

Emerging Sartorial Complexities: Eclectic Fashion

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Abstract: Eclectic fashion is considered to be a selecting what appears to best in various styles. Furthermore it could be identified as deriving ideas, style or taste from a broad and diverse range of sources. During the Kotte period in Sri Lanka Portuguese influences affected the fashion of the royalty due to changing their religion to Christianity. Ultimately they embraced western lifestyle and partly abandoned their jewelry bedecked bare upper body style and combined a western stitched long sleeved loose jacket with the existing clinging draped cloth. Subsequently the early phases of the Kandyan King's attire totally ignored the traditional lower long cloth and adopted the western trousers with long sleeved jacket. They became fashion fanatics and eager to acquire many fashion details from different fashion sources. The literary evidences proved that the royal males had an exotic taste. They were not hesitating to get inspired from the west and produce their own fashion. This paper explores emerging sartorial complexities of dress composition which entailed an eclectic fashion movement in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Sartorial Complexities, Eclectic Fashion, Kotte Period

Introduction

During the sixteenth century the Kotte era (1411-1597AD) marked a new turning point in Sri Lankan dress fashion. The Portuguese conquered the island and established their power gradually throughout the lowlands of Sri Lanka including Kotte. Their influences in political, economic, cultural and social strata were huge and directly affected the lives of people of the society. By this time the royalty was directly inspired by western sartorial trends that led to drastic changes in the way of practicing traditions of Sri Lankan fashion forms.

The royalty had direct contacts with the Portuguese Kings and diplomats and they embraced certain items of dresses, mixed and mingled with the traditional dress and created a novel dress. The process of mingling, of mixing and matching of several dress details is called hybridization and shows a dramatic composition of western, south Indian and Sri Lankan dress details.

Methods and Procedures

The qualitative method was adopted for the research. Sequence of observational studies with temple paintings, wood, ivory carvings, and sculptures along with the continuous literature review with use of documented manuscripts, records, published research and inscriptions were used to gather and sort data. Validation was confirmed with cross checking with literary sources.

Introduction of Christianity: The Change in ideology of the royalty

Changing the names of the royalty and adopting a western lifestyle

In comparison to the world movement of dress fashions the Kotte period marked the culmination of an emerging new fashion trend among the royalty in the succeeding eras in Sri Lanka accompanied by unique features rooted in the Sri Lankan fashion culture. The historical narrations of Sri Lankan dress fashions of the royalties show that the religion of the particular society played a pivotal role in forming the ideology of the wearer. However subsequent to the advent of the Portuguese in Ceylon 1505 AD, the state religion instrumental in terms changed the ideology of the royalty after its conversion to Christianity.

Sometime later in 1557 AD Prince Dharmapala (grandson of King Buwanekabahu VII of Kotte) and his queen were baptized with the names of Dom as Dom Joao PareiraPandar (1557AD) at the hands of Joao de Villa de Conde and the queen as Dona Catherina. Portuguese names were the fashion at court. Baptism became a rebirth under a foreign name and every female royal convert was dubbed as Dona. To denationalize the race was not the missionary’s object, and yet such was the inevitable consequence of the course he pursued, for with baptism came a rebirth under a foreign name and every royal convert was dubbed a Dom.

Prince Dharmapala was coroneted in Lisbon and from his childhood he grew up under the protection of the Portuguese. He was educated under Joao de Villa de Conde (chief of seven members of Franciscan missionaries who visited Sri Lanka in 1543AD) Trinidad notes how Dharmapala was loyal to the Portuguese, and later as King Dharmapala how gratefully he refers to Friar Joao as “my father and master” (Trinidad 1972)“This king PareiraPandar was a very good Christian and ever after lived under the discipline of the Friars of Franciscans and favor and protection of the Portuguese, who defended him as long as he lived and maintained him on the throne notwithstanding the position of Madune, his uncle.” (Trinidad 1972)

