ART AND TRADITION OF SRI LANKA

Volume 01

Music of Sri Lanka
OTHER BOOKS OF THE AUTHOR
• Fashions of Royalty

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Music of Sri Lanka

Dr. Gayathri Madubhani Ranathunga
Ph.D in Integrated Design (University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka 2012),
B.A. (Hons) Fine Arts (University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka 2003),
Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Art, design and Communication (cltad), (University of Arts London, London, 2006)
This book is dedicated to my husband Priyanjith and my son virul
FOREWORD

Music Singing and playing musical instruments have been developed and spread according to their unique traditions all over the world. Therefore this book titled ‘Art and Tradition of Sri Lanka: Music of Sri Lanka’ can be considered as a timely necessary task.

The author Dr. Gayathri Madubhani Ranathunga, Senior Lecturer at the Fashion Design and Product Development of the Department of Textile and Clothing Technology, University of Moratuwa has made a noteworthy effort in exploring the socio-cultural aspects of the history of music of Sri Lanka. The book consists of four chapters. The first chapter is about an unsighted overview of the tradition in Sri Lanka. The second is about the chronological development of the music tradition of Sri Lanka. The third is about the history of musical instruments of Sri Lanka. The forth is about musical instruments of today. Explorations are based on archaeological evidences of Sri Lanka and it is important that the author was able to build a sound dialogue between Sri Lankan music tradition and its interaction with society.

This scholarly work is very much vital for researchers and students of the respective subject areas. Besides, anyone who studies the practical side of aesthetic subjects can be guided with insight into the music of Sri Lanka through a
This Volume aims to discern the inter-relationship of Tradition and Music of Sri Lanka. Many foreign cultural influences shaped the tradition of Sri Lanka throughout her history. Traditional customs, norms, values and beliefs were mixed with different foreign cultural values and norms that came to be practiced then made into our own tradition, the original agent of influence hardly being evident.

Sri Lankan music originated, developed and modified in relation to tradition. The music tradition of Sri Lanka has been developed since prehistoric age. Today Sri Lankan music plays an essential role in signifying a unique cultural identity. Musical instruments, methodology of playing, performance, and occasions for playing still follow traditional customs.

There are plenty of visual and written records to study the background of the subject such as sketches and descriptions made by observer – participants of ancient period, historical murals, carvings and sculptures of different periods. Wall paintings which depict the music of different eras, are observed in research study. Original written sources and true pictorial evidences were used for the research. Museum collections of music belonging to the ancient administrative eras were observed. Pictorial data were cross checked with different literary sources such as temple murals and particular literature and research work pertaining to the subject enabled to build a strong logical analysis of the tradition of music of Sri Lanka.

Professor Emeritus Dr. Lionel Bentarage
University of Visual and Performing Arts
Colombo 07.

One of the responsibilities of a university lecturer is to contribute to the research culture and generously share and publish earned knowledge. Therefore, I would like to wish the author all success and may she involve in such service and publish more research work in the future as well.

Professor Emeritus Dr. Lionel Bentarage
University of Visual and Performing Arts
Colombo 07.

PREFACE
This scholarly work is very vital for University academia in the stream of Humanities and Social Sciences. Furthermore, the content leads the reader to a new perspective of the subject through a sound dialogue narrated through validated recorded historical data, recorded historical visual information, and logical analyse of scholars of the subject area. Therefore, the reader is guided into cross referencing over a variety of data gradually and will gain reliable and analytical interpretation of the subject.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Vidyajothi Professor Emeritus Nimal de Silva for his guidance, enthusiastic encouragement and useful critiques of my research works ever.

My Sincere thank goes to Mrs. Jans for her diligent proofreading of this book.

Finally I would like to thank Deshamanya Mr, Sirisumana Godage and his dedicated staff for their co-operation and assistance in the publication.

Dr. Gayathri Madubhani Ranathunga
Fashion Design and Product Development,
Department of Textile and Clothing Technology,
University of Moratuwa,
Katubadda.
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CHAPTER 1
Tradition of Sri Lanka

1. Discipline of Tradition

A distinguished service professor in sociology, Edward Shils (1981, 11p) status tradition means many things, in its barest, most elementary sense, it means simply a traditum, it is anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present. Further Shills (1981 11p) describes that tradition having been created through human actions, thorough thoughts and imagination, it is handed down from one generation to the next. Wimal Dissanayaka one of the modern intellectuals of our time claims (Dissanayake, 2005 p.15) that ‘the word tradition is derived from the Latin word ‘tradere’ transfer or delivery. He also (Dissanayake, 2005 p.15) explains that the traditional idea of tradition stresses the notion of the handing down of ideas, objects, practices, assumptions and values from generation to generation’. The greatest exponent of the traditional philosophy of art Ananda Coomaraswamy in his scholarly work Medieval Sinhalese Art, tradition concludes according ample of evidences gathered from traditional social organization of the Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka which has been handed down from generation to generation’ (Coomaraswamy, 1959).
As Shils pointed out, human actions are the vehicle of which the tradition is transmitted. Shils (1981, 11p) discusses that one particular concrete action is not transmitted. Human actions are fugitive. The transmissible parts of human actions are the pattern or images of actions which they imply or present and beliefs requiring, recommending, regulating, permitting or prohibiting the reenactment of these patterns. Wimal Dissanayaka (2005, 15p) shows that tradition also implies reception by an active public, alert to both the imperatives of the past as well as the present.

Traditions can change through responses of their bearers to features of the traditions themselves in accordance with standards of judgment which their bearers apply to them. Therefore, Shils (1981, 47-52p) concerns on individual constituted by tradition follow up by several reasons. The sense of the past, the past as a component, memory: the record of the past, and living in the past are significant. In his explanation about the memory he stresses on that memory is the vessel which retain in the present the record of the experiences undergone in the past and of knowledge gained through the recorded and remembered experiences of others, living and dead. Knowledge of and sensitivity to the past bring the image of the past into the present (1981, 52p).

