

A cultural and archeological study of kotiyagala (*mailla*) Cave paintings.

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka has a relatively large number of forest cave temples. Most of them have not attracted the attention of researchers and only a few of them have been researched. The reason is that most of these cave temples are located in forested areas away from human habitation. Reaching those places is also very difficult. But very valuable paintings are found in caves located in such places. Due to the lack of proper preservation, the paintings are facing the threat of destruction at a rapid rate. Kotiyagala Mailla Lenvihara is also a place where such precious paintings are hidden. Paintings from four regions are mainly represented here. Only the paintings on the left side remain of them. The main question of this research is to find out what are the socio-economic cultural political factors that influenced Kotiyagala painting. Research methods such as field study, interviews, and library study have been used to collect data mainly using empirical research methodology. The main objective of this research is to study the socioeconomic and cultural factors that influenced the Kotiyagala paintings and to which tradition the style and structural features of the Kotiyagala paintings show the most similarities. The sample of this research was Kotiyagala Mailla Lenvihara which was selected through random sampling.

Key words: Kottiyagala, Cave paintings, structural features, tradition, religious

INTRODUCTION

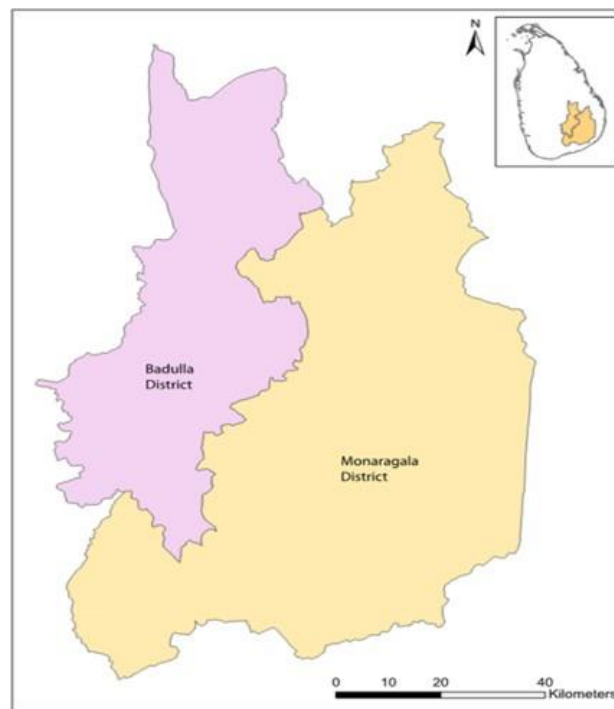
The main objective of this research is to discuss how Sri Lankan artist use faunal icons in cave temple paintings. Sri Lanka had developed a tradition of paintings as an essential requirement for fulfilling the religious needs. Sri Lankan cave temple paintings also fulfilled the religious practices and requirement of Buddhism. Initially, the art of wall painting was introduced by the craftsman by themselves. In the same era in India, classical lines based on literary imagery was developed. In Sri Lanka the indigenous form of popular art continued to be practiced by the artists. These paintings appear two forms of Buddhist art. One is the indigenous traditional form and other one is the imported classical form. Art has developed as a part of culture in every civilization. Paintings were considered as one of the most effective medium of human expression to convey the spirituality of religious thoughts and the philosophical speculations of culture. Paintings was an art practiced in Sri Lanka in ancient time and still it is a living tradition of Sri Lanka. Historical records establish that paintings were executed not only on the walls of buildings, but also on cloth of which nothing has been preserved, as it was not strong enough to withstand the destructive effects of climate and vandalism of human.

This site located in Monaragala district. *Kotiyagala* is 12 ½ miles on the road to *wattegama* which turns off to the south at the 174th mile on the *wellawaya-pothuvil* road. About six miles south of the *kotiyagala* colony, inside this jungle is a cave temple with recumbent Buddha statue and paintings in it. Treasure hunters have dug into the body of the statue. The cave roof which most once have been fully covered with paintings has some of the paintings on it still.

Above the Buddha head one seen a floral design and a figure drawn inside a circle on a red background. North side can see a square with floral designs and geese in it. Alternating square and oval shapes.