Dress fashion of the royalty before advent of the Portuguese



Fig1

Fig2

Fig3

King of Kotte
 King of Kotte
 King Buwanekabahu VII of Kotte
 Udaaludeniya Cloth painting Ivory Casket inv.no.1241
 Temple / Gampola Reg. no 85.133.1/National museum Right end of the gable/ Munich Treasury, Germany

Dress fashions of the royalty after embrace the Portuguese fashion



Fig4

Fig5

Fig6

Fig7

Prince Dharmapala dressed like a King Mayadunne King Raigam Bandara
 Portuguese King & Sinhala King (Uncles of Prince Dharmapala)
 Ivory Casket inv.no 1242 Ivory Casket inv.no 1241 Ivory Casket inv.no 1241
 Right end of the gable Rear view bottom right Right end of the gable

One missionary with condescending enthusiasm wrote of a youthful prince “his thoughts are not those of a black, but of one who greatly desires to copy the Christian Kings both in his manner of life as in all else” for he says that when he becomes a Christian he will not have in his house but Portuguese” (Pieris 1998). The Franciscan historian Civezza has made a statement about the King of Ceylon and his attributes. He stated ‘that the King showed himself sincerely inclined to embrace Catholicism, and in the meantime he permitted a cousin of his to receive baptism. This cousin went to Portugal and returning thence died at Goa and was buried in the church of the Franciscan convent. Afterwards Pereira Pandar (Dharmapala) himself wished to be instructed and baptized. He was baptized and always showed himself a true model of a Christian King’. (Perera, 1920)

Since the ailing Dharmapala had made out a deed of gift in 1580 AD bequeathing his kingdom to the Portuguese crown, all his kingdom would soon belong to Portugal. Perera said that Dona Cathrina’s example was followed by all the ladies of the court and by some of the nobles of the kingdom, whereupon a great number of the people asked for baptism. (Perera 1920)

It is noticed that most of the early kings of the Kandyan era (succeeding era of the Kotte) were educated under Portuguese Franciscans and baptized. King Wimaladharmasooriya I (1591-1604) was one of them, son of a noble called Wirasundara Mudaliyar who was known among the Portuguese by the name of Dom Joao de Austria Mudaliyar. However from his childhood he was known as Konappu Bandara. He embraced Buddhism after he became the King of the Kandyan Kingdom, as it was an important qualification for the kingship. However his personal desires and Western attitudes could not be eliminated from his dress sense. His enthusiasm for Western culture was clearly evident through early travelers’ notes.

Hulugalle (1999) states that the King was pleased to arrange interior decorations of the royal court similar to the western styles. He had some foreign collections of antiques. From his collection he showed some Spanish chairs and a table to the Dutch Admiral Spilbergen. He arranged lodging for Spilbergen not in the Sinhala but the Portuguese fashion. (Paranavithana 1997) Further, Paranavithana states that the King’s great hall was decorated with beautiful tapestry and was occupied by many Spanish chairs and the table was arranged in a Christian manner. (Paranavithana 1997) When he started to build the city of Kandy it was constructed according to the Christian style. (Paranavithana 1997) The King and his royal family always dressed in Portuguese fashion. But, when they were in front of the people they followed Sinhala dress fashions.

Prince Vijayapala (1634-1654 a prince of the Matale district and son of Dona Catherina and King Senarath) was completely converted into the western way of life. He was brought up in a Christian environment and said 'though I am a Chingala by blood I am a Portuguese in my ways and my affections (Pieris, 1927). He was really influenced by western culture and admired the western as the best (Pieris, 1927). Once he wrote to the King of Portugal 'under his (A Portuguese mentor) instruction, I learnt very good customs and etiquette and some special habits which royal persons employ (Pieris, 1927). His personal appearance has been observed by an eye witness, Captain Joao Ribeiro and stated "he was dignified, modest, and courteous, of a stately bearing and appeared about 34 years old, slim of body and very erect. His long hair was curled at the ends, and his beard was worn in the Portuguese fashion, with a moustache which was not very full; his colour was like that of the quince, and he always very cheerful and friendly with the Portuguese; but when he spoken with the natives, his bearing was royal, austere, and very stately". (Pieris, 1927)

