

A Historical Study of Palanquin Traveling in Ancient Kandy kingdom in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Human transport is the oldest mode of carrying loads from one place to another. Not only carrying goods but also humans are used to carry human beings from one place to another in Palanquins. Travelling on the shoulders of servants in a cushy palanquins were reserved for royalty and much of the nobility from Anuradhapura kingdom to Kandyan era .Palanquin is a popular travelling method among Kandyan royalties than other nobles in past kingdoms of Sri Lanka. So this research is mainly focused on Palanquin travelling system in Kandyan era. And it will be a path to make people aware about this historical method of travelling which takes a lot of values in ancient transportation sub culture in Sri Lanka. From intra-textual readings, discussions with resource persons and site visits to Kandy and Colombo national heritage museums, research has got a lot of data about the historical value of palanquin travelling in ancient Sri Lanka. Specially this research is based on some of the literarical facts from “Eda Hela Diwa” by Robert Knox, “Devi Dutu Sri Lankawa” by John David, “Journey of Spilbergen”, “Lori ge Gasert”, “Persiwel Dutu Sri Lankawa”, “Sinhala Samaja Sanvidhanaya” by Ralf Peres and some archaeological facts from Pilikuththuwa Rajamaha Viharaya, National museum Colombo and Dalada Maligawa museum in Kandy and some selected resource persons’ ideas which have closer attention with ancient transport culture in Sri Lanka. When analyzing all these facts, a large number of important incidents that are related to palanquin transport in ancient Sri Lankan kingdoms and up country area were discovered. In addition it was revealed that there was a unique traditional sub culture which was related to palanquin transportation in Kandyan kingdom. Furthermore it was perceived that there were some different types of palanquins mentioned in history books and folktales. Palanquins were a status symbol, and also the specific type of palanquin was a sign of people’s wealth and social standard in ancient Sri Lanka. Depending on the owner’s status, people used different names, materials and decorating methods for palanquins and they also added some new items and developed the palanquins time to time . When analyzing all these facts the it was evident that traveling on palanquins acts an important role in ancient transport system in Sri Lanka. So the research will make people, aware of this heritage value and it gives a huge image to the world about the unique traditional transportation in Kandy kingdom.

Key Words: *Palanquins, Kandy kingdom, Symbol of Social Status, Ancient Transport system in Sri Lanka, Traditional Folktales*

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