the peripheries.

Although it is easy to see Kataragama as a deity associated with politics because he is the god of war, the *sandesa* poems and the patterns of patronage indicate that he had also become a personal deity for ordinary people at least by the eighteenth-century. Obeyesekere understands “the rise of Skanda in recent times as a response to certain socio-economic frustrations.”<sup>57</sup> Through empirical research, he shows that “people have come to believe that Skanda is helpful for all types of problems, from getting jobs to curing illnesses.”<sup>58</sup> But, this idea of a personal deity who could intervene on one’s behalf on personal matters such as an illness is seen much earlier in the understandings of this deity in *sandesa* literature. However, as Holt has argued, this Buddhist conception of a deity is quite different from the Hindu conception of deities.

That is, they were not perceived as transcendent “savior deities” who rescue faithful

<sup>51</sup> When I visited this temple in July 2008, the statue had been destroyed by treasure hunters. Nandasena Mudiyanse includes a photograph of this image in his book *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28, 43.

<sup>54</sup> Dharmadasa and Tundeniya add a few more temples built by Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra in their entry on the deity Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra: temples at Handessa, Vêravala, Kotmale, Mâvela, and the Hâdunuvâve Maddegoda Pattini Devâale. *Sinhala Deva Puranaya*, 461. According to the *Udunuvara Vihâra Vamsaya*, she built and donated land for temples at Handessa, Dehipagoda, and Matgamuva. Tundeniya, *Udunuvara Embekke Devâlaya*, 86. A number of these temples associated with her are cave temples such as Hendeniya, Vêravala, and Hindagala.

<sup>55</sup> The sculpture said to be of Hena Kanda Biso Bandara at Vagama that was destroyed depicts a figure without breasts. See Fig. No. 9 in Mudiyanse’s *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 461.

<sup>57</sup> Obeyesekere, “Social Change and the Deities,” 391.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 392.

devotees from *samsara* through their grace, as in the *bhakti marga* of Hindu traditions wherein chosen deities are understood to grant *moksa*. Rather, they were simply positioned within the Sinhala pantheon beneath the Buddha and were regarded not as creator deities or “high gods”, but as aspiring *bodhisattavas*, or Buddhas-to-be, treading on the *dharmic* path to *nibbana* themselves.<sup>59</sup>

Even though he may not be able to save the devotee from *samsāra*, the *sandesa* literature written to the deity Kataragama, as well as localized patterns of patronage indicate clearly that he had become not only a personal god, but a god of the ordinary man rather than a public deity for the royalty.

The rise in worship of Kataragama by both royalty and commoners, as well as his localization can be traced to numerous reasons. As Obeyesekere has suggested the arrival of the south Indian priests, the *pantārams* and the *āndi* and the role of the Nāyakkars may have played a role in the rise in worship of this deity.<sup>60</sup> As argued above, I would like to suggest the following observations as stronger possibilities for the sudden rise in popularity of this deity and his localization in the early-modern period: the localization of this deity through the use of South Indian literary motifs in local literature and legends; the role of royal patrons, local rulers, as well as commoners in establishing *devāles* in various locales away from centers of power; the creation of message poems requesting the deity to intervene on private matters rather than on public ones; and the rise in importance of local shrines and not just central shrines.<sup>61</sup> Finally, the popularity of

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<sup>59</sup> Holt, “Buddhist Rebuttal,” 164,

<sup>60</sup> Finally, Obeyesekere also notes of another reason for the rise in popularity of this deity in the early-modern period: the political situation in the country in the post-fifteenth century. The constant fighting between the three local kingdoms—Kotte, Sitavaka, and Kandy—and the presence of foreign powers such as the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English, opened up a role for the god of war. Obeyesekere, “Social Change and the Deities,” 385. The origin story for Soragune Devāle is associated with a battle between local kings, but there is little evidence for Skanda’s popularity due to his fame as a warrior. His prowess is certainly mentioned in the praise sections of the deity in *sandesa* literature, but the sudden popularity of this deity may have also to do with the history of the local deity Upulvan, whose shrine was sacked by the Portuguese in 1587. Holt points out that “the destruction of Devinuvara, site of the famous and superbly appointed temple dedicated to Upulvan, may have been a catalyst for a major transformation in the Sinhala Buddhist religious imagination that was later reflected specifically in emergent conceptions of the hierarchically ordered Sinhala pantheon of deities.” Holt, “Buddhist Rebuttals,” 152. In the Gampola and Kotte periods, heading the older pantheon was Upulvan, but as Holt shows, he was eclipsed by Visnu as early as the 1660s. *Ibid.*, 161. During the Portuguese Encounter, numerous temples were destroyed, but Kataragama’s central shrine in the south was not touched. Perhaps, it is also due to this political reason that Kataragama emerged as the most popular deity, to whom not just the ruling elite turned to but commoners as well.

<sup>61</sup> In addition to the seven *sandesas* written to the deity Kataragama between 1707-1895, as well as local texts *Ambekke Alankāraya* and *Astanari Sandesa*, the manuscripts collected by Hugh Nevill in the nineteenth century contain an interesting group of works, which provide various understandings of this deity by local poets in the early-modern period. *Kadirapura Devi Upata* is a poetic ballad consisting of forty-six verses on the birth of this deity. *Sinhala Verse (Kavi)* ed. P. E. P. Deraniyagala. Part 1. (Colombo: Ceylon National Museums, 1954), 30. *Kanda Kumara Saehaella* is another poetic ballad of forty-seven verses in praise of his prowess as a warrior. *Ibid.*, 187. At least three different versions of the *Satara Waran Mal Yahana*, invokes the four guardian deities and invites them to a flower altar prepared in their honor. *Sinhala Verse (Kavi)* ed. P. E. P. Deraniyagala. Part 2 (Colombo: Ceylon National Museums, 1954), 38, 88. The *Satara Dewala Devi Puwata*, consisting of forty-four verses, provides mythical descriptions about the four guardian deities. *Ibid.*, 158. *Kanda Sura Waruna*, which consists of two hundred and twenty seven

this deity can also be seen in the ornamentation of his temples: unlike temples devoted to the other guardian deities, the temples dedicated to Kataragama are famous for their exquisite wooden carvings.

### From Stone to Wood: The Ornamentation of Kataragama Devâles

Before the early-modern period, there was no widespread worship of Kataragama.<sup>62</sup> He seems to have been introduced to Sri Lanka during the Côla and Polonnaruva periods. Bronze and stone images discovered at the Hindu temples of Polonnaruva depict this deity.<sup>63</sup> He is also mentioned in a pillar inscription issued by King Gajabâhu II (1132-1153) of Polonnaruva, wherein he is referred to as Kanta. The inscription records the granting of lands to Dâpera Rangidâge Hinâbi, who had created images of Kanta for a festival of ten thousand offerings.<sup>64</sup> We next encounter this deity in an inscription of 1344 C. E. at Lankâtîlaka Rajamaha Vihâra in which he is referred to as Kanda Kumâra. The inscription states that images of the divine king Kihireli Upulvan, who has undertaken the protection of Lanka, as well as the divine kings Sumana, Vibhîsana, Ganapati, and Kanda Kumâra were installed on the ground floor.<sup>65</sup> His image is enshrined at this temple, in a niche on the northern wall (Fig. 4.3).<sup>66</sup>

A few references to temples dedicated to Kataragama exist in Sinhala literature of the Gampola (1341-1412) and Kotte periods (1412-1467). As mentioned earlier in chapter two, the *Nikâya Sanghrahaya*, written by the Sangharâja Devarakhita Jayabâhu Dhammakîtti, states that the minister Alagakkonara constructed separate temples on the ramparts of the fort called Abhinava Jayavardhana to Kihireli Upulvan, Saman Boksal, Vibhîsana, and Skanda Kumâra, who have under taken the protection of the four directions.<sup>67</sup> The description of a temple to Kataragama appears in the *Sâlalihini Sandesa*, written by the famous Buddhist monk Totagamuve Srî Râhula in 1450 C.E.

To the south of our king's city, Jayavaddana,

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verses, narrates the story about Valli, a wife of Kataragama, who is believed to be a daughter of the Veddas, the indigenous hunter tribe of Sri Lanka. Ibid., 188. *Kanda Male* recounts the story of King Dutugamunu's patronage of the main Kataragama Devâle in Kataragama as well as a number of legends about this temple and other sacred sites in its vicinity. Ibid., 354-356. All these local texts also indicate the popularity of this deity in the early-modern period.

<sup>62</sup> Obeyesekere notes that in this early period, Kataragama is known as Kumâra, Skanda Kumâra, or Mahasen. But by the sixteenth century, he is referred by the name of his central shrine indicating that temple's rise in prominence. Obeyesekere, "Social Change and the Deities," 384.

<sup>63</sup> H. C. P. Bell, *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon North-Central and Central Provinces. Annual Report 1906* (Colombo: Cottle, 1910), 20.

<sup>64</sup> The date is not given but based on the scrip, the language, and the name of the king, Godakumbura dates it to the reign of Gajabahu II (1132-1152 CE). *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. V Pt. 3, 395. As mentioned above, the deity Kataragama is first noted in the Pâli chronicle, the *Cûlavamsa*, in the section that was written during the Polonnaruva period (1070-1215).

<sup>65</sup> Paranavitana, "Lankatilake Inscriptions," 11.

<sup>66</sup> I thank Rajitha Ratwatte, the Basnayake Nilame of Lankâtîlaka Rajamaha Vihâra for giving me permission to access and document the architecture and the sculpture of the inner corridor of this temple. September 2007.

<sup>67</sup> *Nikâya Sanghaya*, 31-32. Through the use of the words "vena vena," the text emphasizes that these were different temples, perhaps implying that they were located at four separate corners on the rampart, or maybe even at the cardinal directions.

Is the temple of God Mahasen,  
Imposingly bedecked, lustrous with gem-like rays of the sun  
Where flags with the fowl emblem flutter  
On golden poles.<sup>68</sup>

A temple to Kataragama is again mentioned in the *Hamsa Sandesa*, written during the latter part of the reign of Parâkramabahu VI (1412-1467).

Enter the chamber of God Skanda  
And pay homage to him  
Whose majesty and fame are beyond words  
And where music of various forms is played  
In offerings to protect the people and the king<sup>69</sup>

However, unlike the previous verse, which clearly states the location of the temple to Kataragama as being outside the city, the verse from the *Hamsa Sandesa* seems to indicate that the temple to Kataragama is not too far from the temple of the tooth relic, which is inside the city—the bird is asked to pay his respects to the tooth relic after he pays homage to the god.<sup>70</sup> Even though there is a discrepancy in the location of the temples to Kataragama, most likely both verses refer to the same temple because they appear in the sections of the message poem that describe the king and his city. A Tamil inscription of the reign of Vijayabahu VII states “the stone pillar given to the temple of Kandacuvami by a[c] cutarâyan.”<sup>71</sup> Pathmanathan notes that it is not possible to ascertain whether the temple mentioned in this inscription is the same as the one mentioned in the two *sandesa* poems.<sup>72</sup> However, these textual examples from the Gampola and Kotte periods indicate that Kataragama was a deity who was considered important enough to have a temple in or near the capital city. It is also significant that in both *sandesas*, in addition to the temple of the tooth relic, the temple to Kataragama is mentioned.<sup>73</sup> The bird, moreover, is asked to pray to Kataragama in the *Hamsa Sandesa*.<sup>74</sup> However, there are no remains of these temples.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Salalihini Sandesa of Totagamuve Sri Rahula Thera*. Trans. Edmund Jayasuriya (Colombo: Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology and Central Cultural Fund, 2002), 43, verse 26.

<sup>69</sup> *Hamsa Sandesa* (author unknown). Trans. Edmund Jayasuriya (Colombo: Central Cultural Fund, 2005), 39, verse 47.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 39, verse 48.

<sup>71</sup> S. Pathmanathan, “Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka: Some Points of Contact between Two Religious Traditions circa A. D. 1300-1600.” *Kalyani: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Kelaniya 5 and 6* (1986): 89. Pathmanathan sees these temples as Hindu temples (i.e. *kôvils*), but it is not clear from the Sinhala and Tamil textual and inscriptional references whether these were *kôvils* or *devâles*. *Ibid.*, 84-95.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>73</sup> In the *Salalihini Sandesa*, before the poet describes the temple to Kataragama (verse 26), he mentions a temple to Isvara (verse 22 and 24), as well as Mount Samanala with its footprint of the Buddha (verse 25).

<sup>74</sup> For a *sandesa* that is seen as a critique of deity worship, it is intriguing that the messenger is asked to pay homage first to a god and then to the tooth relic, unless the route of his journey forces him to do so. The bird could be entering the city from the South.

