

Elite-led Cultural Projects Manifesting Periodic Changes: Geoffrey Bawa Case Studies in Postcolonial Sri Lanka

M. N. R. Wijetunge

Department of Design and Merchandising, School of Education and Spatial Sciences,
Oklahoma State University, USA.

< nishan.wijetunge@okstate.edu ( <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2215-8150>) >

Abstract

It is often believed that the so-called 'cultural projects' are the most ideal form of political, economic and socio-cultural manifestation of a given society, at a given time. These are commonly referred to as 'periodic changes'. In postcolonial Sri Lanka, it is often believed that cultural projects have been used to convey underlying messages to its masses by their patrons. Geoffrey Bawa – considered the most important architect of the nation who was responsible for its 'national architectural style' – completed a number of them in his career. It is often acknowledged that Bawa's cultural projects themselves were instrumental indeed in making of the country's aforementioned national style. On the other hand, the unmistakable role played by the governing/political elite (as patrons) behind the implementation of such projects is also noteworthy. Moreover, it is often said that the architecture of such cultural projects implemented by Bawa were associated closely with elite culture, but that of the masses they were meant for.

In this light, the study narrates theories on elitism, and establishes positions of elite/masses in society respectively. Next, it assesses different levels of cultures, and then, their pertaining building design traditions respectively. In this process, the relationship between elite 'high culture' and 'grand design tradition' is also ascertained. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study takes up three case studies by Geoffrey Bawa. The selected almost-parallel cultural projects with elite patronage are commonly viewed as the most instrumental from his portfolio for making the nation's flagship architectural style by the 1980s. In terms of empirical work, to collect information, the study relies upon drawings, photographic surveys, and especially, literature. The gaps in literature are countered via secondary in-depth interviews based on semi-structured questionnaires, borrowed from literature. The selected architectural attributes (i.e. location selection/layouts as well as form constituents and architectural features/details) from each case study are then analyzed to determine their underlying design tradition/s respectively. Finally, the underlying reasons (i.e. periodic changes) behind their implementation are interpreted in a phenomenological viewpoint to draw conclusions.

Key Words

Elite, Cultural Projects, Grand Design Tradition, Folk Design Tradition, Periodic Changes, Postcolonial, Geoffrey Bawa

Introduction

According to Cambridge.org (2023), the term 'culture' is defined as “[the] way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time”.ⁱ When a given custom can be short-lived and observed only at the individual/family level, a tradition conversely is a more enduring practice that has been passed down through generations, and is observed by the majority of people in society. Moreover, while all traditions may qualify as customs, not all customs are traditions. In this backdrop, how

people execute their buildings is an essential part of the ensemble of the aforesaid customs/traditions that make up a given culture.

Although architecture is influenced by a myriad of factors including history, environment etc., one of the major factors to impact it is culture. Since the main purpose of architecture is to create comfortable places of living for people, the cultural aspect is vital for this goal. In this light, Rapoport (2005) discusses the relationship between culture, the built environment, and design by showing that the purpose of design is to create environments that suit users. For him, such products are therefore, user-oriented. Since design must also be based on traditional knowledge of how people and environments interact, design thus needs to respond to culture. On the other hand, Emmons, Lomholt and Hendrix (2012) examine the historical role played by culture in architectural production and expression, while looking at meaning and communication, tracing the formations of cultural identities.

According to Baldwin (2023), a 'cultural projects' is a type of architecture that is defined by human experience. As places of gathering and exchange, they bring people together. These projects are made to connect people to larger ideas, and also to each other. Such cultural projects are meant to reflect contemporary life. As places to socialize, such also become landmarks and icons of identity. In turn, these monumental works rethink how culture is shared and celebrated.

If architecture from the ancient times is taken into consideration, there is a great difference for example, between Egyptian and Greek styles of building – forming Egyptian and Greek architectural identities respectively as we know them – for which, the most decisive underlying factor becomes the cultural differences of the two settings. When it comes to architecture in the contemporary times however, we can observe the intermingling of different cultures resulting in blurred lines. However, there are still countries where the cultural impact continues to dominate in architecture pertaining to public buildings. In postcolonial Sri Lanka too, this is just the case (M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2022; N. R. Wijetunge, 2021). The notion of nation that prevailed during the era is in fact, a widely-discussed area (M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2010). Over the years, it is evident that the so-called 'cultural projects' have often been preferred by successive Sri Lankan states as the most ideal building type to convey underlying messages to its masses as illustrated by Perera (1994) and M. N. R. Wijetunge (2014, 2015). Scriver and Prakash (2007) ascertain this notion with regard to building projects in colonial India. In this light, although the ability of the domestic architecture of the elite to also do the same has been avowed by M. N. R. Wijetunge (2012, 2013, 2014, 2018, 2020, 2022, 2023, 2024a, 2024b) and N. R. Wijetunge (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2021), it appears that the more private nature of the elite dwelling hampers its manifestation potential as well as intention. The aforesaid idea of repression pertaining to manifestation has been confirmed by M. N. R. Wijetunge (2023) elsewhere. In order to achieve this, he dwells on historical examples (M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2007). Hence, it could be argued that cultural projects executed with established building traditions of a given society for the benefit of its people also have the ability to imbue in them the notion of their way of life. It could also be adduced that such cultural projects carry the propensity for best manifestation of periodic changes pertaining to that particular society via architecture (M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2024a).

On the other hand, it is also commonly perceived that the cultural projects are often realized with the auspice of the ruling elite in society, and the statement is universal and timeless (Wijetunge et al., 2024a). Thus, they are modeled to manifest either political, economic and socio-cultural agendas through symbolic propensities made possible via the repertoire of building traditions at the disposal of a given society implementing such projects. Moreover, it could also be argued that the elite always make sure that such agendas are always beneficial to their political immutability and continuation. In this backdrop, when the pertinent question of which building type out of the aforesaid two is the most ideal socio-cultural manifestation of a given situation is raised, cultural projects appear to be the most formidable counterpart. The fact that unlike more 'private' elite domestic projects, cultural projects are designed on behalf of 'many' – with the societal-level manifestation capabilities as against that of a handful – frame their importance. The

above arguments eventually lead to addressing of the designers of cultural projects. In the Sri Lankan case, the most prolific figure is Geoffrey Bawa. He is considered the most important architect of Sri Lanka during its postcolonial period. He was in fact, responsible for making of its 'national/flagship architectural style' by the 1980s (Robson, 2004, 2007; Sansoni in Taylor, 1986). He achieved this by initially engaging in domestic projects for elite clients, which became springboards for his larger subsequent state commissions – again awarded by the same elite group – that came in the form of cultural projects (Pieris, 2007; M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2012, 2021).

Sri Lanka's postcolonial period that overlapped with the helm of its nationalism commenced in 1948, when Ceylon was granted independence by the British colonial masters. After a nationalist peak that won the nation its independence, it is commonly believed that the phenomenon survived well into the mid-1990s (and beyond) with its ups and downs. One of its lowest points of Sri Lanka's nationalism was marked by the state's own willingness for the nation's partition that was orchestrated in 1994, when the foreign-backed People's Alliance (PA) political party swept into power. This action soon received fervent resistance paused by the nation's majority populace. J. F. R. Perera (2011), Zompetti (1997) and De Votta (2007) all narrate this point in length.ⁱⁱ It is also noteworthy that the same passage of time also paralleled with Bawa's ascent as an architect in the 1960s, and until he wrapped up practice in the mid-1990s (Robson, 2004). Bawa completed a number of cultural projects in his career. Out of the lot, the three case studies undertaken by this research – the Parliament building, *Ruhuna* University and *Seemamalaka* Temple – are considered as an essential part of the ensemble of cultural projects that were instrumental in making the nation's flagship architectural style by the 1980s (Robson, 2004). The fact that they are included in almost all critic/commentator-compiled lists for being either the "most iconic" of Bawa's buildings according to archdaily.com (2023), archnet.org (2023), re-thinkingthefuture.com (2023) and architecturaldigest.in (2023), or as one of "the World's most striking government buildings", as for bbc.com (2023), help affirm the aforementioned point.

When concentrating on the Sri Lankan scenario via three case studies, the study's one foremost objective is to affirm the essential elite patron ship of cultural projects. The next objective is to reveal the underlying design traditions (*i.e.* belonging to weather 'grand' or 'folk' design traditions) constituting the architecture of the cultural projects in question. This tests the popular assumption that cultural projects should ideally imbue the life of the ordinary people which they are meant for, as they are lived. The final objective is to reveal the underlying messages in terms of periodic changes entrapped within the cultural projects in question that came to the fore via architecture. Having tackled the objectives, the ultimate aim here is to ascertain the fact that cultural projects are the best version that there is for the manifestation of periodic changes of a given society, at a given time. If the aim works in the Sri Lankan scenario successfully, it could perhaps be applied to similar situations elsewhere.

Research Context

Elites and Masses

Over the years, numerous scholarly works and definitions have characterized elites as an 'organized minority' within society (Mosca, 1939). Elites tend to dominate the 'unorganized masses' through various factors, ranging from naturally superior intellectual and physical qualities to inherited or acquired economic and political power (Bottomore, 1993). Through these superior qualities, elites consistently remain at the forefront of society, showcasing their prestige and leading the way for the masses to follow. They are engaged in a relentless quest to widen the existing gulf between societal strata. This unchanging nature of elites holds true across different locations and eras, whether in primitive societies or the most advanced.

From a historical perspective, Mosca (1939) proposed that all societies are divided into two classes: 'the rulers' and 'the ruled'. He argued that the ruling class, though smaller in number, carries out all political functions, monopolizes power, and enjoys the socio-economic benefits that come with it. The larger, ruled class, on the other hand, is directed and controlled by the ruling class, often through legal means, but sometimes in arbitrary and even violent ways. This inevitable rule of the minority over the majority is facilitated by the fact that the minority is always organized. It is also said to possess 'superior individuals who have certain attributes that are real or apparent, which is being highly-esteemed and very influential in the society in which they live.

Pareto (1963) is another key theorist on elitism. His ideas, along with Mosca's, can be distilled into a few common, easily understood concepts. As they propagate, in modern societies, the elites could either be found in the form of various 'functional groups' or as a 'political class'. In the olden ages, apex-status of the elites was manifested through their royal, noble, cleric, aristocratic or bourgeois positions in society. Conversely, in the contemporary world, they prevail in the forms of a few distinct functional groups – the intellectuals, managers of industry or bureaucrats. The more conspicuous and loosely-defined political class consist of those who occupy the lower ranks of political command and, more vaguely, those who can influence political decisions. This class undergoes changes in its membership over a period of time, ordinarily by the recruitment of new individual members from the lower strata of society, sometimes by the incorporation of new social groups. Occasionally, these rather-established elite are replaced completely by a 'counter elite' in situations such as revolutions, in a process referred to as the 'circulation of elites'. Within the political class itself, there exists a smaller group – the 'political elite' or 'governing elite' – consisting of the individuals who actually wield political power. This includes members of the ruling government, and of the high administration, military leaders, and in some cases, politically influential families of an aristocracy or royal house, as well as leaders of powerful economic enterprises. However, it is less convenient to set boundaries for the 'political class' as it might include the 'political elite' as well as the 'counter-elites'. The political class may comprise of leaders of political parties which are out-of-office and representatives of new social interests or classes such as trade union leaders, groups of businessmen and intellectuals who are somewhat active in politics. The political class therefore, is comprised of a number of groups which may be engaged in varying degree of cooperation, competition or conflict with each other (Bottomore, 1993). Moreover, Mosca (1939) agreeably observes the notion of elitism with a hint of democracy stating that, an elite does not merely rule by brute force and fraud, but 'represents' in some sense, the common interests and purposes of important and influential groups in society. All these elite-positions in modern society are the real determiners of most aspects of life of the masses (Bottomore, 1993). The elite rule, they manage, and are the ideological think tanks that moulds the society into its form, while masses merely go along with what is imposed up on them with limited resistance.