The son of King Senarath (1604-1635) King Rajasinga II (1635-1687) who also grew up in the Portuguese environment and his dress habits show how he changed his mind with the impact of the environment he had grown up in. Knox's statements are quite important to understand the King's habits displayed throughout his life time. Knox says, 'he was not wont to keep to one fashion, but changes as his fancy leads him'. Furthermore careful observations of Knox state, 'his apparel is very strange and wonderful, not after his own country fashion, or any other, being made after his own invention'. 'On his head he wears a cap with four corners like a Jesuits three tier high, and a feather standing upright before. Like that in a head of a four-horse in a team, a long band hanging down his back after the Portuguese fashion, his doublet after so strong a shape,....the body of one, and the sleeves of another colour, he wears long breeches to his ankles, shoes and stockings'. (Knox, 1958)

Portuguese fashion of the royalty

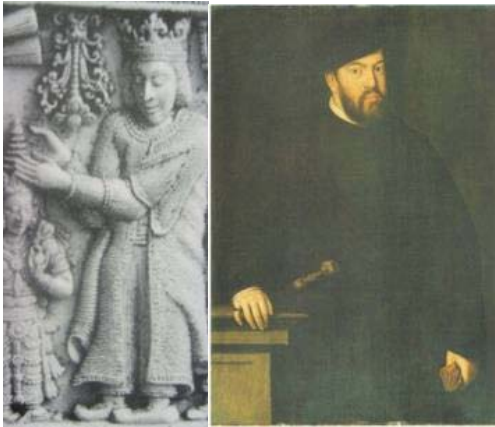


Fig 13 Fig 14

King Joao III of Portugal

Ivory Casket inv.no1241, rear view bottom right

A foreign traveler Christopher Schweitzer's (1676 AD) observation leads to a picturesque quality of dress fashions of King Rajasingha II. 'His shirt and waistcoat is made of the finest cotton, with gold and he wears a garment of coloured silk, that goes four or five times around his middle, and hangs down to his knees. His stockings are fastened to a silver plate, as large almost as a trencher. His shoes are only leathern soles with strings, of which comes up between his toes and the other comes around his foot, and ties..... And all these strings are set out with sapphires and rubies. He wears a sword close under the right arm, tied to a silk ribbon. It being in a massive silver scabbard: it is made like a hanger. And about a yard long. The handle is embedded with five precious stones. On his left side, between his shirt and his waist coat, he wears a long knife, beside his sword, inlaid with gold and jewels' (Hulugalle, 1999).

It could be envisaged how much the Kings were devoted to the new faith and their fervor to the new lifestyle they had to adapt to. Hence, elucidation of these dimensions affirms that change of the one's faith led to drastic change in their inner soul ultimately visible through the dress code. Prince Dharmapala was the person who transgressed the traditional fashion and induced novel sartorial details to the Sri Lankan fashion arena.

New sartorial sense: an eclectic mix.



Fig 8 King Wimaladharmasuriya I (Silva & Beumer, 1988)
 Fig 9 King Rajasimha I (Knox, 1966)
 Fig 10 King Rajasimha II (Dambulla temple)
 Fig 11 King Sri Wickrama Rajasimha (Davy, 1821)

King Vimaladarmasuriya I's (1591-1604) complete costume is described by Coomaraswamy as (Coomaraswamy, 1956) 'the Sinhalese King wears a jewelled crown surmounted by a *trisula*, and having a Buddha figure in the front; a jacket and 'mante' (tippet) and a patterned 'tuppotiya' (lower cloth), probably of muslin with gold or silver thread. He carries a sword hanging by a bandolier over the right shoulder. A lotus flower is in the left hand. The jewelry worn includes earrings, two necklaces with jeweled pendants, armlets and anklets. The King's dress is a hybrid formation of western and traditional Sinhalese dress details. It could be assumed that he composed the full dress according to his personal fashion consciousness. The full dress is completely different from the traditional royal dress code of the earlier Kings.

