

HYPOTHESES ON THE UNITY
AND DIFFERENTIATION
OF CULTURES:
PATTERNS OF ARCHITECTURAL
DEVELOPMENT IN MONSOON ASIA

One of the major problems (or sometimes pseudo-problems) that archaeologists and historians encounter in the study of ancient cultures is the need to differentiate and to identify the sources of the various concepts, techniques, institutions, forms, designs, motifs, etc., that, at any given moment of time, form the constituent elements of the culture or cultural product to which they have turned their attention; or—to pose the question in its proper framework—to analyse the process of cultural formation inherent in the subject of their study. Such considerations

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have a special significance for archaeologists, whose essential concern is with the often incomplete assemblages of material remains left behind by the cultures and civilizations of the past, and whose central task is to enumerate and reconstitute the structures and processes that were operative in the societies in question. The study of acculturation—culture change, cultural diffusion, “stimulus diffusion,” culture contact, etc.—has been part of the theoretical and empirical concerns of anthropologists and sociologists since some decades ago, and the subject of an old and now almost abandoned debate. While the terminology of the social sciences concerned with living societies can also be found in archaeological and historical discussion, such concerns have had inadequate application in the fields of archaeological and historical practice. What has dominated and, to a great extent, continues to dominate historical studies is what we might call “the ‘theory’ of influence” and its corollary, “the migration hypothesis.” Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to say that one of the leading aspects of the study of a past society or culture is the concern with the “parent” culture(s) which influenced it, or the search for the location of its “migratory origins.” While this is especially true of studies relating to the societies of the Third World, it is not exclusively so—as we see, for instance, in the case of European prehistory. The immediate epistemological sources of such approaches are not difficult to identify, being principally located in 19th century diffusionism and, as we shall see shortly, in colonial ideology.

The purpose of this paper is to offer a set of propositions which run counter to those which still dominate those areas of study with which we are concerned here. We take, as an example to which these propositions may be practically applied, the historical architecture of a global region, *viz.* “Monsoon Asia,” and, as a particular case study, the reconstruction of the archaeological remains of Buddhist monuments in Sri Lanka, one of the present writer’s fields of specialization.

The first set of propositions concerns what might be termed *the unity and differentiation of cultures in Monsoon Asia*. By “Monsoon Asia” is meant that entire region which extends from India, Pakistan, Kashmir and Nepal in the west to China, Korea and Japan in the east and includes all the countries of

South-East and East Asia. Of course, there is no suggestion here that Monsoon Asia is a purely self-contained region nor that it contains no transitional zones which, in some respects, are as (or more) closely related to similar transitional zones in neighbouring global regions—as, for instance, the relationship between China and Central Asia or the Indus valley and the cultures of the Iranian plateau and beyond. At the same time, the concept of “Monsoon Asia” as a geo-historical category is more than just a convenient frame of reference—when we speak of its *unity* we refer to the homogeneity of a single, though immense, unit which has a specific geographical and historical character. The specificity of Monsoon Asia lies in the combination of a number of factors, some of which we may list:

(a) Monsoon Asia, as its very name indicates, is a distinct geographical region whose various climates are basically determined or profoundly affected by the monsoon winds and whose area is clearly defined and universally agreed upon by geographers and climatologists;

(b) it is that part of Asia whose economy has been predominantly agrarian at least for the last two or three thousand years, in contrast to the advanced trading economies of Western Asia and the nomadic pastoralism of Central Asia;

(c) throughout these last two or three thousand years, if not even longer, Monsoon Asia has supported—as it does today—over half the world’s population and as such was probably the most productive and the wealthiest region of the world in absolute terms until about the 18th century, sustaining over centuries a large number of brilliant and highly advanced civilizations;

(d) the interrelations and interactions between these civilizations and the cultural and historical unity of the region have various aspects too numerous to list here, but are exemplified in such phenomena as the broad coincidence of the Monsoon Asian region with the area covered by the spread of the Buddhist religion or the prevalence of a number of significant architectural forms common to various regional cultures.

We may take all these factors together as manifesting the complex geographical and historical *unity* of Monsoon Asia.

