Continuity or Change? Kandyan kingship in the first decade of the Nayaka period of the Kandyan kingdom, 1729-1750

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To the Reader

Before you lies my thesis, the final product of the Research Master Global & Colonial History at Leiden University. Writing this thesis was a long and arduous task, but also one that I could not have done by myself, and I would be in remiss if I did not use this opportunity to thank these people.

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Introduction

> The old Kandyan government, at least two thousand years old […] is now no more: it has probably perished for ever, and will be forgotten in a few years, in that very country in which it has existed so long.[1]

Thus, wrote John Davy in a book about his travels through the island of Ceylon, modern-day Sri Lanka, in 1821 CE.[2] Davy, an army surgeon and physician in attendance of the East India Company (EIC), travelled across the island between 1817 and 1819.[3] In 1815, a few years prior to Davy's travels, the British had captured Sri Vikrama Rajasinha, the king of the last remaining kingdom on Sri Lanka, the Kandyan kingdom.[4] The Kandyan kingdom existed from 1591 until 1815, and with the British take-over came an end to a long history of monarchical government on Sri Lanka that stretched back to at least the fifth century BCE: in 1815 the 'old Kandyan government' ceased to exist.[5] In addition to signalling the end of the 'kingly line' the British capture of Sri Vikrama Rajasinha also signalled the enforcement of British control over the whole island, something that no party had achieved before.[6] Davy might have been right in noting that the old Kandyan government had perished forever, he was not correct, though, in stating that this old Kandyan government would be forgotten in a few years. In a coastal town in southern Sri Lanka, Sri Vikrama Rajasinha, the last king of the Kandyan kingdom, was, for instance, 'celebrated as a hero' and as a 'symbol of a free nation.'[7]

Within (Sri) Lankan historiography, the Kandyan kingdom has been somewhat neglected. Most studies that examine the period between 1500 CE and 1800 CE tend to focus more on the European powers on the island than on the Kandyan kingdom itself. This can be explained by the fact that Sri Lanka has one of the longest histories of subjection to 'European imperial power' anywhere in the world, with periods of influence by the

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[1] John Davy, *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, and its Inhabitants with Travels in that Island* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821), 135.
[2] All dates in the present thesis are, unless stated otherwise, Common Era (CE).
[3] John Davy, *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, and its Inhabitants with Travels in that Island* (Dewihala: Tisara Press, 1969), v.
[4] Alicia Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka, 1780-1815* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 202.
[5] Robert Aldrich, *Banished Potentates: Dethroning and Exiling Indigenous Monarchs Under British and French Colonial Rule, 1815-1955* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 37.
[6] Sujit Sivasundaram, *Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka, and the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 4-5.
[7] Nira Wickramasinghe, *Dressing the Colonized Body: Politics, Clothing and Identity in Colonial Sri Lanka* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2003), 26-27.

Portuguese (1506-1636), the Dutch (1636-1796), and the British (1796-1947).[8] The focus on the European powers does not mean however, that the Kandyan kingdom has been forgotten by historians, there have been studies on the social administration,[9] the political administration of the Kandyan kingdom,[10] as well as studies on the indigenous military resistance in the Kandyan kingdom,[11] on women in the Kandyan kingdom,[12] or on the rituals of the Kandyan kingdom.[13] Yet, in close examination, it becomes apparent that some aspects of the Kandyan kingdom have not been studied to the same extent; certain kings feature more prominently in the literature than others,[14] while the seventeenth century remains somewhat understudied in comparison to the eighteenth century.[15] The prominence of the eighteenth century in the historiography can be explained by the final phase of the Kandyan kingdom, the so-called Nayaka dynasty or Nayaka period of the Kandyan kingdom, which served as the subject of some debate and controversy among historians.[16]