Furthermore, Wimal Dissanayake identifies important characteristics of tradition. He status (Dissanayake, 2005 p.16) that ‘the concept of tradition is normally regarded as a transcendental phenomenon in that it is seen to be endowed with certain timeless qualities’. Transcendence is defined in the Cambridge Dictionary as the existence or experience beyond the normal or physical level. Something is transcendental if it plays a role in the way in which the mind "establishes" objects and makes it possible for us to experience them as objects in the first place. Ordinary knowledge is knowledge of objects; transcendental knowledge is knowledge of how it is possible for us to experience those objects as objects. According to the Cambridge Dictionary a transcendental experience, event, object, or idea is extremely special and unusual and cannot be understood in ordinary ways such as a transcendental vision of the nature of God. The vision of god has been developed through accumulated wisdom of the past. The vision of god has been experienced, learnt through culture and practice through tradition since time immemorial. Shils (1981, 77p) speaks on the transcendence of the transience of physical artifacts such as statues, paintings, medals and books having as such no significant practical uses, are even more obviously constituted by the spirit or mind which resides in them. The relationship to them or their audience of readers and contemplators is not one of use, it is entirely a relationship of interpretation. They are created with the intention that they be interpreted, that their audiences apprehend the symbolic constellations by which they have been constituted. (1981, 78p).

- **Culture**

In the journey of developing a unique tradition of a society culture plays a pivotal role. The essentialist attitude to tradition is interconnected with culture. Shils (1981, 6p) says that traditionality became associated with a particular kind of society and culture. Traditional knowledge is the utmost treasure of a culture. The knowledge of tradition is formed, developed, modified, changed by the cultural experience. Culture is, in the words of Tylor, anthropologist, (Tylor 1913,1) “culture taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. Furthermore, he remarks that the condition of culture among the various
societies of mankind, in so far as it is capable of being investigated on general principles, is a subject apt for the study of laws of human thought and action. Therefore, culture can be assumed as a continuous chain which is nourished by human thoughts and experiences from time to time.

2. Formation of a Sri Lankan Tradition

Shils (1981, 330p) expresses that Traditions should be considered as constitutions of the worthwhile life. In order to understand the culture and tradition of Sri Lanka it is essential to study the historical background of the early administration of ancient Sri Lanka. Tradition of Sri Lanka has been developed since prehistoric times. Prehistoric drawings in Tantrimale, Billawa caves show healing rituals, rituals pertaining to daily routines. As well as, political constitution is the main in navigating the cultural perception of a country. Writings of Walter Benjamin (1982, 18) have underlined the importance of understanding tradition not as an ontological question but rather as one of political endeavor.

• Indian Influences

Indian influences were the main inspiration source in constructing Sri Lankan tradition. Sri Lanka being situated at the Southern tip of the Indian sub-continent, is quite possible that cultural and social elements could flourish. The recorded history of the Island and its people starts with the Aryan colonization marked by the advent of Vijaya and his seven hundred followers from North India in the 6th Century BC. In the great chronicle of Mahavamsa it is said that when Vijaya landed on the Island he heard music and drum beat of a festival. It can be assumed that a music tradition would have been even before the arrival of Vijaya. The great chronicle of Mahavamsa says that during King Pandukabhaya the people used to worship Chitharaja and Kalawela demons. It is said that there were temples built for them. The greatest social event in the Island history was the introduction of Buddhism in the 3rd Century BC. Rev. Mahinda son of Asoka the great of India brought Buddhism during the reign of Devanmpiyathissa (250-210 BC). The historical deputation created the strongest link for Aryan influences on the people. More Aryan way of life entered with the arrival of 16 artisan groups of painters, craftsmen and musicians with the deputation. Then an Indian influenced tradition developed through the early administrative era. The oldest Kingdom of the early administrative era was the Anuradhapura Kingdom (250 AD- 11 Century AD). During this time period South Indian Pressures as Lambakarna, Moriya, Pandyas, Pallavas Colas affected the country. During the Polonnaruwa era (11 Century AD- 1310 AD)m more South Indian pressures of the Pandyas and Colas entered the society. Royalty tolerated Hindu religious rites in the palace. Dambadeniya (1220 AD-1345 AD), Yapahuwa (1272 AD-1284 AD), Kurunegala eras (13th Century AD- 1335 AD) also showed more significant South Indian Influences. During the Gampola era (1341 AD-1374 AD) seven South Indian rulers and mayors ruled the Kingdom.

• Western and South Indian Nayakkar Influences

During the Kotte Kingdom (1371 AD-1594 AD) Western influences of The Portuguese in 1505 first affected the country. The last Kingdom of the early administrative phase of Sri Lanka was the Kandyan Kingdom (1469 AD-1815 AD). During the era the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British, the French, Siamese and South Indian influences affected the society. The Portuguese colonial occupation exerted an influence of almost of 130 years. Then next the
Dutch lasted for 163 years and the British for 33 years. As a result of colonial inspiration from the 16th century onward the natives soon embraced Western cultural values. As well as South Indian dominant cultural feature were also quickly and strongly assimilated into the community because of the 76-year resident phase. (Tamil Nayakkar).

- King Sri Vijaya Rajasimha (1739-1747) 8
- King Kirti Sri Rajasimha (1747-1782) 34
- King Rajadhirajasimha (1782-1798) 17
- King Sri Wikrama Rajasimha (1798-1815) 17

**Religion and the State**

A culture stands upon mutual interrelations of state and religion. In ancient Sri Lanka, the King was the head of the civil institution. ‘Sovereignty’ was considered as divine. Coomaraswamy (1959) claims that in Sinhalese history when ruler and people met together, they were united by a common religion and a common culture, in sympathy and with mutual respect. Coomaraswamy’s views on culture of Sri Lanka based on the Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka provides the best platform with ample examples as Kandyan tradition showing a living culture even today. He (Coomaraswamy, 1959) explaining about the medieval era of Sri Lanka says that the Kandyan Sinhalese were an independent and self-contained community, with a culture and art which had for all an equal appeal and a state religion which was also the religion of the people. Historian Lorna Dewaraja (1988) states that the relationship between the King and the priests had always been one of mutual interdependence. The King defended the faith and the faith legitimized the King. Lorna (1988, 197) states that “the whole political system of the Kandyan Kingdom was based upon and the social system and revolved around a monarchy which in theory, was absolute”. In theory the power of the King was absolute. He was lord of the soil. Dewaraja (1985/86, 126) suggests that even though “The King in theory, had absolute power, in practice it was seldom”. The early traditional written records which describes the customs and rules about royalties well explained the consistency in traditional values and norms of the legitimacy of the King. A Kandyan sannasa writes an advise to the King Bhuvanaika Bahu V who ruled from Gampola in A.D. (1372/3 – 1405/6 or 1407/8 as follows,