<sup>75</sup> In addition to the aforementioned temples, *kôvils* to this deity were also built on the peripheries of the island possibly during the Kotte period. According to a verse in the seventeenth-century Tamil text *Kailâyamâlai*, the Nallûr Kantasvâmi Kôyil dedicated to Skanda Kumâra in Jaffna, was built by a king

What does remain are the small wooden temples to this deity, which are found in the Kandyan highlands as well as in the Ūva province, away from centers of politics and religion. Unlike with any other guardian deity, the attention to the ornamentation of the *devâles* for Kataragama is striking.<sup>76</sup> This ornamentation is generally limited to the wooden pillars that support the roof of the *digge*, or the long pillared open hall, in which music is performed for the deity. In some *devâles*, doorways as well as the *simhâsana*, or the small house in which the deity is temporarily placed during the *perehâra*, or the annual procession, are also embellished with elaborate wooden carvings. I begin my exploration of pillars and the preference for wood in this new period with Embekke Devâle, which is well known for its intricately wooden carved pillars. Many scholars have written about Embekke and its pillars but have not attempted to place its pillars within the genealogy of the development of pillars in Sri Lankan art. Nor have they attempted to understand such ornamentation at Embekke alongside the embellishment seen at other *devâles* to Kataragama. Yet, Embekke's pillars—its form and ornamentation—can be traced back to the Transitional period (1215-1591) when stone was the preference. In fact, not far from Embekke, are the remnants of a stone pavilion, with columns that are strikingly similar in form and ornamentation to Embekke. A comparison of carvings on stone pillars and those on wooden columns show that certain motifs were preferred over others, while some were completely abandoned.

Embekke Devâle is located in Udunuvara in the Kandy district not too far from the famous Gampola period temples Lankâtilaka and Gadalâdeniya. Scholars have generally dated this temple to the Gampola period (1341-1412) for various reasons. Based on local legend and the vernacular text *Āmbekke Alankâraya*, Nandasena Mudiyanse believes that the temple goes back to the time of Vikramabahu III (1359-1374). However, as noted above, a number of scholars have rightly pointed out that this text was written during the late Kandyan period (1474-1815).<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the medium and the style of the pillars indicate that it is of a later period, when wood became the preferred material.<sup>78</sup> Embekke Devâle consists of an inner sanctum, an enclosed vestibule, a smaller opened vestibule, and a long open pavilion.<sup>79</sup> A devotee enters the *devâle* by walking through the long open pillared hall, which is called a *digge*. It is also called a *hêvisi mandapa* as it is where the drummers play as an offering to the deity (Fig.

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called Puvanêkapâku. S. Pathmanathan, *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka* (Colombo and Chennai: Kumaran Book House, 2006), 277. Tirukkôvil, which is south of Batticaloa, is another temple dedicated to Skanda Kumâra. Both temples were destroyed by the Portuguese and rebuilt during the Dutch and British colonial periods respectively. See the section Temples to Murukan in C. S. Navaratanam, *A Short History of Hinduism in Ceylon* (Jaffna: 1964), 73-80. I hope to incorporate these two *kôvils* in my narrative on temples to Kataragama at a future date.

<sup>76</sup> The Natha Devâle in Kandy, the Visnu Devâle in Kandy, and the Halpe Pattini Devâle in the Badulla district have pillared halls with ornamented pillars, but this attention to ornamentation is not consistently seen at other *devâles* for these deities.

<sup>77</sup> See footnote 16.

<sup>78</sup> However, the village of Embekke itself was probably an important site, because as mentioned above, it has the remnants of a pavilion with stone pillars of the type that became popular in the Transitional period (1215-1591).

<sup>79</sup> For a ground plan of this *devâle*, see Ronald Lewcock, Barbara Sansoni, Laki Senanayake, *The Architecture of an Island The Living Legacy of Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Barefoot (Pvt) Ltd, 1998), 105.



4.4).<sup>80</sup> For the initial part of the *pûja*, devotees generally congregate in the open pillared hall and the open vestibule or *handun kûdama*. The devotee enters the open vestibule by going through an entrance adorned by a *makara torana* with lions (Fig. 4.5). The open vestibule has four doorways: a cloth painting of the deity and his two wives hang over the entrance to the enclosed vestibule (Fig. 4.6).<sup>81</sup> Inside the enclosed vestibule, a series of cloth paintings of the deity and his wives hang in the center of the enclosed vestibule (Fig. 4.7), while pushed against the side walls on either side are various objects accrued over time. Only the lay priests and the *basnâyake nilame* of this *devâle* are allowed to enter the inner sanctum (Fig. 4.8).<sup>82</sup> The superstructure above the inner sanctum seems to include a second storey with a balcony around the shrine room.<sup>83</sup> The wall facing the front of the *devâle* has a painted doorway with paintings of flowery scrolls on either side. Four embossed figures facing the four directions are mounted on the tip of the pitched roof (Fig. 4.9).

The long pillared pavilion, variously called the *digge* or *hêvisi mandapa*, has received the most attention in scholarly as well as touristy works. The rectangle-octagonal-square pillars have rectangles at either ends of the pillar with a square portion in the middle, and two octagonal sections on either side of the square. The ornamentation is located on the four sides of the squares (Fig. 4.10). The detailed carvings found on these wooden pillars are not replicated elsewhere in Sri Lanka, and nor is the variety of motifs. They include various types of flowers (Fig. 4.11) and foliage (Fig. 4.12); human figures such as dancers (Fig. 4.13); mythical figures like *nârilatâ* (Fig. 4.14); and fantastical beasts like the *gajasimha* (Fig. 4.15). H. M. S. Tundeniya believes that the *digge* at Embekke was based on the pillars at the Magul Maduva, the Royal Audience Hall, built by King Râjâdhi Râjasimha (1782-1796) in Kandy.<sup>84</sup> He suggests that the motifs found on the pillars at Magul Maduva are taken from the stone pavilion located near Embekke. However, he does not provide a comparison of pillars from all three locations to indicate how he arrived at this conclusion. Instead, he provides an interesting story about the king visiting the region in which Embekke Devâle is located, because one

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<sup>80</sup> Karunaratne notes that the “*digge* can be open, walled or half-walled.” Karunaratne, “The Traditional Wooden Architecture of Sri Lanka,” 566. In fact, the *digge* at Embekke Devâle was half-walled before the Department of Archaeology restored the temple in the 1940s. Karunaratne further notes, “the *digge* clearly preserves an architectural type—the large, open columniated hall or pavilion which must have served a number of different uses in different contexts.” *Ibid.*, 566. He points to several secular structures in this style of the open hall, such as the Magul Maduva in Kandy, a pavilion at the Mâtale law courts, and a market in Mâtara. *Ibid.*, 566-567.

<sup>81</sup> The right door leads to the Buddhist image house, which is attached to the main temple, while the left one leads to the *palledevâle*, which is an unattached shrine dedicated to the minor deity Devatâ Bandâra.

<sup>82</sup> However, Tundeniya provides a detailed description of it. Tundeniya, *Udunuvara Âmbekke Devâlaya*, 12-13.

<sup>83</sup> Karunaratne notes that these multi-storied superstructures made of timber became popular in the Kandyan period and can be seen at Buddhist temples and at *devâles*. Karunaratne, “The Traditional Wooden Architecture of Sri Lanka,” 567. This tradition of multi-storied temples can be traced back even to the Polonnaruva period. However, this trend in creating multi-storied superstructures may have been inspired by the upper shrine rooms that were developed for Buddhist temples in the Gampola period as seen at Gadalâdeniya and Lankâtîlaka. The Buddhist *tampita vihâras*, which are temples on stone or wooden stilts, that became popular starting in the early Kandyan period, may have also been a source of inspiration.

<sup>84</sup> For a ground plan of the Magul Maduva, see L. K. Karunaratne, “The Traditional Wooden Architecture of Sri Lanka,” 566.

of his concubines lived in Maddegoda.<sup>85</sup> However, the ornamentation of Embekke may have been inspired by the stone pavilion, which is only a few hundred meters away rather than the pillars of the Magul Maduva, which is at the center of the city of Kandy.

Rather than like the elongated hall of a *devâle*, the pavilion takes the shape of a small rectangle with two rows of pillars on either side of the shorter sides (Fig. 4.16).<sup>86</sup> Comprising of sixteen pillars, these rectangle-octagonal-square pillars have rectangular portions at the top and the bottom with a square at the center and octagonal sections on either side of the square. The ornamentation is in the square sections as well as in the upper rectangular portions (Fig. 4.17). Weather beaten, the relief carvings found in the central squares as well as the upper rectangular portions have mostly faded away; however, some relief carvings can still be made out. They consist of floral motifs (Fig. 4.18), mythical birds (Fig. 4.19), elephants (Fig. 4.20), lions (Fig. 4.21), dancers (Fig. 4.22), and *kîrtimukhas* (Fig. 4.23).<sup>87</sup> The motifs within the squares are set off by a row of geometric woven-like shapes, which in turn are enclosed by a bead-like design on all four sides. Though some of the motifs found at Embekke, such as the *nârilata*, are specific to the Kandyan period, others, such as the dancer and the *bherunda*, are shared between Embekke and the stone pavilion. Hence, the likely hood that local artisans may have been inspired by the basic form of the stone pillars at the stone pavilion as well as the motifs on them is plausible.<sup>88</sup>

The idea of ornamenting the pillars of an elongated open hall as well as some of these motifs—flowers, dancers, warriors—can be further traced back to perhaps the Kurunâgala period (1293-1341)<sup>89</sup>, to a temple called the Ridî Vihara. Ridî Vihâra is a stone temple built against a rock (Fig. 4.24) in Kurunâgala. Consisting of an inner sanctum, which presently houses a small-seated Buddha image, it has a long open pillared hall. In fact, the long open pillared hall with ornamented columns seen at this particular temple becomes the standard style for *devâles* of the Kandyan period, especially those devoted to Kataragama. Unlike the curvilinear roofs of the Gampola period found on temple roofs, the superstructure at Ridî Vihâra is flat (though the overhanging rock seems to make up for the absence of the curvilinear dome). The cornice has a gentle curve and on either end of the entrance to the hall, the cornice has two petal-like shapes. Above the cornice of the hall is a row of *vyâlas* (Fig. 4.25), while the cornice of the inner sanctum is ornamented by *kudûs*. The exterior walls are decorated by three pilasters each on both sides (Fig. 4.26). Though there are clearly signs of South Indian presence, the moldings point to a local workshop: the torus is round and is not rectilinear (Fig. 4.27) like the *tripatta kumuda*, the torus found on Drâvida style

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>86</sup> For a view of the stone pavilion's location in relation to Embekke Devale, see *The Architecture of an Island*, 102. The entrance to the pavilion faces the Embekke Devâle. However, due to restoration, it is not possible to clearly establish the correct direction of the entrance to the pavilion.

<sup>87</sup> The presence of the *kîrtimukha* may indicate that this pavilion indeed is from the Transitional period when this particular motif was popular and was used in multiple ways.

<sup>88</sup> Though the motifs are shared by the pavilion and the Embekke Devâle, the ground plan of the pavilion indicates that it was not a *devâle* or a *vihâra*. Now called an *ambalama*, or a wayside resting pavilion, it may have been a secular hall for the use of royalty or travelers.

<sup>89</sup> This temple has been assigned to the Polonnaruva period; however, the ornamentation of pillars indicate that the date for this temple is post-Polonnaruva and certainly before Gampola. Most likely it is from the Kurunegala period as the capital of the southern kingdom was located in Kurunegala.

monuments. The hall consists of eight pillars with one row of four on each side. The pillars are polygonal with square sections in the center and rectangular portions at the very top and bottom. The ornamentation is found in the square and the bottom rectangular sections. At Ridî Vihâra, there are three types of flowers, two of which seem to represent stylized lotuses with six petals (Fig. 4.28) and four petals (Fig. 4.29). Human figures, such as warriors (Fig. 4.30) and dancers (Fig. 4.31), dominate the rectangular portions of the pillars. Certainly there are minor differences between the form and ornamentation of the earlier stone pillars and the later wooden pillars, but the basic idea of alternating geometrically shaped sections and ornamenting the centrally placed square portions persist. How should we understand this relationship between the stone pillars of stone temples, which are considered to be of the imported style, and the wooden pillars of temples, which are seen as part of the indigenous architectural tradition?

Ananda Coomaraswamy was the first scholar to bring attention to the wooden carvings of Sri Lanka through his now famous book *Medieval Sinhalese Art*. Published in 1908, Coomaraswamy brings attention to the work of the craftsman, which was a central concern in the Arts and Crafts Movement (1880-1910). Though he repeatedly states, “Sinhalese art is essentially Indian,”<sup>90</sup> he sees Kandyan art in a different light.