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Differentiation, on the other hand, refers to the distinctive societies and cultures that we find within this larger unity. The wide deviations and subtle variations, the striking parallels and sharp differences that exist between the various societies and cultures of the region are immediately obvious to those studying any aspect of the life, the history or the environment of the area. In essence, this differentiation consists of the particularities of the local conditions and national traditions as they have been formed in time in the encounter between the various peoples and cultures and their local environments. Undoubtedly, this encounter between man and environment, and man and man, was particular to each place and the social, economic and cultural formations that arose from that relationship were the most fundamental and specific aspects of any given tradition. Thus, we would propose that the distinctive form and dynamic of each culture is achieved basically by its autarchic historical formation and is represented by its specific historical personality. One of the crucial problems that then arises from such a formulation—and which we shall briefly discuss in the sequel—is how to understand the interactions between the various traditions and the relationship of the specific to the general. It is sufficient to say for the time being that it is the sum total of such local traditions that constitute the Monsoon Asian complex of cultures and its rich patterns of unity and differentiation.

We may also pay attention to another major historical process which is contained within the framework of unity and differentiation and which we might call *concentration*. This can be described in brief as the coming together of a number of local traditions—or the development and expansion of a particular local tradition which in the course of its progress absorbs and subsumes others—to form a so-called ‘higher’ culture. It is these higher cultures which often play a leading role in the creation of new forms and concepts by virtue of the concentration of human and material resources which they can muster. Similarly, it is these inventions or innovations which other cultures often adopt or adapt in satisfying the needs or solving the problems of their own processes of historical evolution.

These propositions, presented here in a somewhat schematic

and truncated form, challenge some of the fundamental assumptions which lie beneath a great deal of the archaeological and historical research in the region—assumptions which find very clear and concise expression in the two views quoted below. Both these are short extracts from relatively recent publications and reflect views which are currently operative in the relevant fields of study. The first quotation is from the French historian Georges Coedès, one of the best-known exponents of the so-called “‘Theory’ of Indianisation,” and is taken from a recent American translation of his classic work, *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia*:

“Although Farther India [i.e. South-East Asia] was the theater of revolutionary changes, these changes had no notable effects on the history of the world... It is because of (its) purely receptive character that Farther India was so long ignored. It has not entered history except to the extent that it was civilized by India. Without India, its past would be almost unknown... the countries whose history is outlined in this work owe everything from their titles of nobility to their privilege of possessing a history to India...”¹

The second is from a paper read a few years ago at the Royal Society of Arts in London, by John Irwin, Keeper of the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum:

“The varied art traditions of Asia ... had no ... common roots. This is nowhere more obvious than in comparing the two major art traditions of Asia—those of India and China. The very idea of such disparate cultures having any sort of common pattern or unified style is ... quite absurd.”²

The first of these views derives from the conventional standpoint of colonialist historiography which, in general, denied to any colonized society (including India) the responsibility for having created its own history. Colonial historical writing could not but be a manifestation of colonial ideology. Thus, it had to

¹ Coedès, G., *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia*, Honolulu, 1968, p. 252.

² Irwin, J., “Art and the East India Trade,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. CXX, 1972, p. 450.

deny the occupied countries the “privilege” of having created their own past precisely because colonialism denied them the right to determine their own present. Such writing and research was essentially incapable of any theoretical or systematic study of differentiation and only viewed the unity of cultures in terms of the diffusion of certain formal motifs and concepts. The second view is, as it were, the other side of the coin and reflects elements of an ultra-nationalist or “specialistic” tendency.³ It sees none of the basic patterns of unity that the region manifests and fails to recognize some of the fundamental processes of regional history, while using the same formalist approach to isolate superficial cultural phenomena in an attempt to enumerate certain aspects of differentiation.

The propositions put forward in the present paper have very different implications. We suggest that:

(a) Monsoon Asia should be considered an immense matrix out of which arise a number of different and parallel cultures. This matrix is what we may take as the most important aspect of *unity*.

(b) *Differentiation* proceeds from the fact that the principal dynamic that constitutes the historical process is the *internal dynamic* of each culture—or, in other words, the process that derives from the encounter of man and environment and man and man in the territory within which that culture evolves.

(c) This internal dynamic involves at least three interconnected and often inseparable paths of development: *one*, the (organic) development by any given culture of its own existing forms and concepts; *two*, the invention or innovation of new forms and concepts on the basis of its own experience and resources; *three*, the acquisition and adaptation, according to its own needs and possibilities, of the forms and concepts that have been developed

³ Reflecting, on the one hand, an understandable reaction to colonial historiography and, on the other, the tendency of specialists to see only the primacy and distinctiveness of their own areas of specialization and to ignore transcultural patterns outside their focus of attention. Perhaps it is unfair to Irwin—the admiration for whose work is in no way diminished by the above observation—to reproduce his comment outside the context of his paper as a whole, but there is no doubt that the lack of a theoretical approach and the dominance of empiricism in the British and British colonial traditions of scholarship in the historical and social sciences, has encouraged the latter of the two tendencies noted above.

in similar or in more advanced or less advanced cultures amongst its neighbours.