On the other hand, Pareto's (1963) 'economic dimension' postulates that the factor of economics is the most vital aspect that constitutes elitism; the elites use their political power to achieve the economic edge over masses and vice versa. Hence, out of the ensemble of elites, merely the once possessing some combined degree of economic as well as political edge (and occasionally the intellectual edge), become practically capable of social influence; placing them immutably at the elite apex as the political or governing elite. The bureaucrats, managers and intellectual elites who merely possess what their given names suggest, are relegated to lower elite stratus, and are manipulated by the elite apex. However, 'intricate ways of coalition' between the apex and lower elite stratus is possible, as Mills (1956) explains. The sub-elites who form the liaison between the ensemble of elites and the most numerous masses is a different and less-influential group altogether. Their numbers are usually considerably greater than that of the elites, yet substantially lower than that of the masses. The policies derived by political/governing elite in turn, in either positive or negative terms, affect the economic status of its fellow elites of both coalition and non-coalition, as well as of the governed masses (Bottomore, 1993).

In any case, the policies of political elites consistently aim to support and reinforce the interests of allied elites, working to solidify the existing system for future generations. Hence, changes in society could be attributed to its political and economic arenas, which are essentially intrinsic and complimentary to one another. Mandel (1982) concretizes this canon by illustrating how the factor of 'surplus' that largely appeared following the Neolithic Revolution 15,000 years ago, and later on, the so-called 'means of production', were appropriated by the political elites (*i.e.* the ruling class) over the cause of history. He tells us that this gradually led to the present state of capitalism through numerous historical phases. Consequently, it could be conceived that since political and economic spheres are two of the greatest contributors in the making of elites in society, they also make elites at the apex, the most sensitive to them. In the contemporary capitalist world – which is greatly stable as a system as far as the elites are concerned – this seems to be just the case.

Levels of Culture and Design Traditions

The creative individuals of a society in particular, essentially possess a vital interplay with the society of which they live in. Over the epochs, this trend has been evident in the fields of science, painting, architecture, literature, religious movements as well as moral reforms. These individuals also associate together as elites, which can exist best in a society that is divided into 'stable and enduring classes' (Rapoport, 1969). With reference to the works of T. S. Eliot (in Bottomore, 1993), in every society which is complex, there is a number of 'levels of culture' to be found, and it is utmost vital for the health of the society that these levels of culture inter-relate with one another, while remaining distinct in their own right. Yet, the manner and the taste of society as a whole is always influenced by the society's 'highest culture'. Since culture is a factor that is transmitted primarily through the family unit, if an upper class exists with families which are able to maintain a settled way of lives for a several generations only, the above notion can be fulfilled.ⁱⁱⁱ

A given culture consists of various customs/tradition – pertaining to how/what they eat, how/what they dress, how they do certain things etc. – and these traditions determine how people of that culture actually live. Their way of living is conceived as their 'lifestyle'. Out of an array of traditions applying to various facets that constitute a given lifestyle, how people construct their buildings and shelters becomes a seminal one due to its vitality as a basic human need. In this backdrop, it could be stated that when it comes to architectural traditions, there can be a dichotomy in the forms of 'grand' and 'folk' design traditions. Rapoport (1969) claims that the monument-buildings belong to the grand design tradition, and are erected to impress either the populace in terms of the power of the patron, or the peer-group of designers and cognoscenti with the cleverness of the designer and good taste of the patron. Therefore, based on Mosca's 'power-element', the grand design tradition could be attributed to the 'highest culture' of a given society – the culture of the so-called political or governing elites. This particular culture is also lent to the religious establishment that symbiotically legitimizes the existence of its rulers. This has been the case during the times of kingdoms, and even in most modern societies (Roberts, 1995). The 'folk tradition' in contrast, is said to be the direct and unselfconscious translation into physical form of a culture; its needs and values as well as the desires, dreams and passions of a people. The folk tradition is "[...] *much more closely related to the culture of the majority, and life as it is really lived*". Consequently, the authentic meaning behind folk tradition is that, "It is the world view writs small, the 'ideal' environment of a people expressed in buildings and settlements [...]" (Rapoport, 1969).^{iv} Hence, out of the above elucidations, it could be confirmed that folk design tradition is the tradition pertaining to the masses.

Hypothetically, in a homogeneous cultural society, there would be a single dominant culture with the potential for additional subcultures within it. Such situations are very rare, or simply do not exist. On the other hand, in a heterogeneous cultural realm (society), the complexity will be high with the possibility of many competing sub-cultures. In all these situations however,

there will always be a so-called 'dominant culture' – in N. de Silva's (1991, 2006) view – that in turn, overpowers all other cultural levels of a cultural ensemble. This is usually the culture of the majority that exercises ruling rights; weather via historical legitimacy or brute force. Yet, there may be occasions when the minority exerts its cultural influences as world history attests to. In either of these situations, there will always be immutable ruling elite whose culture will be chosen as the dominant culture of the society they rule. However, with thin this dominant culture, the elite faction always possesses their own unique sub-culture that becomes the envy of all others (Bottomore, 1993).

Consequently, the architectural tradition pertaining to this high culture could be illustrated as the grand design tradition. All other levels of cultures could either have their own unique and solitary building traditions or, there would be varying levels of syntheses between them. In whichever way this come into equilibrium, the building traditions derived by other levels of cultures would always become closer to folk traditions than to the other end of the spectrum. This is why the 'vernacular' that falls under folk tradition is so rich with an array of primitive, pre-industrial and even latter industrial variations. However, in both these situations, there could always be one general folk design tradition, modeled to its current state through historical processes of syntheses (Rapoport, 1969).

Elitism in the Modern Sri Lankan Scenario

The idea of elitism in the modern western sense addressed before becomes even more complex when it comes to the South Asian situation. When elitism in the West has historically had an economic determinism to it (in a Marxist viewpoint as shown by Mandel 1982), in the Asiatic arenas, it has always been culture-centric. Religion, and culture molded by the former has always led the way in elite formation in the South Asian context. This brand of elitism has often fed their agrarian economies which depended on water. The social hierarchies of such societies were underpinned by the control of their scarce water resources (Wittforget, 1957). While class has been the main drive throughout history pertaining to western social stratification, caste – a primordial attribute pertaining to birth and blood – has always dominated the South Asian counterpart in the pre-modern times. After the European colonial advent and following exposure to modern western political, economic and socio-cultural hegemony for over half a millennium, a 'hybrid elitism' pinned on both economic class and socio-culturally hinged caste system has come into existence (M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2012, 2014, 2023; Wijetunge et al., 2024b). Sri Lanka is no exception to this. The island in fact, possesses a more complex caste system in comparison to the four-fold counterpart of its Indian cousin (K. T. Silva, 2005). In this light, it could be stated that with relation to the complicated Sri Lankan case, the levels of culture that exists within modern Sri Lankan society and their respective design traditions too become ever more complex. Hence, the design traditions concerning the postcolonial period Sri Lankan elite entail both western and eastern counterparts. Consequently, its historic gallery/repertoire of potential borrowing too becomes extensive.

Manifestation Propensities of Sri Lankan Cultural Projects

It was established earlier that in modern Sri Lanka (as elsewhere), its politically-charged elites should be most sensitive to the two foremost underlying factors behind their making – economic and socio-cultural – and consequently carry the best potential to manifest them. It was also ascertained that owing to their political and economic clout, they further occupy the highest level of culture within a given society too. In this light, it could be argued that the Sri Lankan modern elite also carry the propensity to manifest the same highest level of culture they adhere to. Since grand design tradition is the building tradition supported by the highest level of culture, the elite carry the potential to manifest high culture-based grand design tradition via their architecture. In situations such as Sri Lanka where the state of elitism is hybrid and complex,

consequently, grand design tradition's historic gallery/repertoire of potential borrowing too becomes more extensive with both local and western inputs.

Further, it was explained before that architectural building projects executed for the benefit of the people of a given society – also affording the ability to imbue in them the notion of their way of life – are its 'cultural projects'. Such projects connect people together and also to larger ideas. As places to gather, socialize and exchange, such also become landmarks and icons of identity that evaluate how culture is shared and celebrated.

Since the vernacular-biased folk design tradition is less the result of individual desires than of the aims and desires of a unified-group striving for an ideal environment, it could be argued that preferably, it is the version that should be employed by elite patrons for cultural projects representing many. However, cultural projects – edifices of religious, monumental, military, administrative, civic etc. of cultural connotation – have historically resorted to grand design tradition, and still continue to do so in universal terms. The underlying factor here is that the political/governing elite at the society's apex are always the ones who commission these projects, and they make sure that their very own sphere of tradition pertaining to the process of building is employed in the act. In Sri Lanka too, this is just the case. The cultural project examples from Sri Lanka illustrate that high cultural grand design tradition (via employment of its historic gallery/repertoire as well as that imposed by the colonial masters) finds more common use than its counterpart. In reality, such projects reflect the economic and socio-cultural reasons behind the making of their patron elite, as a political statement, than the core ideas that should underpin the formation of cultural projects.

Methodology

The study begins by narrating the extant definitions on elitism, and by establishing who the elite and masses are respectively in a given society. Next, it assesses the different levels of cultures, and then, the different building design traditions pertaining to them. The relationship between 'high culture' sustained by the elite, and 'grand design tradition' is thus made explicit, while also ascertaining the link between 'other levels of culture' and 'folk design tradition'. By employing a qualitative research methodology, the study relies on three well-justified case studies by Geoffrey Bawa; considered as almost parallel cultural projects that were instrumental in making the nation's flagship architectural style by the 1980s. Confirming the elite patron ship of these case studies is also fulfilled here. In order to collect information, as empirical work, the study relies upon the collected drawings/photographic surveys, and especially, extant literature. The gaps in literature are remedied via five in-depth interviews, based on semi-structured questionnaires. These interviews are drawn from extant literature, in the form of secondary sources. The selected architectural attributes (*i.e.* location selection and layouts as well as form constituents & architectural features/details) from each case study are then analyzed to determine their underlying design tradition respectively, and the underlying reasons behind their implementation is determined as a phenomenological interpretation. The conclusions are drawn based on the aforesaid. The study was conducted between 9th - 30th January 2023.

Case Studies

The architect in question here is Geoffrey Bawa. His well-connected elite background, core-oriented capitalist and hedonistic ideologies as well as the modernist-influenced architectural upbringing has been manifested by his design portfolio over the decades. His works range from elite houses and hotels to various other classes of cultural projects in Sri Lanka as well

as elsewhere (M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2012, 2014; Wijetunge et al., 2024a). In this backdrop, it is fair to claim that he was unrivalled by any other architect in the years leading to the United National Party (UNP) government's advent into power (in 1977), until its temporary fall (in 1994). Bawa's biographers' analyses – that of Robson (2004, 2007) and Taylor (1989) – too fall in line with this idea.

The UNP happens to be the oldest democratic political party in Sri Lanka, which was formed by a faction of Ceylonese elites who led the political struggle against British rule, finally succeeding in 1948 (Perera, 1994). Even after independence, the UNP was predominantly subjected to elite-domination. Their hybrid cultural condition that was the result of the orient clashing for centuries with occident was commonly referred to as the 'postcolonial-third-culture' (Obeyesekere in Perera, 1994). Consequently, they carried forward the same British-colonial ideologies in political, economic as well as socio-cultural spheres, until they were topped in 1956 by a so-called 'nationalist' government led by Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). The party had been formed a new, by a rebel faction that had fled the UNP (Iven, 2006). Following the conclusion of a series of SLFP-led governments that harnessed nationalist and socialist ideologies, the UNP again sprung into power in 1977, and introduced the so-called 'neo-liberal economic reforms' to Sri Lanka. This victory reinforced the western-oriented elite hegemony in the new nation state of Sri Lanka, and established a capitalist system for the next seventeen years to come.

