

The Royal *Potgul* Tradition in the Rajarata Civilization and the Dambadeniya Period: a Study of Scholarly and Administrative Practices in Medieval Sri Lanka

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This study examines the institutional frameworks and socio-cultural significance of royal *Potgul* in medieval Sri Lanka during the Rajarata Civilization and the Dambadeniya period. Positioned near royal palaces, these repositories functioned as intellectual and administrative hubs, facilitating knowledge production, literary preservation and bureaucratic governance, thereby shaping the era's intellectual and administrative paradigms. The earliest evidence of *Potgul* traditions is traced to the reign of King Dutugemunu with the authorship of *Pin Potth* documented in the *MaraṇaMañcaka* chronicle. These texts, recited during Buddhist funerary rites, were systematically preserved in *Potgul*, reflecting their role under Buddhist doctrinal influence. Royal scribes affiliated with these institutions produced seminal works such as the *Sārārtha Saṅgrahaya*, *Jānakibaraṇa* and *Dampīya Aṭṭwā Gaṭṭapadaya*, illustrating the repositories' capacity to house religious, linguistic and literary resources essential for advanced scholarship. Beyond Buddhist texts, *Potgul* archived Hindu Vedic scriptures, Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, legal codes like the *Manusmṛti*, underscoring their syncretic scholarly traditions. Historical records emphasized their administrative utility. King Dappula II archived judicial rulings for posterity, while Vijayabahu I commissioned the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī Prakaraṇa* within a *Potgul*. Parakramabahu I's dissemination of the *Arthashastra* to military commanders highlighted their strategic governance role. Archaeological evidence near Dambadeniya, including temple remnants in Sirigala and the site termed *Potgul Kanda*, corroborated their existence. Scholarly accounts, such as those by Ven. Sumaṅgalajoti Thero, affirmed the enduring legacy of these institutions in safeguarding state documents. The establishment of *Potgul Kanda* under monastic custodian Vācissara Thero further underscored their role in preserving administrative records. Monarchs like Parākramabāhu II utilized *Potgul* resources to compose works such as the *Kavisilumīṇa*, demonstrating their centrality to intellectual endeavors. In conclusion, royal *Potgul* were institutionalized centers of erudition and administration, synthesizing Buddhist and Hindu scholarly traditions. They enabled knowledge production, legal codification and military strategy, underpinning the cultural and bureaucratic achievements of Sri Lanka's medieval kingdoms. Their legacy, preserved through textual, epigraphic and archaeological evidence, underscores their enduring socio-cultural significance as pillars of medieval Sri Lankan governance and scholarship.

Keywords: *Dambadeniya period; Knowledge preservation; Rajarata civilization; Royal Potgul tradition; Siyabasalakara*