The paintings of *kotiyagala* belong to a period between 17th and 18th century. Prof. Senaka Bandaranayake points out that, these paintings belong to the 11th century. But he said it is not a real time. we have observed two layers of paintings were present at *kotiyagala*. The ceiling and the walls were plastered and covered with paintings depicting various Buddhist themes. The ceiling has been divided into three sections. The left-hand side contains the *Siduhath kumararothpathathiya* the right-hand side contains a badly damaged paintings of a heavenly region. The middle section of the ceiling is decorated with the different type of decos. The *Kotiyagala* paintings represent and illustrative mood that is moving away from the expression and vigorous realism and evocative formality of the *Sigiriya* style. Not only that the style and structural characteristics used in the creation of paintings in the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods have influenced the depiction of *Kotiyagala* ceiling paintings.

Uva Province in this study refers to the area that is currently administratively known as Uva Province. Badulla district and Monaragala district also belong to it. Uva province has a complex geographical diversity. An area of such geographical complexity becomes an important unit for analysis in socio- cultural development. The people's life in Uva is mainly based on agriculture.



Map 1: Location map of the study area (Uva Province)

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are two sources that were used in this investigation.

1. Field observations
2. Investigation of Kotiyagala cave temple paintings and related literature to the contemporary Art.

In the study of the Kotiyagala cave temple paintings, it is more important to pay attention to the full preliminary research related to it. The study was carried out investigate the literature through such sources.

In this study on cave temple paintings in the Kotiyagala at Uva, the literature review has been discussed in two main streams as mentioned above. But although there is a great deal of information on the cave paintings in Sri Lanka. The book on cave temple paintings in the Uva Province is very rare. Because many researchers only research upland paintings. So, we have a number of books and research papers mentioned above about that area. But very few books have been written on cave temple paintings in the Uva Province. The reason for this is that the attention of researchers on the Uva Province is very low.

However, the study of 18th and 19th century temple paintings in other parts of Sri Lanka has done a considerable amount. Among them, the research of Coomaraswamy (1907,1908,1969), Siri Gunasinghe (1978), Senaka Bandaranayake (1982,1986), Godakumbura (1964), Nandadeva Wijesekera (1959), Sirimal Lakdusinghe (1978,1981), Mahinda Somathilake (2002) and Raj Somadeva (2012), are important. Although these scholars did not study the paintings of the Uva Province, they did their research on the temple paintings in other parts of the island belonging to that period.

According to the 1968-69 annual archaeological control reports, a surveyor named M.H Marshall Appuhami informed the Department of Archeology about Kotiyagala archaeological sites in 1967 (De Silva 1969:78). Efforts have been made to designate the site as an archaeological monument (Monument Document No. 45:135) and to make a preliminary record of the paintings contained in the two statues (See, De Silva 1969: de Silva 1990:29-32). In 1975, they and another research group observed the site and two experts in the preservation of paintings, Italians Luciano Maranzi and Silviya Sorryso, participated. But they also have not presented a long description of this. De Silva 1990:30 has noted that the paintings are currently trying to find meaning about the tiger, which recognizes the complexity of the depictions in the paintings and points out the need for further research. There are also errors in the description given of Tat paintings in Chitra Kala, edited by Nandadeva Wijesekera, published on the occasion of the centenary of archeology. Apart from de Silva, Senarath Wickramasinghe has also provided a brief description of this field of Kotiyagala, not genealogy (Wickramasinghe 1991: 167-168). The book “The Grandeur of Sinhala Buddhist Arts” written and published jointly by Dharmasena Rasapana and Gamini Wijesinghe contains a brief description of the Kotiyagala cave temple murals (Rasapana & Jayasinghe 2003: 20-28). Also, Senaka Bandaranaike (1986:39). M. Somathilaka (2002:169) Many researchers have also paid some attention to the tiger paintings in studies related to Sri Lankan murals. Also, the present author has also presented several researches on these Kotiyagala paintings and academic articles have also been published in this regard. (Bandara.J 2020:39-42)

Research Problem:

1. What are the socio-economic, cultural and political factors that influenced the creation of *Kotiyagala* paintings?

Research Objectives:

1. To study how socio-economic and cultural factors influenced *Kotiagala* paintings.
2. Finding out which tradition shows the most similarities in the style and structural features of *Kotiagala* paintings.