The Nayaka dynasty lasted from 1739 until the end of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815, and consisted of four kings, Sri Vijaya Rajasinha, Kirti Sri Rajasinha, Sri Rajadhi Rajasinha, and finally, Sri Vikrama Rajasinha, who respectively ruled the Kandyan kingdom between 1739-1747, 1747-1782, 1782-1798, and 1798-1815. The Nayaka kings rose to power in 1739 when king Narendrasinha died without having an eligible successor to the Kandyan throne, therefore, his brother-in-law was 'hailed' from South India to ascend the throne and he took the name Sri Vijaya Rajasinha.[17] Sri Vijaya Rajasinha was not the only king who came from South India, all four of the so-called Nayaka kings had their roots in South Indian Nayak chieftaincies, hence the name Nayaka dynasty or Nayaka period.[18] In addition to their South Indian roots, the Nayaka kings were also born Hindus.[19]

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[8] Alan Strathern and Zoltan Biedermann, 'Introduction: Querying the Cosmopolitan in Sri Lankan and Indian Ocean History' in: Z. Biedermann and A. Strathern (eds), *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History* (London: UCL Press, 2018), pp.1-19, there 14.
[9] Ralph Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organization: The Kandyan Period* (Colombo: Ceylon University Press Board, 1956).
[10] Lorna S. Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom, 1707-1760* (Colombo: Lake House Investments, 1972); Lorna S. Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka: 1707-1782* (2nd ed. Colombo: Lake House, 1988).
[11] Channa Wickremesekera, *Kandy at War: Indigenous Military Resistance to European Expansion in Sri Lanka 1594-1818* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004).
[12] K.P. Vimaladharma, *Women in the Kandyan Kingdom of the Seventeenth Century Sri Lanka: A Study in the Application of Gender Theory in Historical Analysis* (Kandy: Varuni Publishers, 2003).
[13] H.L. Seneviratne, *The Rituals of the Kandyan State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).
[14] Vimaladharma, *Women in the Kandyan Kingdom*, 33.
[15] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 208.
[16] Sujit Sivasundaram, 'Buddhist Kingship, British Archaeology and Historical Narratives in Sri Lanka c. 1750-1850', *Past and Present* 197 (2007), pp. 111-142, there 119.
[17] Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom*, 26.
[18] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 27.
[19] Sivasundaram, 'Buddhist Kingship', 119.

The main historiographical debate involving the Nayaka dynasty was focused on how these Nayaka kings, despite their South Indian roots and their religion of birth, were at the same time seen as 'patrons' of Buddhism. In particular Kirti Sri Rajasinha, king of Kandy between 1747 and 1782, who revived the *Sangha*, the order of Buddhist monks, through institutional reforms, supported the *Dharma*, the proclamation of the teachings of the Buddha, by promoting the public preaching, and Kirti Sri also refurbished the art of Kandyan Buddhist temples thereby glorifying the Buddha.[20] In other words: how was it possible that the Nayaka kings were 'sponsoring fantastic spectacles of Buddhist piety and learning' despite being born as Hindus of South Indian descent?[21]

Generally, this question has been explained in two ways. On the one hand, historians, like Lorna Dewaraja, have seen the Nayaka kings as outsiders, as 'aliens, not only in race but in language, religion and culture as well.'[22] According to these historians, the Nayakas faced both internal as external opposition during their reign. As noted above, the Kandyan kingdom was threatened by multiple European powers. During the Nayaka dynasty the main European power the kingdom had to deal with was the VOC, who were mainly in control of the coastal regions of the island.[23] In addition to this external threat the Nayakas also faced 'fierce' internal opposition at the court from certain monks and some Sinhalese nobles.[24] In order to stay in power the Nayakas required as much loyalty as possible and it was therefore 'of no advantage to them to stress their distinctness', the Nayakas thus 'emulated the example of the former Sinhalese rulers, adopting their names, languages and religion.'[25] In addition to their South Indian roots, the Nayaka kings have also influenced several aspect of Kandyan society, or as Dewaraja has stated: 'Kandyan politics, court life' and 'society in general' showed signs of 'prolonged Dravidian contact', especially in the 'arts, architecture and music.'[26] In short, these historians, see the Nayaka kings as outsiders who influenced Kandyan culture but who

