

Visual Responses of Buddhist Art to Colonial Politics (AD 1800-1920)

J. A. V. N. Jayathilaka

Abstract

The abundant use of the modified British coat of arms and portraits of the British monarch at prominent locations of Buddhist monasteries in the Low Country is one of the most enigmatic issues in Sri Lankan art history. The main research question addressed in the study is: What were the visual responses embedded in these political depictions in Buddhist art to colonial politics at the time? Three specific hypotheses that derived from a general hypothesis - political and socio-religious dynamics in the British colonial period made a direct impact on the presence of colonial political elements in Buddhist art - were tested. The three specific hypotheses were that the colonial political depictions were incorporated into Buddhist art; (i) to show loyalty and gain the goodwill of the colonizer; (ii) to gain validity for non-*Siam* fraternities; and (iii) to resist the British power and hegemony of the colonizer. A sample of twenty temples from the Low-country region were selected and their wall decorations were examined using semiotics. It was found that the presence of the modified British emblems and the portraits of the British monarch in Buddhist art is not merely a random phenomenon, but a reflection of a significant visual response associated with a number of socio-political and religious undercurrents during the colonial era. It was also found that these depictions reflect a collective response of the temple artists, custodian monks and temple patrons in which the artists played a decisive role in visualizing the collective responses adopting appropriate visual signs, codes and formulas. Until the 1880s, the colonial political depictions have been used to find validity within the colonial situation, show loyalty towards the British government and gain the goodwill of the colonizer. However, during the period from the 1880s to 1920s, the colonial political depictions have been used to promote Buddhist power and resist to the power of the colonizer. As a result, a number of changes such as incorporating Buddhist symbols into the British emblem, removing the symbol of the imperial crown, integrating texts promoting Buddhist power, transforming the British monarch into a worshipper of the Buddha, changing locations and scales of the images of British royals, and embedding new emblems instead of that of the colonizer appeared in colonial political depictions. No colonial political depictions can be seen after the 1920s although the British ruled the island until 1948 due to the crises-ridden background between the Buddhist activists and the British administrators. This absence of the colonial political signifiers that were once used to promote British colonial power can be interpreted as a response of resistance to the colonial power and denial of the hegemony of the colonizer. Thus, implications of these depictions have been changed from time to time through inspirations of both pro-colonial and anti-colonial ideologies, discourses and paradigms, during the British colonial period.

Keyword

Sri Lankan Art, Buddhist Art, Colonialism, Semiotics, Political Signifiers

1.1 Introduction

The abundant use of the modified British coat of arms and images of the British monarch at prominent locations of Buddhist monasteries in the southern and western maritime provinces (the Low-country), is one of the important issues in Sri Lankan Buddhist art during the colonial era (Jayathilaka 2009: 53-57). The majority of those depictions are placed at the most prominent locations at the temples such as atop the façades of image houses, over the main entrances to sanctums, on the archways to *stūpas*, above the main doorways to preaching halls, etc. It can be observed that temple artists have purposely integrated a number of new visual signifiers into these political depictions by changing their traditional codes. Consequently, conventional denotations of these depictions have changed, generating a wide range of new connotations.

Replicas of *stūpas*, Sinhala texts, local flags, indigenous symbols, etc. are among new signifiers embedded into the British the coat of arms. At times, some of the key signifiers of the British emblem such as the imperial crown, the sovereign's motto, and the quartered shield have been removed. For instance, the imperial crown of the British emblem on the façade of Alutgama Kandē Vihāraya has been replaced by a replica of the *stūpa*, thereby making the *stūpa* stand out as the most dominant visual element in the depiction (Figure 1). Also, the modified British coat of arms at Ambalangoḍa Sunandārāmaya contains the text *BUDDHIST ERA 2430*, replacing the British motto *HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE* (Figure 2).

Concerning the representations of the British monarch, Queen Victoria (1837-1901) is portrayed as a superior and majestic-looking character surrounded by the *makara toraṇa* as found in Kataluwa Pūrwārāmaya and Kōṭṭē Raja Mahā Vihāraya (Plates 03 and 04). At times, the same queen has been depicted as a worshiper of the Buddha as found in Polwatta Gangārāma Vihāraya (Figure 5). In some of her portraits, the British empress has been transformed into ‘a double-coded queen’ by inserting textual captions referring to historical Buddhist queens (*e.g.* Toṭagamuwa Subhadrārāmaya) or presented as ‘an indigenolized queen’ by changing her physical characteristics (*e.g.* Karagampitiya Subōdhārāmaya) (Plates 06 and 07).

Thus, the modified British coat of arms and the portraits of the British monarch in Buddhist art are found with a significant diversity, variability and multiplicity. Due to the complex juxtaposition of visual elements that has come from two opposing contexts, one from the colonizer and the other from the colonized, they seem an intriguing hybridity and confrontation of visual signifiers. It allows the generation of a number of new connotative meanings apart from the conventional denotations of the British emblem and royal portraiture. Hence, this paper attempts to answer the research question: What were the visual responses embedded in the modified British coats of arms and the portraits of the British monarch in Buddhist art to colonial politics?

1.2 Theoretical & Methodological Framework

This study uses semiotics as the key analytical methodology to decode the meanings of the modified British coat of arms and images of the British monarch in Buddhist art. Semiotics can be interpreted as a systematic study of signs and their meanings that can be adopted to a vast range of research areas including visual arts. Articulating this wider usage, Eco (1976: 7) states “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as signs”. Semiotics has power to recognize and analyze meaningful relationships in a vast range of human activities and human products, including artistic creations (Edgar and Sedgwick 2006: 350-355). A number of previous works, for example those by Metz (1974), Eaton (1981), Barthes (1985; 2006), Umiker-Sebeok (1987) Jensen (1995), have already proved that this theory can be used in reading denotations, connotations and myths in a vast range of research areas.

The key reason to select semiotics for this study is that the colonial political depictions comprise of a corpus of visual signs drawn from two opposing contexts - one from the colonizer and the other from the colonized. This intriguing juxtaposition of multi-cultural visual signs such as images of Queen Victoria, dexter supporter, sinister supporter, *stūpas*, local flags, and Sinhala and English texts allow new connotations to generate outside their conventional denotations. When the signs of the colonizer appear in the Buddhist religious context, they do not imply the same meanings as they would do in a Western socio-political context (Costache 2012: 171). Therefore, an analytical methodology that can address such complex behaviors of the signs is needed in the meaning making process. Semiotics offers a powerful set of analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to a broader system of meanings.

This study followed the qualitative research method, which is widely used in art historical researches. A sample of twenty-six political representations at the temples either constructed or renovated during the period from 1800 to 1920 was used in the study (See Appendix 01). Data of the selected sample were collected through site visits: visual inspection of artworks at the location and re-examination of their enlarged, recorded images. Semiotics was used as the key analytical methodology for decoding and interpreting the meanings of the selected visual texts. Also, archival records, manuscripts at temple libraries, documents of the colonial writers, inscribed plaques related to monastic work, contemporary newspapers, direct personal interviews, and works of previous scholars were used as sources of information.

1.3 Socio-political Context

Production of art is not confined only to an aesthetic purpose, but involves many other purposes such as expressing social chaos, protesting injustice, reflecting socio-cultural contexts, revealing hidden truths, raising social consciousness, etc. (Rathus 2004: 01-23). As such, it can be identified that the presence of the modified British emblems and the British monarch in Buddhist art was not merely for a decorative purpose, but was a significant reaction of Buddhists community to colonial politics during the British era. This particular phenomenon has to be understood focusing on all major socio-political and religious dynamics in the colonial situation.

The British colonial period (1796-1948) was one of the most crucial and effervescent epochs of Sri Lankan history where many social, political, religious and economic changes occurred. Prior to the British, two European settlers, the Portuguese (1505-1658) and the Dutch (1658-1796), had occupied the maritime region, in succession. The British established their power in the island in 1796 by initially taking over the Dutch territories of the coastal belt, and subsequently conquering the whole island in 1815 by seizing the last Sinhalese kingdom in Kandy (de Silva 1981: 210-264). They ruled the island until granting the independence in 1948.