METHODOLOGY

Geographical and environmental factors in any country are important factors in determining the needs of people's lives. Uva Province is an area with complex geographical diversity. An area with such geographical complexity becomes an important unit for analysis in socio-cultural development. To become such an important unit, it can be understood by studying how various social, economic, cultural and

religious factors have affected people's lives. With cold and hot climates, the people of Uva engage in farming as their life profession, facing various difficulties. Both the qualitative research methodology and the quantitative research methodology have been used in the study conducted on the Kotiyagala Cave Temples. Also, as research methods, fieldwork, Photography, interviews and library studies were used to collect data about specific areas.

Fieldwork:

A considerably extensive sample of site was selected for the field visit. It covered kotiyagala locations from one administrative district enveloping two ecological regions in the country. I followed the two major steps during this fieldwork in order to maintain the documentation. The attributes taken in to consideration during the documentation were the dimensions of ceiling paintings, Orientation of the ceiling paintings, Use the colors of the ceiling paintings, nature of the rendering and the state of preservation. Besides, the dimensions relation to spatial aspect of the place where the image was executed were recorded.

Photography:

Almost 200 canopy paintings of the researched cave temple have been recorded for photography which is most helpful for data collection in this research. Also, more attention was paid to the use of color, use of line, restoration, genre, design and compositional features of the paintings. Because the characteristics were of great help in considering the paintings depicted in the research area and the social, cultural and political issues that influenced the depicting of the paintings. The second step was the photograph recording for professional camera. Under the low light conditions inside the painted and ceiling paintings in the cave temple. Certain distortions in the pictures were subsequently corrected using Photoshop version 8.0. During this research I was taken nearly 200 individual pictures.

Interviews:

The method of interviews has also provided a stronger contribution to the collection of data in this research. Several people who have a good understanding of the older people in this area were invited to participate in the interviews. Through them, it was possible to know the facts about the political environment in that area, also about the history of these cave temples, about the people who sponsored this and about the thoughts and wishes of the people who lived in that era.

Literature survey:

A number of steps were followed for reporting. Collection of published and unpublished references especially on cave paintings and rock art of Sri Lanka was an activity undertaken at the beginning of the research. The aim of this study was to measure the width and depth of these temple ceiling paintings.

FINDINGS

The art developed as a part of the culture in every civilization. Paintings were considered as one of the most effective mediums of human expression to convey the spirituality of religious culture. Historical records said that, the paintings were executed not only on the walls of buildings, but also on cloth of which nothing has been preserved as it was not strong enough to withstand the destructive effects of climate and destructions of human (Geiger: 1950).

Sri Lanka had developed a tradition of paintings as an essential requirement for fulfill the religious needs and wants. Initially, the art of wall paintings was introduced by the art of wall painting was introduced by the craftsman by themselves. In the same era in India, classical lines based on literary imagery was developed. In Sri Lanka, the indigenous form of popular art continued to be practiced by the artists.

Buddhism too had been experiencing considerable difficulty in maintaining its spiritual values and practices. As the kings faced political problems during this era, they didn't have much time spent on development of temple paintings. Their main aim was the establishment of the kingdom by shifting the Capital until the establishment of the kingdom at Kotte.

During this period painting has survived just sufficient to decorate the palace, Image house and Viharas. But, most of the art material including paintings suffered wanton destruction at the hand of Portuguese invaders. But a Renaissance of Art Simultaneously with the revival of Buddhism, painting began to re-emerge in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Distribution of paintings depicted in the *Kotiyagala* cave temple paintings When focusing on the space and the nature of the surface on which the paintings are created, the paintings are found on the cave floor above the reclining Buddha statue. Paintings were drawn in a space of about 40 x 12 feet and at present only a few paintings remain. Most of the depicted paintings that created the right half of it have been destroyed, so problems arose and no specific pattern can be seen in the way *Viyana* has been managed in painting. Because it appears that the paintings depicted here were painted or restored on two occasions by two groups (See. *Figures 1&2*). Such a conclusion can be reached because the differences in the lines and the way they are structured can be clearly seen in the depicted paintings. One thing that can be seen when observing the surface here is the sand, clay and plant fibers with a thickness of 5cm – 2cm before painting. A mixed mortar appears to have been plastered over this surface.

Focusing on the painting techniques, it appears that both the *Seko* or dry plaster tradition and the *Buano* wet plaster tradition were used for the *Kotiyagala* cave temple paintings.



