

Fashioning Modernity: Emerging New Outfit

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Abstract

Sixteen-century fashion in Sri Lanka is examined through the development of the royal male dress code, taking account of the historical context and changes in society at the turn of the century. Analysis of the temple paintings, wood carvings, sculptures and ivory carvings at Munich Treasury in Germany along with the continuous literature review with use of documented manuscripts, records, published research and inscriptions, and archival evidence demonstrate that a substantial change took place in the organization of the movement of royal male dress code visible in the beginning of twentieth Century. This included the eclectic mixture of western and Sri Lankan dress items in the most technically and stylistically sophisticated garments, signaling an increasing recognition of elite in ruling class similar to that found in French couture. The outfit called “*gentleman beneath the cloth*” has been identified as a key outfit, although almost unknown today, was highly successful and prominent at the turn of the social arena of the twentieth century. Trousers (*pantaloons*) coat (*cabaya*), jacket (*hettaya*) short jacket with collar (*manthe hettaya*) and articles of clothing (items) such as attached collar (*tippet*), were observed and analyzed. The conceptual framework of the study is based on the qualitative research method. It is argued that this was an arena in which ruling elite might show off their creativity of forming a new outfit. The results shows that Sri Lankan male dress is made up of rich set of possible combinations (tradition and modern) which entails authentic individuation of an outfit.

Keywords: Fashion, Modernity, Fashion Language, 16th Century, Eclectic Mixture

1. Introduction

Modernity’ is widely used as polar opposites in a linear theory of social change. This theory can be applied to examine the fashion of dress in any social context. In Sri Lanka it was in the Kotte period that both traditional and the modernity form the basis of ideologies of the wearers (both royalty and the elite) as a movement in the royal male dress code. According to culture the royal male dress was composed of an unstitched loose lower dress which formed a clinging draped cloth. The relationship between the two terms ‘fashion’ and ‘modernity’ do not necessarily involve displacement, conflict or exclusiveness. Modernity does not necessarily weaken existed fashion. The term modern impulse may be to think in terms of present day technology with its space exploration and nuclear power. But the common sense of the word ‘modern’ encompasses the whole era since the 18th century when inventions like the steam engine and the spinning jenny provided the initial technical basis for the industrialization of society. Accordingly the word ‘modern’ also evokes especially the deconstruction of inherited privilege and the declaration of equal rights of citizenship. During the sixteenth century the Kotte era (1411-1597AD) marked a new turning point in Sri Lankan dress fashion. The Portuguese conquered the island and established their power gradually throughout the lowlands of Sri Lanka including Kotte. Their influences in political, economic, cultural and social strata were huge and

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directly affected the lives of people of the society. By this time the royalty was directly inspired by western sartorial etiquettes and led drastic changes in the way of practicing traditions of Sri Lankan dress forms. The royalty had direct contacts with the Portuguese Kings and diplomats and they embraced certain items of dresses, mixed and mingled with the tradition of dress and created a novel dress. The process of mingling, of mixing and matching of several dress details is called hybridization of dress and shows a dramatic composition of western, south Indian and Sri Lankan dress details.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Tradition builds Ideology of the wearer

Tradition is the passing down elements of a culture such as norms, values, long standing beliefs art, architecture, dress, language of a particular group of people from generation to generation as inheritances. Ideology may be defined as the set the set of beliefs, values and ideas about the world and the things in it which is characteristic of, or peculiar to a social group. (Barnard, 2002, 41) As Barthes writes 'ideology is the process in which the work of culture is presented to be understood as the work of nature. (Barthes, 1977, 45-46) Besides, tradition and ideology seems in relation to each other which builds the mindset of people in any society. Tradition also build vision of the people's fashioning could be utilizing further creation by their own. Therefore it is indeed to study well established and well –practiced fashion ideologies in order to induce new notions of fashion.

