

The Black Prince's Chapel: an architectural record of the Church of Our Lady of the Gate of Heaven, Telheiras, Lisbon

> The fall of the Kotte Kingdom and a prince in exile

Portuguese presence in Sri Lanka

At the dawn of the 16th century, Sri Lanka, called *Ceilão* by the Portuguese, was divided into three autonomous kingdoms: the kingdom of Kotte by which name its capital city was also called, the kingdom of Kandy that of the central mountainous region, named *Candea* or *Candia* by the Portuguese, and finally the kingdom of Jaffna in the northern part of the country. The kingdom of Kotte was the largest in extent, the most populated and most prosperous. It extended over the Western and Southern provinces of the island.¹ The port of Colombo, which came to be called *Columbo* by the Portuguese, was the chief port of the kingdom of Kotte (Image 1).

The Portuguese presence in Sri Lanka was from 1505 when Lorenzo de Almeida, son of the viceroy of Portuguese India, dropped anchor at the port of Colombo. It is recorded that the Franciscan friar who accompanied the fleet did not remain in the island as he returned to India with the fleet. Very little is documented about the religious activities of the Portuguese in the first four

decades. According to the sources, “there were two centers of Christian worship in the kingdom of Kotte: the small church of St. Lawrence in the Colombo settlement and another in the capital Kotte where the Portuguese captain resided from 1528.”² It is noted that these churches mainly accommodated the spiritual needs of the Portuguese settlers, merchants and soldiers.

The kingdom of Kotte was ruled by king Dharma Parakramabahu IX (1509-1518) when the Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka. According to the chronicles following the death of Dharma Parakramabahu, the kingdom of Kotte was brought under control of his brother Vijayabahu. Subsequently, Bhuvanakabahu, Raigama Bandara (Pararaja Singha) and Mayadunne, who were the three sons by Vijayabahu's first queen, killed their father with assistance from the ruler of Kandy, Jayaweera Wickramabahu, and shared the territory of the kingdom among themselves. The eldest Bhuvanakabahu ascended the throne of Kotte, the second received as his share the region of Raigama, while the youngest Mayadunne was granted the provinces further inland which bordered the Kandyan kingdom. Mayadunne chose Sitawaka as his capital. Thus the three kingdoms came into

ABSTRACT

A Capela do Príncipe Negro: Um registo arquitectónico da Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Porta do Céu, Telheiras, Lisboa

Os edifícios históricos oferecem-nos, não só um registo vivo da nossa história social e cultural, mas também uma contribuição positiva para a nossa noção de pertença e de identidade transnacional.

A Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Porta do Céu, em Telheiras, Lisboa, com os seus 400 anos, é exemplo de um desses edifícios. É historicamente único no que se refere às relações religioso-culturais e políticas entre o Sri Lanka e Portugal, durante a expansão ultramarina dos séculos XVI e XVII, pois acredita-se que esta igreja e o seu convento terão sido o único edifício construídos na Europa por um ceilonense. Foi originalmen-

te construído por D. João, conhecido, em fontes portuguesas, como o *Príncipe Negro*, e que era um príncipe do reino Kandyan, do Sri Lanka. Foi o último herdeiro masculino da antiga dinastia Kandyan.

A linhagem de D. João, o Príncipe Negro, pode ser historicamente traçada tão longe quanto a queda do reino Kotte e o surgimento do reino Kandyan. D. João era filho de Yamasinha Bandara, que subiu ao trono do reino Kandyan em 1592. Na sequência da morte súbita de Yamasinha, D. João, com 12 anos, foi proclamado rei. Mas, devido à instabilidade política da região, foi forçado a abandonar o reino e a procurar a

protecção dos portugueses, em Colombo. Estes entregaram-no aos cuidados dos missionários franciscanos portugueses. Mais tarde, D. João foi enviado para Goa, que foi o seu lar durante 15 anos. Foi depois ordenado diácono e foi chamado a Lisboa, onde finalmente se instalou em Telheiras. Aqui, por volta de 1625, construiu este convento e igreja, como reconhecimento do que os franciscanos tinham feito por si. O objectivo deste estudo é compreender e documentar as evidências históricas presentes neste edifício e registar graficamente essa informação histórica para efeitos de pesquisa, publicação e também arquivo.



Image 25
Stucco
composition on
the pediment over
the triumphal arch.

in the architectural characters of the present building. However today it stands as an extremely interesting piece of architecture with rich historical and artistic significance. In view of its significance in the political and religious affairs of Sri Lanka and Portugal, the church and the convent of Our Lady of the Gate of Heaven in Telheiras deserves to be preserved as a classical monument that belongs to the period of Portugal's overseas expansions in the 16th and 17th centuries. In architectural and iconographic sense the church still remains

a focal point of the Telheiras Parish. It is fortunate that the church has at least been restored and is being well looked after by present brotherhood of Telheiras with the abundant remembrance of the Dom João of Kandy, the founder of the brotherhood.