During the period under investigation, the southern and western maritime provinces of the island were known as the Low-country (*Pātarāṭa/ Pahatarāṭa*) while the central highlands (Kandy) was known as the Up-country (*Uḍarāṭa*). As suggested by Davy (1821: 139) and Coomaraswamy (1908: 11), *Uḍarāṭa* and *Pātarāṭa* division began to appear in Sri Lankan society since the late Portuguese era. Within the indigenous context, the terms *Uḍarāṭa* and *Pātarāṭa* do not merely hold geographical implications, but contain particular hierarchical values: *Uḍarāṭa* as a term associated with superior or high-class, while *Pātarāṭa* as a term referring to inferior or low-class. According to Kandyan standards, all castes in the Low-country such as *Salāgama*, *Karāva*, and *Durāva* were considered inferior to *Govigama* caste in the Up-country.

As a result of the *Uḍaraṭa* and *Pāṭaraṭa* division, the Buddhist organization was also divided into two bodies as the Kandyan Buddhist establishment and the Low-country Buddhist establishment. Following the re-establishment of Kandyan higher ordination under the royal patronage in 1753, all monasteries in the island came under the jurisdiction of the Kandyan Buddhist establishment (Malalgoda 1976: 67-69). However, the dominance of the Kandyan monks was changed as a result of the emergence of new fraternities such as the *Amarapura* (1803), *Kalyāṇivaṃsa* (1810), and *Rāmañña* (1864) in the Low-country. New fraternities developed into independent bodies with the support of colonial bourgeois during the 19th century. The majority of the modified British emblems and the portraits of the British monarch are found in the temples of these new fraternities.

1.3.1 Buddhist Establishment in the Low-country

The hostile religious policy of the early colonial settlers caused a decline of Buddhist power in the Low-country. Buddhist monasteries in the maritime region were directly subjected to violence of the Portuguese and the early Dutch rulers, such as destruction of influential Buddhist temples, plundering of monastic properties, assigning temple lands to missionaries, prohibiting public Buddhist rituals, and forcing the subjects to profess Christianity (Ribeiro 1847; Queyroz 1930: 300-301; *Boudha Toraturu Parīkṣka Vārtāwa* 1956; de Silva 1973; Arasaratnam 1958). Consequently, quality and discipline of the Buddhist monks declined and the order of the monks was reduced to unordained monks known as *ganinnānsē* and *silvattāna* by the mid-18th century (*Mandārapura Puwata* 1958: 823, 824 verses; *Sulu Rājāwaliya* 1959: 42).

A resurgence of the Low-country Buddhist establishment can be seen after the restoration of the higher ordination for Buddhist monks named as the *Siam* fraternity in 1753 (Malalgoda 1976: 62-63; *Chūlavamaṃsa* Chap. 100, 137-138 verses). The monks in the maritime region obtained their higher ordination from the Kandyan monks and studied at educational centers in the Up-country known as *Śilpaśālā* (*Mandārapura Puwata* 1958: 155, 643, 644 verses; Devaraja 1995: 292). However, a segregation between the Kandyan monks and the Low-country monks emerged in 1768 as the former decided to restrict higher ordination under the *Siam* fraternity, only to monks of the *Govigama* caste (*Mandārapura Puwata* 1958: vv. 823-62). This decision unsettled the Low-country monks, most of whom belonged to non-*Govigama* castes and their repeated appeals for higher ordination were rejected by the Kandyan monks. This situation paved the way for the emergence of several influential new fraternities that offered higher ordination to non-*Govigama* monks in the Low-country during the 19th century (Malalgoda 1976: 103-104).

The first new fraternity, *Amarapura*, brought from Burma, was set up by a senior *Salāgama* monk, Ven. Ambagahapitiyē Ñānawimala, with the support of a group of elites of the same caste in 1803. Neither the Kandyan Buddhist establishment nor the Kandyan king endorsed the establishment of *Amarapura*. However, disregarding all resistances, more new fraternities such as *Kalyāṇivaṃsa* (1810), *Rāmañña* (1864), and their sub-divisions such as *Amarapura Dharmarakkhita* (1807), *Amarapura Mūlavamaṃsa* (1834), and *Amarapura Śrī Saddhammavaṃsa* (1862) emerged in quick succession (*Sinhala Viśvakōṣaya* Vol. I, 1963: 640-643). As non-*Govigama* monks were allowed to obtain higher ordination under new fraternities, the order of monks in the Low-country began to expand quickly (Malalgoda 1976: 87-139, 191-242).

1.3.2 Relationship between the Low-country Monks and the British Colonial Government

Avoiding unnecessary clashes with the colonizer, most of the senior monks in the Low-country who belonged to both *Siam* and non-*Siam* fraternities, for example Ven. Karatoṭa Dhammārāma, Ven. Gāllē Mēdhaṅkara, Ven. Valgama Dhammānanda, Ven. Hikkaduvē Sumangala, etc. seem to have attempted to maintain an amicable relationship with the British government. The harmonious relationship between the Low-country monks and the colonial government is reflected in favors extended to the Low-country monks over the Up-country monks. An illustration of the positive relationship and consequent favors of the colonizer was the offering of the incumbency of *Srīpāda* - a position that traditionally belonged to the *Malwatta Chapter* of Kandy - to Ven. Gāllē Mēdhaṅkara from the Low-country (Malalgoda 1976: 86).

The Low-country monks also carried out numerous activities to gain the goodwill of the British colonial government. Eulogizing the British monarch and members of the royal family in poetry, celebrating royal anniversaries at temples, sending letters expressing faithfulness to the British rule, and organizing welcome ceremonies for British governors are some examples of such favors. Ven. Hikkaḍuwē Sumangala, Ven. Taṅgallē Siri Sumanatissa, and Ven. Siṭṭināmaluwē Dharmārāma have composed such eulogizing poems on Queen Victoria and members of the royal family (Sumanasiri 2001: 32; Gunasena 1999: 272-274, 387-389). Moreover, construction of the bell tower of Vidyodaya Pirivena at Maligakanda in Colombo and planting of the *Bo* tree of Pratiṛāja Maha Pirivena in Kalutara were done to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

Affiliation of the Low-country monks to the colonial system of administration, education, and conversion enabled the monks to maintain smoother contacts with the colonial government. For example, some of the chief monks like Ven. Vāliṭhara Ñānatilaka, Ven. Demaṭaṭiṭiyē Saṅgharakkhita and Ven. Vāligama Śrī Sumangala came from the families of local officials who served the colonial government (Dharmabandu 1949: 23-31, 78). Also, before entering the order, some monks such as Ven. Waskaduvē Subhūthi, Ven. Kahavē Rathanasāra, and Ven. Mohottiwattē Gunānanda received a Western-based education at missionary schools (Fernando 2003: 48-49; Dharmabandu 1949: 50-51; Gunasena 1997: 149). These amicable relationships that developed between the Low-country monks and the British colonial government was an important matter for this study.

1.3.3 Shift in the Patronage for Temple Construction

Patronage of new elites in the Low-country, particularly by the class of *Mudaliyars* in temple constructions and Buddhist religious activities, is another noteworthy development in the late colonial period (Jayathilaka 2015:155-169). The majority of these elites belonged to a *comprador* class made up of those who converted to Christianity to secure high positions in the administration, schooling for children, to enter into business, to receive legal recognition to marriages and land ownership, etc. Some of them made enormous profits by venturing into new trades such as mining, liquor, plantation, and furniture (de Silva 1981: 335-337). Entering into such non-traditional business undertakings helped *Karāve*, *Durāve*, and *Salāgama* castes that were considered low castes according to Kandyan standards, acquire elite status or be a status group in colonial society.

The majority of the new elites had professed Christianity, the official religion of the colonizer, nominally so as to avoid harassments by colonizer or gain benefits offered by the colonial systems (Malalgoda 1976: 31). Some of the elites were lay pupils of the Low-country monks and, therefore, close ties of friendship between the monks and the new elites were quite common (Pieris 1918: 136). The patronage of the new elites was often repaid by monks by

praising them in eulogies and supporting them to spread their power among the local populace (Malalgoda 1976: 96, 206).

