

Kingship during the Kotte Period of the history of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

According to historical sources the Aryans who started settlements in 6th century B.C., accepted their leader as the ruler of the kingdom. Thus Vijaya is regarded as the first king of Sri Lanka. The customs which originated from the time of King Vijaya established themselves as traditions.

The capital which was situated in Anuradhapura shifted to various places of the country from time to time. Kotte was one such place. Kotte developed as the capital during the first half of the 15th Century A.C. King Parakkramabahu VI developed Kotte, which was only a fortress at the beginning, into a full fledged capital city in 1415 A.C. The objective of this paper is to examine whether the kings of Kotte from 1415 A.C. to 1597 A.C. ruled according to the established norms on kingship.

There is a large amount of tradition regarding kingship in Sri Lanka. Among them, traditions on inheritance to the throne as the main one. Moreover, conditions such as belonging to the Kshatriya clan for enthronement, the position of Yuvaraja, and his right to the throne were important. The mutual bond between kingship and Buddhism was also a major characteristic.

It was revealed that while some rulers of Kotte acted according to these traditions some tended to overlook them. This study examines many factors, which were considered alternatives to tradition.

Keywords: Kotte, Kingship