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NOTES

- 1 Martin Quere. *Christianity in Sri Lanka under the Portuguese padroado 1597-1658* (Colombo: Catholic Press, 1995) p. 1.
- 2 Martin Quere. "Beginning of the Portuguese mission in the kingdom of Kotte", *Aquinas Journal*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (1988) p. 76.
- 3 Jose Perere. *Baroque Goa: The architecture of Portuguese India* (New Delhi: Books and Books, 1995) p. 53.
- 4 Martin Quere. "Beginning of the Portuguese mission in the kingdom of Kotte", *Aquinas Journal* Vol. 5, no. 1 (1988) p. 73.
- 5 Artur Roque de Almeida. *Monastic Rules of Missionary Orders*. In Exhibition Catalog: Encounter of Cultures: Eight Centuries of Portuguese Mission Work (Vatican, 1996) p. 34.
- 6 W. L. N. Don Peter. *Franciscans and Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Evangel Press Limited, 1983) p. 149.
- 7 For a detail account see Martin Quere. "Beginning of the Portuguese mission in the kingdom of Kotte", *Aquinas Journal*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (1988) p. 76-80
- 8 W. L. N. Don Peter. *Franciscans and Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Evangel Press Limited, 1983), p. 128.
- 9 *Ibid*, p. 149.
- 10 *Ibid*, p. 130.
- 11 V Perniola. *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period, Volume II 1566-1619* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakasakayo Ltd, 2006) p. 113.
- 12 For a detail account see Martin Quere, "Christianity in Kandy in the Portuguese Period", *Aquinas Journal*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (1987) p. 52-56.
- 13 The Franciscans were in Kandy from 1547 to 1582. When Rajasinghe annexed the Kandyan Kingdom, forced the royal family and the Franciscans to flee the capital. V Perniola. *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period, Volume II 1566-1619*, p. 115.
- 14 Yamasinghe Bandara.
- 15 Paul E. Pieris. *Ceylon the Portuguese Era Being a History of Island for the Period 1505-1658*, Volume I (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakasakayo Ltd, 1992), p. 219.
- 16 A Franciscan. Metropolitan Archbishop of Goa from 1583 to 1586.
- 17 D. Duarte de Menezes. The viceroy of India from 1584 to 1588, died in Goa, May 1588.
- 18 Paulo da Trindade. *Conquista Spiritual Do Oriente, Book III, Chapters 1-56*. (Chilaw, 1972) p. 78.
- 19 V Perniola. *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period, Volume II 1566-1619* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakasakayo Ltd, 2006), p. 141.
- 20 *Ibid*, p. 142. Fernão de Queyroz. *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Volume II* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992) p. 439.
- 21 Paulo da Trindade. *Conquista Spiritual Do Oriente, Book III, Chapters 1-56*. (Chilaw, 1972), p. 77.
- 22 Paul E. Pieris. *Ceylon the Portuguese Era Being a History of Island for the Period*