2.2 King's dress : Shawl

One of the historical evidences of the King's dress can be found in the description given by a Portuguese historian Queyroz (1930, p.179) in reporting the Portuguese Ambassador's first audience with the Sinhalese King in AD 1505: the royal dress of King Dharma Parakramabahu IX (1489-1513 AD) is described thus; 'he was girt with a cloth of silver, the ends of which fell on his feet, which were shod with sandals studded with rubies.' Furthermore he says that the King was dressed in a white 'cabaya'. Ferguson (1907) also mentions about the composition of the King's dress during the sixteenth century. He says that the "King was clad in a silken bajo. Bajo is a fashion of a closed jacket and girt with a cloth likewise of silk which reached to his knees..."

There are some indications of dress of the King found in poetical literature. It is said that the King had used shawls as part of his upper dress and wore fine clothes for the lower body. According to the sandesa poetry there were two types of shawls worn by the King during this period; a flower decorated shawl or a shawl embellished with gems. Kavyashekaraya (Liyanaarachchi, 2007, canto 33) says that the King had a shawl across his left shoulder. Furthermore it describes dresses as appropriate for the day in the mirror room, with garments (salu) ornaments and flowers

The Parakumba Siritha (Paranavithana, 1997, canto 34) states that the King's shawl is decorated with gems (Salumini) and the lower body dress which covers his thighs.

It is stated that King Buwanekabahu VII received a silk shawl of six cubits in length from Nalla Adappaya of Puttalam. The King having expressed his appreciation appointed him Raja Wanniar of

Puttalam and presented many villages and allowed him to receive tax from that land and presented gems and tusks of elephants. He also received a bluish shawl from Kuru Kauwar Padawopalashita Ari Maradana Karana Kumara who arrived in Ceylon from Canchipura. (Sri Lak Indo studies, 1977, p.30)

The pictorial evidences of previous eras show that the traditional dress of the King consisted of an unstitched loose lower clinging draped cloth which was formed by lots of wads of pleats and folds with jewelry adorning the bare upper body. Furthermore the long lower cloth has a unique methodology of arranging to the body by forming many folds to both sides of the waist and below the navel without having any single stitching by emphasizing the body curves. It means an arrangement of fascinating frills in the centre of the lower dress which was done up with bunching the two edges of the cloth (Salu) in to the centre of the lower dress. The layers of lower dresses are suggested by lines and deep carving descending from its length of layers. It could be assumed that the lower dress formed more than one piece of cloth. The dress confined by a decorated waist band. The King draped the lower cloth according to the traditional practice of the era.

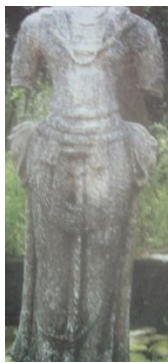


Fig 1

Kings of the Anuradhapura era
85.133.1

(Schroeder, 1990, p. 262)
SriLanka



Fig 2

Buwanekabahu IV of Gampola

(Schroeder, 1990,p. 438 , 468)



Fig 3



Fig 4

cloth painting - Reg. no

National museum, Colombo,

Comparing with previous eras it was seen that the lower dresses of the Kotte era were formed different manner. There was only a single fold arranged to one side of the waist (most probably left side) which has a pointed edge. The fold on the left side of the waist developed in its size to a much greater extent during the last phase of the sixteenth century, evident in the dress of King Wimaladharmasooriya I(1591-1604).

However the lower dress depicted in the Aludeniya wooden door jamb shows that the fold was placed to the center of the navel area and was arranged like a fan. The lower dress is unique in form because it had a circular shaped fold. In fact the feature was depicted in a more pronounced manner during the sixteenth century King's dress. Even though this was mainly worn by the Kings, elites of the court also seem to have adopted the feature in a different way. Pictorial evidences show that the feature evolved gradually throughout the history with subtle adjustments in forming the shape of it.

3. Materials and Methods

For this study utilized varieties of range of materials including written documents and visuals. Utilized original sources of information such as chronicles, books, original records of foreign travelers, published research pertaining to the area, inscriptions, temple murals, sculptures, stone, wood, and special ivory carving two boxes at present kept in Munich Treasury, Germany used for gather and sort data. The systematic data analysis reveals many new meanings created, which influenced transmission of its “context”.