The typical Kandyan wooden architecture has a distinct character of its own, and that it responds directly to the needs of a small agricultural people, not luxurious, and rather prosperous than wealthy. The truly national and indigenous architecture has always been one of wooden buildings; the great stone buildings whose remains attract so many visitors to the ‘buried cities,’ were probably erected with Indian assistance and partly by Indian workmen. . .<sup>91</sup>

Coomaraswamy was trying to highlight a group of works and a time period that had hardly received any attention. The excavations beginning in the 1880s, the tourist publications, and the official as well as commercial photography projects had mostly focused on the art of the “buried cities.” Influenced by the ideas of William Morris and John Ruskin,<sup>92</sup> he was attracted to the ornamentation seen in Kandyan wooden pillars and doorways, which clearly showed the craftsman’s hand at work, as well as the tactile qualities of wood. Certainly a nostalgia for a slower-paced society in an age of industrialization was also a central aspect of the celebration of the craftsman. Senake Bandaranayake praises Coomaraswamy’s work for its choice of subject matter. Orientalist scholarship had been concerned with studies of the ancient art of Asia rather than with the present or the more recent past. This was a pattern in colonialist historiography—to acknowledge the glorious past of the colonized peoples, while negating the vitality of the recent past. The study of Sri Lankan art, had concentrated on the ancient cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva. The later periods in Kotte, Kandy and the maritime zone were seen as a period of decline. Bandaranayake argues that Coomaraswamy changed this: “his study of Kandyan art was not only about creating a

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<sup>90</sup> Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Medieval Sinhalese Art* (Broad Campden: Essex House Press, 1908), v.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>92</sup> Senake Bandaranayake, “Ananda Coomaraswamy and Approaches to the Study of Traditional Sri Lankan Art and Society” in *P. E. P. Deraniyagala Commemoration Volume* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Lake House Investments Ltd., 1980), 68-84.

legitimacy for Sri Lankan art, both ancient and medieval, but also about the vitality of the culture that produced it.”<sup>93</sup> However, in claiming that the art of the present and the more recent past is Sinhalese, Coomaraswamy ran the risk of creating an art historical canon that excluded certain artistic traditions as well as contributions made by people other than the Sinhalese.<sup>94</sup> Coomaraswamy’s language and formulations in this book have dominated the writings about Sri Lankan art for the past one hundred years.<sup>95</sup>

In the very same year, Henry Cave included an extensive essay by J. P. Lewis on Kandyan architecture in *The Book of Ceylon*.<sup>96</sup> Lewis too notes that earlier writers such as John Davy and Major Forbes brushed aside Kandyan architecture.<sup>97</sup> Lewis begins his fairly length exposition by understandably focusing on Kandyan wooden pillars and briefly examines those at the Royal Pavilion, Embekke Devâle, and the Temple of the Tooth, rightly concluding that the shape is similar to stone pillars at South Indian temples but the carvings are typically Kandyan.<sup>98</sup> Referring to them as “Kandyan pillars” he notes, “they are found not merely in temples, but in domestic buildings—wherever in fact the Kandyans had to erect a pillar.”<sup>99</sup> Its use in both religious and secular spaces certainly provides an opportunity for their ubiquitous presence in the built landscape of the Kandyan regions.<sup>100</sup> Though Lewis’s essay is known, his observations on shape and ornamentation are hardly acknowledged.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 73. Bandaranayake further argues that even though Coomaraswamy has been criticized for heavily depending on texts rather than engaging with works of art in its social context, this criticism is not applicable to Coomaraswamy’s work on Sri Lanka. Bandaranayake points out that Coomaraswamy’s understanding of Kandyan society was first through contact with that society and second through textual sources. Ibid., 76-77. Certainly, the numerous photographs of not only objects but also craftsmen at work in his book *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* shows that Coomaraswamy may have seen firsthand craftsmen at work. However, the photographs for this book were taken by his first wife.

<sup>94</sup> Bandaranayake, on the other hand, sees Coomaraswamy’s failings in a different light: he criticizes Coomaraswamy for continuing with the pattern of colonialist historiography to explain one culture through another. Bandaranayake argues that Coomaraswamy’s approach is still influential in that Sri Lankan art and culture is seen as an “extension, offshoot or distinctive regional development of an ‘Indian’ or Pan-Indian tradition.” 74. Certainly, Coomaraswamy as noted above saw Sri Lankan art as an extension of Indian art. He repeats this mantra numerous times in *Medieval Sinhalese Art*. At the same time, by saying that the “truly national and indigenous architecture has always been one of wooden buildings” and by focusing on what he calls Sinhalese art, Coomaraswamy creates a distinct identity for Sri Lankan art.

<sup>95</sup> See Introduction for a discussion on the use of the word “Sinhalese” in the writings about Sri Lankan art.

<sup>96</sup> J. P. Lewis, “Kandyan Architecture” in *The Book of Ceylon* (London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1908), 325-377. He sees some resemblance between Kandyan architecture and the temples of Mudbidiri in Kanara especially because of two architectural features: the pillars with their corners slightly chamfered off and the sloping roofs. Ibid., 325-326.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>98</sup> He believes though that the shape originated in wood. 330.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 333. He briefly examines some small secular pavilions, which he calls *madama* rather than *ambalama*, noting that they generally have a square ground plan with supporting pillars ranging from as little as four up until sixteen. Ibid., 334.

<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, the stone pillar in the transitional period was mainly used for religious purposes, with Yâpahuva as an exception.

<sup>101</sup> In addition to J. P. Lewis, Lorna Dewaraja too makes this observation: “The very characteristic wooden pillars of the Kandyan period are of this type [i.e. the square-octagonal form of what she calls the Dravidian pillar].” Lorna Dewaraja, “Some Aspects of Dravidian Architecture and Sculpture and their Impact on Ceylon.” In *Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies*, Vol. 2 Madras, 1968 (Madras: I. A. T. R., 1971), 431.

C. E. Godakumbura in *Sinhalese Architecture*, published in 1963,<sup>102</sup> suggests that it is possible to recover the past by examining Kandyan architecture and also sees it as “the living example of an old, tradition.”<sup>103</sup> Most recently, L. K. Karunaratne, in writing about the traditional wooden architecture of Sri Lanka, writes that despite the prevalence of timber architecture, timber construction in Sri Lankan art has received little attention.<sup>104</sup> However, starting with Coomaraswamy, there have been a number of scholarly studies on this topic, including coffee table books,<sup>105</sup> which persist this idea that Sri Lankan architecture is solely about wooden architecture. Karunaratne notes, “a living timber architecture, dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, still survives, as do many archetypal forms, which are of fairly recent construction, but which preserve designs and techniques of considerable antiquity.”<sup>106</sup> The possibility that the extant wooden structures preserve a more ancient tradition of building in timber is plausible, but the idea that this timber architectural tradition preserves some unchanging national or indigenous tradition is highly problematic. Such a discourse does not allow for change and dialog: it ignores that the wooden artistic tradition was engaged in a dialog with the stone architectural tradition.<sup>107</sup> The comparison between the forms of pillars and their ornamentation clearly indicates that stone pillars of the transitional period were the source of inspiration for the timber pillars of the Kandyan period. Karunaratne, after cataloging a long list of monuments from the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods in which “timber construction is imitated in brick and stone” and in which “the direct use of timber elements” is present, concludes,

The shadow of a once rich timber constructional tradition are present at all these ancient sites. It is in the wooden architecture and the timber constructional methods of the Kandy Period that we are able to recover not merely an image of this tradition but a substantial and living record of its structural system, its ornamentation and its total architectonic character.<sup>108</sup>

I certainly do not deny the possibility that timber was the main material in use in ancient Sri Lanka as in other parts of South Asia. After all, wooden architecture is imitated at the Buddhist cave sites of Karle and Ajantha indicating that wood indeed was the material for

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<sup>102</sup> A second edition under the new title *Architecture of Sri Lanka* was published in 1976. C. E. Godakumbure, *Architecture of Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Department of Cultural Affairs, 1976).

<sup>103</sup> C. E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Architecture Arts of Ceylon 3* (Colombo: Department of Cultural Affairs, 1963), 16.

<sup>104</sup> Karunaratne, “The Traditional Wooden Architecture of Sri Lanka,” 562. See footnote 4 in this article, which lists a fair number of studies on the wooden architecture of Sri Lanka.

<sup>105</sup> For example, *The Architecture of an Island The Living Legacy of Sri Lanka*.

<sup>106</sup> In this article, Karunaratne explores various structures built in wood such as the village house, the grain store, the *ambalama*, the *tampita vihâra*, the *digge*, the multi-storied Buddhist temples and *devâles*, and the wooden Bôgoda bridge. Karunaratne, “The Traditional Wooden Architecture of Sri Lanka,” 562-568. He concludes by noting that an examination of such a variety of structures, both religious and secular, indicates that timber was the “dominant style.” *Ibid.*, 568.

<sup>107</sup> Unlike Karunaratne, Godakumbura acknowledges these translations between artistic traditions, noting “Sinhalese buildings were at the beginning of wood. . . . Before long, wooden architecture was translated into stone. . . . We come again to a period when this stone work is again imitated in wood. So the transitions have been repeated.” *Sinhalese Architecture*, 31.

<sup>108</sup> Karunaratne, “The Traditional Wooden Architecture of Sri Lanka,” 574.

construction before brick and stone. But looking at Kandyan period architecture need not be about recovering the ancient past. Kandyan architecture needs to be appreciated for what it is and its conversations with the past is a part of its narrative.<sup>109</sup> Certainly, other questions could be asked: why did wood become suddenly appealing in the Kandyan period? Why did ornamenting pillars and doorways become the central concern for the Kandyan artist?<sup>110</sup> Styles become dominant for numerous reasons. One answer might lie in patronage patterns as seen earlier. Another may lie in artistic practices. Though there may be a dominant style in each epoch, a conversation can also take place between two or more styles. Statements such as “Rooted in local conditions, it [i.e. Kandyan architecture] is a purely indigenous development” does not allow for the idea of multiple artistic traditions or the idea of a dialogue between different visual traditions. Rather than seeing this “indigenous architectural tradition” as a monolithic style that has persisted from the Anuradhapura period until the present day, an examination of rural *devâles* built in the Kandyan period both in the center and in the peripheries indicate that building in timber became a widely accepted style in the Kandyan and *Ûva* regions; but, local workshops brought their own ideas and enriched this tradition, which as we have seen had some antecedents with the stone building tradition. The Badulla Kataragama Devâle and the Soragune Devâle both have exquisite carvings not only on the pillars and the doorways of the *devâles* themselves, but also on the small pavilions called *simhâsana*, which function as the resting place for the deity when he or she travels outside the *devâle* during the annual procession. This type of ornamentation of the *simhâsana* is not found elsewhere and clearly questions the idea that Kandyan architecture is a static indigenous tradition that can be traced back to the old centers of Buddhism and politics.<sup>111</sup>

Soragune Devâle (Fig. 4.32) is located in the village of Soragune in Kandapalla Korale, in the district of Badulla in the *Ûva* region. This *devâle* too has a few documents related to it such as a *tudapatha* and a *lekham mitiya*, which indicate that it goes back to a few hundred years.<sup>112</sup> According to the *tudapatha*, a local king named Yâpâ while fighting with his enemies stayed the night at the Uggal Aluthnuvara palace. That night, he promised to grant a village to Kanda Kumâra, if he is victorious at his battles. But, King Yâpâ did not carry out his promise and he was afflicted with an illness of the throat.

<sup>109</sup> Coomaraswamy in comparing Kandyan architecture to the monuments of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa and even to the monuments in South India states that it can never “compare either in extent or magnificence.” Coomaraswamy, *Medieval Sinhalese Art*, 114.

<sup>110</sup> Certainly painting the inner and outer walls of Buddhist temples and devales were also a way of ornamenting temples in the Kandyan period. The ceilings of Buddhist temples (standing structures as well as cave temples) too were painted, sometimes emulating textiles. The outer walls of some of the devales in the Badulla District such as the Kataragama Devale and the Lindamulla Pattini Devale are painted with scenes of processions or images of deities. Cloth paintings were also used in both Buddhist temples and devales as a form of ornamentation. Sometimes the upper portions of pillars were painted.

<sup>111</sup> In fact, *simhasanas* are not seen at the four main devales in the center of Kandy, but only at rural ones. At Devundara the traces of a *simhasana* still exists in the form of a new *devâle* dedicated to Kataragama called the Purâna Simhâsana Vâlle Devâle. Located at the bottom of a long path leading down from the Upulvan shrine to the seashore, the site’s antiquity is testified through the stone pillars. Similar ones are also found at the Upulvan shrine that probably supported a long open-pillared pavilion. Certainly the location of this small structure indicates that it could function like the *simhasanas* in the highland. That the term *simhasana* still lives on in the name of this new *devâle* may indicate an oral tradition that preserves the original function of this structure. The absence of *simhasanas* at the central *devâles* in Kandy is a mystery.

<sup>112</sup> Malini Dais, *Aithihasika Badulla* (Colombo: Department of Archaeology, 1991), 36.

Once again, he promised to grant the village of Madagama if he is cured, and renamed it Soragune.<sup>113</sup> According to the Madagama Sannasa, the *devâle* was constructed in 1582 C.E.<sup>114</sup> However, the wooden structures and ornamentation seem to indicate a much later date, and the entire *devâle* premises were probably renovated a few times as indicated by the newly white washed walls and stone parapet wall.

The shrine to Kataragama at Soragune Devâle (Fig. 4.33) consists of the usual *mâligâva* (palace) or inner sanctum and enclosed *digge*, as well as two open pillared halls.<sup>115</sup> Similar to Embekke, the inner sanctum has two floors (Fig. 4.34) with a balcony on all four sides, with cloth paintings of the main deity. Parallel to the enclosed *digge* are a few storage rooms, which are all connected by corridors (Fig. 4.35). Wooden pillars support the roof in the open *digge* as well as the corridors. Like the pillars at Embekke, these are octagonal as well with square sections on all four sides in the middle of the pillar. These are adorned by stylized flowers of four different kinds (Fig. 4.36). However, the pillars are not given as much emphasis as the ones at Embekke. The local patron/s and the local workshop/s instead chose to profusely decorate the various doorways of Soragune Devâle.