This last, or third, form of development—which constitutes another level of *unity*—is in fact what is usually termed “influence” and developed into such theoretical constructions as “Indianisation,” “Sinisation,” etc. Based on diffusionist and latterly crypto-diffusionist views, the concept of influence was vitally important to colonialist archaeological and historical research. Trapped within colonialism’s view of itself, which saw culture and civilization as emanating from a central source, spreading enlightenment to distant and benighted peoples, colonial historical studies elevated this view into an absolute and fundamental historical principle, which has been ramified by decades of analysis, evidence, and argument and whose influence therefore still persists in many quarters.

This “theory” of influence consistently located the principal dynamics of the historical development of a society outside that society. It often confused the third path of development—the process of acquisition and assimilation in which the principal factor is the dynamism of *the society that takes* rather than *the society from which the form or concept is taken*—with a fourth process which we might describe as the forcible or artificial imposition or importation of forms and concepts unrelated to the significant dynamics of the recipient culture. To our mind this fourth process is not a form of development at all and might well be termed un-historical or anti-historical. The historical fate of such imposed or imported forms and concepts is that they either become recessive and ultimately disappear altogether or they are adapted and absorbed by an organic process of acquisition and assimilation—i.e. by means of the third path of development proposed above.

If all this appears to be posed at a level of abstraction and remains purely theoretical, our second set of propositions is much more specific and descriptive. It is this: that in considering the formal, historical architecture of the Monsoon Asian region, which is mostly either religious or, less frequently, royal in character, we encounter two distinct and basic *styles* or *modes* of building, characterized by their use of materials and their constructional methods as well as their formal qualities and

stylistic characters. On the one hand, we have *wholly masonry* structures with pseudo-architectural superstructures⁴ such as the Indian *sikhara** temples, the masonry pagodas of China and Korea and a limited series of similar temples and tower-temples in Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand and marginally Sri Lanka.⁵ Together these constitute a distinctive architectural mode which we might call the masonry style. On the other hand, we find *timber-skeletoned* or mixed *timber-and-masonry* (*i.e.* timbered or timber-framed structures on masonry bases) buildings, usually with tiled roofs and genuinely architectural superstructures which are most familiar to us in the traditions of China, Korea and Japan but which are, in fact, far more widespread and represent the dominant traditions of a number of cultures in the Monsoon Asian region including Sri Lanka, the west coast of India (Kerala, North and South Kannada, the Konkan coast and Goa, etc.), Nepal, probably once Kashmir and even now parts of the sub-Himalayan region of India, and of course all the countries and traditions of South-East Asia.

The distribution of this latter mode—whose entire architectural character is so totally different from that of the masonry style—more or less coincides today with the wettest parts of Monsoon Asia and also, incidentally, with some of the principal rice-growing and bamboo-using cultures. These coincidences are not accidental. They point to the fact that the prevalence of the particular architectural style or mode is determined or delimited in each culture by environmental factors, longstanding autochthonous building traditions and, of course, local social and cultural needs *in the first instance* and effected by cultural factors such as “imported” religious and architectural ideas only

⁴ What is meant by “pseudo-architectural” is that these superstructures serve more an expressive and monumental than an architectural function; like sculpture, they occupy space, rather than enclose it. Thus, these masonry temples have superstructures which are capable of being fashioned in a great variety of shapes and forms, to such an extent that sometimes the sculptural ideas completely dominate the architectural conception.

⁵ For example, the Central Javanese monuments in Indonesia, Dong Duong and Mi-Son in Vietnam, Angkor in Cambodia, some of the masonry monuments at Pagan, Burma and the *phra prangs* and the superstructures of the *mondops* and *prasats* of Thailand.

* The meaning of the words marked thus is given at the end of this article.

in the second instance. Although there is no basic difference between them in their social, religious or symbolic functions, the architectural distinction between the two styles is a fundamental one, capable not only of classification in terms of its formal qualities but also in its geographical and historical occurrence. At the same time, what are significantly noticeable in each instance are the striking parallels and similarities that exist *within* each mode as well as the distinct regional particularities and differences.