While supporting the religious organization, the new elites also carried out many activities to gain the goodwill of the colonial masters. Those activities included organizing anniversary ceremonies of the British royals, displaying the British coat of arms at their residences (*wallawwas*), launching publications to boost the image of Queen Victoria, commencing schools under the names of the British royals, and organizing banquets for visits of the British princes (Jayathilaka 2016). This elite patronage was one of the noteworthy factors that had a serious impact on the integration of the modified British coat of arms and the portraits of the British monarch in Buddhist art.

1.3.4 British Policy towards the Buddhist Establishment

The policy of the British colonial government had a relatively positive effect on the Buddhist establishment in the Low-country compared to Portuguese and Dutch policies. For instance, granting freedom of faith to all subjects of the British territories in AD 1796 was a relief for the Buddhist community who remained a marginalized religious group under the Portuguese and Dutch (Wimalarathna 1995: 213). Consequently, a large number of temples were renovated and constructed in the maritime regions during the British period. The British religious policy was also not an obstacle for establishing new fraternities, launching Buddhist publications, and opening Buddhist schools and *pirivenas*.

The British supported some of the Buddhist monks in the Low-country due to the latter's amicable and smooth relationships with the colonizer. This support included providing the monks with monthly allowances, offering material donations to temples, helping expositions of sacred relics, and attending Buddhist festivals and ceremonies. The grants provided by the British Governors Robert Brownrig (1812-1820) and Edward Barnes (1824-1831) to Ven. Karatoṭa Dhammārama (1727-1827), the support of Governor Arthur Hamilton (1883-1890) to Ven. Hikkaḍuwē Sumangala (1826-1911) for an exposition of relics, and furniture donated by the British government to Veheragampīṭa Raja Mahā Vihāraya are some examples in this respect (Weerasuriya 1972: 43; Dharmabandu 1949: 17-18; Ven. Telullē Nandālōka, interview with researcher, August 12, 2014).

From a political perspective, this 'good-will response' of the British colonial government can be interpreted as a part of their strategy to maintain the colonial powerbase in the island in a smooth manner. For example, the Acts of Appointment (*Actapatra*) granted by the British government to the chief monks show that the colonizer has tactfully assigned certain duties to the monks, such as reporting conspiracies against colonial rule, supporting the government agents in carrying out their duties, and implementing government orders obediently (SLNA 5/63/22 -2). However, such amicable approaches of the British government, whether done with an honest intention or not, contributed to the growth of Buddhist power in the maritime provinces.

Even though the British policy made a relatively positive impact on the Buddhist establishment in the Low-country, it left a negative effect on the Kandyan Buddhist establishment. The British colonial government took a number of steps to control Kandyan Buddhist power, namely, instigating disputes among the influential chief monks to weaken their power, prohibiting the *Daladā Perahāra*, removing the monthly allowance given to the Temple of the Tooth, confiscating monastic lands for plantation, etc. (Malalgoda 1976: 119-121; Wimalarathna 1995: 217; de Silva 1965: 197-198). Furthermore, the British officially opened Kandyan territories for missionary activities by building churches in villages and opening missionary schools. Thus,

the British colonial rule paved the way for diminishing the power of the Kandyan Buddhist establishment by the late 19th century (Malalgoda 1976: 128).

1.3.5 Influence of the Victorian Government

The image of Queen Victoria (AD 1837-1901) is the most prevalent royal figure among the depictions of European rulers in Buddhist art. Visual manifestations of the British empress can be seen at a number of temples such as Kōṭṭē Raja Mahā Vihāraya, Vālihinda Śrī Sudarśanārāmaya, Kataluwa Pūrwāramaya, Karagampiṭiya Subōdhārāmaya, etc. Since Queen Victoria became the ruler of the British colonies in 1837, the Buddhist establishment in Ceylon needed the approval of the queen or her agents in the island to function as a legal body within the colonized space. Also, the reign of Queen Victoria marks the lengthiest individual reign among all monarchs of colonial Ceylon.

It seems that the religious policy of the reign of Queen Victoria was favorable for the expansion of Buddhist power in the maritime provinces. For instance, a large number of temples, including those of the new fraternities, were constructed and renovated during this period. The Victorian government also did not prevent Buddhist activities such as opening Buddhist schools, commencing *pirivenas*, starting Buddhist newspapers, and organizing religious ceremonies. Moreover, the Victorian government provided some Buddhist schools, monks, and leading *pirivenas* such as the Vidyōdaya Pirivena (1872), monthly or annual allowances (*Viyōdaya Ardha Śatasamvatsara Kalāpaya* 1923: 20).

Victorian era marks the culmination of the Industrial Revolution with Britain emerging as the most powerful and advanced European colonial power. This superiority had an impact not only on Ceylon, but across the world, wiping out uncertainty and doubt regarding Britain's position as a power across the globe. This made the British empress a globally powerful personality who paved the way to consolidate Victorian structures, social codes, and value systems in British colonies under imperial power (Selkirk 1844: 60; Jayawardena 2007). Also, Victorian society had a strict code of ethics, values, and morals related to family, motherhood, womanhood, gender relationships, and social life that were also acceptable to the Buddhist community. For instance, members of Victorian society were expected to live upright lives and not engage in excessive drinking, improper sexual behavior, or display the body in any erotic way (Billington 1988: 116-130; Briggs 1988: 10-26). These reasons contributed to make Queen Victoria a prominent figure among Buddhist community.

1.3.6 Influence of the Buddhist Nationalist Movement

The Buddhist Nationalist Movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is another significant development, as it influenced the depictions of the modified British emblems and the images of the British monarch in Buddhist art. Grouping of the Low-country Buddhist monks into one league in the 1860s to achieve some collective goals and to react to challenges of Christian missionaries, laid the foundation for developing the Buddhist Nationalist Movement (Malalgoda 1976: 224). Success of the Buddhist monks in the religious debate at Panadura (*Pānadurā Vādaya*) in 1873 against the missionaries, consequent arrival of influential Western intellectuals to support Buddhist activities since 1880, expansion of Buddhist education, growth in the number of Buddhist publications, and emergence of a new group of notational Buddhist leaders are some of the noteworthy events of the Buddhist Nationalist Movement.

Along with the growth of the Buddhist Nationalist Movement, certain changes can be identified in the colonial political depictions in Buddhist art. Incorporation of replicas of *stūpas* into the British coat of arms replacing the imperial crown, as found in Alutgama Kandē Vihāraya, is one such change. Shifting the placement of the portraits of the British monarch from the prominent location of temple walls to a less significant location is another change. Moreover, incorporation of texts referring to Buddhist power into the modified emblems (e.g. Ambalangoḍa Sunandārāmaya), reducing the scale of the British coat of arms (e.g. Veheragalla Samudragiri Vihāraya), depicting images of the British monarch as a worshiper of the Buddha (e.g. Polwatta Gangārāma Vihāraya), and invention of new emblems for temple decorations instead of the British coat of arms (e.g. Pānadura Rankot Vihāraya) are among other changes.

The Buddhist nationalist movement led to the development of anti-colonial discourses within Ceylonese society. For example, many pro-Buddhist publications such as *Sarasavi Sandarāsa*, *The Buddhist*, *Sinhala Jāthiya*, and *Sinhala Bouddhayā* published articles criticizing colonial policies (Malagoda 1976: 248-249; Bandara 2007: 268-275). Buddhist schools too implemented certain anti-colonial activities by refusing to sing the blessing song for the British monarch, teaching a new version of pro-Buddhist history, and promoting anti-imperialist attitudes among students (Jayawardena 2004: 32, 63-64). Additionally, the campaign of Buddhist leaders such as Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864-1933), A.E. Buultjens (1865-1916), and Walisinghe Harishchandra (1876-1913) who criticized the colonial system in public, were considered as adversaries to British power in the island.