On the other hand, the intended nationalist manifestation via architecture too should not be discounted. It has been confirmed that the nationalist policies of the UNP government persisted until 1994, when it was finally toppled by the government led by Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge, after a reign of seventeen years (Wilson, 2005). The Bandaranaike government marked the lowest ebb of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism after independence, in its covert quest of attempted partitioning of Sri Lanka that eventually failed. Hence, it could be argued that until the mid-1980s, amidst the chaos of separatism and foreign intervention, nationalist manifestation was vital for the state for its survival, which was realized on their part by Bawa (M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2012; 2014).

Despite its ups and downs over the decades, the UNP even today, has largely retained its elite-dominance and Western orientation in terms of all aspects ranging from its party-structure to political beliefs (Perera, 1994). After all, the UNP-led government had swept into power with a landslide victory; after a very unpleasant period of great austerity and hardship between 1971-77, ushered by a pro-socialist SLFP government (Iven, 2006). In this light, accordingly, the new buildings to be executed by the state had to imbue in them, the great promise of capitalism, and its intended success and optimism; all to be made explicit to the populace (Robson, 2004). Hence, Bawa was chosen as the ideal envoy. His job was to convey to its ruled masses the newly-adapted capitalist hegemony of the state. His elitist background and affiliations well-established by M. N. R. Wijetunge (2012) made him arguably the best candidate for the job.

Bawa practiced Neo/Tropical Regionalism at the time, and the style was seen as conterminous with nationalism (Pieris, 2007). After all, it was only after 1985 when Bawa did actually break away from the Regionalist tropes to finally embrace neo-liberal manifestations that were eventually seen through his designs. If his portfolio is scrutinized, most 'International style'-like of his houses – the de Soysa house (1985-91), Currimjee house (1986-94), Jayakody house (1991-96) and Jayawardene house (1997) – were executed after 1985, which confirms this point.^v The only projects outside of the domestic realm he was able to execute in this new style were the State mortgage bank building (1976-78) and *Kandalama* hotel (1991-94), which are seen more as experimentation attempts (Robson, 2004). In this backdrop, it could be argued on one hand that the three selected case studies – the new Parliament complex (1979-82), *Seema Malaka* (1976-78), *Ruhuna* University (1980-88) – were executed under a unique shared set of circumstances. On the other, these projects are considered as three of the most vital by Bawa, within the process of making of a national/flagship architectural style for the nation. The parliament complex for instance, has made itself into numerous lists compiled to illustrate the best 'iconic' modern

buildings executed in the 20th century world. In fact, the three buildings constantly find themselves in the lists of Bawa's most iconic/trail-blazing projects. Hence, scrutinizing them is only logical for the purpose of this study. Although Bawa did design other projects that potentially fit under the category of civic projects, they all could be excluded owing to a number of valid reasons.^{vi}

Discussion

Case Study 1 - Seema Malaka (1976-78)

Seema Malaka is a Buddhist monument situated in the heart of Colombo, on its famous *Beira Lake*. It is a part of the historic *Gangarama Temple*, and is situated a few hundred meters away from it. Although *Seema Malaka* is now mainly used for meditation and rest rather than for worship, it was originally meant as a place of inauguration to ordain Buddhist monks. The temple was originally constructed in the late-19th century, and it is said that the original structure slowly sank into the water.

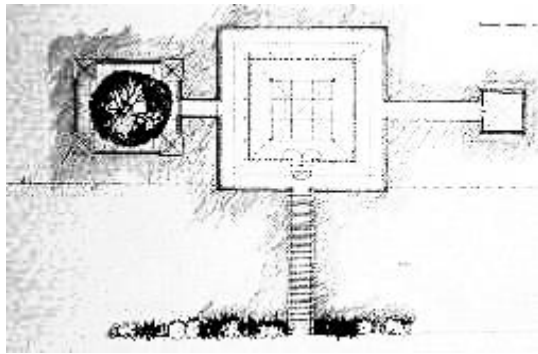


Fig.1

Fig. 1: Layout Plan.
Source: Robson (2004).

Fig. 2: Southern façade view depicting main entrance Causeway & side bridges.

Fig. 3: The inclined timber screen and Buddha statues.

Fig. 4: Main preaching hall Interior depicting *asana*.

Fig. 5: North-facing inauguration room.

Fig. 6: Bo tree shrine and *stupa*.

Source: Author (2017).



Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6

Patron

In 1976, Geoffrey Bawa was commissioned to redesign the *Seema Malaka*. It was the *Podi Hamuduruwo* (junior monk) of the temple who raised the money and invited Bawa to be the architect; possibly with the persuasion of its board of trustees (*Dayaka Sabha*) that comprised largely of Colombo-07 elite (Robson, 2004). The close social connections between the aforesaid group and Bawa who also saw himself an essential part of it, is well-established (Rani Gunasekara in M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2012). After all, the affiliation between influential politicians of the time such as R. Premadasa with this temple is well-known. The project started during the pro-socialist stint of the SLFP headed by Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Premadasa, the soon-to-be Prime Minister of J. R. Jayewardene's impending UNP government hailed from a so-called 'lower caste' background. Having been assured of the Prime Ministerial position, he was now eyeing for means to gain religious legitimacy for his future presidential ambitions (Cooray, 2008).

One of J. R. Jayewardene's pre-election promises was to establish an executive President-led governmental system on par with that of France, as against the Prime Minister-led Westminster model imparted on Sri Lanka by the British – as a new gesture of political decolonization (Perera, 1994). The lower caste groups in the island have historically found themselves marginalized from political affairs, and Buddhism as the majority (and eventually state) religion had traditionally afforded legitimacy for the majority *Govigama* caste group as rulers (Roberts, 1995). During pre-colonial times, the Buddhist establishment validated Kings, and in the age of democracy, it extended support to *Govigama* caste traditional elite as presidential candidates (K. T. Silva, 2005). President Jayewardene's famous speech that gave away the notion of unprecedented power vested in the new executive president – by claiming that the only thing the president cannot pull off using his power is to turn a man into a woman and *vice versa* – was arguably, also a means to maintain the aforesaid *status quo* (Jayewardene, 2000). In this light, under the onslaught of caste politics, Premadasa would have felt at ease approaching the relatively-neophyte *Gangarama* Buddhist temple with more of a 19-20th century multi-caste bourgeoisie patron ship; as against more historic *Kelaniya* temple with unmistakably traditional 'low-country' high caste *Govigama* elite backing, or more archaic Temple of the Tooth in Kandy with its jealously-guarded 'up-country' *Govigama* elite provenance. Premadasa who was politically representing Colombo where he hailed from, needed the legitimization to come from his own constituency. The patrons of more traditional Buddhist institutions were essentially the traditional *Govigama* elite of the country. The Bandaranaiques belonged to the so-called 'First-class *Govigama*' elite of the 'low-country', and so did the Jayewardenes. Sirimavo on the other hand, descended from the Ratwattes – a family hailing from the 'up-country' with a 'Radala' ancestry (Obeysekere, 2007). Despite all socio-cultural historic impediments and odds stacked up against him, Premadasa did eventually become the President of Sri Lanka in 1989. He remains to-date the only individual outside of the *Govigama* caste to ever become the president of Sri Lanka (Ivan, 2006).

When ritualistic aspects such as annual *Esela perahera* (procession) was newly-appropriated by *Gangarama* with the backing of powerful political patrons such as Premadasa – as Perera (1994) tells us – its reconstruction effort was meant more as a reinvigoration project of its image, to place it on par with more historically-established counterparts. The work was funded by a rich Bora Muslim businessman S. H. Moosajee and his wife.^{vii} He had been ostracized by his own community and his action was a result of his reaction to it (Valentine Gunasekara in M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2012). The fact that the industrious Boras with their Indian/Iranian origins who made their fortunes during the 19-20th century British colonial rule is well-established (Kareem in News first Sri Lanka, 2023). This explains the contiguity of this minute group to the rest of the Colombo-07 elite, mostly comprising of Sinhala Buddhists and Anglican Christians (Obeysekere, 2007). S. H. Musajee's son Asker was both Bawa's client and a friend, and it was him who persuaded the initially-reluctant architect to take up the project (Robson, 2004). Since Premadasa belonging to

the island's political class at that time had become a self-appointed patron of the temple, it could be deducted that through its elite trustees, he would have come to know Geoffrey Bawa better.

Location Selection & Layout

The Lake *Baira* is located in the centre of the city of Colombo, which is surrounded by a densely-built business district. The temple located on the eastern side of the lake consists of a central plinth (island) connected to the lakeside by a causeway, and it, to two lesser plinths (smaller islands) by short bridges. The main plinth houses a spacious preaching hall with an *asana* (offering table) for the Buddha at its rear centre-end, while the northern plinth carries a small inauguration room. On the Southern plinth stands a *Bo*-tree shrine in the centre with an adjoining small *Stupa* (pagoda), surrounded by *Devalas* (temples dedicated to deities) on its four corners. The fact that this *Bo*-tree came from a sampling of the *Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi* in the sacred city of *Anuradhapura* – a sampling of the tree in ancient *Bodh Gaya* (in present-day India) under which Buddha attained enlightenment – manifests the significance of perpetuation of tradition in Buddhist temples, which was adhered to here. The *ganta kara* (bell-shaped) *stupa* takes after that of *Kelani* vihara, yet is a smaller version of it.

The tradition of square plans of separated pavilions and their asymmetrical arrangement can be traced back to ancient forest monasteries of the *Anuradhapura* Kingdom. As Robson (2004) tells us, the idea for the overall layout of *Seema Malaka* may have been borrowed from the forest monasteries of *Ritigala*, executed during the kingdom period of *Anuradhapura*. The sand that usually separated the individual buildings within walled compounds of square shape was replaced here by water in the design of *Seema Malaka* complex. The granite paving stones that interlinked them was here replaced by concrete causeways and bridges. The layout suggested of a microcosmic representation of the universe; analogous to other Buddhist/Hindu temple complexes found in ancient Sri Lanka and India (Bandaranayake, 1974). Hence, the complex was oriented in a way its main causeway entrance as well as the surrounding islands formed around the main island all face cardinal directions.

Architecture (Form Constituents)

Form Constituents Reminiscent of forest monasteries with a compound enclosure containing a group of raised granite plinths of square shape supporting wood-structured pavilions with tiled roofs, *Seema Malaka* was conceived in the same fashion. Perching on concrete platforms, in the case of *Seema Malaka*, the three different building types all have more or less the same proportions; analogous to that of religious edifices from throughout history. The main structure that is the preaching hall does not have any walls, and is covered in all directions with vertical timber members – structural and decorative. The inauguration room has been designed with masonry half walls as its top part too is made akin to the preaching hall. The four smaller shrines carry granite columns and in-between enclosed timber panels and doors that have been adorned with carvings. All carvings depict century-old Sinhalese motifs pervasive throughout traditional Buddhist establishments from *Anuradhapura* to contemporary times (Nimal de Silva in M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2012).

The roofs of all aforesaid building types were made pyramidal with double pitches; reminiscent to examples found in Kandyan Royal/religious edifices. Roland Silva (in N. R. Wijetunge, 2021) in fact, deductively constructed the models of ancient *Anuradhapura* and *Polonnaruwa* religious edifices such as *Pilima ge* and *Watadage* etc., and confirmed the fact that they too had roofs similar to what is now found in Kandy. Hence, for him, the Kandyan roof form was a residual one, with ancient origins. In its execution, in the *Seema Malaka*, half-round clay tiles were placed on asbestos roofing sheets (although recently blue glazed tiles have replaced them). The half-round clay tile cover was a low-country adaptation (with Porto-Dutch colonial origins), instead of flat clay tiles that were originally used in the Kandyan case (Lewcock, Sansoni

and Senanayake, 2002). Even the copper capping on pavilion roofs were modeled after that found in the historic Kandyan Buddhist temples and *Devalas*.

