

## Morphology and Utility today of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Temple on pillars (*TämpitaVihāras*) of Sri Lanka

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The structures built on a wooden platform resting on short granite pillars or stumps reflect a unique type of image house from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries called *TämpitaVihāras*. The Samkathana Projecton documenting evidences of the *TämpitaVihāras* has collected data visiting some 90 sites in Kurunegala, Kandy, Kegalla, Matale, NuwaraEliya, Rathnapura, Galle, Matara, Hambanthotaand Anuradhapura Districts. This type of single room very small image house with a wooden super structure seem to emerge in the early Kandyan Era. From over 92 *TämpitaVihāras*, already visited and documented in this project, I shall select a cross section to demonstrate structural morphology of *TämpitaVihāras* according to regions. The reports of the Department of Archaeology mentions 240 *TämpitaVihāras* appearing as archeological sites which have been gazetted, but only 50 edifices have been discussed. These structures have been renovated and published. They are mostly in the Gampaha District: The published study of *SriLankaweTämpitaViharaSampradayaby* the Department of Archaeology (1999) edited by Gamini Wijesooriya, *Architecture of TämpitaViharaya in Sri Lanka* by D.P.Chandrasekara and D.M.K.D.Silva (2002) and *Heritage Building of Sri Lanka* by Nimal De Siva and D.P.Chandrasekara, (2009) mostly refer to the same edifices, at times using material of other research even without reference to them. There has been no comparative study of these over 240 *TämpitaVihāras*, most which are in a sad state of decay and some have been demolished or the features of this unique stone and wooden plinth cemented over, that the identification today becomes strenuous. The utility of *TämpitaVihāras* as “Image Houses”, “Preaching Halls”, “Chapter Halls”, “Temples of the Tooth Relic” and a planned “Royal Palace” in Dodantale, leads to the question of protection and conservation of these single room image houses.

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