A qualitative method has been adopted for this research. The process of the research is inductive; the researcher builds abstractions, concepts and theories from details. Reliability of the data was much concerned during data gathering, and analysis. Therefore validity was confirmed with cross checking literary sources along with random interviews with selected scholars, artists, village headmen who was aware of history of such places and incidents, high priests of the selected temples with gathered images. The study began with in-depth observational studies of temple murals, cloth paintings, wood and stone carvings, sculptures and ivory carvings.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 The Change the ideology of the royalty: introduction of Christianity

Sometime later in 1557 Prince Dharmapala and his queen were baptized with the names of Dom as Dom Joao Parera Pandar (1557AD) at the hands of Joao de Villa de Conde and queen as Dona Catherina. The Portuguese names were the fashion at court. Baptism became a rebirth under a foreign name and every female royal convert was dubbed as Dona. To denationalize the race was not the missionary’s object, and yet such was the inevitable consequence of the course he pursued, for with baptism came a rebirth under a foreign name and every royal convert was dubbed a Dom. Prince Dharmapala was coroneted in Lisbon and from the childhood he grown up under the protection of Portuguese. He educated under Joao de Villa de Conde (chief of seven members of Franciscans visited in 1543AD) Trinitade noted that how Dharmapala was loyalty to the Portuguese, Later as king Dharmapala gratefully refers to Friar Joao as “my father and master” (Trinitade1972,65)

“This King Parera Pandar was a very good Christian and ever after lived under the discipline of the Frairs of Franciscans and favor and protection of the Portuguese, who defended him long as long he lived and maintained him on the throne notwithstanding the position of Madune, his uncle.” (Trinitade1972,50)

One missionary with condescending enthusiasm wrote of a youthful prince “his thoughts are not those of a black but of one who greatly desires to copy the Christian Kings both in his manner of life as in all else” for he says that when he becomes a Christian he will not have in his house but Portuguese” .(Pieris 1998,7) The Franciscan historian Civezza has following made a statement about king of Ceylon and his attributes. He stated ‘that the king showed himself sincerely inclined to embrace Catholicism, and in the meantime he permitted a cousin of him to receive baptism. This cousin went to Portugal and returning thence died at Goa and was buried in the church of the Franciscan convent. After wards Perera Pandar (Dharmapala) himself wished to be instructed and baptized. He was baptized and always shows himself a true model of a Christian King’. (Perera, 1920, 29)

Since the ailing Dharmapala had made out a deed of gift in 1580 AD bequeathing his kingdom to the Portuguese crown, all his would soon belong to Portugal. Perera said that Dona Cathrina's example was followed by all the ladies of the court and by some of the nobles of the kingdom, whereupon a great number of the people asked for baptism. (Perera 1920, 29)

It is noticed that most of the early Kings of the Kandyan era (Succeeding era of the Kotte) were had education under Portuguese Franciscans and baptized. The King Wimaladharmasooriya (1591-1604) was one of them, son of a noble called Wirasundara Mudaliyar who was known among the Portuguese by the name of Dom Joao de Austria Mudaliyar however from his childhood e was known as Konappu Bandara. He embraced Buddhism after he became the King of the Kandyan Kingdom, which was an important qualification for the kingship. However his personal desires and western attitudes could not be eliminated from his dress sense. His enthusiasm for western culture was clearly evident through early travelers' notes. Hulugalle (1999, 81) states that the King was pleased to arrange interior decorations of the royal court similar to western styles. He had some foreign collections of antiques. From his collection he showed some Spanish chairs and a table to the Dutch Admiral Spilbergen. He arranged lodging for the Spilbergen in order to not in the Sinhala but the Portuguese fashion. (Paranavithana 1997, 30) Further Paranavithana states that the King's great hall decorated with beautiful tapestry and occupied with many Spanish chairs and table was arranged in Christian manner. (Paranavithana, p 31) When he started to build the city of Kandy constructed according to the Christian style. (Paranavithana, 39) The king and his royal family always dressed in Portuguese fashion. But, when they in front of the people they followed Sinhala dress fashions. It is believed that the King was introduced to the long sleeved short jacket for the royal dress code known as juwan hette which derived its name from its introduction by Don Jhon Wimala Dharmasuriya I. (Codrington, 1910,P.19) The long -sleeved jacket was also known as '*kameesa hettaya*', *mante* From the eighteenth century onwards the royal dress changed to a long sleeved jacket and the long lower cloth and pantaloons depicted in wall paintings and sculptures of the period. It is obvious that the new dress style merged well into the tradition of the county. After he devised his own visual context, some new associations emerged for the long sleeved jacket. After this, the long sleeved jacket could be seen as being associated with a new set of dress types. Successors of King Wimaladharmasuriya followed the same long sleeved jacket with a collar or tippet (Codrington, 1910, p.19) composed of trousers or pantaloons and they became a fashion style.