This circumstance led to develop crises between the colonizer and the Buddhist leadership towards the late 19th century, as the former suspected that the growth of Buddhist nationalism could pose a threat to their powerbase in Ceylon. Marking a turning point in this new growth, the British rulers took strict actions against the Buddhist activists in 1915 by arresting Buddhist leaders, imposing the death penalty on some who were charged for anti-Muslim riots, and prohibiting pro-Buddhist publications (Jayawardena 2004: 163-187 and Jayawardena 2007: 268-273). The resultant deaths of several Buddhist leaders such as D.E. Pedris, R.A. Mirando, and E. Hewawitharana in 1915 caused irreplaceable damage to the goodwill that prevailed between the British and the Buddhist community.

Thus, the British policy towards the Buddhist campaign in the Low-country changed by the early 20th century, and in return, many Buddhist activists leaned towards the anti-colonial campaigns. The poetic works of Ven. S. Mahinda who criticized the backwardness of Ceylonese people in freeing themselves from British imperialism is one such example. The said crisis-ridden situation led to the collapse in the use of the British emblems and the British monarch in Buddhist art, by around the 1920s. Afterwards, neither the British emblem nor the portraits of the British royals were used in new temple projects although the British continued their rule in Ceylon until 1948.

1.4 Politics of Loyalty and Allegiance: Pro-colonial Representations from 1800 to 1870s

This study examined twenty-six modified British coats of arms and representations of British monarch found in the Low-country temples. As shown in Appendix I, eleven of them have been created during the period from 1800 to 1870s and rest of the others within 1870s-1920s. Organization of visual signifiers of the depictions done prior to the 1870s clearly indicate that they have been embedded with an idea of showing loyalty, allegiance or respect to the colonizer.

The modified British emblem at Dodamdūwa Śailabimbāramaya, for example, occupies the upper part of the central gable as the most dominant visual element of the whole façade (Figure 8). Its prominent location and pictorial scheme have made this emblem the key element in the

entire frontal elevation of the image house. The authors have carefully chosen only certain visual elements from the official British coat of arms for the composition that fits into the location. They are the figure of the lion, the figure of the unicorn, the imperial crown, and a medallion that is a substitute to the quartered shield of the British emblem. The shield supporters of the depiction - the lion and the unicorn - are relatively similar to those of the British coat of arms at the Galle Fort. Both supporters, with sharp gazes, are seen rearing and resting their forelegs on the medallion. The lion and the unicorn occupy a *superior* location on the upper part of the façade making the viewer or the reader, feel *inferior*. The crown, which is a significant sign of British imperial power, can be seen atop the medallion. According to the up-down *syntagm* in semiology, the imperial crown is the most dominant visual signifier of the whole composition. Further enhancing the supremacy of the crown, the lion and the unicorn, which are in audacious and heroic gestures, are placed as guardians of the crown. The monochrome sculptured British coat of arms with similar implications are found at Doḍamdūwa Kumāra Mahā Vihāraya, Kalutara Aśokārāma Mahā Vihāraya, Potuṭṭiya Vālukarama Mahā Vihāraya, and Ambagahapṭiya Mūla Mahā Vihāraya.

In the early depictions of Queen Victoria, she has presented as a powerful, dominant and superior personality. Among the frequently used features in these depictions are; (a) the prominent location above the main entrances, (b) the centralized position of the queen in the pictorial schemes, (c) the guardian animals she was accompanied with, (d) the presence of *makara toraṇa* decoration, (e) the decorative surrounding filled with celestial beings and floral motifs, and (f) the hierarchically superior position above the eye-level of the viewer. The depictions of Queen Victoria at Kōṭṭē Rajamahā Vihāraya, Vālihinda Śrī Sudarśanārāmaya, and Kataluwa Pūrvārāmaya are some examples.

The painted portrait of Queen Victoria at Kōṭṭē Raja Mahā Vihāraya, for instance, is crowned with elegant *makara toraṇa* decorations, surrounded by a group of local deities (Figure 4). Two energetic guardian lions are also placed on both sides of the queen in this manifestation. Moreover, the two of portraits of Queen Victoria at Vālihinda Śrī Sudarśanārāmaya are shown at a hierarchically superior location above the powerful demonic manifestations of Śiva-Vatuka and Śiva-Aghore, at the main doorways to Viṣṇu and Kataragama *Dēvālēs* deities (Figure 9). Both images of the queen are accompanied by two guardian lions as in the previous depiction. The deep red background, demonic Śiva, relatively large scale of the manifestation, sharp-gaze of the queen, and the location above the doorway to the *Dēvālēs* in those depictions have made the British queen an imposing figure. Moreover, the painted portrait of Queen Victoria accompanied by the shield supporters of the British emblem and dragon arch decoration above the entrance to the sanctum of Kataluwa Pūrvārāmaya is another depiction showing the hegemony and supremacy of the British queen (Figure 3).

Several common characteristics that reflect the dominant position of the modified British emblems and images of the British queen can be identified. The first characteristic is that these depictions are placed at hierarchically prominent locations of the temples (e.g. on top of the main façades, on the lunettes of the main doorways or on the archways). In a Buddhist religious space, none of those locations are neutral as they are often devoted to images of powerful deities, *Bōdhisattvas* or spiritual symbols. When colonial political depictions appear at such locations, they inevitably receive a hierarchical significance assigned by the locational context. The second characteristic is that these depictions are positioned above the eye-level of the viewer keeping a considerable physical distance between the depiction (*the observed*) and the viewer (*the observer*). According to ‘modes of address’ in semiology, this physical distance and the location show that the viewer is encouraged to look at the colonial political depictions assigning the image a superior identity. For example, the modified British emblem at Śailabimbārāmaya is placed on the extreme upper part of the main façade and such physical

restrictions are a common feature in visual representations expressing ‘power’ and ‘authority’. The third characteristic of the colonial political depictions is that the visual signifiers representing ‘imperial power’ are often shown as the nucleus of the information. As spatial syntagmatic relations of those depictions reveal, the symbol of the imperial crown or the image of the British monarch are always placed at the most dominant and central positions of the composition. Spatial syntagmatic relations in the depictions at Śailabimbārāmaya and Kurama Mahā Vihāraya are two examples in this respect.

The fourth characteristic is that a number of visual elements such as dragon arch decorations, celestial beings, guardian deities, floral motifs, devils and demonic figures were placed around the depictions of the British monarch creating energetic environments for the British royals. Examples can be seen at Kottē Raja Mahā Vihāraya, Vālihinda Śrī Sudarśanārāmaya, Kataluwa Pūrwārāmaya, etc. According to the *context of the display* in semiotic analysis, artworks acquire meanings not only from their own signs but also from those of the surrounding imageries or environments that were on shared locations or through explicit cross-referencing. In the same way, the energetic environments around those depictions enhanced the visual dominance of the British monarch.

The fifth characteristic is that, until the final quarters of the 19th century, no Buddhist symbols were embedded into the central position of colonial political depictions, disrupting the dominance of signifiers of the colonizer. This means, the visual elements of those colonial political depictions were chosen and arranged without changing their typecast denotations assigned by the colonial political context. The arrangements of visual signifiers of the depictions at Dodamdūwa Śailabimbārāmaya, Dodamdūwa Kurama Mahā Vihāraya (emblem on the façade of the image house), Ambalangoḍa Sunandārāmaya (emblem on the façade of the image house), Ambahapīṭiya Mūla Mahā Vihāraya (emblem on the building on the left to the image house), Kōttē Raja Mahā Vihāraya, Vālihinda Śrī Sudarśanārāmaya, Kataluwa Pūrwārāmaya (two portraits inside the image house and the emblem on the archway to the stupa) and Potupīṭiya Vālukārāmaya are some examples in this respect.

Thus, until the final quarter of the 19th century, the pictorial schemes of the modified British coat of arms and portraits of the British monarch in Buddhist art mainly involved British-friendly or pro-colonial projects that were aimed at gaining the goodwill of the colonizer. Visual responses showing loyalty, allegiance and respect to the colonizer have to be viewed as part of a wider mechanism of the Low-country Buddhist establishment to survive within the colonized space. It seems that those pro-colonial projects were very successful, as the Low-country Buddhist establishment rapidly expanded. However, with the growth of Buddhist nationalist movement in the late-19th century, this pro-colonial behavior began to change and this new situation is discussed in the next sub-section.