Architectural Features/Details

All three platforms of the *Seema Malaka* complex have numerous seated Buddha statues displaying different *mudras* (a symbolic hand gesture or pose); analogous to ones found inside the *Dambulla* rock temple belonging to 12th century A.D. (Seneviratna, 1983).^{viii} Although the bronze versions here – a donation from Thailand – are executed in typical Thai fashion, the *mudras* universal to Buddha statue-making tradition in the Buddhist world has been perpetuated. In the Sri Lankan scenario, the statues would have normally been made either of granite, as in the famous *Samadhi* (from 4-6th century A.D.), or sand stone, in *Tholuvila* (4-5th century A.D.) examples (Von Schroeder, 1990; Wickramage, 1994).

The preaching hall seems to float above its plinth on massive cross-beams, reminiscent to the timber counterparts of early wayside resting places called *ambalamas*, scattered throughout the island. The one in *Panavitiya* in *Kurunegala* (18th century A.D. or before) is the example adduced by Robson (2004) for Bawa's inspiration. The cross-beams in the case of *Seema Malaka* were executed in the modern material of concrete to obtain better spans, and especially for durability as well as easy construction. The interior is enclosed by a timber screen of inward-sloping carved rafters, inspired by temples of *Kerala* and *Nepal* (Robson, 2004). In the façade of the famous palace at *Pathmanabhapuram* in *Kerala* belonging to 17th century A.D., which is surrounded by water, a similar feature is pervasive. As for Robson, this was Bawa's most favorite of Indian palaces. The placement over water and the timber-screened envelope in both cases facilitate cross-ventilation, thereby enhancing thermal comfort.

Inside, the radiating roof rafters converge at the centre of roof, to be interlocked together by a single piece of timber (*i.e. kenimadala*); pervasive in Kandyan religious edifices (Lewcock, Sansoni and Senanayake, 2002). Roland Silva's (in N. R. Wijetunge, 2021) deductive reconstructions of *Anuradhapura* non-secular buildings too illustrates the same form of roof construction; suggesting its older origins beyond Kandyan times.

The *Devalas* housing gods *Saman*, *Kataragama*, *Nanba* and *Paththini* are designed as four small cubicles with granite corner posts and paneled timber walls. The worshipping of deities run back as far as *Polonnaruwa* period (Bandaranayaka, 1974). The two guard stones of granite (*Muralgal*) on either side of the main access door to the preaching hall hark back to the *Anuradhapura* and *Polonnaruwa* periods when Royal and religious edifices possessed such decorative features. The *Vatadage* in *Polonnaruwa* is an excellent example of such. As for Robson (2004), *Seema Malaka* was a precursor to the Parliament building he later designed by 1979 – illustrating the way Bawa grappled with ideas to gradually develop it to fruition at larger scales.

Phenomenological Analysis

Seema Malaka still finds use in terms of the originally-envisaged function. Over the years, it has become a prominent tourist attraction as well as a venue for wedding photography. The phenomenological analysis confirms the fact that, in this edifice too, Bawa relied upon rhetoric high cultural trends of grand design tradition, from Sri Lanka's classical past. This building was realized with the utilization of a combination of styles ranging from retrospective high cultural grand design traditions of former Lankan kingdoms (*Anuradhapura*, *Polonnaruwa* and Kandy etc.). However, the realization of the edifice took place through largely local materials and technology. From layout, form constituents, architectural features/detailing to material and technology, the complex is akin to grand design tradition of the land, but the vernacular.

When the building was commissioned, the nation was undergoing the worse economic conditions it had experienced since independence, under the Communist-led SLFP government. A period of great austerity lasted from 1971 until 1977, when the capitalist UNP swept back into power with a landslide victory (Perera, 1994). During the SLFP stint, nationalism was at a very low

ebb, when the people were burdened with day-to-day survival that manifested in the form of shortages (from food to building materials). The import substitution championed by the state as Jayewardene (1984) tells us, had killed businesses, and also the building industry. During such times, Bawa as the designer, had no choice but to work with what was at hand, explaining the overwhelmingly indigenous material palette of the building. In terms of style too, when people undergoing tremendous hardship had lost their nationalist fervor, it was time again to hark back to a once-glorious past and re-establish it. Thus, the building signified to the people a renewal of bygone Sri Lankan architectural traditions – the grand design tradition of its classical and medieval times. In a period of great austerity, a scaled-down minute version of a normally much larger religious edifice made perfect sense economically. Hence, knowingly or unknowingly, Bawa performed the task architecturally, so that the patron state benefitted from the iconic project indirectly; by appeasing and settling a hard-up and discontented population. At a time when nationally-important new building operations were unheard of, this religious building project received considerable attention (Robson, 2004).

Case Study 2 - The New Parliament Complex (1979-1982)

Sri Lanka's original Parliament building dated from 1929, and had been designed in the Anglo-Palladian style by the British administration to accommodate a legislative assembly of fifty members.^{ix} When prior attempts of building a new parliament complex had failed under the SLFP government, the complex at *Sri Jayewardenepura, Kotte* (in the heart of the District of Colombo), was completed between 1979 and 1982. This came to realization under the auspice of the newly-elected UNP government. The project was executed by a Japanese consortium of two Mitsui Group companies that used the latest 'fast-track' techniques available at the time for its fast implementation.^x In the present, the ideal image of the parliament is under siege. Its surrounding lawns are empty, and the lakeside pavilions are used by armed sentries. If peace and communal harmony had prevailed, its terraces, gardens and pavilions would have been thrown open to the people to realize true intentions behind it.



Fig.7



Fig.8



Fig.9



Fig.10



Fig.11



Fig.12

Fig. 7: Layout Plan.

Source: <http://archive.archnet.org/authorities/56>

Fig. 8: View of parliament ethereally perching on an island Surrounded by water, manifesting its separated but interconnected pavilions, colonnades and especially, the Kandyan roofs.

Source: Author (2010).

Fig. 9: The glamorous chamber with prominent suspended copper ceiling, rich velvet carpeting and lavish timber paneling, with visual emphasis to mobile and flags.

Source: <http://www.parliament.lk/en/visit-arliament/image-gallery/category/6-thechamber>

Fig. 10: The public galleries above members' area displaying

Copper flags in traditional motifs belonging to medieval Kandyan *Disas* (area divisions).

Source: <https://www.parliament.lk/en/visit-arliament/image-gallery/category/7-seating-facility>

Fig. 11: Embellished and silver-filmed copper-made chamber door, inscribed, in the style of ancient rock inscriptions; illustrating the Preamble to the Constitution of Sri Lanka in Sinhala, Tamil and English.

Fig. 12: Reception area displaying austerity, analogous to all other private areas except for the lavishly finished chamber-related area.

Source: Centre for Heritage & Cultural Studied (CHCS) of the Department of Architecture, University of Moratuwa (2012).

Patron

This mammoth project financed partly with foreign aid was implemented by the UNP government, which was ruling the country at the time. It had swept into power with a landslide victory in 1977, which was indeed a reaction to seven years of stagnation, economic hardship and social discontent suffered by the population (Perera, 1994). One of the newly-appointed first ever executive president of Sri Lanka's – J. R. Jayewardene's – initial acts was to see to it that a new parliament was built in *Kotte* (about ten Kilometers inland from Colombo fort); the newly-shifted administrative capital of the country (De Silva, 1988). The choice of site seems to have been made by the president and his immediate advisers, and was primarily driven by political and historical considerations arguably linked with popular nationalism (Robson, 2004).

In July 1979, the Prime Minister at the time, Ranasinghe Premadasa, obtained approval from the Parliament to inaugurate this audacious task on *Duwa* – a 5-hectare (12-acre) marshy island surrounded by the historically-significant *oya* (lake) called *Diyawanna*. The architect that the Jayewardene government commissioned to carry out the design task was Geoffrey Bawa. It is said that Bawa was summoned out of the blue to a meeting with President Jayawardene who commissioned him there and then (Robson in architectural digest, 2023).^{xi} Robson illustrates the fact that Bawa and Jayewardene both attended Royal College, Colombo 07 (a 19th century British 'grammar-school' model elite educational institution), and had been class mates. Further, the elite Obeyesekeres and Deraniyagalas that Bawa had designed houses for long ago were closely related to the Jayewardenes (Arjun Deraniyagala in M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2012). Bawa's own background – his mixed-raised family, privileged Colombo childhood and Cambridge education – made it

plausible for him to operate successfully within a post-colonial context, in order to act as a mediator between local and global cultures (Robson in architectural digest, 2023). After all, in a humanistic viewpoint as illustrated by Gandhi (1998), the elite who consider themselves to be both intellectually and epistemologically superior to lesser classes, also carry the notion that they have the best judgment, and also taste. This notion is well-justified here in Bawa's appointment by his fellow governing elite.

Location Selection & Layout

The location of the new parliament was indeed historical. The *Kotte* citadel had been established during the 14th century A.D. It was a time of significant political instability, with the island divided among several competing Sinhalese kingdoms. It was a time when threats from South Indian kingdoms were looming. The *Kotte* Kingdom carrying the honorific title of *Sri Jayawardene Pura – Sri* (resplendent) *Pura* (City) of *Jaya* (victory) – subsequently extended its power over the entire island by the 15th Century for a brief time; prior to Ceylon's Portuguese colonial advent in 1505 (K. M. de Silva, 1981). It is often believed that in personal terms, President Jayewardene's own name's resonance with the fortuitous name of the historic city prompted him to use the name for his new symbolic capitol city (Robson, 2004). It is also suspected that he saw the perfect opportunity here to gain some nationalist mileage politically, and simultaneously assert legitimacy of his own 'low-county' and high-caste background as the nation's traditional rulers (Perera, 1994). Vale (1992) in fact, saw this move as a direct provocation to the minority Tamil community; as he argued that their identity was now subjugated by that of the majority.^{xii}

As for Robson, (2004), there were also practical and strategically-intended reasons for moving the Parliament to *Kotte*. The capital Colombo was still governed as a small municipality, when it had in fact become an unplanned/chaotic metropolis of almost three million; restricted by the sea, the marshes and lagoons that had once protected it.^{xiii} The primacy of this so-called 'one horse town' as Perera's (1994) illustrates it, posed a serious threat to the balanced development of the whole country.^{xiv} But the move to *Kotte* by only ten kilometers, represented a sizeable conceptual shift. In practical terms, as for Robson (2004: 146-47), "*[it] leap frogged the main belt of marshland to the immediate east of the Baseline Road, and opened the possibility of new urban development on a massive scale in an undeveloped area of about 150 square kilometers, bound to the north by the Kalani Ganga and to the south by the High Level Road. It also offered the chance to orientate the capitol away from colonial Colombo Fort as well as the Indian Ocean [...].* Thus, the idea was that the focus was to be made back towards the interior of the island from the Western 'metropole' as Perera (1994) sees it.^{xv} The new government was now turning its back on the old British period parliament, which was the symbol of Westminster democracy. This way, bringing rapid development to underdeveloped areas around *Kotte* was ensued. On the other hand, this new location was arguably symbolic, and manifested a new indigenous hegemony to the outside world.

Although the newly created 'Urban Development Authority' (UDA) was responsible for drawing up a master plan for the new city of *Jayawardhanapura Kotte*, it was Bawa who actually pinpointed the location of the parliamentary capitol. He proposed that the marshy *Diyavanna Oya* valley be flooded to create an artificial lake of 120-hectares, and that the new parliament be built on a knoll of high ground two kilometers to the south-east on the ruins of a fifteenth-century citadel, on what would become an island at the lake's centre (Robson, 2004).^{xvi} Under these circumstances, "*[...] Bawa conceived the parliament as an island capitol surrounded by a new garden city of parks and public buildings [and also as] a remote citadel on an impregnable island*".^{xvii} Its cascade of copper roofs would first be seen from the north at a distance of two kilometers, floating above the new lake at the end of the *Diyavanna Valley*. As a justification to the massive man-made lake that was executed to surround the parliamentary complex, Robson (2004: 146) elaborates that "*[the] lake itself can be read as a tribute Sri Lanka's two millennia of*

tank building, recalling the sea of Parakramabahu at Polonnaruwa and the tree-lined lake at Kandy”.