[20] John C. Holt, *The Religious World of Kirti Sri: Buddhism, Art, and Politics in Late Medieval Sri Lanka* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), vii.
[21] Sivasundaram, *Islanded*, 8.
[22] Dewaraja, *Kandyan Kingdom*, 26.
[23] R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, 'Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past; The Changing 'Ethnic Identity' of the Last Four Kings of the Kandyan Kingdom' in: M. van Bakel, R. Hagesteijn, P. van de Velde (eds), *Pivot Politics: Changing Cultural Identities in Early State Formation Processes* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1994), pp. 197-221, there 198.
[24] K.N.O. Dharmadasa, 'The Sinhala-Buddhist Identity and the Nayakkar Dynasty in the Politics of the Kandyan Kingdom, 1739-1815', *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies, n.s.,* Vol 6, No. 1 (1976), pp. 1-23, there 5.
[25] Dewaraja, *Kandyan Kingdom*, 26.
[26] Lorna S. Dewaraja, 'The Kandyan Kingdom 1638-1739: A Survey of its Political History' in: K.M. de Silva (ed) *University of Peradeniya, History of Sri Lanka Vol. 2 c.1500-1800* (Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 1995), pp. 183-209, there 209.

were also aware of their 'alienness' and in order to 'compensate for their marginality' became 'zealous patrons of Buddhism, Sinhalese literature and the arts.'[27]

On the other hand, though, there are historians who question this narrative of 'alienness' and see the Nayaka kings as integrated. The first three Nayaka kings came to Sri Lanka at a very young age, while Sri Vikrama Rajasima, the fourth Nayaka king, was even born on the island. All kings grew up on the island and studied under well-known Buddhists priests. This upbringing meant that when the kings ascended the throne, they 'ceased to be "aliens" who could not speak Sinhala.'[28] Which means that the Buddhist revival that occurred during the Nayaka period needs to be seen as a sign of religious piety, clearly influenced by their upbringing on the island.[29] In addition to their upbringing, it is claimed that if the Nayakas were really the 'aliens' other historians have claimed them to be, one could expect some sort of rebellion against these 'outsiders', but there hardly have been any rebellions against these kings. This lack of rebellions would therefore suggest that the Nayakas were quite popular among their subjects.[30] In this view, the Nayaka kings should not be seen as 'aliens' at all: they were raised on the island, knew Sinhala and were familiar with Sri Lankan culture and religion. The Buddhistic reforms, therefore, need to be seen as a sign of religious piety, while the lack of rebellions underlines the view that these kings were no 'aliens' but integrated.

As stated above, the study of the Nayaka kings has for a long time been dominated by this dichotomy, but recently historians try to move beyond seeing the Nayaka kings in a fixed group, as either 'alien' or integrated. According to Sujit Sivasundaram the 'traditional idea of static kingship' is 'unhelpful' in coming to terms with the 'shifts in both the self-preservation of these monarchs' and in 'how they were viewed by their courts'[31] Because, as Gananath Obeyesekere stated: 'the Nayaks were a little of both, allowing for polemics to crystalize around their perceived alien-ness in certain moments and context, but by no means as a fixed condition and an inevitable necessity.'[32] If the Nayaka kings could be both 'aliens' and integrated, it is clear why historians need to move beyond the fixed 'traditional' explanations of the nature of the Nayaka kings and see in what way these four kings influenced Kandyan

[27] Dharmadasa, 'Sinhala-Buddhist Identity', 2.
[28] Gunawardana, 'Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past', 199.
[29] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 27.
[30] Gananath Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas: the many faces of the Kandyan Kingdom, 1591-1765' in: Z. Biedermann and A. Strathern (eds), *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History* (London: University College London Press, 2018), pp. 161-177, there 167
[31] Sivasundaram, *Islanded*, 33.
[32] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 174.

kingship and society, or as Obeyesekere stated: historians 'need to move away from observing the Nayaka kings simply as foreigners and explore the impact of the Nayakas on Kandyan society.'[33] Following Obeyesekere, instead of focussing on the nature of the Nayaka kings, i.e., whether or not they should be seen as 'aliens' or integrated, this thesis will focus on the question to what extend and in what way the Nayaka kings influenced Kandyan kingship.