1.5 Political Signifiers in Buddhist Art from the 1880s to 1920s

The Buddhist Nationalist Movement in the Low-country strongly influenced the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized since the 1880s. Uniting of the Low-country monks of *Siam*, *Amarapura*, *Kalyāṇawaṃśa*, and *Rāmañña* fraternities into one alliance forgetting their ideological differences paved the way to form this movement in an organized manner. Theoretical victory of the Buddhist camp at *Pānadurā Vādaya* against missionary activities, support of influential Western intellectuals to Buddhist campaigns, pro-Buddhist campaigns of the Buddhist Theosophical Society, impact of Buddhist education, response of pro-Buddhist newspapers, discourses of the lay Buddhist leadership against imperialism, etc. were among the most decisive developments of the Buddhist Nationalist Movement pertinent to this study.

In parallel to the growth of the Buddhist Nationalism, it is possible to identify a number of significant changes of the colonial political depictions. Integration of Buddhist symbols into hierarchically dominant positions of the modified British emblem is one such significant change. The symbol of the *stūpa* is the most prevalent signifier among them. Examples in this regard can be seen at Alutgama Kandē Vihāraya, Ambalangoda Sunanadārāmaya, Kalutara Aśōkārāma Mahā Vihāraya, and Koṭahēna Dīpaduttamārāmaya (Plates 01 and 02). In all of these instances, the symbol of *stūpa* is shown replacing the imperial crown or at central positions such as above the imperial crown or atop the medallion between the lion and the unicorn.

As a result of the incorporation of such Buddhist symbols into the British coat of arms in place of conventional European signifiers, the denotative meanings of the British emblem has been changed allowing room for new connotations. For instance, in the modified emblem at Alutgama Kandē Vihāraya, the symbol of the *stūpa* is placed atop the medallion replacing the imperial crown, which is an important signifier of British imperial power (Figure 1). Consequently, the conventional syntagm and implications of the British coat of arms are overturned, upgrading the *stūpa* into a commanding position in the composition. Also, the dexter supporter and the sinister supporter that typically appear as guardians of the imperial crown have become the supporters of the *stūpa*, implying an irony. The moulded upper edge of the façade has been made as a large aura for the *stūpa* to enhance the glorious appearance of the Buddhist symbol.

Concerning other depictions at Ambalangoda Sunanadārāmaya, Kalutara Aśōkārāma Mahā Vihāraya and Koṭahēna Dīpaduttamārāmaya, the symbol of the *stūpa* has been placed at dominant positions of the modified emblems. For instance, the symbol of the *stūpa* in the depiction of *Satsati-Gē* at Ambalangoda Sunanadārāmaya is positioned above the imperial crown (Figure 2). According to its up-down syntagmatic relation, the Buddhist symbol is in a hierarchically superior position, than the imperial crown of the colonizer. Also, flags and celestial beings painted at either side of the *stūpa* have created a setting that expresses a sense of ‘glory’ of the Buddhist symbol. The modified emblem at Kalutara Aśōkārāmaya does not have the imperial crown, and instead, a replica of the *stūpa* is placed in the position of the crown making the Buddhist symbol look like the heart of the composition. In the modified British emblem at Koṭahēna Dīpaduttamārāmaya, the *stūpa* was placed between the medallion and the crown, implying a feeling of ‘a crowned *stūpa*’.

In addition to the *stūpa*, several symbols that are popular in local Buddhist art practice, for example stylized representations of the sun, the moon, and figures of local deities can be identified in the colonial political depictions. The moulded British emblem on the archway to the *stūpa* at Kalutara Pulīnatalārāmaya contains this type of solar and lunar symbols on the upper part of the emblem along with three asterisks. These asterisks apparently imply a sentiment of the triple gems - *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Samgha*. Another representation of the moon and a bust of a god with a large aureole; seemingly an image of the Sun God, can be seen in the modified emblem at Kalutara Ashokārāma Mahā Vihāraya. In indigenous iconology, those signifiers often symbolize divinity, eternity or prosperity (Coomarasawamy 1908).

Integration of textual captions or mottos referring to Buddhist power is another significant change in the late-19th century. The emblem bearing the wordings, *BUDDIST ERA 2430*, at Ambalangoda Sunanadārāmaya is one such example (Figure 2). This text is shown in capitalized Roman script inside the medallion, replacing the colonizer’s motto, *HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE* (Evil to him who evil thinks). Capitalization has rendered a particular visual emphasis to this text, which implies a feeling of the dawn of a new Buddhist era. The embossed date of the emblem reveals that it has been made in 1887 (2430 in Buddhist years). Although Queen Victoria celebrated her Silver Jubilee in the same year, neither pictorial signs

nor textual captions referring to the British queen was incorporated into the depiction.

Another text inscribed in English, 'TILOKAṆATHA DATUṆṆIT ṆṆ', can be seen in the modified British coat of arms on the main façade of Alutgama Kandē Vihāraya. As in the previous text, this is also shown in capitalized Roman scripts inside the bottom banner of the emblem. The meaning of the whole text is not clear, but its first word - TILOKAṆATHA - means 'the lord who looks down with compassion at the three worlds - human, divine and *Brahma*'. Therefore, it is clear that this text has a religious meaning indicating spiritual qualities of the Buddha. Both texts in Kandē Vihāraya and in Sunanadārāmaya are presented with symbols of *stūpas* showing their religious affiliations.

Including dates given in the Buddhist year instead of the popular Western date system in colonial political depictions, is another popular practice in the late-19th century. These dates are mostly inscribed either in Sinhala letters or Arabic numbers inside the central medallion of the emblem (e.g. Ambagahapitiya Mūla Mahā Vihāraya, Amarapura Chūlaganṭṭinikayē Mūlastāna Vihāraya), on the bottom banner (e.g. Toṭagamuwa Subhadrārāmaya and Karagampitiya Subōdhārāmaya), or around the medallion (e.g. Ambalangoḍa Sunanadārāmaya). They usually refer to either the date of temple construction or origin of the temple. The use of the Buddhist year, instead of Western dating, could be a result of the expansion of Buddhist monastic education or rejection of the prevailing date system based on the birth of Jesus Christ.

Placing of the modified British emblems and portraits of the British monarch at relatively less-prominent locations and reducing their scales, are two other noteworthy changes. The miniature-looking painted British coat of arms bearing the date 1891 on the doorframe of Veheragalla Samudragiri Vihāraya is one such good example. Due to the small scale of this emblem, its visual dominance has been reduced. As a result, this emblem looks more like a decorative element among the floral designs on the doorframe than a political icon of British power. Images of Queen Victoria at Polwatta Gangārāmaya is an example for reduction of the scale of the queen, and making her a worshipper of the Buddha. The image of the queen at Maramba Purāna Raja Mahā Vihāraya is another example of changing locational prominence of royal portraiture.

The use of the British emblem as a decorative element for statues of the Buddha is another alteration in the latter decades of the 19th century. An example in this respect can be seen at the image house of Koṭahēna Dīpaduttamārāmaya. This modified emblem was placed behind a statue of the seated Buddha, along with some other European decorative motifs, creating a *torana*-looking decoration for the Buddha. This emblem appears to have been erected for a decorative purpose so as to create a glorious-looking background for the statue of the Buddha, rather than emphasizing a political meaning.

Depicting the images of the British royals with dual identities, binary implications and blurring their exact identity are significant characteristics in the late 19th century. The royal figures at Toṭagamuwa Subhadrārāmaya that are supposed to be of Queen Victorian and her husband, Prince Albert, is one good example. The Caucasian-looking fair complexion, the imperial crown atop the medallion, the shield supporters of the British emblem, Western attires and ornaments are among the signifiers of both portraits suggesting their European origin. Yet, the names written in small Sinhala letters in a less prominent manner below the portraits - Mahāmāya Dēvi and Suddhōdana Rajatumā - have assigned them a different identity relating to the mother and the father of the Bodhisattva Siddhartha (Figure 6).