The decisions pertaining to city/town formations and their planning had always been an elite affair in the island. For instance, the village named *Anuradha Gama* had humble origins, formed by a Brahmin who had migrated to the island during the 3rd century B.C., which was then developed as a fortified city by subsequent Kings (Ponnamperuma, 2016). Similarly, the shifting of Sinhalese kingdoms by the ruling kings as they saw fit, during times of great political insecurity, is well-established (K. M. de Silva, 1981). On the other hand, the rather personal hand played by the last king of Ceylon – *Sri Wickrama Raja Sinha* – in the development and beautification of Kandy city surrounding the famous Temple of the tooth is historically-established (Perera, 1994). In this light, it could be deduced that Jayewardene too sought to achieve a fete that would assure him a place in the nation’s pantheon of historic rulers, for strategic decision-making. Bawa too resorted to historic layout criteria directly fitting to that of the grand design tradition, in order to fulfil the task at hand.

Architecture (Form Constituents)

As Robson (2004) tells us, the plan and the asymmetrical arrangement of the pavilions might equally be said to recall Sri Lankan monasteries of the *Anuradhapura* period.^{xviii} The most prominent features of such monastic complexes – for example, Western monasteries – are the asymmetrical buildings with two raised platforms, and their positioning on rock surfaces, the connecting stone gangways between the platforms, the moat around the platforms, and especially, the lack of decorations (Amarasekara, 2017). Detailed plans of the *Anuradhapura* monasteries had long been in the public domain (Smithers 1994, Hocart 1924), but renewed interest was sparked by Bandaranayake (1974). He carefully analyzed the Western Monasteries and categorized a number of monastery types in terms of plan form, and speculated about possible roof forms using evidence from ancient cave paintings. He also drew parallels with the building traditions of neighboring *Kerala* with which, the island has had historic interactions for centuries. Bandaranayake (in Roberts, 1980) recalls that around the time of assembling the publication, he regularly met Bawa, who borrowed a copy of the book in 1977, and kept it for several years.^{xix} This testimony confirms Bawa’s exposure to and understanding of the grand design tradition associated with this building type.

In the new parliament complex, the location of pavilions, water and causeways were all meaningfully played with. The final approach to the building was conceived to be facilitated via a tree-lined causeway, leading to a public piazza punctuated by pools and water cascades. From there, steps and ramps would ascend to the entrance loggia, where a formal entrance and staircase aligned directly with the main chamber, leading toward the Speaker's chair. As was often characteristic of Bawa's designs, the main *parti* was conceived as an experiential journey – a carefully orchestrated sequence of events – centered in this case around the annual state opening of Parliament (Robson, 2004). The design placed the main chamber in a central pavilion surrounded by a cluster of five satellite pavilions.^{xx} This was on par with the 5th century *Anuradhapura* period concept of the *panchavasa* (Silva, 2010).^{xxi} Although the main pavilion is symmetrical, its axuality is diffused by the asymmetry of the arrangement of the lesser pavilions around it.^{xxii} As a result, the pavilions each retain a separate identity, but join together to create a single upward sweep through their tent-like roofs. One important idea carried forward was that the main debating chamber would be a symmetrical hall with government and opposition benches facing each other across the axis of the Speaker's chair. This could be interpreted as a return to the Westminster model or alternatively, as a reference to the Royal audience halls of Kandy and *Polonnaruwa* (Abeywardena, 2004).

In the complex, each pavilion was defined by its own umbrella roof of copper. The roofs seemed to grow out of the plinths of each pavilion, although they are actually interconnected at ground and first-floor levels. Traditional 'Kandyan' roofs were made from flat clay tiles laid to a

shallow pitch at the eaves, and a steeper pitch at the ridge.^{xxiii} As for Bawa (in Taylor, 1989), one unchanging element of the design was the roof – protective, emphatic and all-important – governing the aesthetic, whatever the period and whatever the place. For Bawa, often, a building was only a roof, columns and floors – the roof dominant, shielding, giving the contentment of shelter. It was often ubiquitous and pervasively present, while its scale or pattern was shaped by the building beneath. The roof – its shape, texture and proportion – was the strongest visual factor. The use of copper in place of tile gave the parliament roofs thinness and a tent-like quality of a stretched skin. These qualities transported them far from the realms of historical pastiche, while recalling the fabled 'brazen roofs' of *Anuradhapura's Lovamahapaya* of the 16th century A.D. (Chapman, 1861). The use of tiled roofs during the time of Kandyan kings was only meant for the king, aristocracy, the administrative stratum of the *Govigama* caste^{xxiv} and the religious establishment. Nimal de Silva (in M. N. R. Wijetunge 2012) further elaborates that a special privilege had to be granted by the king to the administrative elite, in favor of a great deed performed on behalf of the Kingdom, often during war times. Thus, it appears that this century-old grand design tradition was perpetuated by Bawa, with great care.

In contrast, everything below the roof was designed in a modernist mode with a simple elegance that followed the discipline imposed by a 6-meter by 6-meter structural grid. The pavilions were supported on two levels of plinth, expressed as a treated system of concrete columns at 6-metre canters, behind which the building skin was recessed within slender dark metal frames. The upper plinth stepped back on the east, south and west sides, to form a continuous upper terrace linking all the pavilions. However, on the north side, a double height order of columns rose through both levels to mark the entrance loggia. Rising out of the upper plinth, the main pavilion housed the debating chamber. A further row of concrete columns on its lower floor created a continuous 3-metre-deep arcade in front of the members' lobbies, while an arcade on the middle floor was formed by composite teak columns at 3-metre centers. On the top floor, a perimeter ambulatory was enclosed by a fine timber screen. Above this, the roof was made to cantilever out by 3 meters. The layering of the three levels produced a differential rhythm, while the timber lattice of the top floor exaggerated the shadow of the roof overhang. This reinforced the impression that the roofs were floating above the buildings. Scott (1983), in his comparison proclaimed that the parliament complex in fact, resembled the architect's favorite *Kerelan* palace at *Padmanbhapuram* in *Trivandrum*, India; without its intricate ornamentation.^{xxv}

Architectural Features/Detailing

Much of the interior of the building complex was finished plain; with white polished terrazzo floors, off-white walls and dark timber furniture. The members' dining room offered views across the lake on three sides and, with its clay tiled floors and simple sloping timber ceilings, had the ambience of a restaurant in a resort hotel. This restraint was partly due to budgetary constraints, and partly to the demanding schedule. In the main chamber, however, no expense was spared. A pair of heavy bronze doors slide-opened to reveal an austere stone staircase lined with murals by the famous local artist L. T. P. Manjusri – known for his polemic post-colonial era modernist paintings – depicting the history of *Kotte* (Wanigaratne, 2021). The notion of employing the best artisans of the land to impress also harks back to the grand design tradition (Nimal de Silva in M. N. R. Wijetunge, 2012). At the landing, a pair of silver doors were to open to reveal the short final staircase leading up into the chamber. Above them, the ceiling seemed to hover like a drooping tent of chain mail, with Laki Senanayake's massive chandelier of silver palm fronds hanging from its apex. Senanayake's part in the post-independent arts scene in the country is well-established (lakisenanayake.com, 2023), and his employment also was akin to that of Manjusri, in terms of underlying intentions. The ceiling was made from square tiles of aluminum, which were each hung individually from the supporting roof structure. The lower part of the chamber was contained within walls of rich dark timber paneling, lit from concealed up lighters that acted as supports for the metal flags of the eighteen *korales* (tadeonal region demarcation) also design by

him. Above, four steeply tiered rows of visitors' seats rose towards an upper windowed gallery. The chamber was grander and more ornate than the surrounding accommodation. Bawa himself drew an analogy between his design and the opulent Music Room in Brighton's Royal Pavilion (with its dragon-scale ceiling and hanging gasoliers), the British House of Lords, various Indian palaces, and especially, ceremonial marquees used by Royals (Robson, 2004).^{xxvi} Thus, although the decorative featured deployed in the interior were indigenous, the core decorative ideas came from abroad. However, wherever the ideas were imported from, they were of grand design tradition pertaining to their respective origins.

However, it is noteworthy that design emphasis had only been given to the external façade, the surrounding landscape and especially, the chamber and its associated areas, whereas all other private areas (*i.e.* receptions, committee rooms, members' rest areas etc.) were finished to be austere. The budgetary constraints would have prompted this design strategy.

Phenomenological Analysis

In designing the Parliament, Bawa's aim was to create a potent symbol of democracy that would transcend differences of community or religion. To this end, he used historical precedents in an ambiguous and abstract way; drawing on multiple sources. As a result, the building became an instantly recognizable icon, distinctly "of Sri Lanka" and "of government," despite having no elements that were specifically Sinhalese or Buddhist in its design. It was in fact, an expression of many different but overlapping culture and traditions. Further, it was meant to be a symbol of open, accessible and democratic government. However, Bawa's intentions was hampered by political events over the years for which, the governing/political class elite of the country themselves were the culprits.

As extant evidence suggests, Bawa relied upon rhetoric high cultural trends of grand design tradition from Sri Lanka's classical past, and also that of the former colonial masters, but not the country's vernacular for his design. The building was achieved largely with the use of a combination of styles ranging from retrospective high cultural grand design traditions of former Lankan kingdoms (*Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kandy* etc.), European classical revivals (culled from British Royal examples) to the 'international style', which was in fact the consolidated contemporary form of architectural modernism that had become popular by that time. The realization of the edifice too happened through modern materials and technology; quintessential to the international style. Additionally, construction techniques were optimized and streamlined to meet the tight schedule. Sri Lanka's parliamentary traditions were part of a colonial inheritance that was espoused by a Western-educated elite. The Parliament building was by necessity a national monument. Yet, it also was placed in an international arena, and reflected Sri Lanka's position in the modern world. This explains the necessity for the deployment of architectural modernism by Bawa in his design.

Although the new Parliament building complex in Sri Lanka is now regarded as one of the 20th century's greatest architectural masterpieces by various critics, it was built at considerable expense to the state – a cost that some still view as overly extravagant for a cultural project with such limited use. The harshest reproach of all was, being the parliament – the symbol of power representation of the masses – it completely lacked of any reference to them (Perera, 1994). Alternatively, it merely conveyed to the masses, a sense of a political vision that promised future economic-prosperity, in the age of open economy. When the UNP had swept into power, the party had convinced the people that they were coming out of economic hardships doctored by the previous government (Iven, 2006). Thus, the ideal approach to achieve this feat was to draw on nationalism and its historical architectural imagery, but with a modern, materialistic twist that hinted at anticipated economic prosperity. However, by 1982 itself, this glimmer of hope had all but disappeared. The opening of the parliament was staged against a background of rising communal violence that gradually escalated into a bitter civil war. The persisting quandary necessitated strict and highly visible security measures in and around Colombo. In this backdrop,

just a fraction of the development proposed for the area around Parliament was realized.^{xxvii} Consequently, the building now stands forlorn with its approaches blockaded by check points, metal barrels and barbed wire.