We may at this point briefly examine some of the typical building types of the region in the light of the propositions set out above. Undoubtedly, the most dramatic structures found in the formal architectural traditions of Monsoon Asia are the various types of towers or tower-temples, almost always associated with the most important institutions in a religious complex. Those examples which are in the masonry style are invariably restricted to the *śikhara** temples of India, the masonry pagodas of China and Korea and to special structures or buildings belonging to narrow historical periods⁶ in other areas such as the countries of South-East Asia, Sri Lanka or Nepal—these latter two examples consisting mostly of monuments of an “imported” rather than an indigenous type. The timber-skeletoned or mixed timber-and-masonry counterparts of these are much more widely spread throughout the region, ranging from the historic and highly formal timber pagodas of Japan to (say) the equally complex but organic village tower temples or *merus** of Bali, Indonesia. When these are considered together with the timbered tower-temples of Nepal or Sri Lanka, we have an immediate statement not only of the wide geographical spread of this type but also of the variety of local forms that exist within the parameters of a single building type. Of course, what is equally striking is the relative homogeneity of this widespread type in contrast to the much greater variety in style and character displayed by its masonry equivalents.

⁶ In certain countries where the timber tradition was generally dominant, there were relatively limited periods in which a large number of important masonry structures were erected. This phenomenon seems to be linked with epochs of great economic prosperity when “extravagant” imported ideas were adopted on a substantial scale and developed into distinctive local styles.

A much more uncommon but equally distinguished series of structures are those buildings which are based on a circular or polygonal ground plan and which occupy a very special place in a number of Monsoon Asian traditions. The most famous and grandest of these, in the timber or timber-and-masonry mode, is the Temple of Heaven in Peking, matched in the beauty of its conception by some of the numerous circular *srīkoils** of Kerala and the much earlier ruined *vatadāgēs** or *stūpa*-temples of Sri Lanka. A rare, well-preserved version of a circular temple in the masonry mode also exists in Kerala, while similar variants and parallels in both styles, based on a polygonal—usually octagonal—ground plan are common to East, South-East and South Asian traditions.

A very different architectural conception is the “image-house” type which has its origins in the simple combination of a square or rectangular *cella* with an extended porch or vestibule in front. This is encountered fairly widely throughout South and South-East Asia, while its most advanced development is to be found in India, where it merges with the tower-temple to form the classic Hindu temple design.

The building type which is perhaps the most interesting and useful from the point of view of historical and intraregional comparison is the rectangular house or hall form, whose most advanced and elaborate developments are in the timber mode. Clearly one of the most ancient and most basic architectural concepts, it is undoubtedly derived from the typical dwelling houses of the region. In its more formal expressions a wide range of similarities and differences exist, with a basically similar form manifesting itself in various traditions. Thus we find a number of local variations related in each case to their indigenous building traditions and in many sub-regional zones also to each other—as in the case of the Chinese *tien** and the Japanese *kondo** or the relationship between the *bots** and *vihāras** of Thailand and those of Cambodia and Laos. Perhaps no other building type so clearly demonstrates the patterns of unity and differentiation in the timber architecture of Monsoon Asia.

The considerations that have been raised here are developed even further when they are applied to a specific archaeological

or historical problem. We may take as a case study the attempt by archaeologists to reconstruct (conjecturally) the architectural form and lost superstructures of the buildings found in the ruined monastic complexes of the Early Historical Period in Sri Lanka (the Anurādhapura and Polonnaruva Periods, 3rd century B.C. to 13th century A.D.). Such an endeavour is not merely an exercise in reconstruction but an attempt to analyse and interpret the character of the Sri Lankan tradition, to delineate its morphology and to enable us to make comparisons between this tradition and other related and parallel traditions in the Monsoon Asian region.

The formal architecture of Sri Lanka from pre-Christian to modern times has consisted almost entirely of structures in timber or timber-and masonry.⁷ At various periods and in different types of buildings, the masonry component—consisting usually of the foundation platform and lower walls—varies according to such factors as social use, social or ritual status, architectural function, cost, prevailing fashions, availability of materials and so on. However, even a predominantly masonry construction retained its distinctive timber-and-masonry character in its dominant timbered and tiled roof, as well as in other features such as the use of timber columns, beams and lintels.