Another depiction of the British monarch with dual identities is found at Karagampitiya Subodhārāmaya. In this case, physical appearance, complexion and attire of Queen Victoria is comparable to the characteristics of Sri Lankan women than those of a British royal lady (Figure 7). The absence of certain features such as the royal crown on the head, official shield supporters

of the British emblem and Caucasian physical features has blurred her Victorian identity giving an appearance of a non-European queen. Consequently, while representing the image of Queen Victoria, this depiction allows the viewer's own interpretations (connotations), replacing her with any Buddhist queens.

The representation of Queen Victoria at *Sūvisi Vivaraṇa* sequences at Polwatta Gangārāmaya is a useful example in understanding how the queen was made a subordinate figure to the Buddha. In this case, the British empress is presented in the gesture of worshipping the Buddha as a faithful devotee (Figure 5). The scale of the queen's images has also been reduced. Furthermore, the image of the queen who was supposed to be of Queen Victoria at Maramba Rajmahā Vihāraya, is pictured by the side of the doorway to the image house as a devotee who offers flowers to the Buddha. In both depictions, no *makara toraṇa*, guardian deities or guardian animals are placed and the both portraits have lost the prominent location on the lunette above the main entrance to the sanctum.

Incorporation of new emblems of Buddhist power instead of the British coat of arms is another important development in the late-19th century. The emblem on the main façade of Pānadura Rankoth Vihāraya that was built to memorialize and glorify the victory of the *Pānadurā Vādaya* is one good example. This emblem is presented as an icon of 'Buddhist power' since the temple was constructed to celebrate the victory of the Buddhists movement against missionary activities. The basic syntagm of the emblem is based on the symbol of the lion that represents Sinhalese ethnicity as well as the defender of religious law in Buddhism. The two figures of lions in the emblem that have well-formed physical features, occupy audacious gestures and watchful gazes, keeping their upper limbs on a shield with two crossed flags that look like two crossed swords. The gesture of those lions implies a feeling of warning to all rival forces of the Buddhist movement.

Accordingly, this discussion suggests that a series of noteworthy changes appeared in colonial political representations in Buddhist art from the 1880s to the 1920s. New dialogues and discourses, which were promoted by the Buddhist Nationalist Movement, seem to have directly influenced the emergence of such changes of colonial political depictions. The most shared characteristic in all those changes is the transformation of visual signifiers of colonial political depictions to promote Buddhist power, rather than highlighting the colonizer's power or showing allegiance to the colonizer and these prominent changes can be summarized in tabular form as follows (Table in Figure 1):

Change	Example
1. Incorporating the symbol of the <i>stūpa</i> at the central positions in the modified British coat of arms often replacing the imperial crown or placing the <i>stupa</i> at a hierarchically superior position to the imperial crown	E.g. The modified emblems with symbols of the <i>stūpa</i> at Alutgama Kandē Vihāraya, Ambalangoda Sunanadārāmaya, Kalutara Aśōkārama Mahā Vihāraya, Kotahēna Deepaduttamārāmaya
2. Depicting the modified British coat of arms with texts referring to Buddhist power instead of the colonizer's mottos	E.g. The wordings in the emblems of <i>Sathsati-Gē</i> at Ambalangoda Sunanadārāmaya and Alutgama Kandē Vihāraya
3. Incorporating dates in Buddhist years instead of the colonial dating system based on the birth of Jesus Christ	E.g. Ambalangoda Sunanadārāmaya, Karagampitiya Subōdhārāmaya, Dodamdūwa Kumara Mahā Vihāraya, Toṭagamuwa Subhadrārāmaya
4. Depicting the British monarch with dual identity by labeling the portraits of the British royals with the names of Buddhist queens/kings, changing their physical appearance to those who	E.g. Toṭagamuwa Subhadrārāmaya, nd Karagampitiya Subōdhārāmaya

are similar to indigenous queens, or removing some of the unique signifiers related to Queen Victoria (for instance the small crown and veil on the head)	
5. Reducing the scale of the colonial political depictions or placing them at relatively less-prominent locations	E.g. Veheragalla Samudragiri Vihāraya, Polwatta Gangārāmaya, Māramba Purāna Raja Mahā Vihāraya
6 Incorporating new signs of Buddhist symbolism relating to divinity, prosperity or protection such as the sun, Sun God, and the moon into the modified emblems	E.g. Kalutara Pulinatalārāmaya
7. Changing the gestures and poses of the images of the British monarch and making them devotees of the Buddha	E.g. Polwatta Gangārāmaya and Maramba Purāna Raja Mahā Vihāraya
8. Modifying the configurations of some of the dexter supporters (the lions) giving them an indigenialized identity	E.g. Ambalangoda Sunanadārāmaya and Dodamdūwa Kumara Mahā Vihāraya (Emblem at the preaching hall)
9. Placing the British coat of arms as a background decoration of the statues of the Buddha	E.g. Kotahena Dipadttamaramaya
10. Integrating new emblems showing Buddhist power instead of the modified coat of arms of the British colonial government	E.g. Pānadura Rankoth Vihāraya

Figure 1: Changes in Colonial Political Signifiers in Buddhist Art (from 1870s to 1920s).

1.6 Discussion: Politics of Buddhist Art

As discussed above, from 1800 to 1870s, the integration of colonial political signifiers into Buddhist art are mainly associated with showing allegiance to the colonial rule and surviving within the colonial situation. One of the key reasons that influenced the integration such depictions into Buddhist art was that the British were able to establish themselves as the most authoritative European power in the whole island after the conquer of the Kandy Kingdom in 1815. Consequently, the official custodianship of Kandyan rulers within the Buddhist organization collapsed and was replaced by British rulers who became the new authority for decision-making on Buddhist affairs in the entire island. Within this new situation, the goodwill, tolerance and support of the British rulers became a matter of vital importance for the Buddhist establishment to function as a legal body in colonial situation. Also, the British colonial government actively involved in many Buddhist affairs such as approving the appointments of chief monks, issuing Acts of Appointments for senior monks, granting allowances to certain temples, making decisions on monastic lands and properties, etc. In most cases, the British rulers strategically used their powers to keep the monks under their control. Contents of the Acts of Appointments issued by the British colonial government to chief monks reflect such secret agendas of the colonizer (SLNA 5/63/22 -2).

The Kandyan Buddhist establishment that was dominated by monks of the *Siam* fraternity (*Malwatta* and *Asgiri* Chapters) were never content with British rule as it disturbed their dominant position enjoyed under the Kandyan monarchy. Therefore, no long-lasting relationships were developed between the British and Kandyan monks. On the contrary, the approach of the Low-country monks towards British rule seems to be an amicable and strategic one. Since many of the Low-country monks successfully adapted to the colonial situation, they made efforts to avoid unnecessary disputes with the colonizer. As mentioned before, some monks established amicable contact with the colonizer by eulogizing the British monarch and

royal family members in poetry, celebrating the royal anniversaries at temples, sending letters expressing allegiance to the British rule, and organizing welcome ceremonies for British governors.

The British religious policy towards the Low-country monks was relatively favorable compared to those of the Portuguese and the Dutch and therefore, it had a number of relatively favourable effects upon the Low-country Buddhist establishment. For example, the British policy that respected religious practices of the colonial subjects was a relief for the Buddhist community in the maritime regions, whose previous generations had experienced religious hostility by the early colonial settlers. As a result, a large number of Buddhist monasteries were constructed and renovated in the Low-country during the British Era. Among other advancements during the British time were the expansion of Buddhist publications, translations of Pali texts into European languages, emergence of English medium Buddhist schools, establishment of Monastic Colleges for priests (*pirivenas*), celebration of Buddhist religious festivals, expansion of new chapters and fraternities such as *Amarapura*, *Kalyāṇivaṃsa* and *Ramañña*. In addition, philanthropic acts, including donations to local religious establishments were considered in granting the title of *Mudaliyar* to influential Ceylonese capitalists whatever their religion, during the reign of Queen Victoria. The British also allowed local officials in administrative positions to engage in Buddhist activities in public and supported some chief monks and selected temples by providing allowances or abolishing some taxes.