Case Study 3 - Ruhuna University (1980-88)

The location chosen on the south coast close to *Marata* town was the constituency of Ronnie de Mel, who was the Minister of Education of the UNP-led government of the time. Out of three campuses earmarked, Bawa received the general campus comprising of science and arts faculties as well as central administrative facilities. The project was planned to accommodate 3000 students initially, to rise to a number of 4000 ultimately.^{xxviii} The project was let to a Dutch firm of civil engineering contractors called Ballast Nedam, although the sub-contractors, craftsmen and laborers were all local. The result was a modern campus, vast in size, but human in scale. As Bawa (in Robson, 2004) wryly observed at the outset of the project, “[if] this place doesn’t turn students into civilized beings, nothing will!” Almost forty years after its inception, to date, it has produced approximately 50,000 graduates, and over 75 postgraduates (ugc.gov.in, 2023).



Fig.13

Fig.13: Layout Plan.

Fig.14: Façade of a main building.

Fig.15: Buildings placed on the undulating landscape, without altering it.

Fig.16: Building placed on prominent granite base depicting different levels of terrain.

Fig.17: Meandering roofed passages that link buildings.

Source: <https://www.archnet.org/sites/3040>



Fig.14



Fig.15



Fig.16



Fig.17

Patron

The commission for the project came in 1979, followed by that of the parliament; from the same client – Premiere J. R. Jayewardene, during the same UNP stint as aforesaid (Robson, 2004). The Jayewardene-Bawa connection was prior-established.

Location Selection & Layout

The 30-hectare site straddled three steep hills, and the westernmost overlooked the sea, and was separated from the other two by a low-lying valley. The vice-chancellor's lodge and a guest house were placed on the western hill. The intervening valley was flooded to create a buffer between the road and the main campus. Then, the science faculty's buildings were wrapped around the northern hill, and those of the arts around the southern counterpart. The depression on the landscape between them was used for the library and other central facilities.

As quintessential to Bawa, many of the important design decisions of the project were taken on site. However, he was happy to leave much of the detailed planning to the assigned job architect Nihal Bodhinayake.^{xxix} As elaborated by Robson (2004), Bodhinayake's problem was translating Bawa's ideas into the language of the building contractor. To achieve this, he set up a strict grid based on 3 meters horizontally, and 1.5 meters vertically. This was an attempt to fix the various pavilions on a system of coordinates, and to standardize all junctions. Hence, what underlined the overall design composition was simple rationality.^{xxx} The buildings were planned orthogonally on a north-south grid, but were allowed to run with the site. Natural features such as rocky outcrops were incorporated into the bases of buildings, or became focal features of the open spaces.^{xxxi} This topographical approach was reminiscent to that employed in the building layouts of King Kasyapa's Palace on the rock at *Sigiriya*, during the *Anuradhapura* period (Robson, 2004).

The design exploited the site to make every part of the campus seem unique. The pavilions with their varying scales were inter-connected by roof covered links, to be separated by an ever-changing succession of garden courts. Places to pause, sit, ponder, gather and discuss were made pervasive throughout. The main routes were either cut uncompromisingly across the contours, or they were made to meander horizontally along them. The factor of view was given emphasis in this execution.^{xxxi} Further, it appears that the buildings were aligned carefully to minimize solar intrusion, and also mitigate the adverse effects of the south-west monsoon.

Architecture (Form Constituents)

In Robson's (2004) view, although there was nothing that connected the design to historical precedents, its limited architectural vocabulary was derived from Porto- Sinhalese architectural traditions. Owing to the lack of a clear extant Portuguese building legacy in the country (except for a ruined seminary at *Atchchuweli* and fortifications that had been tampered-with by latter colonial interventions), this notion becomes problematic. However, the basic architectural plan and form constituents employed suggested a strong degree of maritime Dutch architectural influence. While the plans were mostly rectangular housing a myriad of functions (in different

buildings), in certain buildings, they were wrapped around with colonnaded verandahs and cantilevering balconies. These buildings were then capped with hip or pyramidal roofs. Certain buildings were made to have imposing granite bases, suggestive of the stability quintessential to maritime forts such as ones in Galle and Matara.

Architectural Features/Detailing

In terms of architectural features, the windows were noteworthy. The upright rectangular glazed windows were mostly made to have double-sashes, and were divided to have smaller rectangular panes. The doors were made to be imposing and tall, with double sashes. The fenestrations were in most occasions decorated with stucco surrounds, to be painted in earth colours. A conspicuous degree of architectural detailing too could be found here. While the concrete-made columns of wrapped-around verandahs and inter-linking passages were all made rectangular – unlike in the circular masonry counterparts found in the colonial case – they were abstracted with simplified column heads (without column bases). The maritime region's buildings have always had column heads and bases both. The handrails that protected edges of balconies were made out of tubular steel, to have interconnected horizontal series of squares that were each crossed. This feature usually executed in timber, is very common amongst both Dutch and British period buildings in the maritime. The notable aspect about the project was that the entire complex comprised of about fifty rather unremarkable buildings. They were realized to be passive in terms of energy use, with a limited material palette and design vocabulary of standard details.^{xxxiii} Its construction was straightforward, comprising walls of plastered brick on a concrete frame, and roofs of half-round clay tile laid on corrugated asbestos sheeting.

In terms of colour scheme, the facades were mainly painted in light hues (*i.e.* lily white in this case) as reminiscent to imposing colonial buildings of the maritime. The columns and cantilevering parts were mostly adorned in earth colours such as flint grey, perhaps to make a connection to pervasive rubble retaining walls and bases. This colour selection also aided the buildings to blend with the natural rocky surrounding. The vertical grey lines in the form of columns also read together with that of abundant coconut trees surrounding the buildings.

Phenomenological Analysis

All this abundant evidence confirms that Bawa drew on the high-cultural rhetoric and grand design traditions of Sri Lanka's Portuguese-Dutch colonial period, rather than its vernacular architecture. Owing to the discussed features, the overall temperament of the building ensemble became rather Dutch-like – reminiscent to 17-18th century houses and civic buildings the colonial power executed along the coast. After all, military engineering works such as fortifications and also the Dutch architectural legacy in Ceylon are attributed to their Portuguese forefathers (Ashley de Vos in Wijetunge 2012); as the term 'Dutch architecture' was a misnomer on part of the non-architect British civil servants (Fonseka, 1978). On the other hand, it is said that imported colonial influences were combined with local elements in the making of 'hybrid' traditions such as the so-called Dutch counterpart (Lewcock, Sansoni and Senanayake, 2002). In this light, Robson's aforesaid proclamation gains currency.

In this background, it could be argued that the hybrid Dutch architecture too borrowed from the grand design tradition extant in the coast, but from the vernacular. The hybrid was indeed a synthesis between the grand design traditional elements the foreigners had brought to Ceylon from their prior colonies (and to prior colonies, from their home lands in Europe). Lewcock, Sansoni and Senanayaka (2002) draw this connection. In a period when the state was delving on nationalism yet again for its survival and perpetuation, this harking back was only logical. The state had no choice, facing on one hand the onslaught of internal a separatist struggle in the north, and on the other, a resultant foreign intervention that came in the form of an Indian Peace keeping force (Gunaratna, 1993). Moreover, the dissatisfaction felt by the southern youth was manifested simultaneously, in the form of pro-socialist *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (People's Liberation

Front) insurrection, which in turn also challenged the government's authority (Ivan, 2006). During a time when nationalism was overwhelmingly threatened, it made perfect sense for the state to revoke the same via traditional high cultural architecture version of the grand design tradition; to remind the people of their past heyday and glory. The aim was to inspire hope for a new era of national glory, bringing with it a sense of promise and optimism.

Conclusion

The Elite are an organized minority that controls unorganized masses, and the idea is universal and timeless. In the modern-day, while the governing/political elite minority at society's apex wield real political power, the larger political class also carries some political influence. On the other hand, while the much larger middleclass has lesser access to political power, the most numerous working class is the most politically feeble. The high culture of the elite is the vessel that carries architectural grand design tradition traditionally endorsed in elite/religious dwellings, while the vernacular pertains to the lesser levels of culture operating within a given society.

Geoffrey Bawa's involvement in the three case studies under consideration was officially endorsed by the state. These civic projects were meant for the benefit of many. In this light, it could be ascertained that the political/economic stances taken up by the governments in power were reflected in the civic architecture they endorsed. In all three cases falling approximately within a span of a decade (in terms of implementation), nationalism was flaunted to appease the nation's troubled citizens.

In the case of *Seema Malaka*, when the nation was undergoing an unprecedented economic slump during the pro-socialist SLFP's stint in power, the state resorted to nationalism to hark back to a glorious romantic past heyday through which, a sense of optimism was propagated. The architectural repertoire of grand design tradition belonging to multiple historic periods of great prosperity was implemented with a locally-available material palette, and relatively uncomplicated building technology. Although not directly government-sponsored, the explicit involvement of the Prime Minister-to-be was suggestive of an impending UNP resurgence at the back of social disgust towards an uneasy socialist rule of the SLFP. A conspicuous religious project would have made perfect sense nationalism-wise, when organized religion was at risk at the hands of a pro-socialist state.

Conversely, as a new era of optimism emerged with the introduction of the open economy – a concept championed by the overtly capitalist UNP government, which appeared as a kind of messiah – nationalism was once again invoked in the design of the new parliament building. The economy was on the rise following a landslide victory that handed the reins to the new government, leading to an influx of foreign capital. This time, the fresh material palette now made available due to reinvigorated international orientation had to be flaunted to a people who had undergone tremendous hardship at the hands of the former government. The veneer of the grand design tradition's rich historic repertoire was this time reproduced with novel materials and advanced technology, to manifest the victory of capitalism over socialism. The notion of need for a new parliament in a historic city indeed reinforced nationalism, having discarded the former British-built classical counterpart in Colonial Colombo.

When the UNP-led state had lost its short-lived charisma, and when it was now under tremendous pressure of social upheaval, partition, and especially foreign intervention, it had no choice but to redeploy the rich historic oeuvre of grand design tradition, yet again in the Ruhuna University. This time too, the material and technological advancements of the times were renegotiated. However, this time, the richness of architecture, the materiality as well as building technology were all somewhat inferior to the previous case. Owing to political unrest and resultant economic slump, the state this time would not have had access to as much funding as before. Sponsoring an institution dedicated to propagating knowledge made perfect sense this

time. Shaping the nation's intellectuals epistemologically would have been regarded as an absolute necessity by the capitalist and nationalist state, with all its inherent precariousness.

In the first two cases that took place in and around more historically recent and modern cosmopolitan Colombo, it made sense for the designer to put to use the entire historic spectrum of the nation – from classical times of *Anuradhapura/Polonnaruwa* to medieval Kandy. Colombo had always been a colonial city. During times of trouble attempted to be inveigled via nationalism, or during times of promise attempted to be signified by the same, it was only but logical to resort to a more glorious pre-colonial past, when Sri Lanka was not subjected to foreign subjugation. When a project was implemented in the deep South on the coast with a strong Southern identity that could not do away with its colonial heritage however, the hybrid Porto-Dutch contingent was added to the mix of grand design tradition's classical and medieval mix, to form a synthesis.

When political and economic changes were manifested in architecture as aforementioned, the resultant socio-cultural changes too revealed in architecture in terms, of either people's unrest, hardships or optimism. Bawa in all three foresaid cases thus, became merely a vessel conveying to the populace the messages by the state encrypted in his architectural productions. The politically unaffiliated architect crafted architectural symbolism that deliberately aligned with the state in power, favoring the very elites who had commissioned him in the first place.

In other words, Bawa's actions suggest that he engaged in a survival strategy that helped maintain his own elite status, along with that of his collaborators within the political class or governing elite strata. This complies with theories on elitism that ascertains the fact that the elite as an organized minority strives to assert its control on the unorganized masses. Furthermore, the above elucidations indeed comply with the revelation that elite in a given society, reflect more immediately its 'periodic changes' (*i.e.* political, economic and socio-cultural) than any other social stratum. Finally, it could be concluded that it was the high culture of Sri Lankan elite, and its grand design traditional historic repertoire that was manifested in the three state-sponsored cultural projects in question. In them, the vernacular that belongs to other levels of culture (pertaining to the masses) was discounted altogether.