As far as we can see, the architecture of the Anurādhapura Period (3rd century B.C. to 10th century A.D.) was almost entirely of this pattern. The known remains from about the 5th century A.D. onwards are substantial enough for detailed study, while there is sufficient material and literary evidence (as well as data from trial excavations showing constructional layers going down several metres below the surface) to see that there is a continuity of tradition stretching back to the period B.C. The surface and immediate sub-surface remains at Anurādhapura, Polonnaruva and elsewhere, which can be roughly dated between

⁷ For brief surveys of the Sri Lankan architectural tradition see: Paranavitana, S., "Architecture (Ceylon)," *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* (ed. Malalasekera), Vol. of Specimen Articles, Colombo 1957, pp. 8-22; Godakumbura, C.E., *Architecture of Sri Lanka (The Culture of Sri Lanka, 5)*, Colombo 1976; Bandaranayake, S., "The Historical Architecture of Sri Lanka," *Viskam*, Colombo 1976, pp. 16-34. For a detailed study of the archaeology of the Buddhist monasteries of Anurādhapura, see: Bandaranayake, C., *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture; the Vihāra of Anurādhapura*, Leiden, 1974.

the 7th or 8th century and the early 13th century, consist of columniated buildings with masonry substructures. The latter are usually rammed earth platforms with heavy, brick masonry revetments. Thick brick walls rise above these foundation platforms to the height of the ground floor. Stone is used only scarcely at first and mainly in such features as steps and entrances. In time, it is progressively applied to the outer facing of the platforms. Rarely, stone entirely replaces the brickwork of the foundations and even parts of the walls. The columns almost everywhere are of stone but are clearly replacements, at a later period, of timber originals. With a handful of exceptions, none of the existing structures in their present condition rise above the upper level of the ground floor, which marks the limits of the masonry sections of the buildings. The lost superstructures were of timber and other perishable materials and had tiled roofs. Iron nails and clamps used in the wooden construction, notched, and tenoned columns to carry wooden beams and large quantities of roof tiles are all that are left of the upper storeys and the roofs.

The reconstruction of these lost superstructures,⁸ essential to the historical interpretation of Sri Lankan architecture, should be based on at least three types of evidence. Firstly, the archaeological evidence from the material remains discussed above. Secondly, the documentary evidence which is at present rather scanty but consists of both literary and visual data, including some rock engravings at Anurādhapura, paintings from Polonnaruva and a rich collection of architectural types depicted in murals of the much later Kandy Period (17th-19th century). Thirdly, the comparative evidence of living traditions, which are themselves capable of further classification. The most important of these sources is the simple, domestic architecture of the village, displaying an amazing range of formal variations. This must have been the principal source of design development and therefore one of the determining factors in the distinctiveness of local traditions and in the differentiation of national styles, while at the same time being part of the unifying matrix that we spoke of above. These popular building traditions have

⁸ Bandaranayake, S., *op. cit.*, 1974, pp. 351-378.

often survived from the earliest phases of man's architectural activity and preserve to this day archetypal concepts and designs which constitute the basis of formal architectural development. This relationship between vernacular and formal architecture is well displayed in the village temples and the more ambitious conceptions of the Kandy Period, which preserve a great deal of the designs and timber constructional methods of the ancient Sri Lankan tradition. An equally rich source of evidence is the comparative material from parallel cultures within the Monsoon Asia matrix.

The reconstruction of the ruined monuments of the Anurādhapura Period, based on a convergence of these lines of investigation, confirms our view that the prevailing architectural style of this epoch was of the timber or mixed timber-and-masonry mode and that it must have been a local version of similar traditions elsewhere in Monsoon Asia. The remains of the subsequent Polonnaruva Period (11th-13th century) have a substantial masonry component, in both brick and stone, but with a few exceptions are a direct continuation of Anurādhapura architecture. The surviving buildings of the 14th-18th century and the living architectural traditions of the 19th and 20th centuries also display a continuity of the very same timber or mixed timber-and-masonry mode that we encounter at Anurādhapura and Polonnaruva. The comparison of the earlier with the later buildings enables us to reconstruct and interpret the former and to understand the historical origins of the latter.