‘O Royal Prince! You must not mix with other castes or families. Do not intermarry with other castes. Do not go bare bodied. Do not let them approach you. Do not allow them canopies, carpets, beds, chairs or appointments to high office. Do not allow them to wear jackets, hats, sandals or use umbrellas. If they do wear them they should be seized and tried and the heads of those found guilty must be shaved on one side, their eyes must be chopped off, they must be made to suffer the thirty-two tortures such as having the hands lopped off, etc., and banished from the country. If one of your class mixed with one of them, they should be tried, and you should neither eat or drink with them, but have him trounced and relegated to a lower caste. have no more intercourse with his descendants. have such under your control. Maintain you the laws of the land, the laws of the king, and the laws of morality’ (Pieris 1956, 251).

Cultural customs, values and norms are sturdier in their perception over traditional notions of tradition. State and religion were the key tools of accepting or rejecting new cultural habits. Approval of upper strata were the key in exerting considerable foreign influences on the culture.
Foreign influences directly affected royalty then trickled down to commoners. This authorization opened the door to a variety of social and cultural influences such as Western, Tamil and Siamese. Foreigners brought their own cultural habits from their reigns. Language, food, dress, dance music and dress are reminiscent of those cultural mixing.

The following two examples of traditional language and food of Sri Lanka provide evidences in order to understand how the culture changed from time to time and how traditional practices have been altered in accordance. The Language of Sri Lanka consists of Sanskrit, Pali, Tamil, Portuguese and Dutch multi-cultural words which have been collected throughout history. Their contribution in effective communication is very much vital today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original source</th>
<th>Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Aryan terms</td>
<td><em>kulla</em> (winnow), <em>bada</em> (stomach), <em>vilumba</em> (heel), <em>oluva</em> (head), <em>padura</em> (mat), <em>kumbura</em> (paddy field)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aryan Terms*</td>
<td><em>-goal</em> (Salary), <em>kúkku</em> (Money), *kołow (Good or Bad), <em>kotua</em> (Lodgings), <em>kumburi</em> (Neighbours), <em>kumbur</em> (Deficiency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanskrit terms</td>
<td><em>eka</em> (one/eka), <em>catur</em> (four/hatara), <em>Sapta</em> (seven/hata)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pali</td>
<td><em>akki</em> (eye/Akshi), <em>Amma</em> (mother/amma)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Sinhalese and the Aryan Languages, A number of idiomatic phrases formed (Kantawala, 1921 -1922 - 105p)

### Table 1: Foreign words which have been linked to the Sinhalese language in the course of the cultural history of Sri Lanka.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Food Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Indian</td>
<td>murukku/paniwalalu/oil cake/kokis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siamese</td>
<td>pittu/milk rice/hoppers/string hoppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>cake, bread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Foreign foods which have been included into the food culture of Sri Lanka.

Food of Sri Lanka has diversified delicacies as people of Sri Lanka were introduced to multicultural food varieties from time to time throughout her history. Multicultural values were absorbed to demonstrate an original food tradition in Sri Lanka.

Art is the most enduring cultural signifier and is greater than other cultural elements to which traditional knowledge and practice bear testimony. Literature, dance, drama,
music, art and crafts architecture, sculpture, painting, dress of a society reveal the tradition of Sri Lankan art. Ananda Coomaraswamy (Dissanayake, 2005, p. 32) conceived of tradition as an educative force. The Artist, the patron, the consumer of it, one and all are shaped and invigorated by a specific tradition. Ananda Coomaraswamy thought of art as an instrument through which tradition is expressed.

Conclusion

Many foreign cultural influences shaped the tradition of Sri Lanka throughout her history. Traditional customs, norms, values, beliefs were mixed with different foreign cultural values and norms and came to be practiced then made our own tradition and the original agent of influence is hardly evident. Sri Lankan tradition is a hybrid formation of multicultural values which have been experienced and learnt throughout the history of Sri Lanka.

Characteristics of the notion of tradition.

1. Essentialist attitude to tradition is interconnected with the culture.

2. There is a tendency in changing traditional notion of the tradition according cultural changes which happened during the course of time.

Changes of culture affects traditional practice of tradition.

3. Culture affects concurrent political, administrative, social and religious factors. Political constitution is the main in navigating the cultural perception of a country.

Western cultural Influences → New words to language
Nayakkar Influences → South Indian food

4. There is a mutual correspondence between state and religion which has a direct correlation with the attitude of culture. State and religion were key tools of accepting or rejecting new cultural habits.

5. Concept of tradition (behavioural pattern, affecting factors) can be well understood by studying the arts of Sri Lanka.

6. Even though the factors that affect the tradition change very often, the basic structure of the tradition remains the same.

7. Tradition is an educative force. Tradition serves to educate.
CHAPTER 2
The Music Tradition of Sri Lanka

The topic provides an introduction to musical variations, influences and instruments of ancient Sri Lanka. It is said that music and dance are as old as the origin of humans. It is predicted that singing would have begun before language was used. Early examples of musical instruments which have been used by primitive people are depicted in primitive art (cave art). The painting depicts people who danced playing drums, imitating some hunting rituals. These imitations involved body movements, sounds, clapping, steps and even group dancing. Music would have been a method of releasing stress, fear, pleasure, sorrow, self-protective sounds (screaming), sports and healing rituals. Different sounds were produced from high pitch to low pitch. These sounds belong to music notes, such sounds are evident in tribal groups all-round world. Such features are evident in (andaharay) in every stage of cultivation, from ploughing to reaping of the crop.

