

**A STUDY OF COSTUMES AND THE USE OF MOTIFS IN THE  
TEMPLE MURALS OF THE KANDYAN TRADITION: A STUDY  
BASED ON SELECTED TEMPLE MURALS OF LOW COUNTRY**

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Ancient visual art can be described as an archaeological tool that brings objective and absolute knowledge from past human culture to the present. It reveals a wide variety of information about humans from those days. The primary research area of this study focuses on the usage of costumes and their motifs in the temple murals of Kandyan tradition, specifically within two selected temples in the southern province, namely *Kathaluwa Purwaramaya* and *Thotagamuwa Thelwaththa Viharaya*. Although there have been a number of studies related to the nature of clothing and its use in the visual arts found in the Kandyan tradition, such research has focused on the surface nature of clothing, design patterns and the individual roles it portrays. However, a gap exists in scholarly inquiry into the underlying significance of clothing concerning styles, individual and social spaces, social status, ranks, power dynamics, respect, class, caste, regional identity, and other cultural influences. Therefore, since art is a social activity and a unique human activity, a close reading of the old visual arts can reveal much information about social culture, space, and individual ideology of that time. The costumes and their designs have the potential to function as a distinctive archaeological visual source, aiding in uncovering the authentic identity of the information disclosed by these sources. This holds true for the specified period, whether written sources are present or absent, contributing to the understanding of social character during the formation of the history of ancient visual arts. Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyse how the clothing and designs featured in Kandyan paintings can represent society during that period, investigating their potential as archaeological visual sources in historical reconstruction. The examination revealed that artists deliberately utilised designs, colours, and various costume types to visually express the social hierarchy and centralisation of power in that period. While this academic study primarily uses qualitative research methodology, a rational analysis is also expected to be carried out. The data collection procedure mainly focuses on primary sources and studies conducted on selected temple paintings, museum observations and interviews conducted with art historians and artists who belong to transitive traditions. Furthermore, as secondary sources, information is primarily expected to be collected from books, magazines, and articles.

**Keywords:** Archaeological visual sources, Ethical activities, Social institutions, Tradition