As mentioned before, most of the colonial political depictions are found at temples of non-*Siam* fraternities such as *Amarapura*, *Kalyāṇivaṃsa*, and *Rāmañña*. To understand this phenomenon, it is important to realize the crises faced by non-*Siam* fraternities in settling in the island. New fraternities that were set up with no royal or state patronage had a struggle of 'recognition' and 'legal validity' as they were rejected by the Kandyan Buddhist establishment and the king of Kandy - the authoritative body of Buddhist affairs in Sri Lanka. As a result, during the early decades of the 19th century, new fraternities struggled to be a recognized part of the Buddhist organization of Sri Lanka, which was dominated by the *Siam* fraternity.

The collapse of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815, however, nullified the decisions of the king of Kandy against non-*Siam* fraternities. This political change also restricted the power of Kandyan monks in Buddhist affairs of the island. Although the king of Kandy did not accept the new fraternities, the British rulers did not implement such adversary policies against new fraternities probably due to their liberal religious policy. In addition, lay patrons who supported new fraternities had affiliations with the colonial government. For example, *Salāgama* elites who patronized the establishment of the *Amarapura* fraternity in 1803 were *Mudaliyars* of the British colonial government (Mendis 1944: 27-28 and Malalgoda 1976: 87-105). This situation encouraged the new fraternities to look for the support of the colonizer. Accordingly, the integration of colonial political depictions into temple decorations by new fraternities seems to be a part of seeking legal validity and recognition in the colonial situation. Although this practice was started by non-*Siam* fraternities, later it extended to some of the *Siam* temples too.

In parallel to the integration of colonial political depictions into temple decorations, it is possible to identify a series of pro-colonial or pro-monarchical activities carried out by monks and temple patrons in the Low-country, to show loyalty to the colonizer, and thereby gain the colonizer's support. Eulogizing the British monarch in poetry, celebrating anniversaries of the British royals at temples, sending letters expressing allegiance to the British government, seeking permission of the British rulers in appointing chief monks, and organizing welcome ceremonies for the British governors were some of the activities by monks. The patrons too carried out similar projects such as celebrating the official pageant of the British royals, displaying the British coat of arms at their residences, setting up scholarships on behalf of the British royals, making donations to erect statues of the governors, organizing banquets for the

royal visits, and launching publications to commemorate royal anniversaries (Jayathilaka 2016:163-164).

The aforesaid pro-colonial approach reflecting loyalty and allegiance to the colonizer began to change by the final phase of the 19th century due to socio-political and religious changes. New discourses that were brought about by the success of the Buddhist monks against the Christian missionaries, ideologies of Western intellectuals who supported the Buddhist campaign, activities of the Buddhist Theosophical Society, expansion of Buddhist publications, growth of Buddhist education, and emergence of new lay Buddhist leadership were not favorable to British power in the island. Those discourses questioned and criticized the superiority of the colonizer and his models. Ideologies propagated among the indigenous community through Buddhist education, pro-Buddhist publications and public speeches of Western supporters and Buddhist leaders had a negative impact on British colonialism and imperialism. For example, the Buddhist schools developed a new form of knowledge that respected Buddhist value systems, indigenous history, Sinhala language, national heritage, and patriotism that were unfriendly to colonial values (Jayawardene 2004:63-64). After the 1880s, most of the Buddhist newspapers published articles questioning and criticizing the policies of the British colonial government.

Within the aforesaid backdrop, a number of modifications appeared in selecting and organizing visual signifiers in colonial political depictions in Buddhist art. New pictorial schemes and syntagms were settled in those depictions prompting ‘Buddhist power’, instead of the hegemony of the colonizer. Among those modifications were the integration of the symbol of the *stūpa*, amalgamation of texts referring to Buddhist power, removing the imperial crown, reducing the scale of the British coat of arms, including texts referring to Buddhist power, changing the gestures and locations of portraits of the British royals, making the British royals become worshippers of the Buddha, and replacing the British coat of arms with new ones showing Buddhist power.

The practice of using the modified British coat of arms and the portraits of the British monarch for temple decoration disappeared by the end of the second decade of the 20th century although the British continued to rule the island until 1948. Clashes between the Buddhist activists and the British rulers, criticisms of national Buddhist leaders against the colonialism, and anti-colonial discourses propagated by Buddhist publications, etc. led to create this situation. The crises-ridden situation and consequent deaths of some influential Buddhist leaders in 1915 resulted in an unrecoverable damage to the relationship between the Buddhist community and the British. Thereafter, many Buddhist activists inclined towards the campaigns that sought for the independence from British Imperialism rather than fostering amicable contacts with the colonizer.

Accordingly, it is possible to identify three periods relating to the presence of the colonial political depictions in Buddhist art; namely, (i) the period based on the colonizer’s power (1810s-1870s), (ii) the period based on Buddhist power (1880s-1920s) and finally, (iii) the period with no colonial political signifiers (1920/30s-1948). During the first period, colonial political depictions have predominantly been used to (a) show allegiance to the colonial government, (b) gain the goodwill of the colonizer, (c) finding recognition for new fraternities and (d) surviving within the colonial situation. In the second phase, the colonial political depictions were transformed to imply Buddhist power than the power of the colonizer. Therefore, certain crucial changes; namely, (a) incorporating Buddhist symbols into the nucleus positions of the British coat of arms, (b) removing the symbols of imperial power, (c) changing of the prominent locations and scales of the political depictions, (d) embedding texts implying Buddhist power, (e) making the British royals worshippers of the Buddha, and (f) incorporating new emblems instead of the British coat of arms, appeared in those depictions. During the third

period from the 1920/30s to 1948, neither the British emblems nor royal portraits were used in Buddhist art although the British continued their rule until AD 1948. The absence of signs of the person in power, which were once used with superior emphasis, can be seen as a response of ‘resistance’ to the British colonial power and a denial of the colonial hegemony by the Buddhist community.

1.7 Conclusion

The above discussion shows that the presence of the modified British emblems and the portraits of the British monarch in Buddhist art is not merely a random event, but a reflection of a significant visual response associated with significant socio-political and religious undercurrents in the British colonial Era. Hence, visual signifiers, syntagmata, and pictorial codes of those depictions have changed from time to time through inspiration of different ideologies, discourses and paradigms in colonial situation. Until the end of the third quarter of the 19th century, colonial political depictions in Buddhist art have largely used with pro-colonial approaches by highlighting the hegemony of the colonizer and superiority of the British monarch.

The practice of using colonial political signifiers in Buddhist art was started by the new fraternities (non-*Siam* fraternities) in the Low-country as a means of gaining the support of the colonizer to find recognition and legal validity within the colonized space and later passed down to some *Siam* temples as well. The relatively favorable British religious policy towards the Low-country Buddhist establishment, particularly during the reign of Queen Victoria, paved the way to make this practice popular and establish the figure of the queen as a prevalent image in Buddhist art. Therefore, colonial political depictions during the period from 1800 to 1870s were profusely used to find validity within the colonial situation; to show loyalty towards the British government; or to gain the goodwill of the colonial rulers.

Yet, after the 1870s, a number of noteworthy changes such as incorporating Buddhist symbols, removing the imperial crown from the British emblem, integration of texts promoting Buddhist power, transformation of the British monarch into worshippers of the Buddha, changing locations and scales of the images of the British royals, and embedding new emblems instead of that of the colonizer appeared in the colonial political depictions in Buddhist art. The shared characteristic of those changes was to promote Buddhist power rather than highlight the hegemony of the colonizer. New discourses and ideologies brought about by the victory of the Buddhist camp at *Pānadurā Vādaya*, arrival of influential Westerners to support the Buddhist campaign, activities of the Buddhist Theosophical Society, expansion of Buddhist education, growth of Buddhist publications and emergence of new Buddhist leadership influenced such changes in colonial political depictions.