Three of the most typical buildings of the Anurādhapura Period are the circular *stūpa*-temple or *vaṭadāgē*,* the image-house or *pīḷimagē** and the rectangular monastic residence or *pāsāda**, all corresponding to the Monsoon Asian archetypes discussed above. It is clear today that the most obvious comparative models for each of these distinctive structural types are available within the range of timber or timber-and-masonry buildings belonging to those collateral traditions. Thus, the investigation and reconstruction of a monument with a circular ground plan such as the Sri Lankan *vaṭadāgē** must take into account from the outset such structures as the circular *śrīkoils** of Kerala, with their single or double conical roofs, and the Temple of Heaven in Peking. Similarly, a detailed study of existing local building types, both from the point of view of

their architectural design and character and of their constructional methods, must be carried out alongside the archaeological material in order to characterize not merely the general but the specific attributes of the reconstructed monuments. The historical significance of such methods would be not merely to improve the technical accuracy of the task of reconstruction but also to locate the distinctive character of the Sri Lankan tradition and its place in the Monsoon Asian matrix.

If the dominant architectural tradition of Sri Lanka was of the timber or mixed timber-and-masonry style, there are at least two other types or categories of buildings in the country which either belong to the masonry mode or which lie somewhere between the two styles. The origin and development of these types and their place within Sri Lankan architecture also have an important historical significance. The first of these consists of monuments which are entirely made of stone masonry. Examples of this are very rare and are always very clearly importations, representing various schools of South Indian *śikhara** temple architecture. In most of these examples the major or the provincial South Indian school to which they belong is easily identifiable, but in one or two instances an eclectic mixture of several schools or an “indigenous provincialism” can be detected, indicating that an element of local dynamism was sometimes operative even in the construction of imported forms.

The second and equally rare but more historically relevant type consists of structures which are wholly of brick masonry. Here the imported models and decorative motifs have been acquired and assimilated at various stages in the development of the local architecture. Thus, the 11th or 12th century Thūpārāma temple at Polonnaruva has a ground plan which is derived from prototypes at Anurādhapura, base-mouldings which come from early Buddhist traditions in India (again via Anurādhapura) and a superstructure which is a definite imitation or close reproduction of the South Indian style.

A significant variation on this latter type are monuments which are substantially of brick—even to the point of having vaulted brick ceilings—but whose roof superstructures were probably timbered and tiled in a distinctly national style. An example of this is the monumental Laṅkātilaka temple at Polon-

naruva, dating from the 12th century. This has been conjecturally reconstructed on the basis of the South Indian models and also with reference to the earlier Thūpārāma shrine mentioned above. However, a more relevant comparison might be with another monument of the same type and scale—dating from the 14th century—the Laṅkātilaka temple at Udunuvara, near Kandy. The superstructure of this last-named example has been rebuilt in the Kandy Period where the addition of a timbered and tiled roof of the local type has transformed a brick masonry structure, with many imported design elements, into a magnificent expression of the indigenous architectural tradition.

The various categories of buildings that we have been considering here cover more or less all the styles or modes that are encountered in Sri Lanka, not only in the Early Historical Period but also through all the later periods, right up to modern times. They range from timber structures with a minimal masonry component, as in the monuments of the Kandy Period, to constructions entirely of stone masonry. The intermediate stages are represented by buildings such as those at Anurādhapura, which have masonry walls up to the height of the ground floor and timbered superstructures above; others, like the two Laṅkātilaka temples above, which are of masonry but with a dominating timber-skeletoned and tiled roof; and, lastly, buildings with their superstructures also in masonry, but of brick rather than stone.

The crucial difference from the point of view of architectural style is the nature of the roof, which imparts a distinctive character to a structure and places it within one of the two basic modes of Monsoon Asian building. The roof type of the Kandy Period is a highly formal and specialized conception, generally restricted in a formal architectural context to religious and royal buildings but with its roots in the organic traditions of the village. There is no doubt that it has a long history of previous development. Although the earliest precise documentation so far is from murals of the 12th or 13th century, we may well conjecture that the timbered superstructures and tiled roofs of the Anurādhapura Period were of a similar character. Undoubtedly, the master builders who were capable of conceiving the circular temples and elaborate monastic residences of Anurādh-

pura must have produced roof forms commensurate with the inventiveness and vitality of the surviving substructural designs. Like the smooth curve of the Chinese or Japanese roof, the “winged” and multiple superimpositions of Thailand, the short, rigid, wide-angled roofs of Nepal or the deep straight roofs of Kerala, one of the distinctive features of the Sri Lankan roof is the double pitch or double angle which is applied in various combinations of hipped, gabled and multiple, superimposed forms.