One of the doorways (Fig. 4.37) for example consists of a traditional design of a simple *liyavâla* (creeper) with two *bhairava* figures on either end at the bottom. Another doorway (Fig. 4.38) consists of row of lotus petals along with an elaborate double creeper curved inward running up the sides, with an image of the *nârilatâ* (female emerging out of a creeper) on the lintel (Fig. 4.39), and two mythical *bherunda* birds on either side at the bottom (Fig. 4.40). A third doorway (Fig. 4.41) is adorned again by a row of lotus petals, but the complex double foliage creeper is different in that it is curved outwards, while the lintel is mostly ornamented by stylized lotuses, with a now empty middle portion (Fig. 4.42). A fourth doorway (Fig. 4.43) has a row of lotus petals along with a complex creeper running up the sides beginning with two stylized lotuses (Fig. 4.44), while the lintel is adorned with elaborate foliage (Fig. 4.45). The variety of carvings on the four doorways is striking and indicates that regional tastes differ. Kandyan period wooden architecture is clearly not a monolithic, static tradition: far away from the center of Kandy, the patrons and workshops of this *devâle* decided to emphasize the ornamentation of not simply the pillars, but also of the doorways.

This *devâle* consists of a shrine not only to Kataragama but also to Pattini (Fig. 4.46). Her temple is located to the left side of the main shrine. It consists of a double storey inner sanctum with a room to its right side and a small open pavilion with two pillars. The Pattini devâle too has an elaborately carved doorway, but now it is partially screened off by a cloth hanging. Although the carvings on the two octagonal-square pillars contain the same stylized flowers (Fig. 4.47) like those on the pillars of the adjacent Kataragama devâle, the design around the flower at the Pattini devâle is given more attention. At both *devâles*, the circular flowers are set in squares but the carver at the Pattini devâle has chosen to give more space to the border around the flower by

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 36. Dais also cites a local poem that is also about a king named Yapa, who went to battle twice and lost, but won in his third attempt. Though it does not mention the name of the deity Kanda Kumara or Kataragama, the poem does note that in the village of Madagama there occurred a sound of a conch. Perhaps, it implies a certain miraculous event, which can only be attributed to a deity. Ibid., 36.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>115</sup> Some temples to this deity have many pavilions, such as the Kataragama Devâle in Badulla.

adding two rows of squares in addition to the bead motif running along on the edge. The flower and the geometrical ornamentation surrounding it are given equal emphasis. Out of the four stylized flowers used to ornament the two pillars at the Pattini devâle, one flower (Fig. 4.48) is completely different from those on the pillars at the Kataragama devâle. Even the same two flowers at the Pattini devâle are different in their treatment as one has twelve petals, while the other has sixteen petals (Fig. 4.49). The ornamentation of pillars at the Pattini devâle indicates that different carvers from that of the Kataragama devâle worked on this temple.

Unlike most *devâles* that have *simhâsanas*, the Soragune Devâle has two for each deity that also contain exquisitely carved wooden architectural features (Fig. 4.50). The ornamentation on the octagonal-square pillars again indicate a different carver at work: the delicately carved flowers are set first within a circle and then only within a square with two rows of geometrical squares running on all four sides (Fig. 4.51). Some of the stylized flowers (Fig. 4.52) are completely different from those ornamenting the pillars at the *devâles*. Again, the same two flowers are carved differently, which perhaps indicates a different carver. Like at the Kataragama Devâle, there is certainly more emphasis on the doorways than on the pillars. In addition to the elaborate creepers, the geometrical design seen on the carvings of the square portion in the pillars surrounding the stylized flowers is repeated on the doorways. Though the basic overall design of the doorways at the *simhâsana* and the *devâle* are similar, the carvings differ. One of the doorways is supported by two lions (Fig. 4.53), while the other is supported by two large stylized lotuses (Fig. 4.54). The lion faces away from the door and a creeper emerges out of its mouth. The carvings from this entire site indicate the traces of at least three different carvers, if not more. Although this *devâle* is a local shrine, the carvers are still aware of the designs at older and contemporary centers. Participating in a larger tradition, the carvers yet show their local roots in the variety found in the ornamentation and in their choice of locating such ornamentation on religious monuments.

The elaborate ornamentation of doorways is not simply seen only in the wooden architecture of the Kandyan period. The rare remains of a stone doorway with an elaborate lotus petal design from the Anuradhapura period indicate that ornamenting doorways was the next step in adorning temple entranceways,<sup>116</sup> which were already decorated by the renowned moonstones and guardstones of the Anuradhapura period. However, elaborately ornamenting the stone doorways become a hallmark of temple as well as secular architecture from the Transitional period. Again, as with the stone and wooden pillars, another dialog begins to emerge between the stone doorways of earlier periods and the wooden doorways of the Kandyan period. Though probably inspired by the stone doorways, the motifs of the wooden doorways of the Kandyan period indicate that the carvers decided to adopt and adapt certain motifs, while carving some new ones that were particular to the period or the region. The lion motif adorning the lower most

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<sup>116</sup> For a drawing of the stone doorway from the Abhayagiri vihâra in Anuradhapura, see Senake Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 351, Fig. 149d. For a careful description of the ornamentation on this doorway, see C. E. Godakumbura, *Simhala Uluvahu Sinhalese Doorways* Art Series 9 (Colombo: Archaeological Department, date?), 31. Bandaranayake in explaining the apparent disparity in the ornamentation of monuments in the Anuradhapura period, notes that “dual tendencies of economy and extravagance often existed side by side.” Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, 351. This formulation is certainly apt in understanding the role of ornamentation in the Anuradhapura period, but in the following periods, ornamentation plays a larger role.



portions of the jambs on either side at one of the doorways to the *simhâsana* at Soragune Devâle is also seen at both the stone door frames at the Upulvan Shrine at Devinuwara (Fig. 4.55), at Lenagala Vihâra, and at Ambulugala Tampita Vihâra (Fig. 4.56), all from the Transitional period.<sup>117</sup> But, the lion in each doorway is different. At the stone doorway of the Upulvan Shrine in Devinuwara, the most elaborately carved stone doorway in Sri Lanka, the lion motif is located at four different locations. Of particular interest is the frontally seated lion (Fig. 4.57), often seen during the Yâpahuva and Gampola periods on various architectural features—he is located above the *gana*, who is squatting and holding up the doorway with his hands at the foot of the jamb. Even in the same temple, at Lenagala Vihâra, the posture and the character of the lion is different: the lion in the doorframe from possibly the 15<sup>th</sup> century with a frontal face and a body facing sideways,<sup>118</sup> has one of his front paws lifted, while the lion in the doorframe from a later period, stands on his hind legs with a stylized flower emerging out of his mouth. This idea is similar to the lion motif at Soragune, but the lion at Soragune faces away from the door and the flower travels upwards.<sup>119</sup> At Ambulugala, though the posture of the lions is similar to the ones on the 15<sup>th</sup>-century doorframe from Lenagala Vihara, the lions are differentiated through the treatment of their manes (Fig. 4.58). Motifs such as lions, the *kibhihi* face, dancers, musicians, and the *Gajalakshmi* are often seen on stone doorways from the Transitional period, but not all of these are translated into the wooden architecture of the Kandyan period. The *Gajalakshmi* is replaced by the *nârilata* as seen at one of the doorways at Soragune Devâle, and other temples such as Dippitiya Vihâra and Pitiye Devâle.<sup>120</sup> The combinations of the lotus petals, the foliage, animals motifs, human figures, mythical figures, and geometrical patterns differ; the location of these motifs on the various doorways also differ,<sup>121</sup> though some doorways may share a certain motif in the same location,<sup>122</sup> the nature of the carvings can differ too. These observations indicate the presence of many local workshops, which were comfortable in carving both stone and wooden doorways. Although they were participating in a larger

<sup>117</sup> Unlike with pillars, stone doorframes continued to be made alongside wooden doorframes in the Kandyan period. The doorframes from Pitiye Devâle at Dambarawa, Dadimunda Devâle in Kandy, the Hanguranketa Vihâra, the Alutnuwara Vihâra, and three doorframes from the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy are all made out of stone. The ornamentation on these doorways indicates that they are indeed from the Kandyan period and not instances of reuse. For detailed drawings and descriptions of each of these doorways, see Godakumbura, *Simhala Uluvahu*, 39-77.

<sup>118</sup> This particular motif of the lion with a frontal face and a body that is sideways is first seen at Devinuwara above the capital of the quasi-pillar attached to the stone doorway, but the lion does not lift its paws.

<sup>119</sup> This motif of the foliage coming out of the lion's mouth seems to have been quite popular in the Kandyan period as it is found on both wooden and stone doorways. It is seen on the wooden door-frames from Medawala Rajamaha Vihâra and Kelaniya Rajamaha Vihâra, as well as on the stone doorframes of Pitiye Devâle and on two stone doorways from the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy.

<sup>120</sup> Even the *nârilatâ* motif can be quite varied: sometimes, she is carved emerging from a creeper holding two creepers from both hands; at other times, she is shown as a fully human figure seated holding the same gesture. The most complex motif comprises of five women seated above each other and supporting two more who are in an acrobatic pose.

<sup>121</sup> The popular *nârilatâ* motif of five women in seated and acrobatic poses is generally used in the center of the lintel, but at the tampita vihâra at Devangala, it is on the doorjambs.

<sup>122</sup> The thresholds of Dippitiya Vihâra and Devangala share the motif of a mythical bird spouting foliage from its mouth. But, the character of the creature as well as the foliage around it differs in both examples.

and a more centralized tradition, the local artisans brought to their building projects new ways of using old ornamenting practices.

Rather than looking at Kandyan architecture in order to recover the past glory of Sri Lankan architecture, I think it is far more useful to examine the variety in the ornamentation found on pillars and doorways, which indicate that a number of workshops were active not only in the centers but also in the peripheries. Even within this so-called new monolithic tradition of wooden architecture, there is room for engagement with stone, either by translating the ornamentation of stone pillars into wooden pillars, or by creating new stone doorways alongside wooden doorways. This dialog between the stone and wooden architectural traditions indicate that local artisans were also negotiating boundaries, and not only the ruling elite. Though scholars have seen stone as an “imported” or “foreign” artistic tradition, Sri Lankan patrons and artisan workshops in the transitional period hardly thought so—as shown in the previous two chapters, stone was embraced as a medium to build temples to the Buddha and the deities during the transitional period. Perhaps one way of thinking about the dialog between the stone and wood artistic traditions in the Kandyan period is to consider the possibility that artisans may not have seen stone, brick, and wood as entirely separate categories, but more as visual traditions that existed side by side.

This variety of ornamenting practices (motifs as well as location) is not the only feature at these small wooden *devâles* that indicate localization, but as shown above, patronage patterns too point to the presence of local patrons rather than only the participation of royal patrons from the center. Initially, the belief in guardian deities may have been for political reasons and the patronage of temples to such deities was dominated by the secular and the religious elite. However, in this chapter I suggest that the patronage of temples to Kataragama and the poems to this deity indicate that by the early modern period, the belief in deities had expanded to embrace the problems of commoners: he had been transformed from a public to a more private deity.

## Epilogue: The Shifting Identities of *Kôvils* and *Devâles*

My narrative on *kôvils* and *devâles* in Sri Lanka began by questioning the meaning of these two temple spaces as fixed ethno-religious sites in contemporary scholarship and popular thinking. In twenty-first century Sri Lanka, these two terms—*kôvil* and *devâle*—refer to two architecturally distinct monuments and separate temple cultures. They have become binary spaces in that *kôvils* are temples dedicated to Hindu deities, with Tamil Hindu priests and Tamil Hindu devotees, while *devâles* are for local, Hindu, and Mahâyâna deities with Sinhala Buddhist lay priests and Sinhala Buddhist devotees. This dissertation has attempted to unsettle this dichotomous ethno-religious portrayal of *kôvils* and *devâles* in Sri Lanka by paying attention to temples as sites of dialog in which religious, cultural, and visual boundaries were negotiated by diverse communities. Difference was accommodated through the appropriation of South Indian visual and religious traditions by kings, monks, ministers, merchants, local rulers, ordinary devotees, and artisans. In this epilogue, bringing together the four case studies I presented, I offer a narrative that attempts to understand the shifting identities of *kôvils* and *devâles* in medieval, early modern, and contemporary Sri Lanka.

My dissertation opened up with a chapter, which argued that both *kôvils* and *devâles* were one and the same in the Polonnaruva period (1017-1296 CE). The textual, inscriptional, and material evidence clearly shows that whether they were called *kôvils* or *devâles* only one type of temple existed to deities.<sup>1</sup> Even though Sri Lankan Buddhist kings, modeling themselves after Cōla kings, patronized these temples to deities, they were not located *in* or *adjacent* to Buddhist temples.<sup>2</sup> However, in the transitional period (1296-1591), the identity of these two temple spaces begin to shift.

The reasons for the emergence of two separate temple spaces to deities can perhaps be traced to the Southern port city of Devinuvara, renowned for its prosperous shrine to the local guardian deity Upulvan.<sup>3</sup> An inscription from Devinuvara, issued during the reign of Parâkramabâhu II (1236-1269) of Dambadeniya indicates the variety of religious institutions at this temple town. “Improprieties shall not be caused to holy places such as *viharas* [Buddhist temples and monasteries], *devalas*, *agraharas* [brahmin villages], and *kovil*.”<sup>4</sup> While S. Pathmanathan notes that the inscription’s significance lies in its equal treatment towards religious institutions of both Buddhism and Hinduism,<sup>5</sup> I would like to further point out the religious nature of this port-city: temples to both the

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 1 for a more detailed analysis of the term *devâle* and its historical usage in the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva periods.