Music developed in three institutes
1. Peasants - Folk music
2. Temple – Buddhism and Music
3. Music and Dancing at the King’s Court

1. Peasants - Folk music

Songs of the paddy farmers belong to the first category of folk songs in Sri Lanka. They are unwritten and transmitted orally. Sinhalese villagers used to sing these folk songs while they used to work in paddy fields and mine specially at night, and also while rowing boats and while transporting goods in bullock carts. Folk songs were spontaneous feelings which arose in the villagers’ simple minds, which reflected their tiredness and interest in work. Even the mothers used to sing lullabies for their children to go to sleep. All these ideas and words came from their hearts. Jana Gee (folk songs) has played an important role in the cultural development of Sri Lankan society.

Different types of folksongs
1. Pal kavi (watch hut verses)
2. songs: merit of the pilgrimage
3. Agricultural songs
4. Nelunkavi (Weeding verses)
5. Lullabies
6. Puzzles
7. Viridu – Associated with the rabana drum
8. Games
9. Songs associated with Mines
10. Bullock cart verses
11. Wasp bees verses
12. Verses of the tunsarana (chanting) sung by the villager a truly native tune.
13. Poems associated with memorable incidences.
2. **Pal kavi (watch hut verses)**

3. **Songs :Merit of the Pilgrimage**

The songs show clearly the great sympathy which the people feel for one’s striving to become a Buddha.

- Entering the forest of the god,
- Beholding the god’s auspicious forest,
- Bestowing merit on the god with cheerful heart,
- Ever making him our refuge;

- Buddha first all men adore,
- They travel many a yodun in the forest,
- Thinking of Saman Deviyo as they come,
- ‘By virtue of these merits (that we give) the Buddhahood thou shalt attain.

Go we all to worship Samanala,
And overcome the ocean of rebirth,
Let us offer all these flowers and lamps,
Let us sing all through the forest.

(Aananda Coomaraswamy, 1956, p.44)

- **Agricultural songs**

  Part of a reaping song is in praise of a *tala* tree, a tall and beautiful flowering palm.

  ‘In Ryigam Korale renowned there grew a famous tala-palm, fairer than speech can tell, with various beauty crowned, from village known; fair of hue this palm flower bloomed, as it were lotus petals expanded on the tree’

  (Aananda Coomaraswamy, 1956, p.31)

- **A sowing song -**

  ‘When the fields are well prepared, which lie round Balagala hill, right quickly then the seed is sowing by the four regents of the earth’.

- **A threshing song contains the following verses:**

  ‘O bull-king leader of the team, O Veriya going next him, and Kalata the bull- calf, make haste to get the threshing ended ; I will get your twin horns gilt, deck your pair of ears with pearls, you dew-calves likewise; thus I shall adorn you’

  (Aananda Coomaraswamy, 1956, p.31)

4. **Nelunkavi (Weeding verses)**

(Aananda Coomaraswamy, 1956, p.44)
5. Lullabies

The ancient poems of wrestling (Human combat) all refer to the violent nature of these fights which invariably end in the death of the loser.

6. Puzzles

The wrestlers coming with great renown from the Mallava land, Vaunted his prowess and gyrated around the Maha Maluva, Him our champion smashed down, tore apart and taking up the halves Hung them in the corners of the Maha Maluva in the Royal presence.

7. Songs associated with Mines

The great king in his Pattirippuva watched the contest, The champion advanced and circling swiftly Suddenly engaged with his opponent in the wrestling contest Then carried in ether hand the rent halves of his opponent.

(Deraniyagala, P.E.P. 1959, Some Sinhalese Combative, Field and Aquatic Sports and Games, Published by National Museum of Colombo, 12/13pp)

An old poem described a contest at Kundasale palace before King Narendrasimhe in the 18th century.

Denna dhepole multhanin lath
Raja bojana sithu se budimina
Gennevaaramala, bandapati,
Ine diyakachchiya andimina
Anne surathen guttiye sabaye
Vahsi basva porata vadinma
Dhunna parata muna bindha
Le Kundasalaya maluva hamathana
an approximate translation is as follows,
Each fighter in his corner did eat a royal meal
Donned shoulder strap and belt and loin cloth tightened still
Then forth to meet his foe he went bragging of fights he’d won
They meet with thudding blows and scuffle that festive day
And blood spilled far and wide the courtyard of Kundasale.

(Deraniyagala, P.E.P. 1959, Some Sinhalese Combative, Field and Aquatic Sports and Games, Published by National Museum of Colombo)

10. (Wasp bee verses) මූදුරු අජුවන්

මූදුරු සැලපු අංශ ආරක්ෂණයක්
මූදුරු අංශ අංශ ආරක්ෂණයක්
මූදුරු වෙසේ අංශ ආරක්ෂණයක්
මූදුරු සැලපු අංශ ආරක්ෂණයක්

 FOREST COVERS WITH WHITE MORAS
Message signals of their gentle sound of buzzing
Give wax and honey to the world
Fly away and mourning for their tragedy

11. Poems associated with memorable incidences.

Senkadagalanuwara was one of the most war swept capital of the world. There are many folk songs depict the bravery of Kings of the Kandyan Kingdom. Sinhala culture gathered pomp and ceremony round the throne to make its occupant believe he was a nara-deva. One of the victory songs is given below,

Unwire of the might of King Rajasingha,
The foolish general rushed into Kandy,
The enemy was surrounded and thrashed like cattle in a pen,
And the prisoners were given to his fighters as slaves.
(Dolapihilla, 2006, 81p)

The troublesome state during the King Kirthi Sri Rajasimhe reign with the British is well described by folk songs.

Everywhere in Lanka resentment spreads,
And some in Lanka rise in protest,
They devise ways to assassinate the King.
And plan to rebel against him, (Dolapihilla, 2006, p.255)

As well as some historical incidences have been transmitted by folk songs today.

During King Sri Wickrama Rajasimha, the European led armies climbed the hills, the Kandy was left a heap of ruins. Poets have sung of what they beheld.

Streets and storied palaces,
Temples of the gods and the beautiful shrine of the Tooth,
Were all destroyed by the enemy’s fire. (Dolapihilla, 2006, p.82)

One of the most striking historical incident was the tragedy of Ehelepola Kumarihamy and her children. It is said that they were accustomed to tales of execution and torture.

The execution of Medduma Bandara who stepped forward fearless, with hot tears. A folk song remembers the ruthless act,
Where three roads meet on the Bodhi Street,
Where the Bo and Na trees stand together,
On a day the four Gods had forgotten to administer justice,
At that spot they murdered the little Bandara.