The general classification of roof types and the reconstruction of the Anurādhapura Period roofs is important in the definition of a Sri Lankan tradition and the location of that tradition within the patterns of unity and differentiation in Monsoon Asia. An important historical insight which emerges from such an attempt is that the dominant architectural modes of Sri Lanka relate as much or more to a wider Monsoon Asian pattern—with its geometrical centre in South-East Asia—than to the dominantly masonry tradition of formal historical architecture in India. This forces us to question the conventional assumption of a great deal of modern Sri Lankan archaeological and historical research that the country’s historical evolution was wholly linked with that of the Indian subcontinent.

Equally important conclusions arise from an application of the theory of development, proposed in the earlier part of this paper, to the various categories of buildings listed above. Thus, those monuments which are entirely of stone or brick represent, in varying degrees, the use of imported forms and concepts in the architectural design of a building as a whole. While the stone structures are entirely imported and probably built—in most instances—by foreign architects, the brick edifices are partially assimilated local attempts to imitate or emulate foreign models. Although there are significant differences between the stone and the brick monuments—the latter medium being quite familiar to local builders—these masonry conceptions as a whole are quite distinct in character from structures in the indigenous timber mode. We may say they represent, in somewhat different ways, the fourth “path of development” discussed above, i.e. the forcible or artificial imposition or importation of foreign models. The lack of any significant number of important or

substantial monuments of this kind and the rarity of their occurrence, both spatially and chronologically, help to reinforce and confirm this view.

On the other hand, buildings in the timber or mixed timber-and-masonry mode form the most substantial part of the surviving historical monuments and of the living tradition. They exemplify the three other paths of development. Thus, the distinctive roof type and the basic constructional principles represent the dominance and development of indigenous methods and local innovations. Similarly, the commonest building type at Anurādhapura is the rectangular *pāsāda*,* the development of a purely local (if also universal) house type into an elaborate monastic residence. At the same time, other major architectural conceptions, such as the circular *stūpa*-temple and the image-house, seem to represent germinal ideas that were taken from abroad and then developed within the language and idiom of the indigenous tradition. These same processes of development, invention and adaptation can also be seen in an analysis of the more superficial aspects of Sri Lankan architecture such as the decorative motifs and detailing employed in the buildings. Once again stone and, to a lesser extent, brickwork show greater susceptibility to imported ideas than more perishable materials, although the surviving timber and painted designs are not of sufficient antiquity for us to make quite the same generalizations as we are able to do *vis-à-vis* architectural form.

In the final analysis, the architectural tradition of Sri Lanka appears quite clearly as a distinctive particularization of patterns which extend throughout the Monsoon Asian region. The individuality of this national style has its historical origins in the social, economic and cultural dynamism of the Sri Lankan people in their encounter with and mastery over local conditions and resources, while the common pool of ideas and experience that exist in the Monsoon Asian matrix have always been a rich source which they have drawn upon time and time again. It is both this internal dynamism and the international context that are respected in the unity and diversity of cultures in Monsoon Asia. This case study and the propositions that precede it are a contribution towards evolving a theoretical framework with which we can analyse and understand such phenomena. The

architectural cultures of the Monsoon Asian region provide a useful testing ground for the hypotheses that we have to offer.

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LEXICON

- Bot:* rectangular hall in a Thai Buddhist monastery, containing a Buddha image or images, but used mainly for monastic ceremonies, chanting, etc.
- Image-house:* house or shrine in which one or more images of the Buddha are placed.
- Kondo:* 'golden hall,' rectangular shrine containing images, in a Japanese Buddhist monastery.
- Merus:* tower temple with multi-tiered roofs in Bali, Indonesia.
- Pāsāda:* term signifying 'palace' or 'mansion,' used in Sri Lankan archaeology to denote rectangular monastic residences and chapter houses found in ancient Buddhist monasteries.
- Piḷimagē:* Sri Lankan shrine containing one or more Buddha images.
- Śikhara:* towering superstructure of Hindu temple.
- Srīkoil:* central shrine of Hindu temple complex in Kerala, India, usually circular in plan and with a conical roof.
- Tien:* rectangular Chinese hall of monumental proportions.
- Vatadāgē:* circular Sri Lankan Buddhist shrine enclosing a *stūpa*, which is a monument containing relics.
- Vihāra:* term with a wide connotation in Buddhist monasticism and monastic architecture, but in Thailand referring specifically to a rectangular hall, similar to the *Bot*, but enshrining Buddha images and used for worship.