

2.48 Kandyan temple murals: a comparative study of murals of the Kandyan Kingdom and the Maritime Provinces during the 17th and 18th centuries

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ABSTRACT

Temple murals of the Kandyan tradition were a visual media which indicated the attitudes and beliefs of the people of Sri Lanka during the 17th and 18th centuries. These murals are not only works of art but also authentic historical sources. Thus, these murals can be used as primary sources for the study of the history of the Kandyan Kingdom as well as the colonial influence on the Maritime Provinces.

The paper would focus on the attitudes and the observations of the artists regarding the colonial rule and the social influence of the colonizers on traditional society. A marked difference could be seen in indicating such attitudes and observations of the artists who created the murals in the Kandyan temples from those of the artists who created murals in the temples of the Maritime Provinces.

The aim of this paper is to critically examine this difference. Although artists used the same style of drawing i.e. the style popularly known as the Kandyan style, the contents of the murals of the two regions indicate notable differences. These differences, when defined historically indicate the distinct manner in which the attitudes of the two regions were formed during colonial rule.

Key words: Mural paintings, Historical sources, Colonial rule, Kandyan style