<sup>2</sup> The archaeological remains of the medieval city of Polonnaruva too clearly indicate that temples to deities existed not far from Buddhist temples. In fact, Siva Devâle No. 1 is located next to the Sacred Quadrangle that consists of only Buddhist monuments (see map of Polonnaruva Archaeological Site).

<sup>3</sup> For a history of this deity and his shrine at Devinuvara, see Senerat Paranavitana, *The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara* Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Volume VI (Colombo: The Ceylon Government Archaeological Department, 1953). For a more recent discussion of this deity and his transformation into Visnu, see John Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu: Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Paranavitana, *The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara*, 70. Even though Paranavitana translates *vihâras*, *devâles*, *agrahâras* in the plural and *kôvil* in the singular, there is no indication in the original inscription.

<sup>5</sup> S. Pathmanathan, “Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka: Some Points of Contact Between Two Religious Traditions (Circa A.D. 1300-1600),” *Kalyani Journal of Humanities and Social Science of the University of Kelaniya* Vol. 5 & 6 (1986): 95.

Buddha and to deities coexisted at least by the thirteenth century, if not earlier.<sup>6</sup> The inscription, moreover, by *listing* the types of religious institutions at this port-city, suggests that by the mid-thirteenth-century, *kôvils* and *devâles* were *possibly* seen as separate temple spaces.<sup>7</sup> To further understand this development, we need to examine the religious history of this city.

The term Devinuvara, or city of god, clearly implies the preeminence of deity worship, but the earliest textual and inscriptional references to this site seem to indicate a Buddhist site. The oldest textual reference to this city uses the Pâli form “Devanagara.” The *Cûlavamsa* states that King Vijayabâhu I (1058-1114) rebuilt the *vihâra* at Devanagara and donated villages to the temple.<sup>8</sup> According to Paranavitana, the oldest reference to the Sinhala term “Devinuvara” is in a Sinhala inscription of King Nissamka Malla (1187-1196). The inscription states, “thrice he made the circuit of Lankâ. . . he built many *viharas* in Anuradhapura, Devi-nuvara, Kâlano, Miyuguna, and made donations of vast riches.”<sup>9</sup> Again, the reference is to a Buddhist temple. To complicate matters further, Devinuvara has numerous names.<sup>10</sup> Paranavitana believes that Devinuvara was known earlier as Kihirâli in Sinhala and Khadirâlî in Pâli.<sup>11</sup> According to the Pâli *Cûlavamsa*, King Dappula I (659 CE) who briefly ruled over Rohana in southern Sri Lanka, built the “Khadirâlî-vihâra and offered to the god.”<sup>12</sup> The name of the deity is not mentioned. It is intriguing that the author of the *Cûlavamsa* uses the term *vihâra* to refer to a temple to a deity: could it possibly mean that a temple to a deity was constructed inside or adjacent to the Buddhist institution? We will never know. An

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<sup>6</sup> Archaeologically, it is not possible to prove that such religious institutions were within one sacred precinct—even to this day, a Buddhist *vihâra* exists to the side of the present-day Visnu Devâle, perhaps indicating that different types of religious spaces existed side by side. Devinuvara is certainly not the only port temple city in Sri Lanka in which both a temple to a deity and a temple to the Buddha is believed to have coexisted. Tirukkônêsvaram on the Eastern coast and Munnêsvaram on the Western coast are both port temples with nearby Buddhist temples. The exact date of the appearance of the two Buddhist temples at these two port temple cities cannot be verified through inscriptions or archaeological evidence. Tirukkônêsvaram is the earlier of the two Saiva temples as attested by the poems of the South Indian *bhakti* saint Sambandâr of the seventh century. For more on Tirukkônêsvaram, see S. Pathmanathan, *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka* (Colombo & Chennai: Kumaran Book House, 2006), 53-99.

Munnêsvaram does not appear in the historical record until the fifteenth-century, though it was probably already a famous religious site when King Parâkramabâhu VI (1412-1467) donated land to the temple in 1450 CE. After its destruction at the hands of the Portuguese in 1578 and in 1600, the temple continued to be patronized by Sri Lankan kings: King Kîrti Sri Râjasimha (1747-1782) donated land as well. For more on Munnêsvaram, see Rohan Bastin, *The Domain of Constant Excess: Plural Worship at the Munnesvaram Temples in Sri Lanka* (New York: Berghahn, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> However, one cannot disregard the notion that the Tamil term *kôvil* may have been used by Tamil speaking devotees, while the Pâli and Sinhala term *devâle* may have been used by Sinhala speaking devotees to refer to the same temple.

<sup>8</sup> Wilhelm Geiger, trans., *Cûlavamsa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1996), 60: 59-64.

<sup>9</sup> *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I. (1912): 135. As it is mentioned alongside other famous religious sites such as Anuradhapura, Kâlaniya, and Mahiyangana, Paranavitana suggests that the temple must date back earlier. Paranavitana, *The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara*, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Holt too notes that “Devinuvara was known by many different names: Giriya, Girihela, Kiheleripura, Devundara, Devanagara, and the Tamil name used by the Chinese, Thenevarai.” Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 95.

<sup>11</sup> Paranavitana, *The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Cûlavamsa*, 45: 51.

inscription issued during the reign of Dappula II (807-823) by his nephew, Kitakbo, states that lands have been dedicated to the Kihirāli-pirivena.<sup>13</sup> What is clear is that a Buddhist institution existed at this port-city at least from the ninth-century, if not earlier. Perhaps, a temple to a deity existed as well. When the name Devinuvara came into vogue in the eleventh and twelfth-centuries, the fame of the temple to the god seems to have overshadowed the older Buddhist temple and monastery.<sup>14</sup> By the thirteenth century, a slightly clearer picture of this deity and his temple begins to appear in the historical record.

In the subsequent periods, the multiple references to Upulvan in chronicles, inscriptions, and poems indicate that the deity of Devinuvara had emerged as the preeminent deity of the country. The *Cūlavamsa* states that during the reign of Parākramabāhu II (1236-1269), his son Vīrabāhu, went on a pilgrimage to Devinuvara to give thanks to the lotus-hued god for his victory against Chandrabhānu.<sup>15</sup> After offering a “divine sacrifice” to the deity, Vīrabāhu establishes a *pirivena* called Nandana for the Buddhist *sangha*.<sup>16</sup> In the chapter “The Performance of All Kinds of Pious Works,” King Parākramabāhu II is said to have reconstructed the temple to the lotus-hued god.

Then when the Monarch learned that in the sacred town of Devanagara which was a mine of meritorious works, the shrine long since erected to the lotus-hued god—the King of the gods, had now fallen into decay, he betook himself to the superb town and in rebuilding the dwelling of the King of the gods like to the heavenly mansion of the King of the gods, he made of it an abode of all riches.<sup>17</sup>

A number of observations can be made from these two references: both Vīrabāhu and his father, King Parākramabāhu, continued the patronage pattern established by Sri Lankan kings in the Polonnaruva period; the deity is referred to as the “lotus-hued god” or “King of the Gods;” the temple to the deity and the Buddhist institution were separate religious spaces; the temple to the King of the Gods had reached the same status of the Buddhist institution or even higher; and in both instances, when the *Cūlavamsa* refers to the temple of the lotus-hued god, it uses the term “*devarājālaya*.”<sup>18</sup> In the Polonnaruva period, when the *Cūlavamsa* was written, the author had used the term *devāle* to refer to temples to deities.<sup>19</sup> As the author is different in the thirteenth century, this choice of terminology may have been due to personal preference.<sup>20</sup> However, the Pāli terms “*devāle*” and

<sup>13</sup> Paranavitana, *The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara*, 62.

<sup>14</sup> However, Sri Lankan kings of the Polonnaruva period seem to have patronized a Buddhist *vihāra* at Devinuvara and not a *kōvil* or a *devāle*.

<sup>15</sup> *Cūlavamsa*, 83:49.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 83: 50.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 85: 85-89.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 85: 85-89.

<sup>19</sup> In the Polonnaruva period, the terms *kōvil* or *devāle* referred to a temple dedicated to a Hindu deity—these temples, moreover, were predominantly Saivite. Due to the ambiguous identity of Upulvan, who is not given a pan-Indic name, but is referred to as the “lotus-hued god” or the “King of Gods,” perhaps the term *devālaya* is been extended to refer to a temple to any deity (local or Hindu).

<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the term “*devarājā*” is consistently used to refer to Upulvan in inscriptions, chronicles, and the poetry of the Gampola and Kotte periods. Therefore, it would be natural to use the deity’s name *devarājā* when referring to this deity’s temple.

“*devâlaya*” are not that different. Both mean the house of god.<sup>21</sup> This consistent use of the term “*devâle*” perhaps indicates that the temple to Upulvan was seen simply as a temple to a deity as in the Polonnaruva period, rather than as a temple with specific ethno-religious affiliations. However, scholars who have previously worked on this temple wish to categorize it as either a Buddhist *devâle* or a Hindu *kôvil*.

Much ink has been spilled on attempting to figure out the location, the identity of the deity Upulvan, and the religious identity of the temple to Upulvan. Paranavitana was one of the first to begin this quest and his study is centered on a small stone temple in Devinuvara. Presently called Galge or rock house (Fig. 5.1), it consists of an inner sanctum and an enclosed vestibule. Although the façade initially seems devoid of any ornamentation, the stone-walls of the vestibule and the inner sanctum are punctuated by simple pilasters (Fig. 5.2). Taking the form of a shaft and a bracket, the either sides of some of the brackets are decorated with tiny vertical chisel marks (Fig. 5.3). The cornice has *kûdus* or horse-shoe shaped windows. The main doorway consists of two *nâga dâla* motifs on either side, while lotus petals ornament all three sides of the doorway (Fig. 5.4).<sup>22</sup> Large lotus petals adorn the underside of the cornice (Fig. 5.5), while carvings of stylized flowers ornament stones directly above the doorjambes (Fig. 5.6). There is no significant pediment (Fig. 5.7) that could help in identifying a local or foreign workshop, nor are there any niches for deities. Galge is built on an elevated ground with a flight of steps preceding an area, which may have included a pillared hall built of more perishable materials (Fig. 5.8). Paranavitana states that this building belongs neither to the “Dravidian” nor to the Sinhala tradition.<sup>23</sup> Most likely, it is a localized translation of the Drâvida tradition, which, as mentioned before, shared many features with pan-Indic Buddhist architecture of earlier periods.<sup>24</sup> The lack of ornamentation and the simple basement seems to indicate a very early date. Paranavitana attributes the Galge to the seventh century.<sup>25</sup> The archaeological remains do not clearly indicate the identity of the deity, nor of the temple. However, a combination of material evidence and textual references give a slightly clearer picture of this deity and his temple.

In addition to examining the archaeological remains, Paranavitana examines the descriptions of the topography of Devinuvara in four *sandesa* poems of the Gampola (1341-1408) and Kotte periods (1408-1565). Based on the poetical descriptions, he is

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<sup>21</sup> Both terms are interchangeable in contemporary Sinhala usage.

<sup>22</sup> The inner doorway between the vestibule and the inner sanctum are also decorated with a similar design. Paranavitana, *The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 9. As Paranavitana is able to assign other stone temples in Sri Lanka to particular phases of Drâvida architecture, his goal is to do the same with this temple. But, “when examined in details, [it] does not fit into any of the well-known historical stages through which the architecture of South India has been shown to have passed in succession.” *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Again, such monuments remind us that to explain the complexity in Sri Lankan art with such dichotomous terms—Drâvida and Sinhala—are inadequate. Moreover, to attempt to understand monuments through the lens of architectural movements in South India may not be the best method.

<sup>25</sup> Paranavitana, *The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara*, 10. There is no image in the inner sanctum to indicate the deity who was worshiped in this space, nor any inscription to date the temple. The only textual reference that could be associated with this temple is that of the *Cûlavamsa*—as mentioned earlier, a local king named Dappula of the seventh century is believed to have built a temple to a deity. Perhaps, this temple was patronized by a local king, but the possibility of merchants as patrons is not unlikely either. After all, this temple was located in a port city.

able to distinguish “three distinct groups of sanctuaries at Devundara:”<sup>26</sup> *kôvils* to Ganesa and Siva near or on the sea shore, a Buddhist temple inland, and a shrine to Upulvan separated from the Buddhist temple.<sup>27</sup> Parnavitana sees a correspondence between these three types of religious sites and those that are noted in the aforementioned thirteenth-century inscription of Parâkramabâhu II.<sup>28</sup> He further points to the significant correlation between the poetic descriptions of temples, the listing of religious sites in the inscription, and the archaeological remains on the ground.<sup>29</sup> He convincingly argues that the Galge is the historical temple to Upulvan.<sup>30</sup> Even though he does not use the word “*devâle*” to describe this temple, his reasoning implies that the Upulvan temple was a *devâle*, while the rest of the temples to deities at Devundara were *kôvils*.