Figures 1



Figures 2

Source: Double figures of womens, Field work, Kotiyagala Ceiling paintings, Monaragala District, Sri Lanka

Space and the form of the painting plane

The frescoes of the main statue house on the site of the researched cave temple are found on the cave plinth above the reclining Buddha statue. Approximately 40*12 feet. By now, most of the etymological paintings have been destroyed and very few paintings have survived. The paintings depicted on this page are represented along two main zones, which can be classified as the painting zone on the right. The paintings belonging to the left-hand painting area depict the bodhisattva couple, animal figures, and apsara figures, while the right-hand painting area depicts the people engaged in stupa worship, the group dressed as a

nobleman, and the double figures of women drawn in the circular space, the group holding the *kataramaka*, the *listara* paintings and Canopy decorations etc. can be seen.

Style and structural features

When the depicted paintings are observed very well, the fact that these depicted paintings are drawn by the subordinates are drawn on at least two occasions. Because the style and artistic features of the depicted paintings are highlighted in a different way. When compared with other paintings drawn on the same layer of plaster, it appears that they were painted simultaneously, but in terms of technical skill, different painting parts are also evident in this painting. In particular, the circular design of the canopy above the Buddha image shows poor linework compared to the rest of the painting. Because the lines used are very wide. Also, the use of shapes and colors is not optimal. Therefore, it can be concluded that the piece is most likely the work of an amateur craftsman (See figures 1&2).

Human figures reveal the diversity and uniqueness of paintings stylistically. The paintings depicted in the cave paintings are found in two main regions, but they raise problems in evaluating the style as a tradition. Because all human figures are painted with equal attention. But upon careful observation, it becomes evident that among the human figures depicted in the center, special attention has been paid to the representation of the nobleman and his wife's daughter who are living in a *Vilthera vimānaya* (See figure 3&4). The linework is followed by color saturation, and the linework reveals a trained artistry. Lines have been successfully used in the subject, especially to highlight the features of human bodies. The elegant and elegant features of the female figures and the strength and physical characteristics of the male are revealed in these two human figures. Both the male and female faces are detailed and some effort has been made in expressing emotions. These are vividly outlined and colorful lines are used for it. A special concern has been given to the fullness of the die as compared to the linearization. Attempts have been made to highlight the body features of the figures using brownish yellow tones. Those colors have been successfully used to bring out fullness. Although lighter colors are used for human figures, slightly brighter colors are used for clothing.



Figure.3

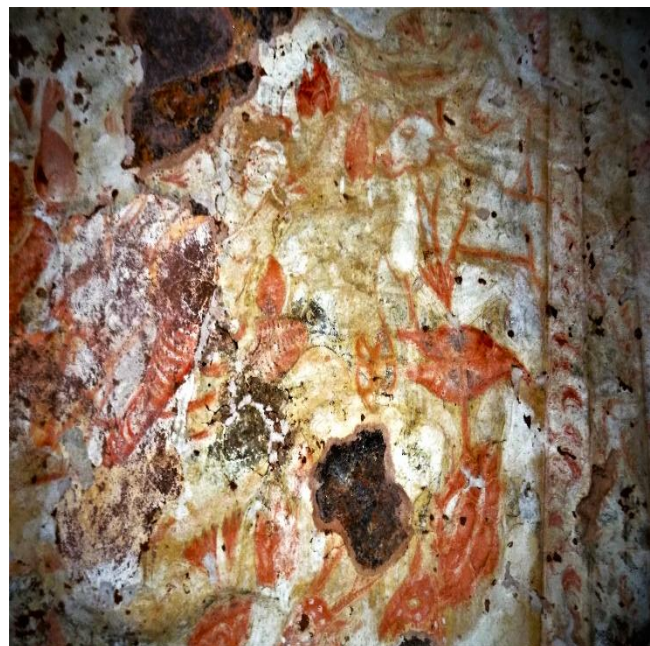


Figure. 4

Source: *Vilthera vimānaya*, Field work, Kotiyagala Ceiling paintings, Monaragala District, Sri Lanka.

Colours have been fully applied and mostly red-brown color has been used and an attempt has been made to get the detail related to the human figures by increasing the color. These features can be identified especially with the male figure in the center and the female figure to his left. The figure's face, neck, chest area, abdomen and arms are rounded and filled with more and more color to give a three-dimensional appearance. Red color has been used in combination with other colors in the presentation of jewelry, but the detailed data about it cannot be identified due to the color fading of the paintings. Attempts have been made to highlight the human figures by coloring the background beyond the human figures in blackish red.