The modified British coat of arm and the portraits of the British monarch are hardly found in temple decoration after the 1920s although the British continued their rule until 1948. The crisis ridden background between the Buddhist activists and the British administrators led to the collapse in the use of colonial political signifiers in Buddhist art by the second decade of the 20th century. In parallel, the Buddhist leadership was inclined towards an anti-imperialistic approach that sought independence from British imperialism. Therefore, the said ‘absence’ of the modified British coat of arms and the portraits of the British monarch that were once used to promote British colonial power, can be seen as a response of ‘resistance’ to colonial power and denial of the hegemony of the colonizer.

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Interviews

Ven. Nandaloka, Telulle (chief monk of Veheragampīṭa Raja Mahā Vihāraya). Personal interview with the researcher at the temple premises, August 12, 2014.

Appendix 1: Dating of the Colonial Political Presentations in Buddhist Art.

	Temple	Colonial political depiction	Dating
AD 1800-1870	Doḍamdūwa Śailabimbāramaya	The moulded British coat of arms on the main façade of the image house	AD 1830s-40s
	Doḍamdūwa Kumāra Mahā Vihāraya*	(i) The moulded, modified British emblem on the rear façade of the image house	Around the mid-19 th C.
	Ambalangoḍa Sunandārāmaya*	(i) The moulded British coat of arms on the façade of the image house	In the second quarter of the 19 th C.
	Ambagahapīṭiya Mūla Mahā Vihāraya*	(i) The moulded, modified British coat of arms	Around the mid-19 th C.
	Vālihinda Śrī Sudarśanārāmaya	Two portraits of Queen Vitoria over the entrances to the Viṣṇu Dēvalē and Kataragama Dēvalē	Around the mid-19 th C.
	Kōttē Raja Mahā Vihāraya	The painted portrait of Queen Victoria on the lunette above the doorway to the sanctum	Around the mid-19 th C.
	Kataluwa Pūrwārāmaya*	(i) The sculptured modified British emblem on the archway to the <i>stūpa</i>	1840-50s
		(ii) Two portraits of queens with the modified British emblem inside the image house	Third quarter of the 19 th C.
	Ambagahapīṭiya Mūla Mahā Vihāraya*	(ii) The painted, modified British coat of arms over the main entrance to the sanctum	1864
	Potupīṭiya Vālukarama Mahā Vihāraya	The modified British coat of arms in relief, on the main façade of the image house	1868
Kalutara Aśokārāma Mahā Vihāraya*	(i) The painted British coat of arms on the ceiling of the image house	1868	
AD. 1870-1920	Amarapura Chūlaganti Nikayē Mūlastāna Vihāraya	The emblem with two lions on the façade of the image house	1871
	Dodamdūwa Kumāra Mahā Vihāraya*	(ii) The painted British coat of arms over the main entrance to the perching hall	1878
	Kataluwa Pūrwārāmaya*	(iii) The modified coat of arms with a human bust over the main entrance to the image house	1886
	Kalutara Aśokārāma Maha Vihāraya*	(ii) The modified British coat of arms in relief, on the archway to the <i>stūpa</i>	1870s
	Kalutara Pulinalārāmaya	The sculptured emblem on the archway to the <i>stūpa</i>	1870s-80s
	Koṭahēna Dīpaduttamārāmaya	The adornment with the British coat of arms over the seated Buddha in the image house	The final quarter of the 19 th C.
	Ambalangoḍa Sunandārāmaya*	(ii) The modified British coat of arms with the wordings: <i>Buddhist Era at satsati ge</i>	1887
	Alutgama Kandē Vihāraya	The modified British coats of arms in relief, on the façade of the image house	1887
	Karagampīṭiya Subōdhārāmaya	The portrait of Queen Victoria over the main entrance to the sanctum	1880-1900
	Toṭagamuwa Subhadrārāmaya	The portraits of the king and the queen with the modified British emblems	1888
	Veheragalla Samudragiri Vihāraya	The miniature-looking painted British coat of arms with a human bust portrait, on the main doorframe	1891
	Sapugoḍa Śrī Mahā Vihāraya	The British coat of arms with a royal portrait	1883-94
	Polwatta Gangārāma Vihāraya	The repeated portrayals of Queen Victoria in veneration of the previous Buddhas	1880-1920.
	Pānadura Rankoth Vihāraya	The emblem with two lions on the façade	1880s-90s
	Māramba Purāna Raja Mahā Vihāraya	An image of the queen who is similar to Queen Victoria, in the image house	1880s-1920s

Appendix 2: Figures



Figure 1: Modified British coat of arms on the faced (upper section), Alutgama Kandē Vihāraya, Kalutara; Figure 2: Modified British coat of arms at ‘Satsati-Gē’, Ambalangoḍa Sunanadārāmaya, Galle.

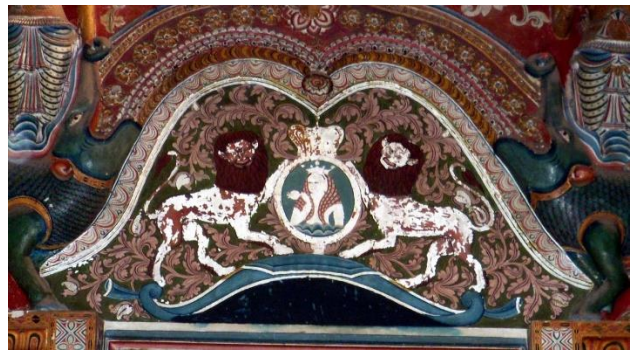


Figure 3: Modified British coat of arms with the portrait of Queen Victoria on the lunette over the right entrance to the sanctum, Kataluwa Pūrwāramaya, Galle; Figure 4: Portrait of Queen Victoria, Kōṭṭe Raja Mahā Vihāraya, Colombo.



Figure 5: Queen Victoria in veneration, Polwatta Gangārāma Vihāraya, Matara; Figure 6: Modified British coat of arms with Queen Victoria, Toṭagamuwa Subhadrārāmaya, Galle.



Figure 7: Portrait of Queen Victoria, Karagampitiya Subōdhārāmaya, Colombo; Figure 8: Modified British coat of arms on the main façade of the image house, Dodamdūva Śailabimbārāmaya, Galle.

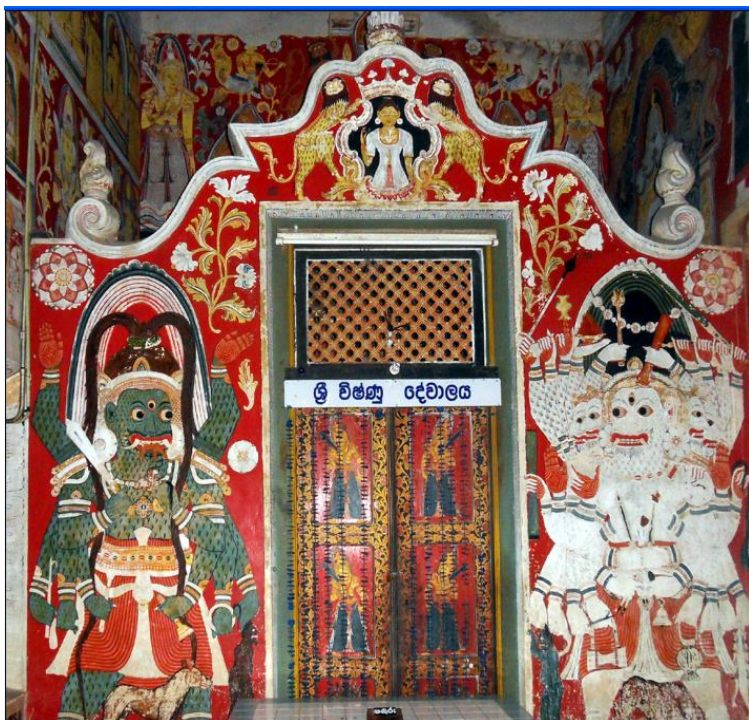


Figure 9: Portrait of Queen Victoria with Śiva *Vaṭuka* and Śiva *Agōre*, entrance of *Viṣṇu Dēvālē*, Vālihinda Śrī Sudarśānārāmaya, Matara.