It is believed that King Vimaladarmasuriya I introduced the long sleeved short jacket for the royal dress code known as '*juwanhette*' which derived its name from its introduction by Don Jhon Wimala Dharmasuriya I. (Codrington, 1910.) The long -sleeved jacket was also known as '*kameesahettaya*', '*mantehettaya*'. From the eighteenth century onwards the royal dress changed to a long sleeved jacket and the long lower cloth and pantaloons depicted in wall paintings and sculptures of the period. It is obvious that the new dress style merged well into the tradition of the county. After he devised his own visual context, some new associations emerged for the long sleeved jacket. After this, the long sleeved jacket could be seen as being associated with a new set of dress types. Successors of King Wimaladharmasuriya followed the same long sleeved jacket with a collar or tippet (Codrington, 1910) composed of trousers or pantaloons and they became a fashion statement.

Even though Prince Dharmapala first adopted the Portuguese style '*cabaya*' or long coat and introduced them to the Kings it also could be suggested that King Wimaladharmasuriya I introduced the short jacket or '*hettaya*' as upper body dress for the royalty. His long lower dress seems to be a development derived from the early Gampola period and the sixteenth Century lower dress depicted in the two cloth paintings at the Museum, Colombo. (Reg.No.85.133.1) The broad design on the front fold of the dress seems similar to the above mentioned sixteenth century lower dress. The side fold also shows gradual development of the dress feature. He wore jewelry including the necklaces, crown,

earrings, armlets, bracelets, varieties of rings, and bandolier.

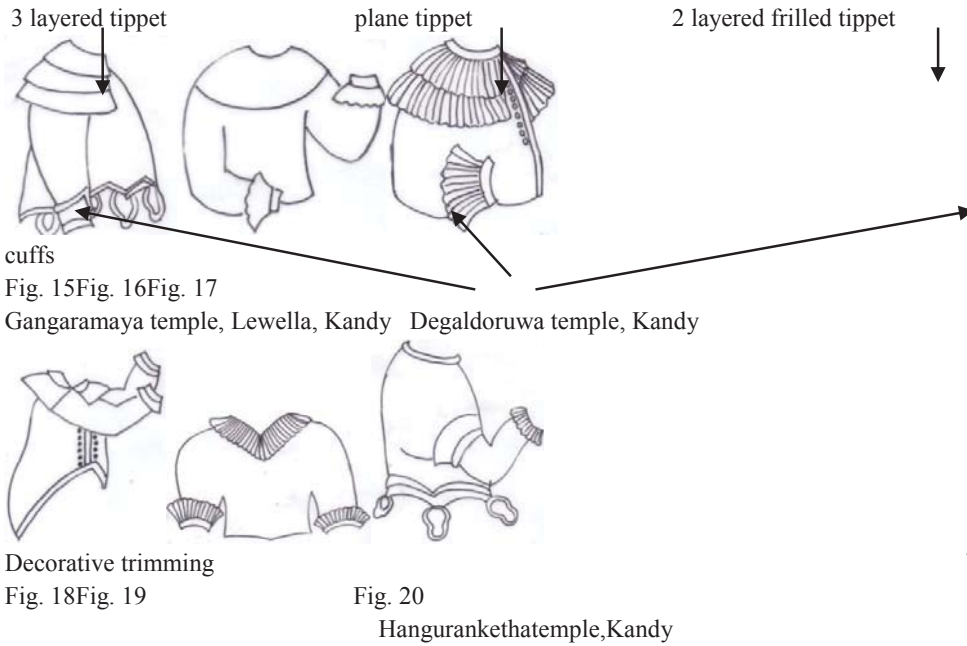
Fig 10 shows the dress of King Kirthi Sri Rajasimha composed of loose white pantaloons and the 'hette' or jacket. This jacket was also known as 'mojahette' and is presently well preserved at the Kundasale temple in Kandy. This was made in a rich material of brocade, velvet, silk or cloth of gold. The jacket has long sleeves. The jacket's neck line is wide and has a two piece frilled collar.