On the whole, due to the success of Varna Purana, the paintings have received a significant finish and it is difficult to consider these as highly expressive paintings. This is because human figures do not achieve high success in aspects such as aesthetic quality, fullness, natural qualities, posture and expression of emotions. Compared to the four-person Bodhisattva representation, the Bodhisattva image on the western wall is weaker in terms of expression. Paintings that can be directly compared to these paintings have not been reported elsewhere in the island. The illustrated paintings prove that the meta-classical style is more closely related to the characteristics of the classical style than the classical style in terms of line work and color saturation. Because considering the exceptional skill and elegance of the human figures in this style, it is clear that these paintings are directly related to the classical style.

Contextual significance of paintings

Mural paintings are found in many ancient cave temples. Apart from the Stupa *Dhatu Garbha* support paintings, most of them are paintings created in connection with *Parvata Piyasi*. Many of the paintings created in this way are based on various religious themes and objects, but there are few enough factors to understand it more broadly as a tradition. There are paintings in the canopies of the caves which were used for the residential needs of the monks. Kandy's *Bambaragala Viharaya*, *Rajagala Plain*, *Mayuragiri* and *Rakkhitakanda* are examples of this. There are cases where paintings with human figures can be seen on the cave wall or canopy, although there are no features of a temple complex associated with the cave complex. Observing the depiction of the built environment and paintings in some such areas, it can be assumed that the frescoes were used for sacrifices and rituals. *Kudumbigala*, *Mihintalea*, *Mayuragiriya* are examples of it.

Kotiyagala Mailla Cave Temple, which belongs to the so-called cave temple group, is a place where paintings have been preserved in comparison with other such places, and this can be appreciated as a temple with the richest evidence in the subject of identifying the cave temple mural tradition of the period before the Polonnaruwa Kingdom period.

Paintings belonging to several phases are found here, and they differ from the paintings related to bed sacrifices and rituals in the cave paintings in that the interior space is properly managed in a space reserved for religious purposes.

The paintings depicted here are not just meant for worship, but are depicted in a way that ignites religious feelings, communicates religious matters, creates attraction and highlights its perfection.

In the investigation of the ancient cave temple mural painting tradition in Sri Lanka in connection with the *Kotiyagala Mailla* Temple, painting has also taken place along with the creation of the statue here. It is shown that the temple had a specialty in painting as a means of communicating the desired spiritual and social matters. Focusing on the overall space, more space is reserved for depicting religious themes. A common feature for all the stages painted here was that the left painting area created around the main statue has a large space dedicated to depicting the Bodhisattva plane. Bodhisattva idols in the eastern part have been painted with omens. As a whole, it can be recognized that the space of *Mailla* Cave Temple has been set aside for the depiction of characters, events, and situations with religious needs in mind as a main feature of the painting tradition.

In the investigation of the ancient cave temple mural painting tradition in Sri Lanka in connection with the *Kotiagala Mailla* Temple, it seems that the painting was done simultaneously with the creation of the statue. Spiritual and for images as a medium of the subject to communicate social issues specialty It is shown that it was owned. More space is reserved for depicting religious themes in focusing on the whole. Regarding the painting area on the left side, a large space is reserved for the representation of the Bodhisattva plane the region on the right is entirely devoted to the representation of *Lokumbu Niraya*. On the whole, it seems that a major feature of the temple painting tradition was to devote more space to depicting special characters, events, and occasions with religious needs in mind.

Among the *Kotiagala* murals, the methods used to depict situations and events are special. It depicts the bodhisattva plane panels completed within a rectangular space with Few such illustrations are found in this country related to the ancient period. Pans for panel moldings, hinges, and documents Traditional decorative designs were used, and zones are also important for canopy decoration to the painting of parallel vertical and horizontal lines. Paneled Rectangular paintings were difficult to find in this country, but in Ajanta and India Ellora, they are commonly found in the vicinity of temple premises in rocks, etc.

