

CULTURAL GIFTS RECEIVED BY SRI LANKA AS A RESULT OF FOREIGN TRADE RELATIONS IN THE 7TH - 8TH CENTURIES AD (A STUDY BASED ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF SOME SELECTED ANCIENT TEMPLES IN AMPARA DISTRICT)

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Sri Lanka had a very valuable geographical background to mediate trade activities through maritime routes. Because of this, Sri Lanka was able to build trade relations with Eastern and Western Asian countries. The main research problem of this study, whether the architectural elements of the ancient temples, reflect the features of cultural heritage. Which gifted through foreign trade relations in 7th - 8th century AD. Ancient temples located in valley region of Ampara District; Kumbukkanoya, Hadaoya, Vilaoya etc, were used as main study areas. The reason for choosing the relevant Boundary is that this region belongs to the eastern province of Sri Lanka and faces the eastern part of the Indian Ocean. It aims to study the relationship between Sri Lanka and foreign countries through the ancient architectural features of the selected temples. Data was collected (field exploration, Literature resources etc.), classified and analysed using qualitative research method. Around the 7th – 8th centuries AD, when the Southeast Asian states east of Sri Lanka were economically strong, the economic relations between Sri Lanka and those states were more intense. In the meantime, archaeological evidence shows that there was a cultural exchange between these regions. At this time, there is information that the East, Southeast, and South regions of Sri Lanka were constantly open for Southeast Asian relations. In the coastal trade between the east and west of the Indian Ocean, the southern and southeastern parts of the country have been involved in these relations. The studies conducted show that the selected temples in the study area were open to foreign cultural exchange. There were small anchorages along the rivers estuary facing the east coast of Sri Lanka, and since then internal trade has been carried out by small vessels up the rivers. Thus, they may have patronized the temples found on the way up the river, and a similar example can be seen in Southeast Asian states along the Irawadi River in Burma and the Progo River in Indonesia. Accordingly, it is not difficult to understand the patterns of cultural relations that come through economic relations. In the study of monastic plans, statues, inscriptions, buildings identified in the temples, Mahayana architectural features were seen more. Since an intense spread of Mahayana concepts was seen in the Southeast Asian states by the time of the proposal, it can be assumed that the same influence was received in this country as well. Also, the placement of temples used for economic purposes beyond the religious basis was seen. Thus, by the 7th – 8th centuries AD, it can be concluded that the foreign cultural gifts that came through the global economic changes at that time were evident through the architectural elements of the ancient temples.

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