S. Pathmanathan and John Holt both have speculated about the identity of the temple to Upulvan. They turn to another source, Ibn Batuta, a famous Muslim traveler, who visited Devinuvara in the 1340s. Although he does not describe the shrine, he speaks of a “vast temple” noting that the name of the deity is synonymous with the town.<sup>31</sup> He describes the image, saying it is made of gold with two large rubies for the eyes. The only ritual he mentions is the nightly performances for the deity by dancing women.<sup>32</sup> In interpreting this last reference to this temple by Ibn Batuta, John Holt believes that the Upulvan temple was a Hindu temple.<sup>33</sup> Pathmanathan too, based on the inscription by Parâkramabâhu II, which mentions the word *kôvil*, believes that Ibn Batuta was describing a Hindu temple.<sup>34</sup> However, the word *kôvil* is not used to refer to this temple in any Sinhala or Tamil references.<sup>35</sup> In a Sinhala *sandesa* poem of the Kotte period, the *Kokila Sandesa* (1440-1446 CE), uses the term “*raja-gê*” or the “king’s house” to refer to the Upulvan temple.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, Parnavitana points out that “the term *raja-gê* corresponds to Tamil *kôvil* or *kôyil*.”<sup>37</sup> Even though the Tamil term *kôvil* is not used to refer to the Upulvan temple, the Sinhala term “*raja-gê*” evokes the basic meaning of the word *kôvil*, which means the king’s place, house, or palace.<sup>38</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>26</sup> Parnavitana, *The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara*, 12.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

<sup>31</sup> Cited in Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 97. However, curiously Ibn Batuta speaks of only one temple, when archaeologically, there were more. Perhaps he does so because the temple to Upulvan as the *sandesa* poems clearly show was the most important shrine in this temple town. From his point of view, this vast temple he describes may have included the Buddhist temple and the shrines to other deities.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 97.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 97. Holt says “his account may suggest that the shrine at Devinuvara had become a Hindu temple,” indicating that before the 1340s, perhaps Holt believes that the temple was not a Hindu temple but a *devâle*. *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>34</sup> Cited in Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 97. Pathmanathan too assumes that the temple was originally a *devâle*: “[T]he original character of the *devale* had already been transformed on account of intercultural interactions . . .” *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>35</sup> Parnavitana too notes “The shrine of Upulvan is nowhere referred to in Sinhalese literature as a *kôvil* . . .” Parnavitana, *The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara*, 75. One reason might be the lack of Tamil references.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 15. It is not too far from the meaning of the term *devarâjâlâya* or the house of the king of the gods.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Parnavitana further notes, “as in a Hindu *kôvil*, the ritual must have modelled on the daily routine of the king in a royal palace. The dance of the young women in the evening, conducted daily at the shrine, which

the use of “*devarâjâlaya*” and “*raja-gē*” to refer to the Upulvan temple seems to correspond to the ways in which the terms *devâle* and *kôvil* were used in the previous Polonnaruva period: a temple dedicated to a deity with no specific ethno-religio affiliations.<sup>39</sup> This question on whether the Upulvan temple was a Hindu *kôvil* or a Buddhist *devâle* has been asked by previous scholars through the lens of a twentieth-century assumption: *kôvils* are Hindu temples patronized by Tamils, while *devâles* are Buddhist temples patronized by Sinhalese.<sup>40</sup> With the lack of more conclusive evidence, perhaps, it is futile to speculate further about the religious identity of this temple. Unlike in the Polonnaruva period in which Sri Lankan kings began to patronize temples to deities, in the transitional period, another community of worshippers began to patronize deities as well. Perhaps, it would be more productive to shift the focus to this new development in Sri Lankan Buddhism: the participation of Buddhist monks in the worshipping of deities.

An examination of inscriptions and *sandesa* poems indicate that Upulvan was worshipped by *both* brahmins and Buddhist monks. The aforementioned Sinhala inscription issued by King Parâkramabâhu II (1236-1269) mentions the term *agrahâra* indicating that a brahmin community lived at Devinuvara.<sup>41</sup> A Tamil inscription, probably issued in 1420 by King Parâkramabâhu VI, states that he donated a village, garden, and fields to maintain twelve brahmins at an alms hall, which belongs to the King of Gods.<sup>42</sup> The *Tisara Sandesa*, the earliest *sandesa* written to Upulvan during the reign of Parâkramabâhu V (1344-1359), was written by a monk, who was residing in Devinuvara and praying to Upulvan to protect the king.<sup>43</sup> The author of the next message poem, *Mayura Sandesa* (1385-1391), is anonymous, but it too was written to Upulvan requesting his protection of King Bhuvanekabâhu V (1375-1391) and blessing his wife Queen Chandrâvatî with a son. In addition, Upulvan is asked to protect the king’s Tamil bodyguards, the royal army, officials, and ministers. I would like to point to the significance in the inclusion of the *sangharâjâ* Dhammakîtti at Gadalâdeniya, and the monks of the two fraternities in this long list of people to be blessed by Upulvan.<sup>44</sup> In the following Kotte period (1412-1521), another message poem to Upulvan, the *Parevi*

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from the poet’s description differed in no way from that described as having been a feature of Prince Sapumal’s court at Jaffna, is evidence to this effect.” Ibid., 15.

<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the appeal of this deity to the various communities of a port city indicates that it is challenging to categorize the identity of the deity and his temple. Perhaps the ambiguous identity of this shrine reflects the multi-dimensional quality of its deity. After all, Upulvan was worshipped by Tamils, Sinhalese, and Chinese. Holt further suggests that “as an iconographically indistinct deity, he was worshipped in any number of ways by various constituencies.” Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 98. Even though the inscription of Parâkramabâhu II lists the various religious institutions at this port city implying that *kôvils* and *devâles* were separate temples, perhaps this temple was both a *kôvil* and a *devâle*, depending on which language the devotee spoke or wrote. In other words, it was a space in which both Hindus and Buddhists would have worshipped side by side.

<sup>40</sup> Paranavitana too articulates this assumption in his study of the temple to Upulvan in Devinuvara. “The shrine of Upulvan is nowhere referred to in Sinhalese literature as a *kôvil*, which term even today is restricted in its use to shrines of gods worshipped by Tamils and adopted from them by the Sinhalese Buddhists. The shrines of gods who have been naturalized among the Sinhalese are *dêvâlas*.” Paranavitana, *The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara*, 75.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>43</sup> Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 108.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 112-113.



*Sandesa* (1430-1140) is written by the famous *sangharâjâ* Srî Râhula.<sup>45</sup> The final message poem addressed to Upulvan, the *Kokila Sandesa* (1440-1446) is also written by a Buddhist monk, who was the head monk of the Tilaka Pirivena at Devinuvara. He requests Upulvan to ensure that Prince Sapumal, the son-in-law of Parâkramabâhu VI, is victorious at Yâpâpatuna.<sup>46</sup> The sudden participation of Buddhist monks in the worship of deities as writers of poems to deities, or as recipients of divine intervention is noteworthy. This new role may have been embraced by Buddhist monks because of the precarious political situation in the country in which multiple centers of power competed.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, a number of famous monks from both the Gampola and Kotte periods may have also begun to act as intermediaries between the king and the deity as brahmins may have been seen as competitors. Perhaps, Buddhist monks began to worship Upulvan simply because his temple was next door to a Buddhist *vihâra*. Whatever the reason/(s) for this new development in Sri Lankan Buddhism, it clearly locates temples to deities in a new context. With the involvement of Buddhist monks perhaps the identity of such a temple to a deity had changed, or at least begun to change from its solely royal associations in the Polonnaruva period. Yet I would refrain from defining such a temple space dedicated to deities of the Transitional period (1296-1591) in ethno-religious terms. After all, evidence from both the Gampola and Kotte periods indicate that both Tamil brahmins and Sinhalese Buddhist monks were praying to the same deity at the same temple.

In my second chapter, I examined the patronage of a stone temple to the Buddha, Gadalâdeniya Rajamaha Vihâra, by the aforementioned Buddhist monk, Dhammakîtti, in 1344 CE. He incorporates a shrine to probably Upulvan attached to this Buddhist temple. In addition to the fact that the South Indian architect Ganesvaracâri was used to working in the stone tradition, Dhammakîtti's choice in material may have been in part an effort in replicating the Upulvan shrine of Devinuvara in central Sri Lanka. Dhammakîtti's and the architect's choice in material began an engagement with stone architecture not seen before in Sri Lankan art history. In the next few centuries, other patrons built temples in stone to the Buddha and to deities in the Kandyan highlands. Moreover, architects and artisans of the Kandyan period, who were working in wood, looked towards the stone tradition, specifically to the stone pillars and doorways, for inspiration. In the very same year of 1344 CE and not too far from Gadalâdeniya, the chief minister of the regional kingdom Gampola, Senâlankâdhikâra, built another temple to the Buddha, Lankâtilaka Rajamaha Vihâra, surrounded by niches to five deities. With the incorporation of deities, the identity of the Buddhist temple begins to shift as well. Is the site still a *vihâra*? Buddhist monks began to question this new development in Sri Lankan Buddhism.

The most vociferous critique of deity worship begins in the Kotte period. Written in 1475 and consisting of five hundred and sixty five verses, *Vîdâgama Maitreya's Budugunâlankâraya*, extols the virtues of the Buddha, while criticizing the worship of

<sup>45</sup> Punchibandâra Sannasgala, *Simhala Sâhitya Vamsaya*, second ed. (Colombo: Lake House, 1964), 255.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>47</sup> Holt too has pointed out "What the *Tisara Sandesa* seems to be reflecting is another very interesting and important development in the history of Sinhala Buddhist religion: an eminent Buddhist monk is portrayed as appealing to the powers of a divinity in order to insure the protection of kingship. . . It would also seem to signal that the veneration of the gods by Buddhist monks for this worldly (*laukika*) political concerns had become regarded, perhaps, as an acceptable or unexceptional practice. . ." Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 109.

deities.<sup>48</sup> Holt too has brought attention to this text in documenting various moments of opposition against the veneration of Hindu deities by Sri Lankan monks.<sup>49</sup> I would like to highlight another text, the *Bhakti Sataka*, written slightly earlier during the reign of Parâkramabâhu VI (1412-1467), which also criticizes the worship of deities. Interestingly, it was written by a brahmin, Râma Candra Bharati, a pupil of Srî Râhula, a great proponent of deity worship. This Sanskrit text, comprising of one hundred and seven verses also extols the virtues of the Buddha. At the same time, by criticizing various Hindu gods, the author attempts to show that the Buddha is far beyond any one of them.

Brahma is overpowered with *avidya*,  
 Vishnu is embraced by great illusion, which it is difficult to discriminate,  
 Samkara holds Pârvati in his own person, owing to excessive attachment,  
 But in this world the great Muni, the Lord, is without *avidya*, without illusion, and  
 without attachment.  
 O, brothers, tell me, who among these is to be worshipped, for the attainment of  
 salvation by people possessing intelligence.<sup>50</sup>

Verses such as these clearly place Hindu deities in an inferior position in relation to the Buddha.<sup>51</sup> Another text that has not received attention in the literature about these monastic disputes in the worship of deities is the *Hamsa Sandesa*. Also written during the Kotte period, the *Hamsa Sandesa*, unlike any of the other Sinhala *sandesas*, gives a more prominent place to the power of *Buddhist rituals*, especially chanting.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the message is sent to a Buddhist monk and not to a deity.<sup>53</sup> Even though it is generally seen as a poem that criticizes the worship of deities,<sup>54</sup> it does not say out outright that devotees should not worship deities. For example, the Hamsa or the swan messenger is encouraged to worship at the temple of Skanda before he worships the Tooth-relic in the city of Jayavaddana.<sup>55</sup> In Kâlaniya, again the messenger is asked to worship Vibhîsana.<sup>56</sup> Finally, when he reaches his destination, the messenger is asked to request the chief monk at the Kâragala Vihâra and the Padmâvatî Pirivena to chant *paritta* in order to

<sup>48</sup> Punchibandara Sannasgala, *Simhala Sâhitya Vamsaya*, 283.

<sup>49</sup> See Holt, *The Buddhist Visnu*, 58-61.

<sup>50</sup> Pandit Hara Prasad Sastri “Bhakti Sataka One Hundred Slokas on Reverence and Love.” *Journal of the Buddhist Text Society of India* 1.2 (1893), 21. I would like to thank Alexander von Rospatt for helping me read portions of this text in Spring 2004. Also see verses 4, 81, 91, 92, and 99.

<sup>51</sup> None of the names of the deities who are criticized are the guardian deities of the Kotte kingdom: Upulvan, Saman, Vibhîsana, and Skanda Kumâra. Therefore, one wonders if Buddhist writers made a distinction between local guardian deities and Hindu deities. Of course, Skanda Kumâra is a pan-Indic deity, worshipped both in north and south India. The names used to refer to Skanda Kumâra in the Polonnaruva, Gampola, and Kotte periods indicate that he was still not associated with the site Kataragama—in other words, the names used to refer to him do not indicate that he was seen as a local deity, who is associated with the local landscape. Therefore, it is difficult to confidently claim that this critique is solely about worshipping Hindu deities.