The life that is lived by the majority of a given society, at a given time, is indeed its responses to periodic changes. In a turbulent setting such as Sri Lanka, the periodic changes are mostly negative and the resultant responses too are detrimental to elite posterity. Hence, the elite faction in rule realize this verity and employs architects – ideally ones from their own ranks – to appease the untoward masses via exploitation of its grand design traditional inventory that has nothing to do in reality with how people of that society actually live, or have lived in the past. Nationalism feeding on either bygone glories or future optimism is flaunted, with indiscriminate deploying of grand design traditional elements belonging to either secular or non-secular spheres, from selected windows of history.

The study's first objective – to confirm the essential role of elite patronage in cultural projects – was achieved by identifying state sponsorship for each case study and, notably, highlighting the governing elite politicians who enabled these projects. The second objective, to uncover the underlying design traditions (whether 'grand' or 'folk') that shape the architecture of these cultural projects, was also met, revealing key differences among them. The final objective, to identify the embedded messages reflecting periodic changes within the architecture of these cultural projects, was successfully evaluated across the three case studies. Addressing these objectives ultimately allowed the study to affirm that cultural projects serve as the most effective expressions of a society's periodic changes at any given time.

A limitation of this study is its reliance on only three case studies, which could be remedied by incorporating more. It could also be suggested that if the study's findings are applicable to the Sri Lankan context, they might also be relevant to similar cases elsewhere, particularly in sub-continental regions with former colonial interventions.

References

- Abeywardena, H. A. P. (2004) [Kandyan Heritage], Central Bank of Sri Lanka: Colombo. (In Sinhala).
- Amarasekara, S. (2017) Buddhist Meditation Monasteries in Ancient Sri Lanka, *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol 6, Issue 1, Brazil: LAR Center Press.
- Archdaily, 2023, *Spotlight: Geoffrey Bawa*, [online]. [Online] Available at: <<https://www.archdaily.com/770481/spotlight-geoffrey-bawa/>> [Accessed 26 February 2023].
- Baldwin, E. 2023, *Monumental Design: 10 Global Practices Redefining Cultural Architecture*. [Online] Available at: <<https://architizer.com/blog/inspiration/collections/global-practices-rethinking-cultural-architecture/#:~:text=Cultural%20architecture%20is%20defined%20by%20human%20experience.%20As,thet%20and%20libraries%2C%20cultural%20projects%20reflect%20contemporary%20life>> [Accessed 26 February 2023].
- Bandaranayake, S. (1974). Sinhalese Monastic Architecture. In J. E. Van Lohuizen-De Leenw (Ed.), *Studies in South Asian Culture*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- BBC, 2023, The World's Ten Most Striking Government Buildings. [Online] Available at: <<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20160618-the-worlds-ten-most-striking-government-buildings/>> [Accessed 26 February 2023].
- Bottomore, T. B. *Elite and Society*, Second Edition, Routledge, London, 1993.
- Chapman, I. J. 1861. Some Additional Remarks upon the Ancient City of anurájapura or Anuradhapura, and the Hill Temple of Mehetélé, in the Island of Ceylon. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, Volume 13, pp. 164-178.
- Cooray, E. G. (2008) *Premadasa: In the Shadow of a People's President*, Colombo: Vijitha Yapa.
- 'Culture' (2023) Cambridge Dictionary. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture> (Accessed 27 February 2023).
- de Silva, K. M. (1981) *A History of Sri Lanka*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- De Silva, K. M. (1988) *J.R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka a Political Biography: 1906-1956 (J. R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka*, Volume 1, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- de Silva, N. (1991) [Nationality, Culture and Ideology], Chinthana Parshadaya: Maharagama. (In Sinhalese).
- de Silva, N. (18th July 2006b) *Sinhalayage Parinamaya*, [Online], Available: <http://www.kalaya.org/audio5.html> [06 November 2011].
- de Silva, Nimal (2009) [Sinhala Art and Pattern Tradition], Padmapani Nirmana saha Prakashakayo: Colombo. (In Sinhalese).
- De Votta, N. (2007) *Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalist Ideology: Implications for Politics and Conflict Resolution in Sri Lanka*, Policy Studies 40, Washington: East-West Center.
- Emmons, P. Lomholt, J. and Hendrix, S. eds. (2012) *the Cultural Role of Architecture: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*, London: Routledge.
- Fonseka, M. (1997) "The Conservation of Old Colombo", *S.L.A.Journal*, Vol.101, No 19.

- Gandhi, L (1998) *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Gunaratna, R. (1993) *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: The Role of India's Intelligence Agencies*, Colombo: South Asian Network on Conflict Research.
- Hocart, A. M. ed. (1924) *Memories of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, London: A. C. Richards.
- Ivan, V. (2006) [Tale of a Conflict], Ravaya Publishers Ltd: Maharagama. (In Sinhalese).
- Jayewardene, J. R. (2000) *Selected Speeches of J. R. Jayewardene*, Colombo: J. R. Jayewardene Centre.
- News first Sri Lanka, 2023, *The Bohras of Sri Lanka; a proficient trading community | Lost and Forgotten (Part 1)*, [video online] Available at: < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9ABDuwbeDM&list=PLwBEINflt3JHMMpt_GPzf-wKWme9Ln4Jf&index=10> [Accessed 7 March 2023].
- Lewcock, R. Sansoni, B. and Senanayake (2002) *The Architecture of an Island: The Living Heritage of Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Barefoot (PVT) LTD.
- Macgillivray, A. (2006) *A Brief History of Globalization*, Carroll & Graf Publishers, New York.
- Mandel, E. (1982) *Introduction to Marxism*, London: Pluto Press Ltd.
- Mills, C. W. (1956) *The Power Elite*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mosca, G. (1939) *The Ruling Class*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Obeyesekere, M. (2007) [Sri Lankan Politics and Caste Challenges], Samanthi Poth Prakashakayo: Ja-Ela. (In Sinhalese).
- Pareto, V. (1963) *A Treatise on General Sociology 1915-19*, New York: Dover.
- Peiris, A. (2007). *Imagining Modernity: The Architecture of Valentine Gunasekara*, Sri Lanka: Stamford Lake (Pvt) Ltd.
- Perera, J. F. R. (2011) *Winning an Unwinnable War*, Nugegoda: Sarasavi Publishers.
- Perera, M. C. N. (1994) 'Decolonizing Ceylon: Society and Space in Sri Lanka', PhD Thesis, State University of New York at Binghamton.
- Ponnamperuma, S. (2016) *The Story of Anuradhapura*, Colombo: N. S. M. Ponnamperuma.
- Rapoport, A. (1969) *House Form and Culture*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Rapoport, A. (2005) *Culture, Architecture and Design*, Chicago: Locke Science Publishing Co. Inc.
- Redfield, R. (1965) *Peasant Society and Culture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Re-thinkingthefuture, 2023, *Geoffrey Bawa – 15 Iconic Projects*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/design-studio-portfolios/a2739-geoffrey-bawa-15-iconic-projects/>> [Accessed 26 February 2023].
- Roberts, K., 1980. *Re-creation of the Old Sri Jayewardenepura*, Sunday Observer, 10 February 1980.
- Roberts, M. (1995) *Cast Conflict and Elite Formation: The Rise of a Karava Elite in Sri Lanka 1500-1931*, Navarang (in collaboration with Lake House Bookshop): New Delhi.

- Robson, D. 2023, *6 of Geoffrey Bawa's Most Iconic Buildings*. [Online] Available at: <<https://www.architecturaldigest.in/content/6-geoffrey-bawas-iconic-buildings-sri-lanka/>> [Accessed 26 February 2023].
- Robson, D. (2007) *Beyond Bawa: Modern Masterworks of Monsoon Asia*, London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.
- Robson, D. (2004) *Geoffrey Bawa: the complete works*, London: Thames & Hudson.
- Scott, R. 1983. Bawa's Parliament. *Architectural Review*, CLXXIII, pp. 17-30.
- Sansoni, B., 1986. A Background to Geoffrey Bawa. In: B. B. Taylor, ed. 1986. *Geoffrey Bawa*. Singapore: Concept Media, pp.172-173.
- Scriver, P. and Prakash, V. (2007) *Colonial Modernities: Building, dwelling and architecture in British India and Ceylon*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Seneviratna, A. (1983) *The Golden Rock Temple of Dambulla: Caves of Infinite Buddhas*, Vijitha Yapa: Colombo.
- Silva, K. T. (2005) [Caste, Class and Social Conflicts in Sri Lanka], Visidunu Prakashakayo (Pvt) Ltd: Boralesgamuwa. (In Sinhala).
- Silva, R. (2010) Libraries of a Yester-Era, *Journal of the University Librarians Association of Sri Lanka*, 14 (1), pp. 3-4.
- Smither, J. G. (1994) *Architectural Remains: Anuradhapura, Ceylon comprising The Dagabas and certain other Ancient Ruined Structures Measured, Drawn and Described by James G. Smither*, New Delhi: New Delhi Asian Education Services.
- Taylor, B. B. (1989) *Geoffrey Bawa: Architect in Sri Lanka*, London: Butterworth Architecture.
- Ugc, 2023. *Universities and Higher Educational Institutions established under the purview of the University Grants Commission* [online] Available at: https://ugc.ac.lk/index.php?option=com_university&id=7&view=single&Itemid=25&lang=en [Accessed 7 March 2023].
- Vale, L. J. (1992) *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, New Heaven and London: Yale University Press.
- Von Schroeder, U. (1990), *Buddhist Sculptures of Sri Lanka*, Hong Kong: Visual Dharma Publications, Ltd.
- Wickramage, C. (1994) *The avukana Buddha, Sri Lanka*, The Academy of Sri Lankan Culture.
- Wickramaratne, S. (2021) *L.T.P. Manjusri: Artist and Scholar (1902-1982)*, Colombo: Perera-Hussein Publishing House.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R. (2007) 'Evolution of Elite Domestic Architecture From British to Decolonization; with Special Reference to Maritime Provinces of Sri Lanka', M.Sc. Dissertation, University of Moratuwa.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R., 2010. Role of the Notion of 'Nation' in Post-colonial Elite Domestic Architecture of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In: Nottingham Trent University, *NTU College Conference*. Nottingham, UK 8 July 2010.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R., 2011. Kandyan Elitism as an Eastern Brand of Elitism and Formulating Kandyan Elite Domestic Architecture. *Built Environment*, 09(1), pp.21-36.

