

## Western elements in Buddhist monastic art and architecture in Colonial Ceylon

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Abundant use of Western elements in Buddhist monastic art & architecture in the Maritime Provinces during colonial period is one of the most enigmatic issues in Sri Lankan art history. Using Baroque & Gothic-like architectural forms, neo-classical columns, Western costumes, figures with Caucasian features, guardian deities dressed in Western garments, and British coat of arms over the main entrance of image houses etc., appear to be a common practice in the maritime temples. There were strong hostilities between the native Buddhist establishment and the colonial rulers during this period. Despite such hostilities and crises, the use of such non-Buddhist and non-Sinhalese elements as a mode of religious and aesthetic expression in Buddhist places of worship poses a paradoxical phenomenon. To understand the factors that influenced to select Western elements, one has to study social, political, and cultural context in colonial Ceylon. Among them, the foremost factors are losing of the royal patronage to the Buddhist temples in the maritime region, passing to the political power in Ceylon to the hands of colonial rulers, emergence of a new class of patrons for Buddhist temples, expansion of temples in the maritime regions. The new patrons of Buddhist monasteries in maritime region were very different from the traditional patrons in Ceylon. New patrons were made up of those who converted to Christianity to secure high position in the colonial administration. However, many of them were nominal Christians and continued their former religious practices in their own way. The Buddhist monasteries began to expand in the maritime region especially in the South, after establishing three new fraternities called *Amarapura*, *Kalyanivamsa* and *Ramañña*. This resulted in Buddhist revival in the maritime regions, and construction and renovation of monasteries became a prime necessity for growing number of monks. This necessity readily met with the above converts who imitated colonial masters and it paved the way to create a Western based Buddhist art tradition in the maritime regions.

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