Fig 11 shows King Sri WickramaRajasimha's royal dress which shows a continuous narration of dress etiquettes which was followed by the Nayakkar Kings. He wore loose pantaloons as lower garment with two layers of frills attached to the ankle. He wore a pair of sandals that was unique. He carried a staff with beautiful carvings which was inlaid by gemstones. He covered the upper body with a long sleeved fine muslin jacket known as 'Watahette' or 'Relikamise'. The jacket was embellished with thread work and had a three layered 'mante' worn over it. Fig 11 presently in the Kandyan Museum shows a jacket with a broad 'mante'. This dress article was also utilized by Kings Keerthi Sri Rajasingha and Wimaladharmasuriya 1 in their jackets. However the size of the article is seen to be bigger in the tippet of Wimaladharmasuriya 1 (Codrington, 1910). It is known that these Kings practiced oiling their hair as etiquette and they separately attached the tippet to the neckline of the jacket as a protective dress item which they supposed would not allow oil to run into their jacket.

Apart from 'yatakamise' or 'roppillios' (foundation garment) he wore a fine muslin shirt as 'udakamisaya' or 'wambays' (doublet or outer garment) which was sleeveless. Bo-leave patterned cuffs were attached to the sleeve wrists. Reminiscent of the Portuguese King (fig 14 King João III) and he carried a handkerchief. His forehead is marked with a 'thilaka' (forehead mark) which is pronouncing a signifier of his Tamil origin. Although King Sri WickramaRajasimha and Kirthi Sri Rajasimha were Tamil by birth eventually they embraced Buddhism and followed fashions of their former Kings.

Complexities of eclectic fashion: design variation in jackets.

Temple murals during the period of Kandy show varieties of patterned upper body jackets worn by the Kings. Visual representations show how the Kings were immersed in Western fashions and adapted them according to their contemporary social dress norms and values. They patterned the jackets with different types of sleeves, necklines, collars, fastenings, and decorative trimmings such as frills, and ornamental cuffs with traditional designs and motifs. Murals of the Hanguranketha temple show a different styled long sleeved jacket which has a big puffed sleeve having a certain volume emphasized at the center of the shoulder and tightening to the elbow by attaching a fabric frill. Very often they used overall design fabrics to make *hetta* or jackets. Frills were a common detail feature for all *kameesahette*, which were mostly attached to the necklines and the hemlines of the sleeves (cuffs). There was also a jacket with a pointed tail.



Complexities of eclectic fashion: hybrid dress.



Fig. 21 Fig. 22
Higher administrative officers during the period of British rule in Sri Lanka Early 20th Century

It is also identified that the elite or the high rankers of the administrative society during the early twentieth century in the south of Sri Lanka wore long coats with a long cloth up to the ankle and wore long trousers beneath the cloth. What is noticeable here is that instead of Prince Dharmapala's long coat and long lower piece of cloth a new dress form, trousers worn beneath the cloth emerged. This new fashion brought an interesting dress composition and elaborated the perception of the perceivers of that society. The mode of the new dress composition signified 'smart gentleman'. It seems that with the passage of time the elite male has ignored the lower cloth and practiced wearing a long coat and trousers. In this way it seems that people in the society could continuously convey dress signifiers according to their wish. However it is apparent that the culture of the society had ignored some dress forms and re-formed and adopted another dress for elite males in the middle phase of the twentieth century in Sri Lanka.

Results & Conclusion

It is realized that the fashion of dress in Sri Lanka has become a vibrant composition in succeeding administrative eras in history. The Portuguese impact on the dresses of the royalty caused a vibrant composition of dress. The novel dress mode immediately inspired by the elite of the royal court led to many other formations of components into dress. The so called traditional Sri Lankan dress became a blend of Western and Sri Lankan. However the finalized dress fashion becomes more authentic than ever before. The cultural blend of stitched long coat or short jacket mixed with an unstitched wrapped long cloth gave immense visual metaphor was for the viewer. The male dress of the early phase of the 20th Century, gradually built up its position steadily in society. The dress was identified as a strong metaphor in social administration. This sartorial eclectic blend paved the way to emerging new trends among Sri Lankans.

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