Figure 5 shows the son of King Senarath (1604-1635) King Rajasinga 11 (1635-1687) who also grew up in the Portuguese environment and his dress habits show how he changed his mind with the impact of the environment he had grown up in. Knox's statements are quite important to understand the King's habits displayed throughout his life time. Knox says, 'he was not wanted to keep to one fashion, but changes as his fancy leads him'. Furthermore careful observations of Knox state, 'his apparel is very strange and wonderful, not after his own country fashion, or any other, being made after his own invention'. 'On his head he wears a cap with four corners like a Jesuits three tear high, and a feather standing upright before. Like that in a head of a fore -horse in a team, a long band hanging down his back after the Portuguese fashion, his doublet after so strong a shape,...the body of one ,and the sleeves of another colour, he wears long breaches to his ankles, shoes and stockings'. (Knox, 1958, p. 62) A foreign traveller Christopher Schweitzer's (1676AD) observation leads to a picturesque quality of dress fashions of King Rajasingha II. 'His shirt and waistcoat is made of the finest cotton, with gold and he wears a garment of coloured silk, that goes four or five times around his middle, and hangs down to his knees. His stockings are fastened to a silver plate, as large almost as a trencher. His shoes

are only leathern soles with strings, of which comes up between his toes and the other comes around his foot, and ties. And all these strings are set out with sapphires and rubies. He wears a sword close under the right arm, tied to a silk ribbon .It being in a massive silver scabbard: it is made like a hanger. And about a yard long. The handle is embedded with five precious stones. On his left side, between his shirt and his waist coat, he wears a long knife, beside his sword, inlaid with gold and jewels' (Hulugalle, 1999, p. 140). It could be envisaged that how much the Kings devoted to the new faith and fervor to the new lifestyle they have to adapt. Hence, elucidation of these dimensions affirms that change of the faith of oneself led drastic change in their inner soul ultimately visible through the dress code. Prince Dharmapala was the person who transgresses the traditional fashion and induces modernity to the Sri Lankan fashion arena.

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

4.2 New dress details: new fashion line

Fashion in dress changed in the manner of how people made their own interpretations that led to new meanings in clothes. It also shows how meanings of clothes resolved in one situation leads to new contexts of discovery. (Damhorst 1985, 40) The visual data shows that the long lower piece of cloth was a common dress for the lower body and was used by royalty, elite, court performers and functionaries during the sixteenth century in Kotte. All of them utilized a long cloth as their lower body dress with naked upper body. By all of these categories the lower dress of royalty and dancers' seems very special. It is also noticed that *Sandesa* poetical works described the lower dresses of Kings and dancers. The pictorial references proved that these three categories of people wore a long lower piece of cloth in three different ways. The King's lower cloth with a bare upper body was resolved in the society and signified royalty. The lower cloth merged with a long coat or *cabaya* leading to a new context. The King's own self representation with a new dress (long sleeved *cabaya*) subsequently led to new meanings in clothes.