- Wijetunge, M. N. R. (2012) 'Domestic Architecture of the Sinhalese Elite in the Age of Nationalism', PhD Thesis, Nottingham Trent University.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R. 2013. Domestic Architecture of the Modern-day Elites: Manifestations of Periodic Change in Home Environments. *ISVS e-journal*, 2(4), pp. 54-70.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R. (2014) [From Ancient Times to Modernity: An Ensemble of Essays], Vol 1, Modulus2 Architects Publishers: Colombo. (In Sinhala).
- Wijetunge, M. N. R., 2015. The Notion of Nation: Protagonist Behind the Post-Colonial Elite Domestic Architecture of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). *Built Environment-Sri Lanka*, 11(2), pp.12-24.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R. 2018. Architectural Modernism in Sri Lanka: Geoffrey Bawa & Valentine Gunasekara, Asia Culture Centre, 30 August - 29 October 2017. [Exhibition Catalogue]. Gwangju: Asia Culture Centre.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R. 2020. *The Age of Passion; Architecture of Valentine Gunasekara, NADA, 10-14 October*. [Exhibition Catalogue]. Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Architects and University of Liverpool.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R., 2022. Decolonization and Nationalism: The 'American Style', the Vernacular and the Domestic Architecture of Sri Lanka. *ISVS e-journal*, 9 (4), pp. 180-201.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R. (2023). The de Silva House at Mt. Lavinia by Valentine Gunasekara: Phenomenological Analysis of an Elite Dwelling from the Nationalist Era of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). *Built Environment-Sri Lanka*, 14(1), pp. 69-99.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R. (2024a). Implications of the Demise of American Style on Architectural Decolonization of Sri Lanka. *ISVS e-journal*, 11 (2), pp. 508-532.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R. (2024b). Subtle Addressing of Caste in the Elite Domestic Architecture of Geoffrey Bawa. *Built Environment-Sri Lanka*, 14 (1), pp. 42-57.
- Wijetunge, N. 2010, Role of the Notion of 'Nation' in Post-colonial Elite Domestic Architecture of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In: Nottingham Trent University, *NTU College Conference*. Nottingham, UK. 10 May 2010. Nottingham: Nottingham Trent University.
- Wijetunge, N. 2011. Role of the 'American Style' in Post-Independence Period Domestic Architecture in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In: NTU (Nottingham Trent University), *The Third Annual Research Practice Course Conference*. Nottingham, U.K. 20 May 2011. Nottingham: Nottingham Trent University.
- Wijetunge, N. R. 2012. Emulating Vernacular: Role of Tradition in the Elite Domestic Architecture of Geoffrey Bawa & Valentine Gunasekara. *ISVS e-journal*, 2(2), pp. 2-16.
- Wijetunge, N. R. 2013. Unearthing What Underlies Elite Domestic Works of Geoffrey Bawa and Valentine Gunasekara. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, LVIII (1), pp. 67-88.
- Wijetunge, N. R. (2021) *The Archaeologist-Architect of Sri Lanka: Roland Silva*, Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Architects.
- Wijetunge, M. N. R., Gayantha, K., Chandrasekara T and Jayadas, A. (2024a). Elite Associations and Manifestations in Geoffrey Bawa's Domestic Architecture in Post-colonial Ceylon (Sri Lanka): A Phenomenological Viewpoint, *ISVS e-journal*. 11 (10).
- Wijetunge, M. N. R., Gayantha, K., Chandrasekara, T. and Jayadas, A. (2024b) Elitism and the Practice of Architecture: The Evaluation of Architects Through the Pritzker Price in the Broader Asian Region (1979-2023). *Archi-texts e-journal*, 1 (1).

Wilson, G. H. (2005) *CBK, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Her Leadership of Sri Lanka*, Media Prima: University of Michigan.

Wittfogel, K. (1957) *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, Haven: Yale University Press.

Zompetti, J. P. (1997) Reading postcolonial identity: The rhetoric of devolution from Sri Lanka's president, Chandrika Kumaratunga. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 8(2), pp. 161-78.

Notes

ⁱ It is further explained as “the attitudes, behavior, opinions etc. of a particular group of people within society”.

ⁱⁱ The disillusionment on the part of the majority populace on Bandaranaike's empty promises of resolving the ethnic conflict afforded Mahinda Rajapakse from the same political party with an opportunity to become the President in 2005. Riding on popular nationalism, he saw to it that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was militarily defeated by year 2009. The foreign intervention – especially which of the West – towards stern and decisive military actions by the state revealed of underlying intentions of such factions for a partition within Sri Lanka on ethnic lines (J. F. R. Perera, 2011).

ⁱⁱⁱ Although, existence of an upper class along with such conditions, does not merely guarantee a high culture; Yet, when they are absent, the higher civilization is unlikely to be found, although this is not so rigid. According to Bottomore's point of view, when it comes to the subjects of conservation and transmission of a high culture, we may well descend from the view that it has been, and must be, primarily the work of the family.

^{iv} although to what extent the designer is really a form-giver is a moot point

^v The only exception is the Martenstein house which was started in 1977. Still, this was started after open economy was introduced, and helps to establish the said point.

^{vi} The *Yahapath Endera* Farm School (1965) and the *Piliyandala* Institute for Integral Education (1978) were for the Church, and more private in nature. Since the Christian community in Sri Lanka is a minority, arguably their culture is not the country's high culture. On the other hand, the *Oruwala* Steel Corporation complex offices and housing (1966) and *Ekala* free industrial zone complex (1966) were too were conceived with restricted access owing to the sensitivity of their operations. Moreover, they do not fall within the considered time window when nationalism was hitherto unforeseeably threatened.

^{vii} In memory of their son Ameer S. Moosajee.

^{viii} King *Nissanka Malla of Polonnaruwa* gilded the caves and added about 70 Buddha statues in 1190 A. D.

^{ix} By Austin Woodeson, chief architect of the PWD; with highly modeled façades embodying a continuous double-height Ionic order above a rusticated podium.

^x Having built the Ceylon Pavilion at the Osaka Expo in 1970, Mitsui had already worked with Edwards, Reid and Begg where Bawa set out and established himself in.

^{xi} A morning phone call from a permanent secretary led to a brief lunchtime meeting with the President, who offered Bawa the job on the spot. He was prepared to give Bawa a free hand in the design and his only stipulation was that the project be completed by April 1982 (Robson, 2004). However, some refute this story by claiming that Bawa who was initially reluctant to accept the project and was tempted to take it up again owing to the interest shown in the it by a new architectural firm on the block called DEVCO. Since the project had been awarded to DEVCO by this point, in order to circumvent conflict, the government convinced the new firm to let Bawa handle the architectural aspect of the design, while they settled for certain interior features such as labs and especially, infra-structure. To compensate DEVCO for its loss, the firm was awarded with the *Karapitiya* Medical Faculty project.

^{xii} Robson (2004) however, thinks otherwise. According to him, this criticism ignores the irony that *Kotte* was actually ruled by a line of kings of mixed Indian and Sinhalese descent at a time when political boundaries often obscured the clear distinction between Tamil and Sinhalese. The biggest threats to security at the time were from the South India based *Vijayanagar* empire and from China. It could equally be argued therefore, that *Kotte* represented a last period not of Sinhalese hegemony but of Sri Lankan unity, before the onset of European colonization.

^{xiii} There were those who wanted radically to shift the capital to more historic Kurunegala, *Dambulla* or even *Trincomalee*.

^{xiv} Economically, socially as well as communally.

^{xv} The Colombo Fort had always been a foreign bastion, facing the sea and turning its back on the interior of the island. During the British period it gradually lost its residential function and became predominantly a centre for government and commerce. Parliament's position in relation to the Fort symbolized the very limited powers of the new legislature: the real power was still vested in the British governor, whose base remained inside the Fort. The building's orientation towards the Indian Ocean and ultimately towards Europe served as a further reminder that the sun had still to set upon the empire (Robson, 2004).

^{xvi} Bawa arrived at this decision, having viewed the area on the ground and from the air.

^{xvii} It would form the end point of a long promenade, beginning 8 Kilometers to the west in Colombo's 'Viharamahadevi' park and following the grand west-east axis formed by Ananda Coomaraswamy Mawatha, Hornton Place and Castle Street before swinging southwards a Rajagiriya.

^{xviii} Robson also elaborates that, the plan and the asymmetrical arrangement of the pavilions might equally be said to recall Mogul lake palaces, South Indian temples, Chinese palaces or Sri Lankan monasteries of the Anuradhapura period.

^{xix} During an interview in 1980 Bawa observed that "[Kotte] is a sort of design continuum, reflecting the visual formalities of the old Sinhalese buildings, grand but not pompous, like what you see in Senake Bandaranayake's book. Really it will be a set of pavilions with asymmetry of planning" (Roberts 1980: 63).

^{xx} The main pavilion and its five satellites define a series of separate outdoor spaces between the building and the lake. Arriving in the ceremonial piazza the first satellite pavilion to the east takes the form of a large open-colonnaded audience hall for public meetings and spontaneous gatherings; to the west a second pavilion contains the public entrance and security checkpoint. On the western side of the island a less public square is defined by a third pavilion, which contains staff facilities. On the south side a fourth pavilion contains the service court and is connected by its own causeway back to the shore. A fifth pavilion at the south-east corner contains the MPs' dining room above a covered car park and defines a large garden court facing east across the lake, connected to the members' terraces by a monumental open staircase (Robson, 2004).

^{xxi} *Panchavasa* had a highly stylized layout with a distinct raised sacred platform in the middle of the monastery which accommodated the five sacred buildings of the establishment. These were the *stupa*, the *Bo*-tree shrine, the Chapter house, the Image house and the Sabha. The residences were at a lower level surrounding the sacred platform in one, two or three concentric squares and facing the sacred edifices at the centre. This total layout was bound by a moat with some open ground beyond where at the Main Entrance were the hot water bath and the refectory. The total complex was finally surrounded by a high wall and a gatehouse as its point of entry (Silva, 2010: 3-4).

^{xxii} The ground floor, set within the plinth, contained a multitude of offices arranged around a central plant room. Ministers' and whips' offices are located at first-floor level on three sides of the main block. The chamber is on the second floor, with members' lobbies to the east and west, where suites for the prime minister and the president are located towards north overlooking the piazza. The third floor accommodates translators and journalists and the fourth is given over to a public gallery (Robson, 2004).

^{xxiii} Similar roof forms are found throughout the island, as well as in other parts of monsoon Asia.

^{xxiv} The aristocracy consisted of the king's immediate family who were appointed as *Adigars*, *Rate Mahattayas* and *Disaves* etc. On occasion, the administrative elite such as *Korala*, *Vidane* and *Arachchi* drawn from the *Govigama* caste, belonging to the second tier of administration – the Kandyan equivalent of the sub-elite as M. N. R. Wijetunge (2011) sees them – were also allowed to utilize the luxury.

^{xxv} Rupert Scott was a former E. R. & B. assistant. Writing in the Architectural Review, he compared the Parliament building with Bawa's favorite *Keralan* palace at *Padmanabhapuram*, peevishly bemoaning the lack of 'tortoiseshell floors, carved thrones and delicately pierced screens' (Scott 1983).

^{xxvi} Scott was finally moved to declare that 'there is an enrichment [in the chamber] that, if applied to the whole building, would place it among the great monumental buildings of the world' (Scott 1983).

^{xxvii} Although the new garden city capital never materialized, Parliament's transfer to Kotte did encourage the growth of Colombo towards the east. Most of that growth was, however, the result of unbridled private investment and land speculation, neither subject to planning controls nor supported by infrastructural investment. Even the first tantalizing glimpse of the Parliament building that Bawa orchestrated at the turning of the road at Rajagiriya is now obscured by unauthorized developments on the edge of the lake in which it stands. Neighboring *Bataramulla*, a remote and sleepy village in 1979 is now a congested urban centre, while uncontrolled suburban development has spread more than 10 kilometers further to the east. Sadly, a unique opportunity to plan a new city has been squandered.

^{xxviii} The work started on site in August 1980 and the final arts faculty buildings were handed over in July 1986, with the project continuing to final completion in 1988. The total cost, including site works and furnishings, came to 450 million rupees, equivalent at the time to about 9 million pounds sterling.

^{xxix} A building project that in Europe would have been handled by a large team of architects and specialist consultants was run largely by an individual job architect

^{xxx} Bawa grudgingly recognized the need for such a discipline, but reserved for himself the right to break it whenever he saw fit.

^{xxxi} The overall strategy employed here had been developed from projects handled in the yesteryear – *Yahapath Endera* Farm School and the *Piliyandala* Institute for Integral Education etc.

^{xxxii} As Robson (2002) explains, “[the] Views were carefully orchestrated in a stenographic sequence that conceals and reveals in turn, playing the northern views of jungle and distant hills against the southern views of the lake and the ocean beyond, always referring back to the picturesque hump-backed bridge that connects the entrance across the lake to the central valley and acts as the linchpin of the whole composition”.

^{xxxiii} A few of the spaces are air-conditioned and the buildings rely for the most part on natural ventilation.