

2.27 Buddha as a guardian of the harvest: new interpretation on a spatial model of the image houses on pillars in Gampaha District

MK Amila Indika

Post Graduate Institute of Archeology, University of Kelaniya

ABSTRACT

Ten image houses on pillars are remained in Gampaha district, which can be assigned from 17th to 20th century A.D. These monuments have an immense importance in studying religious, social, economical, technological and aesthetic status of the contemporary society.

It is noteworthy that all the buildings were designed to be placed towards the nearby paddy fields, except one instance. This means that the Buddha statues of the image houses are facing to the paddy fields. But facing directions of those buildings are varied to each other.

When that phenomenon is analyzed in a border sense with geographical and environmental factors, location of paddy fields, economic status of the period, religious concepts, agrarian rituals and plan of the image houses on pillars, it becomes clear that was a conscious intentional action.

Rural economy of the relevant area in that period was based on wet rice cultivation. This area belong to the low land wet Zone of the country, which hasn't suitable environmental conditions for rice cultivation due to high rainfall, damages of insects and weeds. Colonial administrative policies and new tax amendments, struggles between the Kandian kingdom and colonial powers caused to worsen the hardships confronted by the farmers.

In the circumstances, they may have intended to get blessings of Buddha to protect their harvest from environmental factors and other elements as well. This was architecturally symbolized by being placed image houses on pillars of the area towards nearby paddy fields.