<sup>52</sup> *Hamsa Sandesa*, trans. Edmund Jayasuriya (Colombo: Central Cultural Fund, 2005), 21.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>54</sup> The translator of the *Hamsa Sandesa*, Edmund Jayasuriya, states that “it scoffs at the faith in gods.” *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>55</sup> See verse 47. *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>56</sup> See verse 114. *Ibid.*, 49.

transfer the merit to deities such as Saman, Skanda, Vibhîsana, and Upulvan.<sup>57</sup> In the following verse, the swan is asked to request the chief monk to entreat the gods to bestow prosperity and long life on King Parâkramabâhu and to protect him from his enemies.<sup>58</sup> Again the Buddhist monk is portrayed as functioning as the intermediary between the king and the gods. However, it is clearly through *paritta* or Buddhist rituals that the monk is able to approach deities.<sup>59</sup> It is not through the power of the gods that the king is protected but it is through pleasing them by chanting and transferring merit. Clearly more research needs to be done on such monastic debates, for texts like the *Hamsa Sandesa* indicate that there were varying degrees of criticism.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the best example in which the worship of deities is questioned by the Buddhist establishment is the way in which Râjasimha I and his patronage of a *kôvil* has been portrayed in Sri Lankan history.

In chapter three, I examined the patronage of the Berendi Kôvil by King Râjasimha I of the Sîtâvaka kingdom (1521-1591) and the subsequent accusations that he had converted to Saivism. This temple was dedicated to Bhairava, a fierce form of Siva, and not to one of the four guardian deities of the island. As the *sandesa* literature of the previous Gampola and Kotte periods indicate, *kôvils* to Saivite deities were part of the religious landscapes of capitals and port-cities. Râjasimha moreover, was clearly not the only Sri Lankan king patronizing *kôvils*, a pattern that had been established by the kings of Polonnaruva and followed by the kings of Kandy until 1815. Had *kôvils* acquired a new identity in the Sîtâvaka and Kandyan periods, so that Râjasimha was accused of heresy? Perhaps, we need to understand these accusations against Râjasimha keeping in mind the debates that had arisen between Buddhist monks about worshipping deities in the Kotte period. Another possible answer might lie in the introduction of Christianity by the Portuguese in sixteenth-century Sri Lanka. C. R. de Silva has suggested that “Buddhism (and Hinduism) might have become more explicitly defined due to the interaction with missionary Christianity.”<sup>61</sup> Therefore, there may have been a further hardening of boundaries between the two religions. Even though the Buddhist monk Dhammakîtti and the minister Senâlankâdhikâra of the Gampola period had constructed temples to the Buddha, which incorporated shrines to deities, this trend did not continue after the Kotte period. In the Kandyan period, we see lone *devâles* being built by local rulers with no Buddhist temples attached to them.

In the Kandyan kingdom, *devâles* were built for the four new guardian deities: Visnu, Nâtha, Kataragama, and Pattini. In chapter four, I focused on the construction of Kataragama *devâles* in the Kandyan and Ûva provinces depicting not only the popularity

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<sup>57</sup> See verse 202. *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>58</sup> See verse 203. *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>59</sup> When the poet describes the chief monk at Kâlaniya Vihâra, he says “When he has along with monks of his choice finished chanting in the god’s temple *paritta*, the sacred words. . .” This too suggests that some Buddhist monks participated in the worship of deities by chanting. At this particular temple, after the chanting ceremony, dancing girls perform for the deity. Only after this ritual is the swan asked to worship god Vibhîsana. See verses 106-116. *Ibid.*, 49-50.

<sup>60</sup> Most recently, C. R. de Silva suggests that a comparison of the texts, which were studied in various periods might illustrate the “changes in indigenous religions due to a clash with a new exclusivist doctrine.” Chandra R. de Silva, “Portugal and Sri Lanka: Recent Trends in Historiography” in *Re-exploring the Links History and Constructed Histories between Portugal and Sri Lanka*. ed. Jorge Flores (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 11. Such a study may also show the attitudes of various monks and *pirivenas* towards deity worship.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

of this South Indian deity, but also the localization of his worship in various regions. Even though Buddhist monks worshipped this deity as seen through the message poems written to Kataragama by Buddhist monks, there is little evidence that Buddhist temples were constructed inside the sacred precincts of such *devâles*.<sup>62</sup> Although I have focused on *devâles* to Kataragama only in the Kandyan region, *kôvils* to this deity were built outside the Kandyan kingdom as well.<sup>63</sup> Further research might indicate whether both types of temples were considered to be the same, or whether their identity had shifted due to the aforementioned reasons and the new political boundaries in the island.

By the 1700s, the political geography of the country had separated the country into at least four or five regions, from the Kandyan kingdom, to the lowlands ruled by the Dutch, the Vanni ruled by the Vanniyars, Jaffna, and the eastern coast. *Kôvils* were built in the Kotte period and rebuilt after the Portuguese Encounter in the Kandyan, the Dutch, and the British colonial periods. However, these were located on the peripheries of the island, mostly populated by Tamils. Therefore, the new geo-political boundaries of the early modern period may have also brought about this understanding that *kôvils* are patronized by Tamil Hindus and *devâles* are patronized by Sinhala Buddhists. By the early twentieth-century, the ethno-religious boundaries between the two temples seem to have hardened. The census of 1911 includes a map of Sri Lanka entitled “Ceylon Religions” with small line drawings of *kôvils* in the northern and eastern provinces depicted through the distinctive architectural form of the *gôpura* or the gateway, which was probably not constructed until the British colonial period. The central and southern regions of the island are dotted with Buddhist temples signified through a line drawing of a *stûpa*.<sup>64</sup> Viewed alongside another map from the same census entitled “Ceylon Races,” which presents line drawing figures of the various “races” in Ceylon, with Ceylon Tamils in the northern and eastern provinces and low country Sinhalese and Kandyan Sinhalese in the southern and central provinces,<sup>65</sup> one is made to visibly see the congruence between race, religion, and geography in early twentieth-century Sri Lanka. It is not surprising then to see the emergence of such an understanding of *kôvils* and *devâles* as ethno-religious spaces.

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<sup>62</sup> However, in the twentieth century, *devâles* began to be built inside the precincts of Buddhist temples. Gombrich and Obeyesekere understand this development as a twentieth-century city phenomenon. See Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1988). However, more research needs to be conducted to trace the roots of this trend to the nineteenth-century, to the Buddhist revival, when some of the temples in the South, which consist of images of guardian deities or *devâles*, were renovated. Perhaps the incorporation of the tooth-relic in the mid-1700s into the annual Kandyan procession dominated by the guardian deities had some impact in bringing again the Buddha and the deities physically closer in religious spaces.

<sup>63</sup> According to a verse in the seventeenth-century Tamil text *Kailâyamâlai*, the Nallûr Kantasvâmi Kôyil dedicated to Skanda Kumâra, was built by a king called Puvanêkapâku. Pathmanathan, *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka*, 277. Tirukkôvil, which is south of Batticaloa, is another temple dedicated to Skanda Kumâra. Both temples were destroyed by the Portuguese and rebuilt during the Dutch and British colonial periods respectively. See the section Temples to Murukan in C. S. Navaratanam, *A Short History of Hinduism in Ceylon* (Jaffna: 1964), 73-80.

<sup>64</sup> See chapter IX “Religions” in E. B. Denham, *Ceylon at the Census of 1911, Being the Review of the Results of the Census of 1911* (Colombo: H. C. Cottle, Government Printer, 1912), 245-273.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-244.

However, even in the twentieth century, the distinction between a *kôvil* and a *devâle* can sometimes be so little. At sites such as the Kataragama Devâle in Kandy (Fig. 5.9), that distinction has become unstable. The layout of the temple shows the ambiguous identity of this ritual space: in the center is the *devâle* (Fig. 5.10), while on its left side is the *vihâra* (Fig. 5.11). During my last visit to the Kataragama Devâle in Kandy,<sup>66</sup> numerous small shrines to Hindu gods and goddesses had been added to the right of the centrally placed *devâle* (Fig. 5.12), while at the very back of the *devâle*, another Buddhist temple had emerged (Fig. 5.13). This site, which originally housed only a *devâle* to the god Kataragama in the early Kandyan period, now includes the Buddha as well as other Hindu deities. A Buddhist monk and a Hindu priest and his family reside at this site, while the daily devotees consist of Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus. The rituals at this site places the Buddha in a supreme position, but this small plot of land, nestled amidst the bustling shopping district of Kandy, is now home to two *vihâras*, a *devâle*, and a *kôvil*. Perhaps these negotiations echo the dialogs that took place amongst medieval religious communities in which Buddhas and gods began to coexist in the same sacred precinct. It is yet another example that questions the fixed ethno-religious categories that have dominated the writings of Sri Lankan art history. In listening to such dialogues from various historical moments and at different social levels—not only from political and monastic centers but also from the peripheries—it is my hope that a more complex story about Sri Lankan art has emerged.

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<sup>66</sup> This visit took place in July 2009. I have also conducted research at this site in July 2005. I hope to return to this site again to try to understand the negotiations that brought about this unusual religious site.

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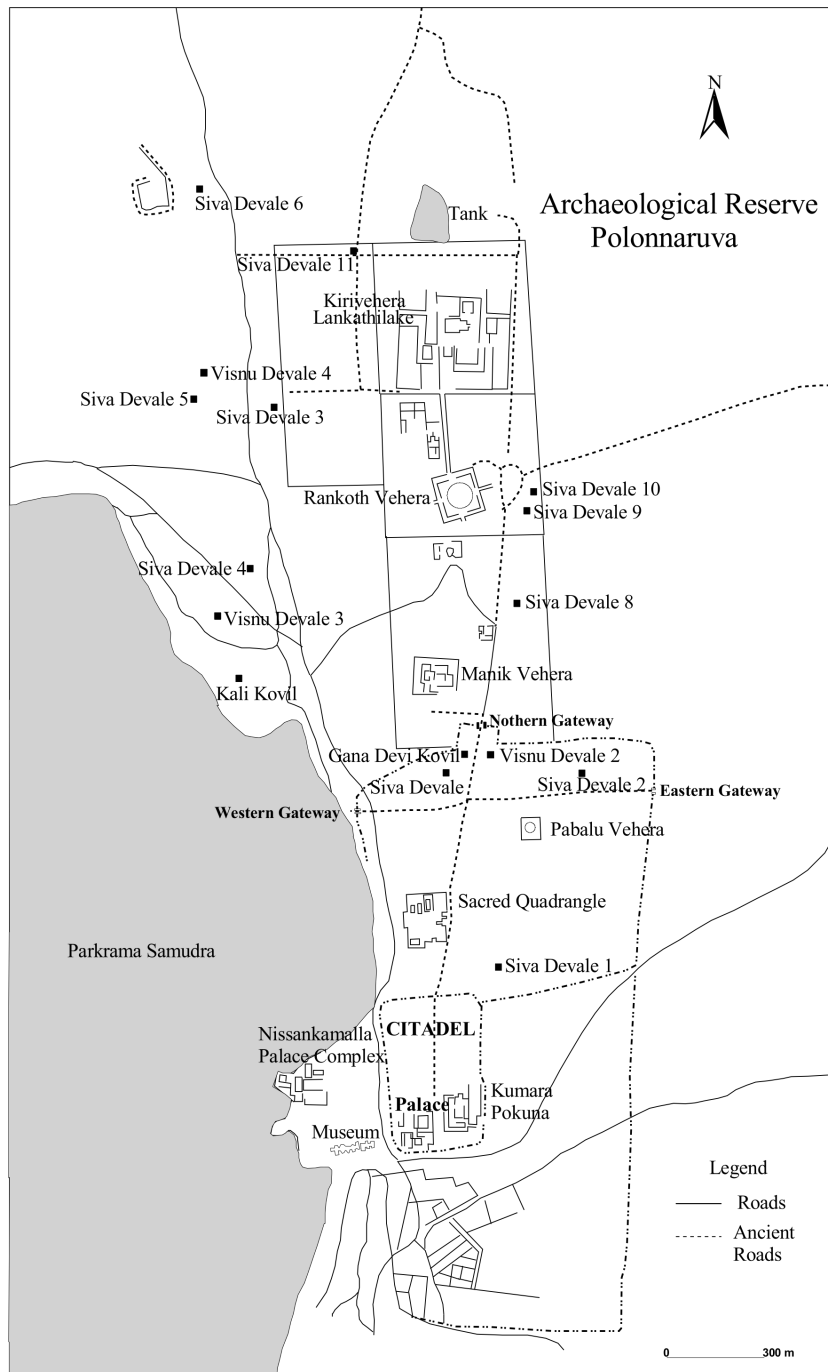


Fig. 1.1. Map of Polonnaruva Indicating Locations of Devâles.