- 1505-1658, Volume I (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo Ltd, 1992), p. 255.
- 23 V Perniola. *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period, Volume II 1566-1619* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo Ltd, 2006), p. 142.
- 24 Jorge Manuel Flores. *Five hundred years of relations between Portugal and Sri Lanka* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente), p. 71 and V Perniola. *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period, Volume II 1566-1619*, p. 141.
- 25 St Anthony's College, Colombo. It was the main educational institution of the Franciscans in Sri Lanka. Several historical accounts mention that members of the royal families were educated there.
- 26 Jorge Manuel Flores. *Five hundred years of relations between Portugal and Sri Lanka* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente), p. 71.
- 27 In 1594 the Portuguese invaded Kandy and enthroned Dona Catharina, the lawful heir to the crown. However making use of the strategic advantages of the kingdom of Kandy, Vimaladharmasuriya routed the Portuguese army, married Dona Catharina and, through her, asserted his right to the throne. This seems to have been the end of the stay of the Franciscans in the kingdom of Kandy, V Perniola. *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period, Volume II 1566-1619*, p. 143.
- 28 Fernão de Queyroz. *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Volume II* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992) pp. 469-477. W. L. N. Don Peter. *Studies in Ceylon Church History* (Colombo: The Catholic Press, 1963), p. 12.
- 29 Mannar.
- 30 Paulo da Trindade. *Conquista Spiritual Do Oriente, Book III, Chapters 1-56*. (Chilaw, 1972), p. 81.
- 31 Fernão de Queyroz. *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Volume II* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992), p. 708.
- 32 Bardez was one of the islands of Goa and was in the charge of the Franciscans for missionary work.
- 33 Paulo da Trindade. *Conquista Spiritual Do Oriente, Book III, Chapters 1-56*. (Chilaw, 1972), p. 82.
- 34 The viceroy of India who had finished his term of office in India and returned to Portugal in the same voyage.
- 35 An Augustinian priest. He was consecrated Archbishop of Goa in 1595 and Viceroy of India from 1607 to 1609. After his return to Portugal he was appointed Archbishop of Braga in 1612 and viceroy of Portugal during the Iberian Union from 1612 to 1615.
- 36 Paul E. Pieris. *Ceylon the Portuguese Era Being a History of Island for the Period 1505-1658, Volume I* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo Ltd, 1992), p. 256.
- 37 V Perniola. *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period Volume II 1566-1619* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo Ltd, 2006), p. 169.
- 38 The city of Coimbra was the capital of Portugal from 1131 to 1255. During the late Middle Ages, with its decline as the political center of the Portugal, Coimbra began to evolve into a major cultural center with the University. The University of Coimbra is the oldest university of Portugal and was established in 1290. It is also considered as one of the oldest universities in continuous operation in the world.
- 39 Fernão de Queyroz. *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, Volume II* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992) p. 702. Paul E. Pieris. *Ceylon the Portuguese Era Being a History of Island for the Period 1505-1658, Volume I* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo Ltd, 1992), p. 256.
- 40 <http://collegiateway.org/news/2008-coimbra-university-colleges>.
- 41 Casa da India was the Portuguese central authority that managed all the aspects of overseas territories during the Portuguese expansions in the 16th century.
- 42 V Perniola. *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period, Volume II 1566-1619* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo Ltd, 2006), p. 170.
- 43 M. H. Goonatilleka. "Two Sinhala princes at the court of Lisbon in Portugal", *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. XXV (October 1988), p. 186-192.
- 44 The Iberian union was a political structure between the monarchies of Portugal and Spain that governed Iberian Peninsula from 1580-1640.
- 45 Filipe III of Portugal (IV of Spain).
- 46 Jorge Manuel Flores. *Five hundred years of relations between Portugal and Sri Lanka* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente), p. 73.
- 47 Grandee of Spain (Grande de España) is a high noble title. Grandees were entitled to the honorific style of 'The Most Excellent Lord' or 'His Excellency' and they were addressed as Primo (Cousin) by the King.
- 48 V Perniola. *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Portuguese Period, Volume II 1566-1619* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo Ltd, 2006), p. 170.
- 49 W. L. N. Don Peter. *Studies in Ceylon Church History* (Colombo: The Catholic Press, 1963), p. 13.
- 50 Paul E. Pieris. *Ceylon the Portuguese Era Being a History of Island for the Period 1505-1658, Volume I* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo Ltd, 1992), p. 257.
- 51 S. G. Perera. *Historical Sketches: Ceylon church History* (Colombo: The Catholic Book Depot), p. 143.
- 52 Count of Oeiras was a Portuguese title of nobility created in 1759 by the King D. José I and first granted to Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo. Later through another royal decree in 1769 the same king upgraded the title as Marquis of Pombal.
- 53 W. L. N. Don Peter. *Studies in Ceylon Church History* (Colombo: The Catholic Press, 1963), p. 15.
- 54 *Historia Serafica*, Vol. V, p. 612. W. L. N. Don Peter. *Studies in Ceylon Church History* (Colombo: The Catholic Press, 1963), plate I.
- 55 Paul E. Pieris. *Ceylon the Portuguese Era Being a History of Island for the Period 1505-1658, Volume I* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo Ltd, 1992), p. 257.
- 56 A coronet is a small crown consisting of ornaments fixed on a metal ring which were worn by the noblemen. A coronet shows the rank of the respective noble. Traditionally heraldic Coronet was used in their coats of arms by nobles.
- 57 The cross of Avis adorns the lily petals at the arm-ends and also has the appearance of a barbed fighting spear. These crosses were mainly used in heraldry in Portugal.
- 58 Paul E. Pieris. *Ceylon the Portuguese Era Being a History of Island for the Period 1505-1658, Volume I* (Dehiwala: Tisara Prakashakayo Ltd, 1992), p. 257.
- 59 For a detailed explanation of the origins of 'plain architecture' refer to G. Kubler, *Portuguese Plain Architecture: Between Spices and Diamonds 1521-1706*.
- 60 José Manuel Fernandes. *Synthesis of Portuguese Culture: Architecture* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda), p. 40.
- 61 G. Kubler. *Portuguese Plain Architecture: Between Spices and Diamonds 1521-1706* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), p. 166.
- 62 John R. Mullin. *The reconstruction of Lisbon following the earthquake of 1755: a study in despotic planning* (University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 1992).
- 63 G. Kubler. *Portuguese Plain Architecture: Between Spices and Diamonds 1521-1706* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), p. 154.
- 64 This kind of images sculpted and dressed in the baroque style was propagated in Spain, Portugal and in their colonies from the late 16th century to the early 18th century. Realism and intense attention to detail characterized the wood sculpture of this period.

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