It is clear that connections between South India and Sri Lanka have always existed, especially from the eleventh century CE onwards, when the South Indian Cholas conquered northern Sri Lanka and 'greater cross-fertilization' between Southern India and Sri Lanka took place. South Indian scholars and soldiers in particular were for example regularly patronized by Lankan kings.[34] Many historians have therefore acknowledged that 'there had always been a South Indian connection with Kandyan kingship' however, the accession of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha is 'generally seen as a breach with the former dynasty.'[35] The reason for this, according to Obeyesekere, is because 'the presence of the Nayaka dynasty resulted in a 'Dravidianization of Sri Lankan Buddhist culture', which essentially means that Kandyan kingship became (more) 'Dravidian' or 'South Indian' under the influence of the Nayaka kings.[36] Lennart Bes recently showed that Nayaka kingship on the Indian subcontinent differed from earlier forms of 'Dravidian kingship' which is why the present thesis speaks of Nayaka kingship and the 'Nayakarization' of 'Sri Lankan Buddhist culture.'[37]

The question of how Kandyan kingship was actually influenced by the Nayaka kings has, however, received hardly any attention among historians, it is therefore not clear what is meant by 'Nayaka kingship', how 'Nayaka kingship' is different from 'Sinhala kingship', and in what way the Nayaka kings indeed influenced, or 'Nayakarized' Sinhala kingship? According to Obeyesekere, 'it was during the Nayaka reigns' that 'the divinity of the king and the ceremonialism associated with it developed to a degree unthinkable earlier', and that these ideas were even 'carried to an extreme degree' with the Nayaka kings.[38] Although this is an interesting argument, Obeyesekere does not explain what ceremonies have, or what

[33] Ibidem, 167.
[34] Stephen Berkwitz, 'Divine Kinship in Medieval Sri Lanka: Dynamics in Traditions of Power and Virtue in South Asia' *Entangled Religions* 8 (2019), pp. 48-68, there 50.
[35] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 27.
[36] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 167.
[37] Lennart Bes, *The Heirs of Vijayanagara: Court Politics in Early-Modern South India* (unpublished dissertation, Radboud University Nijmegen, 2018; Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka Period Tamilnadu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
[38] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 175.

ceremonialism has, changed, or 'developed' during the Nayaka period? Connected to this question is the question that if some of these ceremonies, or even the ceremonialism itself, at the Kandyan court 'developed' during the Nayaka period, does that mean that these ceremonies were already in place before the Nayaka kings rose to power, and, if so, is it then still possible to speak of a clear break between the Nayaka kings and the Sinhalese kings as some historians have stated? These questions will play an important role in the present thesis, and all evolve around the central question of the present thesis: did Kandyan kingship became 'Nayakarized' under the Nayaka kings?

In order to answer this question, the present thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter should be seen as more of an introductory or overview chapter that will focus on Kandyan kingship. Central questions of this chapter will be: how did the Kandyan kingdom rose to power, and more importantly, what does Sri Lankan kingship in general, and Kandyan kingship in particular entail? In the second chapter the focus will be on Nayaka kingship, because if we want to know whether or not Kandyan kingship became 'Nayakarized' after the accession of the Nayaka kings, it is important to know what the characteristics of Nayaka kingship are, and since there were multiple Nayaka kingdoms in Southern India during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the differences, and more importantly, the similarities between these kingdoms will be discussed in order to give a general overview of 'Nayaka' kingship and its characteristics.