One of the most interesting aspect which have been orally transmitted through generation to generation is the perception of the female beauty. How female beauty was formed in the early society is given as follows:

"her hair should be voluminous, like the tail of the peacock; long, reaching to the knees, and terminating in graceful curls; her eyes, the blue sapphire and the petals of the blue manilla flower; her nose should be like the bill of the hawk; her lips should be bright and red, like coral on the young leaf of the iron-tree. Her teeth should be small, regular and closely set, and like jasmine buds. Her neck should be large and round, resembling the berrigodea. Her chest should be capacious; her breasts, firm and conical, like the yellow cocoa-nut and her waist small almost small enough to be clasped by the hand. Her hips should be wide; her limbs tapering; and the surface of her body in general, soft, dedicate, smooth, and rounded" (Davy 1921,83).

From 16th century onwards Sinhalese women started to wear different cultural dresses as a result of European influences.

Some ladies wear ‘bodies’, ‘crinolines’, skirts, frocks and hats
Some ladies wear cloth, jackets and smear perfumes
Some ladies wear ohoriya like Hindu dresses.
Some ladies do not cover their breasts.

Robert Michael (et al 1989 5p) says that one way in which readers who are familiar with native Sinhala speech may attend to this possibility is by recalling popular, modern doggerel. For illustration, we select one limerick which depicts the Sinhala person’s response to the intrusion of the technological age, to progress as it was embodied in the steam railway engine. It runs thus:

Eating (fiery) coal,
Drinking water,
Iron demon that runs to Kandy

2. Buddhism and Music

Music and dancing like sensual art (arts that please the five senses) received little patronage from the temple. Pure Theravada Buddhism has no codification of any data pertaining to music and dancing in its worship. Even chanting of the Buddha sutras should strictly be non-musical. Therefore music and dancing have developed as folk arts among the Buddhist. Mahayanism which started seeping into the main religion from the mid-Anuradhapura period gave license for lavish festivities and ceremonies as part of its worship and was therefore favourable to the lifestyle of the King.

Religious faith and beliefs in deities are expressed in poetry. The most popular female deity in the Kandyan era was pattini.
O pattini, the pure and noble, listen to me,
kindly accept this song and dance,
save us from the calamities that befall us.

It appears that the poets engaged in the composition of verses, bestowed merit on the deities and all beings and wished that they would protect them in return. Thus it is evident that poetry had a powerful, undertone of the beliefs of the people had in divine beings (Chandrasiri 2014,52/53pp)

3. Music and Dancing in the King’s court

Buddhist religious tradition which developed with Mahayanism allows dance and music activities. panchathurya nada (penta -orchestra) or five kinds of musical tones are played at the temple. At the beginning North and South Indian music and dancing inspirations shaped our tradition during the early administrative eras. Two major traditions of music are mentioned in the great chronicle Mahavamsa as Sri Mahabodhiya and temple of the tooth (kavikara maduwa) which were associated with dance and music. King Parakramabahu I (1153 - 1186 AD) of the Polonnaruwa Kingdom was known to be the first who established a royal unit of music. During the era, Hinduism enjoyed free worship and received royal patronage. It is said that festivals of the tooth relic were held with the participation of hundreds of dancers and musicians. Parakramabahu II (1236 - 1270 AD) of the Dambadeniya Kingdom was another King in whose reign many musical activities happened. His daily routine included four music and dance sessions in the palace. According to kandavuru sirita maintained two music parties, one for the services of the festivals of the tooth relic called daladageivijjatun. The other was rajageivijjatun for the service of the court.

During the Kingdom of Kandy King Narendrasimhe (1767 - 1739 AD) gave much patronage to performing arts. South Indian Nayakkar influences exerted considerable cultural influences on performing arts. The royal dancing unit was known as Netum Illungama constituted only of women according to the South Indian tradition. Kavikara maduwa or the royal institute of poets is attributed to him. The largest number of panegyrics have been composed in praise of the King. During his reign the singers were known as kavikara. Five dancing and music categories at the Kandyen Court are mentioned as (kavikara Maduwa/vasala illangama/natum ilangama/thamberu purampettu kara division/ sinharakkar division). kavikara maduwa is consisted of 13 people. Has served karnataka musicians. Prasashthi /hatankavya/viraha gee/vannam/savdam/ragam/sindu are various singing performances. Besides vasala illangama was the only unit where acrobatics, warriors and magicians served. natum ilangama was only for dancing women. thamberu purampettu kara division was for drums and wind instruments, Western instruments involved were thomberu (thrombone) and purampettu (trumpet). Sinharakkar division was for drums/ dawla,thammattama and horana. Today the Kandyan dancing tradition includes (kohomba demon- kohomba kankariya) gatabera and Vesnatum (Kandyan Dancing). Low country dancing is famous for Devolyaga using yak bera. Sabaragamu dancing is based on mahasaman devala (dik-ge – natum) use dance and music.
Figure 1: The Queen is accompanied by a Musician. Suriyagoda Rajamaha Viharaya

Figure 2: A March of Musicians. Dambulla Temple Painting
Figure 3:
King and his retinue at a procession. Drummers are playing, Walagoda Rajamaha Viharaya.

Figure 4:
Mara’s Daughters, Madawala Temple painting.
CHAPTER 3
History of Musical Instruments of Sri Lanka

There were five main groups of musical instruments called pasaturugosa (the sound of the five-fold musical instruments). Most instruments mentioned in pali text books. Vamsattappakasini mentions the music of five types of instruments as follows,

- Atata - one faced drum
- Vitata - two faced drum
- Atatavitata - not clear
- Ghana - metallic percussion
- Susira - blown species

Graffiti on the mirror wall at Sigiriya of (5th century AD) mentions the lute (vina). Dambadeniya asna mentions seven types of Vena. Pali jataka stories, Tisara sandesa kavya of the 14th Century AD, Kavyasekaraya, Kueniasna of 15th Century AD mentions various musical instruments. Kunstantinu hattana of 17th century AD mentions the European brass wind instrument named thamboru (trumpet). Few instruments of European music came to the country during colonial occupation at the country. Some instruments were brought from South India during the Kingdom of Kandy.