As a whole, the paintings of the *Mailla* Cave Temple are in line with the contemporary tradition of temple frescoes, and devote more space to depicting contemporary institutional matters, as well as sometimes regional, local and place identities. Not only the theme, object, technique, style of the paintings but also the overall representation may have been influenced by such matters, but there are no sufficient facts about the temple murals left in this region and in the island to identify them comprehensively and comparatively. However, it can be assumed that this was a rural temple that existed at that time due to the fact that the area located in the Myla Cave Temple was not historically located in a region with urban or semi-urban characteristics, and according to the archaeological factors and their distribution, it revealed the characteristics of a small-scale Buddhist complex. The design of paintings here may have been done in an adequate manner for the needs of the rural communities, due to the fact that they are located far from the main nuclear regions, it may have been difficult to get the high technology resources as well as special skills in painting. Apart from the relatively poor characteristics of linework and finish, the deficiencies in the coloring of paintings can be cited as illustrations. Especially when focusing on the painting area on the left side of the main statue house, which is related to the classical style, the color saturation of these paintings is very weak compared to the paintings created according to that style. Because it is limited to only a few colors and their color brightness is not seen. Also used for the color green, blue and yellow. They have been discolored for a while, but a later attempt at coloring can also be seen. Often the lack of raw materials and knowledge required for the production of wild colors may have been the reason for such weaknesses. However, in order to reach a more comprehensive and correct idea about this, further research should be done.

The *Kotiagala Mailla* temple frescoes are very important in the study of the style and evolution of the art of painting in Sri Lanka. In particular, the transitional features of the painting style from the classical style to the post-classical style can be recognized in several cases in relation to the paintings. The paintings to the left of the main statue are related to the classical styles of regional frescoes, although the expressive quality is relatively weak and decadent. The depiction of hell in the painting region on the right shows a stylistic similarity to the *Dimbulagala*, *Pulligoda* paintings, which can be described as a vertical trend between classical and post-classical styles. The painting on the left wall of the eastern portico shows a greater affinity to the classical style.

CONCLUSION

Its statue in the study of *Kotiyagala Mailla* temple frescoes House Extensive murals in both A report Allowed to do. Representations in paintings and ancient literary sources and in this country other Places

from It was also possible to identify the theme and subject matter of the found structures by analyzing them in a balanced way, as well as to arrive at reasonable assumptions about the paintings that cannot be determined in this way. It is more remarkable to be able to identify the *Lokumbu Niraya* and *Bodhisattva* images depicted here. In relation to this era, such temple murals are currently found only in *Kotiyagala* paintings. Expert attention has also been paid to Apsara, Bodhisattva Vimana, etc., among the actual murals. In engaging in a comparative study of ancient paintings, it seems that these paintings represent the transitional stage of formation from the classical style to the post-classical style. Considering the style characteristics and certain factors of the suburban built environment, it can be assumed that these paintings were created between the 8th century and the 13th century AD. *Kotiyagala Mailla Viharaya* can be named as the place where the richest factor is left to study not only the cave temple paintings but also the entire temple mural painting tradition in Sri Lanka, related to the ancient era or before the Polonnaruwa period. There are opportunities to inquire about the subjects, themes, and stylistic features of the temple murals as well as their evolution from time to time in relation to these paintings. Also, identifying the communication functions expected from the temple wall paintings and certain strategies adopted for that purpose can provide clues about the specific style characteristics of the ancient temple painting tradition in Sri Lanka. Broadly considered beyond the tradition of temple frescoes, the evolution of the ongoing evolution of the vernacular painting tradition can also give these paintings a unique contextual significance.

A study of Mahayana *Bodhisattva* worship in Sri Lanka and the significance of *Avalokateshwara Bodhisattvas* in Sri Lanka has the opportunity to use these paintings as sources because rare illustrations of it can be obtained from this place. Apart from the depictions of the statues, it is possible to reach important assumptions about the historical background of the locality based on their physical factors and the built environment factors of the statue house. It seems that by further analyzing the factors related to the archaeological site in the suburbs, it can be expanded to the investigation of the history of the region. The images depicted in the *Kotiyagala Mailla* paintings can be used to identify the images found in other places on the island and to determine the theme and subject of the Bodhisattva Vimana. It is more remarkable to be able to arrive at a hypothesis. Overall, it should be pointed out that the information revealed by the studies carried out in the area of ??researched paintings can be used to expand the study of the temple mural painting tradition in Sri Lanka beyond the Polonnaruwa Kingdom period, especially the cave temples. By carrying out scientific research for analysis, it will be possible to reach more reliable conclusions about their technical background and dating. At present, the *Kotiyagala Mailla* temple murals are in a very poor condition and if conservation is not done, they will be destroyed soon.

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