

The Use of the Practice of Perspective in the Southern Style Temple Paintings

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The depiction of depth and space using the practice of Perspective is a novelty apparent in the temple paintings of the Southern Maritime region of Sri Lanka in the 18th and 19th centuries, which cannot be seen in the Central Kandyan style temple paintings. The objective of the present study is to examine the way in which the Perspective is used in the Southern-style temple paintings in the maritime region. A field study was conducted to examine and study the Southern Style paintings of selected temples, and a comparative literature review was conducted to examine the paintings created in the 18th and 19th centuries by various foreign artists, in order to identify the influence of Western art which introduced the depiction of depth and space using perspective to the temple painters of the Southern Style. It is apparent that the temple painters of the Southern Style did not follow the theories of Linear or Parallel Perspective, even though they tried to imitate the visual depiction of Perspective. The temple painters of the Southern Style have been influenced by the various foreign artists who were active in the colonial period and have tried to mimic their works when depicting depth and space. Apparently, the deficiencies in proportions and distortions in the buildings and surrounding space are a result of this mimicry without the study of the theories of Perspective. Moreover, it is likely that the Southern-style temple painter had considerable freedom to depict depth and space to his preference, either with or without the consent of temple patrons and monks. Evidently, colonialism and its influence resulted in imitating the depiction of depth and space using the practice of Perspective by the Southern Style temple painters without the study of the various theories of Perspective.

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