

Social and Economic Conditions of the Kandyan Period as Reflected by the Secular Architecture.

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ABSTRACT

The present study of the socio-economic conditions of the Kandyan period as reflected by secular architecture mainly tries to unveil the social and economic setting of the *Udarata* by using secular architectural monuments as an optional source instead of making use of traditional type primary sources, basically the written primary documents. Hence, the research problem of the study is centralized to understand to what extent the secular architecture can be used as a primary source to examine the social and economic history of a particular historical period. The secular architectural monuments of the Kandyan period have been used to exemplify the hypothesis. In the sense, simply it is expected to confirm the significance of secular architectural monuments in studying historiography.

The entire research is documented under seven chapters. The first chapter, the introduction provides an overall picture about the study including the aim and the purpose of the study, scope and limitation, the methodology used to obtain and accumulate information in favour of answering the research question, sources which uses to analyze the question and so forth.

The second chapter which provides the theoretical support speaks mainly about the relations between man and his dwelling place as a portrayal of his physical, moral, cultural and experiential background. Here, it further discusses various dimensions that used to interpret and analyze the relations between man and his built environment by different prominent scholars in the field of architectural historiography including Amos Rapoport (1977), Christopher Alexander (1977), Yi Fu Tuan (1977), Norberg-Schultz (1980), Canter (1977) and Relph (1976). Although these scholars had divergent conceptual frameworks, they all talked about the close relations among man and his built environment. The concept of 'Genius Loci' of Norberg-Schultz, the theory of 'Place and Placelessness' of Relph and the 'Pattern Language' of Alexander's combined and equalized at the point which says that dwelling is a total experience of the dweller. This totality includes his moral, physical and cultural experiences.

The third chapter is provided with a rough idea about the birth, growth and development of the Kandyan period as a significant epoch or a turning point in Sri Lanka's history and culture. In this discussion it was understood that the significance in its political, economic and social conditions moreover illustrated through the traditional architectural practices of the inhabitants. Identification of Kandyan dwelling types, their hallmarks and significances are discussed under chapter four. The Kandyan houses have categorized into three such as residences of royalty, nobility and common. This classification facilitated further to understand specific characteristics in Kandyan architecture. Chapter five examines the idiosyncrasies of the Kandyan period edifices where contains an extensive examination of noticeable features in Kandyan houses, specially roof, wall and floor.

The most important part of the research covers in chapters six and seven. The application of the theoretical interpretation into the case study, the secular architectural monuments is carried out under these two chapters and revealed some of the fashionable facts related to social and economic conditions of the Kandyan period. At the end or in the epilogue mentions the final findings of the research. It was found as a result of combining the theory into the Kandyan secular built environment that the Kandyan architectural monuments compiled with seven major components, namely perceptual, expressive, adaptive, integrative, and instrumental, the general ecological inter-relationship and the domain of aesthetic values and traditions. Since the entire built environment of the Kandyan period is a creation of those seven components, it was able to understand the social and economic conditions of the period between sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Further, in turn, this study established the fact of vitality of architectural monuments in studying social history of an identified historical period.