Three types of instruments are evident in written history, sculptures, carvings and paintings of early Sri Lanka.

1. Stringed
2. Wind
3. Percussion

- **Stringed Instruments**

   The pillar summit of the Lovamahapaya at Anuradhapura shows different types of lute (veena).

   Sigiriya frescos of 5th Century AD depict a woman with a lute placed against her shoulder. A graffito states that ‘the golden- coloured -one being desirous of singing, placed the lute against her shoulder and was playing’ (Godakumbura, 1983, 23p).

   Kotte period literature (16th and 17th Century) suggests the presence of a bowing instrument in Sri Lanka. The famous poem Guttila Kavya has number of verses describing the plying of veena with upaveenaya, which in the past would have meant the plectrum, kona. But in the 17th century upaveenaya would have possibly meant another part of the instrument, probably the bow,

   Indimiyi noneyaya -dakva silpa veenaya
   Samaga upaveenaya-ragena dadikota sada veenaya

   Kovul Sandesaya gives another verse line in support of this view:

   Gaga mini venin gena sinindu tat naga

   And the Pareve Sandesaya has a similar line,

   Gana sandehi surangana venu tabla akaa

   Kulatillaka (28p) shows that ‘all these verses point towards the act of rubbing the Veena’. Eighteenth century
paintings at Telwatta and Mulkiwigala temples, both in Southern province depict celestial musicians (females) playing a crude type of fiddle. Its resonator is a coconut shell which is fixed on to a pole (stem) (Kulathilaka n.a 27p). There is also the Kandyan veena illustrated in John Davy’s book, Account of the Interior of Ceylon.1821.p242. This is too a fiddle, which is very similar to those drawn at Telwatta and Mulkiwigala. John Davy describes this instrument as having two stings of hemp or horse-hair. The bamboo stem is about two and half feet long. It is played with an arched bow which too had horse - hair. Two brass pellets were attached to one end of the bow.

A nineteenth wall paining at Purva-rama temple in Kataluwa depicts a lady playing a string instrument called Ravikinne.
• Wind Instruments

Kulathilaka (25p) states that out of all instruments the Shanka or the conch had an air of dignity and respect. The conch -blower of the Devala enjoyed the title of Sakdura. The hakgedi-appu or the Hakgedi-muhandiram at the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy was selected from govi-caste. It has to be noted that at the coronation of Kings it was the conch blower who had to pour holy water on the King’s head. Thus the conch-blower enjoyed much higher staus in the past society.

The pillar summit of the Lovamahapaya of the Anuradhapura Kingdom depicts Conch (hakgediya). Conches are evident in sculptures at the Kantakachetiya, Mihintale of the Anuradhapura Kingdom. From the base of the bronze Natarajha statue from polonnaruwa as well as wood carvings from panavitiya. The conch can make but note and would have been of use only to punctuate the music (Announcement of royal proclamation).

Figure 3: 
a lady playing a string instrument called Ravikinne. (Purvarama, Kataluva)

Figure 4: 
Temple mural of 18th Century depicts a conch player.
The flute or *vasdandu* is depicted on the pillar summit of the *Lovamahapaya* as well as the doorway at *Galpatha viharaya*. Trumpet is evident in temple murals of Mulkiigala in Matara belonging to the Kandy.

- **Rattles and Strikers**

  A rattle is a type of percussion instrument which produces a sound when shaken. The instrument vibrates to produce sound. Strikers produce sound by being struck, although other playing methods include rubbing, shaking, plucking, and scraping. The Elephant lamp from Dedigama and Yapahuwa dados show cymbal (*talampota*) players.

  ![Cymbal (talampota) player of Elephant lamp from Dedigama](image)

  *Figure 5:*
  Cymbal (*talampota*) player of Elephant lamp from Dedigama

### Percussion

Drums play a major role in religious ceremonies. In major events such as the *Perehares*/processions of Sri Lanka are comprised of the sounds of drums. Farmers use many varieties of drums (*Uddakki, Bummadi*) when harvesting crops. Many rituals such as *Pirith*(chanting) and *Thowil*(heeling magic) in Sri Lankan Folklore, involves drums.

Drums have been held in diverse ways for playing. Traditional drums are played today in three ways. The method of playing depending on the type of drum.

1. Beating with the palm and or the fingers. The carvings of Ganegoda temple depict drum players.
2. Notes created by the friction of the ball of the thumb on the drum head.
3. Played with sticks re-doubled and tied into a loop at one end.

Kulathilaka (26p) describes that one of the most important drum of the past was the *pana-bera*, which had hour-glass shape. *Pana-bera* has been defined as a singing accompaniment which had to be held in the centre with one hand and played with other.
Figure 8: Various drums played during the Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka. (Davy, J. 1821. An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and of Its Inhabitants, London: Longman, p240)
Figure 7: Musicians and Dancers Yapahuna.

Figure 9: Drums depicted in Southern tradition of Kandyan School paintings Purvarama, Kattahari (Kataluva, Kantalavu Jataka)
Figure 10: Rahan player, A royal procession, Sivi jataka, Mulkirigala rajamahaadhamu

Figure 11: Demon eating, female Kandyan drummer, Mulkirigala Temple.
Figure 12:
Stringed, Wind, Percussion instruments players, Telapatta jataka, Mulkirigala raja maha vihara. Man spellbound by she-demons in the guise of Musicians. The Bodhisattva stands outside the house.

Figure 13:
Music players, Representation of the tooth-relic temple in Kandy, Sailabimbarama, Dodanduwa
CHAPTER 4
Musical Instruments of Today

Musical instruments which are often played in different occasions today is mentioned in this chapter. Capacity of producing sound varieties, methodology of playing, medium of each instrument, occasion of use and historical evidence of each instrument are explained in order to disseminate comprehensive knowledge of the subject.

Geta Beraya - (Wedding Drum)

This drum generates two different sounds. It is played with free hands on ceremonial occasions. It's made with 'Asala', 'Kohomba' or 'Kos' timber. In order to generate two different sounds, the left of the drum is made with cowhide and the right, with monkey skin (lives around dummala trees) and bound tightly with tough leather. Geta Beraya is well depicted in the Panavitiya Abbalama wood carvings.

