

Edifices in Dark Days: Origin, Types and Development of Oratorian Missionary Churches in Sri Lanka

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The early 19th century Catholic churches in Sri Lanka built by the Goan Oratorian missionaries mainly follow the unique Indo-Portuguese architectural concepts which were adapted to the political and economic demands of Sri Lanka as well as to certain aspects of the local climate and culture. However, the distinctive architectural model of missionary architecture of Sri Lanka has not been identified in-depth in available historical references and in modern research. First, during the Dutch occupation and the period of persecution of Catholics and later, with the advent of the British, the members of the Oratorian order have played a crucial role in the restoration and reconstruction of a territorial network of Catholic churches to its former stronghold. This study intends (i) to discuss the origin and the development process of the network of Oratorian churches in Sri Lanka and (ii) to analyse the impact of Indo-Portuguese architecture on those churches built by the Oratorian mission in the Island during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Keywords: Colonial period Architecture, Church Architecture, Network of Oratorian Churches, Typologies of Oratorian churches, Indo-Portuguese Influence