Furthermore it is also revealed that the production and exchange of meanings of dress of the Sinhalese Kings are quite clearly similar to the meanings of the original Portuguese long sleeved jacket and given numerous interpretations by different Kings as cultural producers. It is understood by the examples below that the original Portuguese jacket ends up with a set of meanings different from those it began with. Prince Dharmapala wears a long sleeved long *cabaya* with a front opening, King Wimaladharmasooriya I wears a *Kameesa hettaya* or known as *Juan hettaya* with a tippet (a kind of collar) (Codrington, 1910) and with a front opening, King Rajasinghe XI wears a long sleeved jacket and a waist coat with a sash crossed over the shoulder with buttoned front opening, Keerthi Sri Rajasingha wears a long sleeved jacket known as *Moja hettaya* with a broad tippet, and King Sri

Wrickrama Rajasingha wears a long sleeved jacket known as *Wata hettaya* or *Reli Kamise* with three layered frill (*manthe*) layered trimmings attached to a broad tippet. The study reveals how the meanings of dresses developed in one social context and possibly moved across contextual boundaries and created new context for a new mode of perception. When Prince Dharmapala adopted the western long coat as his upper body dress with a long piece of cloth, new meanings were attached by the social context. He adopted the same styled long coat which was worn by the Portuguese King. In the social context of the long coat emerging signified royalty with a combination of long trousers. But in our social context the signification of ‘royal’ first emerged with a long piece of cloth and then it moved from that social context to another (Kandy period) and flourished as a new style for the Kings. The new dress style of the Kings’ attire existed until the end of the last kingdom of Sri Lanka; the Kandy period.



Fig 5

Rajasimha II

(Knox, 1966)



Fig 6

Sri Wickrama Rajasimha

(Davy, 1821)

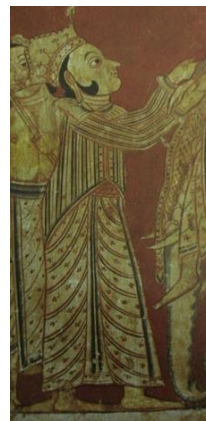


Fig 7

King

Hanguranketha temple

4.3 Emerging new outfit: “gentleman beneath the cloth”



Fig 8



Fig 9

Higher administrative officers wore new dress: “gentleman beneath the cloth”

Early 20th Century

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

When the writer studied and analyzed the society and culture during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it is proven that some meanings of the dress are derived from cultural experience and some are negotiated during social transactions and also some are conjured independently in the minds of the participants of their culture. This also can be seen when analyzing the series of images of the Kings and the dancers (stereotypes). The King's trousers signified royalty during the Kotte period, however when considering the same trousers today it won't signify royalty; it signifies formality or smartness, because the trousers are a sign deriving today in a different culture. The study has demonstrated that dress rarely conveys single meanings; more often their messages may be described as consisting of layers of meaning, with some layers being more applicable than others in a specific context. It also signified some fashion or style, comfort and luxuriousness. Because clothes are social objects, they have the potential to convey meaning and from a variety of social and cultural contexts.

5. Conclusion

It has been shown how, and in what sense, fashion in dress is a cultural phenomenon and it has been explained how the sense of culture is being used. Fashions in dress are cultural in the sense that they are some of the ways in which a group constructs and communicates its identity. They are two ways in which the values and identities of several categories of people may be communicated both to another category and also to the members of those category groups. It is also identified that the elite or the high rankers of the administrative society during the early twentieth century in south of Sri Lanka wore long coats with a long cloth up to the ankle and wore long trousers beneath the cloth. What is noticeable here is that instead of Prince Dharmapala's long coat and long lower piece of cloth a new dress form a trouser worn beneath the cloth emerged. This new fashion brought interesting dress composition and elaborated the perception of the perceivers of that society. The mode of the new dress composition signified 'smart gentleman'. It is seems that with the passage of time the elite male has ignored the lower cloth and practiced wearing a long coat and trousers. In this way it seems that people in the society could continuously convey dress signifiers according to their wish. However it is apparent that the culture of the society had ignored some dress forms and re-formed and adopted another dress for elite males in the middle phase of the twentieth century in Sri Lanka.

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