Yak Beraya

Yak beraya is made from the timber of the Kithul tree. This instrument is played using the free hand and is about 3 feet in length. It is mainly used in the lower country of Sri Lanka for Thowil and the perehares (procession).

Dawula

This drum is made using Kithul timber. They are decorated with exquisite art and brass strips. Cowhide is used and is played with a stick called 'Kaduppu'.
This instrument is shaped like a sand clock. Udakkiya is made by carving either the Suriya or Ahala timber into two apertures. Udakkiya is played with 2 sticks called ‘Walayan’. The pitch of the sound can be changed by applying pressure on the twine with a bound cloth. Lovamahapaya pillar summit shows the Udakkiya instrument.

Bummadiya is made with clay in the shape of a 'kala gediya' (a kind of pot used to carry water). Both the sides are made into 2 apertures and pasted with 2 leather skins.

Bummadiya is used in the songs of the farmers when harvesting paddy. This is also called "Kalaham" or "kalaberaya".
**Thammattama**

This instrument is made with either the root of the *Kithul tree* or any other suitable timber. The root or the timber is crafted in the shape of a ‘*walanda*’ (Pot). Secondly both the left & the right tops are bound tightly by cow leather. This drum is played with 2 ‘*kadappus*’ (2 sticks). Temple murals of Mulkiyigala of 18th Century AD show *thammattama* players.

**Rabana**

*Rabana* is about one foot in diameter. This instrument is also carved out of wood. The leather is stretched over the rim of the wooden drum and is hammered with nails.

*Rabana* used for dancing, and used for rotating for the presentation, *Virindu rabanna* and *rabanna* which is consisted of wide diameter are different kinds of *rabanas*, used in Sri Lanka.
Horanewa

*Horanewa* is known as Sri Lanka’s version of the oboe is an instrument made of the elephant tusk with its backend adorned with brass. The base is riddled with small holes to enable varying pitches when it is played.
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APPENDIX

Art music is the work of the Individual, and expresses his own personal ideals and aspirations, it is composed in, comparatively speaking a short period of time, and by being committed to paper it is forever fixed in one unalterable form. Folk music on the other hand is the product of a race, and reflects feeling and tastes that are communal rather than personal, its creation is never completed, while at every moment of its history it exists not in one form but in many. (C.J. Sharp. 'English Folk Song')

No greater mistake was ever made than to suppose that ballads survive best among the most illustrate and ignorant. (F.H. Eckstrom and P. Barry, What is Tradition)

Folk music is natural music. In its making it is not controlled by the conscious application of conventional rules and restrictions. (C.J. Sharp, Some Characteristics of English Folk music)

Folk lore material thrives in society in which there are people of considerable native intelligence artistic appreciation, memory, imagination and creative urge who can comprehend value, remember and recreate their native folk - lore and thus propagate it as an a living tradition. (R.S. Boggs 'Materials Science and Art of folk – lore')

(R.S. Boggs 'Materials Science and Art of folk – lore', 1981,ART AND TRADITION OF SRI LANKA - VOL. 01, 85-86.)
Instruments from Pillar capitols near Ruvanveli stupa, Anuradhapura. Veena, Drum, Flute, conch, pana-bera, Kumbha-bera (Kulathilake C. De .S, Musical Instruments in Sri Lanka’s History, Department of Cultural Affairs, 39 p)

Harp-Veena Player–4th century frieze, Colombo Museum. (Kulathilake C. De .S, Musical Instruments in Sri Lanka’s History, Department of Cultural Affairs, 45 p)
Instrument from Mahiyangana relic chamber. (Kulathilake C.De.S., Musical Instruments in Sri Lanka’s History, Department of Cultural Affairs, 45 p)

Musicians from Mulkirigala-early 19th Century. (Kulathilake C.De.S., Musical Instruments in Sri Lanka’s History, Department of Cultural Affairs, 45 p)

Drum player, Carvings from Niyamgampaya.

Musicians by 1819. Instruemnts from Davy (1821),
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Uddekkki player, Subhadramara Viharaya, Totagamuva, 1886, Pl CXXVI (Manjusri LTP 1977, Design Elements from Sri Lankan Temple Plantings, Colombo Archaeological Society of Sri Lanka)
Purvarama Viharaya, Katalugoda, Kataluva 1886, Pl CXXVII
(Manjusri LTP 1977, Design Elements from Sri Lankan Temple Plantings, Colombo Archaeological Society of Sri Lanka)
Dawul players, Painting from Kandyan Tradition
Dawul, thammattama and horn players, Painting from Damhava Temple. (Chatiwongs, N. et al., 1990, Paintings of Sri Lanka Colombo: Archiological Survey of Sri Lanka, Central Cultural Fund)

Dawul, thammattama players, Painting from Lihiniyagala Temple. (Dissanayaka, S.B. 1997 Dyathilaka Nuwara, Colombo: Dept of Archeology)
Instrumemts from Davy (1821), (සිංහල, නෝල්, ශීල් පන්තිවරුන්
මේයිස්), මුළු අක්කරම්, 341 (3)}
Coomaraswamy, A. 1956, Medieval Sinhalese Art, Pantheon, plate XXXIV
Cymbol Player, Rakava Viharaya, 19th Century Pl CXXV  
(Manjusri LTP 1977, Design Elements from Sri Lankan Temple Plantings, Colombo Archaeological Society of Sri Lanka)

Thalampata player (middle), The Seductive Forces, Subhodharama Viharaya, Karagampitiya.
Rabana - Historical Evidences


Raban has been introduced from South East Asian countries. This instrument appears in Thailand as Rammana, and in Malaysia as Reban and also Raban. The name Raban does not appear in any list of Indian music instruments. Neither do the long lists of musical instruments of Thupavamsa, Pujavaliya or Dalada Siritha accommodate this name Raban. Ekas- bera, the one faced drum may refer to another type of instrument.

The following verse taken from the upat-kavi of Raban play traces the origin of Raban-play in Lanka to the reign of King Vijayabahu (1055 AD) probably the founder of Polonnaruwa.