Fig. 1.2. Siva Devâle No. 2, Joseph Lawton, 1870-1871.  
Courtesy of the Department of Archaeology, Colombo, Sri Lanka



Fig. 1.3. Siva Devâle No. 1, Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka



Fig. 1.4. Siva Devâle No. 2, Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka



Fig. 1.5. Devakostha at Siva Devâle No. 2, Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka



Fig. 1.6. Siva Devâle No.3, Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka



Fig. 1.7. Visnû Devâle No. 2, Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka



Fig.1.8. Dhavalâghara, Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka

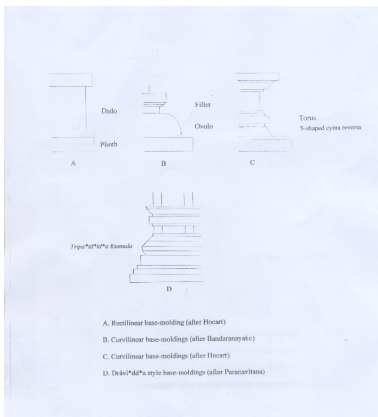


Fig.1.9. Base Mouldings



Fig. 1.10. Mahasiva Râtri 2008, Siva Devale No. 2, Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka



Fig. 1.11. Poson Perehara, Siva Devale No. 2, Polonnaruva, Sri Lanka



Fig. 2.1. Gadalâdeniya Rajamaha Vihâra (View of the Image House for the Buddha and the Subsidiary Shrine)



Fig. 2.2. Pillars, Gadalâdeniya



Fig. 2.3. Carvings at the Basement of Pavilion, Gadalâdeniya





Fig. 2.4. Carvings on Entrance Staircase, Gadalâdeniya



Fig. 2.5. Niche on the South wall at Gadalâdeniya



Fig. 2.6. *Vyâlas* above the cornice of the image house to the deity, Gadalâdeniya



Fig. 2.7. Frieze of *Ganas* above the cornice, Front Pavilion, Gadalâdeniya



Fig. 2.8. *Sikhara* above the image house to the Buddha, Gadalâdeniya



Fig. 2.9. Staircase leading up to the *sikhara* of the main shrine, Gadalâdeniya



Fig. 2.10. Central staircase, Yâpahuva



Fig. 2.11. Composite pillars (partially reconstructed), Yâpahuva



Fig. 2.12. Composite Pillars, Gadalâdeniya



Fig. 2.13. Carvings of Siva and Krisna, Gadâlâdeniya



Fig. 2.14. Medallions with carvings of dancers, Composite column (left), Gadaladeniya



Fig. 2.15. Alawatura Vihâra



Fig. 2.16. Row of *Vyâlas*, Alawatura



Fig. 2.17. Square-Polygonal pillar, Alawatura



Fig. 2.18. Remnants of an Octagonal pillar supported by crouching lion, Alawatura



Fig. 2.19. Octagonal pillar with molded base, Alawatura



Fig. 2.20 Polygonal pillar, Yâpahuva



Fig. 2.21 Seated Buddha under a *torana*, Alawatura



Fig. 2.22. Frontally seated lion, Gadalâdeniya



Fig. 2.23. Composite pillar supported by a row of lions, Yâpahuva

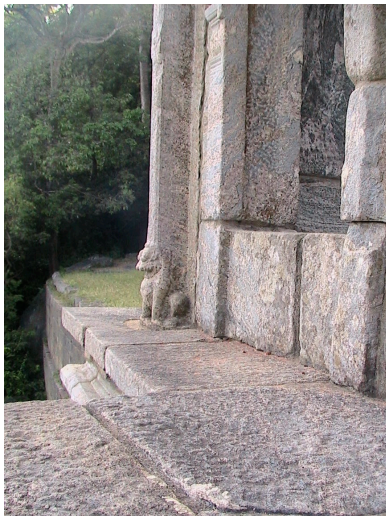


Fig. 2.24 Pilaster supported by a frontally seated lion, Yâpahuva



Fig. 2.25. Procession of dancers, Alawatura



Fig. 2.26. Procession of dancers, Niyamgampâya



Fig. 2.27. Three dancers sharing two legs, Yâpahuva





Fig. 2.28. Moldings, Alawatura



Fig. 2.29. Nâtha Devâle, Kandy (courtesy of the Department of Archaeology)



Fig. 2.30. Basement molding, Inner Sanctum, Nâtha Devâle (courtesy of the Department of Archaeology)



Fig. 2.31. Niche, Inner sanctum, Nâtha Devâle, Kandy (courtesy of the Department of Archaeology)



Fig. 2.32. The shrine above the niche, Inner sanctum, Nâtha Devâle, Kandy (courtesy of the Department of Archaeology)



Fig. 2.33. Ornamentation on the cornice and above the cornice, Inner sanctum, Nâtha Devâle, Kandy (courtesy of the Department of Archaeology)



Fig. 2.34. The second storey, Inner sanctum, Nâtha Devâle, Kandy (courtesy of the Department of Archaeology)



Fig. 2.35. Domical roof, Inner sanctum, Nâtha Devâle, Kandy



Fig. 2.36. Âdahana Maluwa, Kandy



Fig. 2.37. Basement moldings, Âdahana Maluwa



Fig. 2.38. Kobbekaduwa Vihâra and its basement moldings, Kandy



Fig. 2.39. Sellâvali Vihâra and its basement moldings, Kandy



Fig. 2.40. Niche, Âdahana Maluwa



Fig. 2.41. Barrel-shaped temple above niche, Gadalâdeniya



Fig. 2.42. Barrel-shaped Temple Above Niche, Âdahana Maluwa



Fig. 2.43. Lankâtilaka Rajamaha Vihâra



Fig. 2.44. Thûpârâma Temple, Polonnaruwa



Fig. 2.45. The Niche to a deity, Lankâtilaka



Fig. 2.46. Basement moldings and exterior wall of inner sanctum, Lankâtilaka



Fig. 3.1. Berendi Kôvil, Sîtâvaka, Sri Lanka



Fig. 3.2. Âtikônânâyakar Cuvami Kôvil, Tampalakâmam, Sri Lanka



Fig. 3.3. Madagoda Pattini Devâle





Fig. 3.4. Cornice, Berendil Kôvil



Fig. 3.5. Short Pillar Posts, Madagoda Pattini Devâle



Fig. 3.6. Circumambulatory path, Madagoda Pattini Devâle



Fig. 3.7. Daval Perehâra, Kabulumulla Pattini Devâle



Fig. 3.8. Râjasimha I, Kabulumulla Pattini Devâle



Fig. 3.9. Worshipping Râjasimha I



Fig. 3.10. Maha Bamba Kolama, Saman Devâle Pehâra, Ratnapura

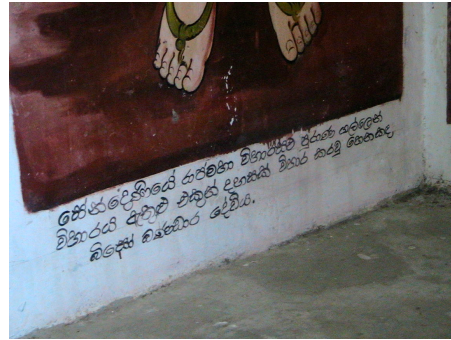


Fig. 4.1. Portrait of Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra, Hendeniya Vihâra



Fig. 4.2. Portrait of Hena Kanda Biso Bandâra, Hindagala Vihâra



Fig. 4.3. Kanda Kumâra, Lankâtilaka Rajamaha Vihâra



Fig. 4.4. *Digge* or *Hêvisi Mandapa*, Embekke Devâle



Fig. 4.5. Entrance to the open vestibule, Embekke Devâle



Fig. 4.6. Cloth painting of the deity and his wives at the entrance to the enclosed vestibule, Embekke Devâle (2005 and 2009)

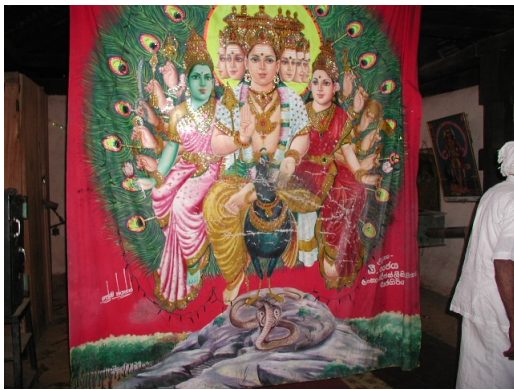


Fig. 4.7. Cloth painting of the deity and his wives inside the enclosed vestibule, Embekke Devâle



Fig. 4.8. Cloth painting of the deity at the entrance to the inner sanctum, Embekke Devâle



Fig. 4.9. The second storey of the inner sanctum, Embekke Devâle



Fig. 4.10. Square-octagonal pillars, Embekke Devâle



Fig. 4.11. Flower motif, Embekke Devâle



Fig. 4.12. Foliage motif, Embekke Devâle



Fig. 4.13. Dancer motif, Embekke Devâle



Fig. 4.14. *Nârilatâ* motif, Embekke Devâle





Fig. 4.15. *Gajasimha* motif, Embekke Devâle



Fig. 4.16. Stone pavilion, Embekke



Fig. 4.17. Square-octagonal pillar, Stone Pavilion, Embekke



Fig. 4.18. Flower motif, Stone Pavilion, Embekke



Fig. 4.19. *Bherunda* motif, Stone Pavilion, Embekke



Fig. 4.20. Elephant motif, Stone Pavilion, Embekke



Fig. 4.21. Lion motif, Stone Pavilion, Embekke



Fig. 4.22. Dancer motif, Stone Pavilion, Embekke



Fig. 4.23. *Kirtimukha* motif, Stone Pavilion, Embekke



Fig. 4.24. Ridî Vihâra



Fig. 4.25. Cornice and row of *vyâlas*, Ridî Vihâra



Fig. 4.26. Exterior wall, Ridî Vihâra



Fig. 4.27. Curvilinear torus and base moldings, Ridî Vihâra



Fig. 4.28. Flower motif, Ridī Vihâra



Fig. 4.29. Flower motif, Ridī Vihâra



Fig. 4.30. Warrior motif, Ridî Vihâra

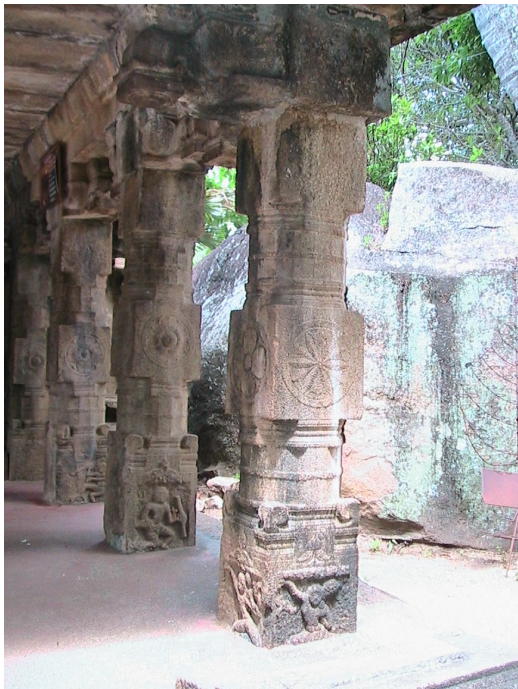


Fig. 4.31. Dancer motif, Ridî Vihâra



Fig. 4.32. Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.33. Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle





Fig. 4.34. Inner Sanctum, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.35. Ancillary rooms and corridors, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.36. Flower motifs, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.37. Doorframe with Bhairava figures, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.38. Doorframe with the nârilatâ motif, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.39. Nârilatâ motif, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.40. Doorframe with *bherunda* motif, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.41. Doorframe with foliage motifs, Shrine to the Deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.42. Lotus motif on lintel, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.43. Doorframe with foliage and lotus motifs, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.44. Details of lotus motif on door jamb, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.45. Foliage motif, Lintel, Shrine to the deity Kataragama, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.46. Pattini Devâle, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.47. Flower motifs, Pattini Devâle, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.48. Flower motif, Pattini Devâle, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.49. Flower motif, Pattini Devâle, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.50. Simhâsana, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.51. Square-octagonal pillar, Simhâsana, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.52. Flower motifs, Simhâsana, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.53. Detail of wooden doorway, Simhâsana, Soragune Devâle



Fig. 4.54. Detail of wooden doorway, Simhâsana, Soragune Devâle





Fig. 4.55. Stone doorway, Devinuvara



Fig. 4.56. Stone doorframe, Ambulugala Vihâra



Fig. 4.57. Frontally seated lion, Stone doorway, Devinuvara



Fig. 4.58. Lion motif, Ambulagala Vihâra



Fig. 5.1. Galge, Devinuvara, 7<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 5.2. Pilasters, Galge, Devinuvara, 7<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 5.3. Detail of Pilasters, Galge, Devinuvara, 7<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 5.4. Detail of doorway, Galge, Devinuvara, 7<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 5.5. Lotus petals below the cornice, Galge, Devinuvara, 7<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 5.6. Ornamented stones above the door jambs, Galge, Devinuvara, 7<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 5.7. Basement molding, Galge, Devinuvara, 7<sup>th</sup> century



Fig. 5.8. Galge, Devinuvara, 7<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 5.9. Main Entrance, Kataragama Devâle, Kandy



Fig. 5.10. The Centrally Placed *Devâle* to the Deity Kataragama, Kataragama Devâle, Kandy



Fig. 5.11. Buddhist Temple, Kataragama Devâle, Kandy



Fig. 5.12. The Small New Shrines to Hindu Deities, Kataragama Devâle, Kandy





Fig. 5.13. The New Buddhist Temple Behind the Main *Devâle*, Kataragama Devâle, Kandy