Palamuva me laka tula
Vijaba nirindu rajakala
Viva bandina kala
Raban nertaya lakata viya mula

(for the first time in Lanka, it was at the wedding of King Vijayabahu that the Raban-play originated)

Its main function in the past, associated with wedding festivity of King Vijayabahu. According to Dr. Paranavithana in his ‘Ceylon and Malaysia’, before ascending the throne Vijayabahu lived in Rohana by the name of Kirthi. His father Buddharaaja hailed from Malaysia (Java). During prince Kirthi’s campaigns against the Pandyans in Lanka another prince by the name of Suriyanarayana who had affiliations with the Sri Vijaya dynasty of Sumathra helped him. This Suriyanarayana who later ascended the throne of Malaysia, in order to maintain the good will sent his daughter Tilokasundari to be Vijayabahu’s Queen.

Figures of Raban players are widely portrayed in the paintings and carvings of the 18th and 19th centuries, specially the Temples of the Southern region of Lanka.
Rabana player, Painting from Kathaluwa Temple.
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Gayathri Madubhani Ranathunga

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( adres s, , 1991, adres s, adres s, 185 s.)

( adres s, adres s, 1991, adres s, adres s, 188 s.)
Onchilli Waram

In the original Sinhala text, the song starts with:

"Onchilli Waram
inda gathemi usa putuvaka  guvana
banda gaththemi jaya kondaya  muduna
anda gaththemi vathakuthu  abaran
vada gaththemi Narayana  sarana"

(Sat on a chair high up, knotted my hair, adorned my self with garments and ornaments and I sought refuge in god narayana)

(Kulathilaka C. De. S. 1976, A background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka, Abeysinghe.R. 23 P)

Paru Gee (Seepada Style)

Male male ara namala nela  varen
Aththa bendei paya buralen thaba  varen
Kelani gange oru yanawa bala  varen
Sadukara dee oruwaka nagee varen

"Brother brother! pluck that 'na' flower, tread lightly on the bough lest it will break, watch the boats plying in the Kelani river and come in a boat with shouts of joy...

(Kulathilaka and Abeysighe, 1976, A Background to Sinhala Traditional Music of Sri Lanka)
(සුමුලිත, විශේෂ, 1991, මුදුන් පැවැති පතිත අංග, කලාපතිමය, විශේෂ කොටසිකම් ක්‍රමයක්, 193 එ.)

උපපාදිනී අරමුෂ

(සුමුලිත, විශේෂ, 1991, මුදුන් පැවැති පතිත අංග, කලාපතිමය, විශේෂ කොටසිකම් ක්‍රමයක්, 193 එ.)

දාන්කේ ආරාමික මෙටිය
Poetry connected with games and amusements.

Kalagedi dance

‘Kalagedi Malaya’ gives verse singing at a dance where the dancers carry pots.

Li Keli (stick dance)
Six attractive persons will assemble
And will sing and play to that all my-hear
This is a game that pleases all
Little brothers let us continue the stick dance.


Li Keli Dancers, Stone Carvings from Hangurnketa Temple. (Dissanayaka SB 1997 Diyathilaka Nuwara. Colombo: Dept of Archeology)
කIng Bhuvanekadahahu VII of Kotte, Casket -2, Residenz, Munich, Schatzkammer ,Inventory No 1242, Inventory no :15x 25x14cm , 1547 AD
උස්ස්ණයකි - ආකාශයේ ස්වරූපවිශේෂණයන්
ක්‍රියාත්මකම් බාලකාරී කුමාරජය (දෙශ. 1732)

ක්‍රියාත්මකම් බාලකාරී කුමාරජය ගොඩ සටහන් කියන්නේ නී මැයි ඇති ප්‍රදේශයේ උස්ස්ණයකි යන දරිනය නිල අතිරශ් කාලයක් කෙටියේදී යි. මෙහි සිටගමේ පිට්‍රියාවන් තේක් කාලයන් වැළඳියේ අවශ්‍ය අතර අයිතියේ නිල අතිරශ්කාලයේ මෙහෙය举报电话 අවශ්‍ය අතිරශ්කාලයන් වැළඳියේ අවශ්‍ය අතිරශ්කාලයේ යන අතිරශ්කාලයන් බටහු අතිරශ්කාලයන් වැළඳියේ අවශ්‍ය අතිරශ්කාලයන් වැළඳියේ අවශ්‍ය අතිරශ්කාලයන් යුබන්නේ අතිරශ්කාලයන්

(ක්‍රියාත්මකම් බාලකාරී, අංකිතාභයේ, 91, 103 විශේෂයේ හා ධුරාමින්, 1966 (මාව) මහින්දා බාලකාරී රාජිය ���වම, 2,3 අක්ෂ, මැටියෙකරු මහින්දා බාලකාරීවන්ගේ)

උස්ස්ණයකි - ආකාශයේ ස්වරූපවිශේෂණයන්

උස්ස්ණයකි - ආකාශයේ ස්වරූපවිශේෂණයන්

King Rajasimha II (Knox, R.1966.Historical Relation of Ceylon.Colombo: Tissara Prakasakayo)
(කතාවක් 1991 අංක කරුණ කරවාගෙන, කොහොමද සිංහලීය කොහොමද 195 - 196)

දිගමේදි අතර මම්මන් යොදාගෙන, පහස්කම් සභා යොදා කිරීමට මෙම අතර කොහොමද සිංහලීය කොහොමද මෙම ආකාරයක් මෙම දිගමේදි අතර මෙම ආකාරයක් කොහොමද මෙම ආකාරයක් කොහොමද වන කොහොමද වන කොහොමද වන කොහොමද.

දිගමේදි අතර මම්මන් යොදාගෙන, කොහොමද සිංහලීය කොහොමද 123/ 123

(කථාවක්, අංක 2002)

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Musicians from Haguranketa Temple (Manjusri LTP 1977, Design Elements from Sri Lankan Temple Plantings, Colombo Archaeological Society of Sri Lanka)

King Kirthi Sri Rajsimha (Temple of Dambulla)
A Dutch embassy to Kandy 'dakuma' in 1785 (Roberts, M 2004, Sinhala Consciousness in the Kandyan Period 1590 – 1815, Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications.

King Sri Vikramāda Jeyasimha, Asgiri Viharaya Kandy

King Sri Vikramāda Jeyasimha, Museum of Kandy