After two more introductory chapters, on Kandyan kingship and Nayaka kingship, the final two chapters will dive deeper into several aspects of Kandyan kingship. In the third chapter the focus will specifically be on the decade before the accession of the Nayakas, from 1729 to 1739, what does Kandyan kingship look like in this period, what are its characteristics, and more importantly, what do certain ceremonies look like. In the fourth and final chapter, the first decade after the Nayaka accession, from 1739 until 1750, will be analysed to see if, and how, the ceremonies and even Kandyan kingship itself has changed. What aspects are different when compared to the previous decade, and in what way? Is there indeed a clear break visible between the Nayakas and their predecessors? If these kingly ceremonies indeed changed to such an 'extreme degree' during this first decade of the Nayaka period, does that also mean that Kandyan kingship could be considered 'Nayakan' in that decade? And if that is the case, is it then possible to see the Kandyan kingdom from 1739 onwards as a South Indian kingdom, or even as 'an indirect successor state' of Vijayanagara,

the great South Indian state that existed until the sixteenth century, as recently has been suggested by the Dutch historian Lennart Bes?[39]

Sources

Working on early modern Sri Lankan history one can make a distinction between two categories of primary sources, indigenous sources and sources produced by nonindigenous actors. Indigenous sources can be anything from epigraphic records to literary texts and letters, but also visual materials like architecture, coins, and works of art.[40] Historians have different views on Sri Lankan literary texts, according to Lorna Dewaraja there is 'an absence of any well-developed indigenous tradition of secular historical writing' in Sri Lanka,[41] however, according to Alan Strathern, there has been a 'impressive literary tradition' in Sri Lanka, but this tradition did 'dry up somewhat' since the arrival of the Portuguese.[42] Both authors do acknowledge that not many texts that were written since the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century have survived which has consequences to the usage of these indigenous sources. Another problem with indigenous sources is the language barrier, personally am I not able to read Sinhala, therefore, I only use translated and published indigenous texts and letters in the present thesis.[43]

The most well-known indigenous texts from the island are the *Mahavamsa* the 'great chronicle' and the *Chulavamsa* the 'lesser chronicle.' Both chronicles have originally been written in *Pali,* a sacred Buddhist language, but have been translated and published to German and English in the 1930's by Wilhem Geiger. The *Mahavamsa* narrates the history of the island from its founding myth, the colonization by prince Vijaya around 500 BCE until the reign of king Mahasena around 300 CE. The *Chulavamsa* is often seen as a continuation of the *Mahavamsa* and details 'the island's history up to the eighteenth century.[44] In fact, the *Chulavamsa* stops at the death of Kirti Sri Rajasinha in 1782, but in the nineteenth century a few chapters were added 'concerning the rule of the last two kings.'[45] The *Chulavamsa* is the most relevant for the present thesis and will play an important role in characterizing the reigns

[39] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara,* 10.
[40] Ibidem, 15.
[41] Lorna Dewaraja, *The Internal Politics of the Kandyan Kingdom 1707-1760* (unpublished dissertation, University of London, 1970), 3.
[42] Alan Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Sri Lanka: Portuguese Imperialism in a Buddhist Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 16.
[43] This is also the reason why no diacritical marks are used in this thesis.
[44] Robin Coningham, e.a., 'Archaeology and Cosmopolitanism in Early Historic and Medieval Sri Lanka' in: Z. Biedermann and A. Strathern (eds), *Sri Lanka at the Crossroads of History* (London: University College London Press, 2018), pp. 19-43, there 21.
[45] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention,* 219n16.

of Narendrasinha, Sri Vijaya Rajasinha, and Kirti Sri Rajasinha, and to provide an indigenous perspective of these rulers, however, it is important to be careful with the usage of the *Chulavamsa*. The main reason for this caution is that it is hard to pinpoint exactly who wrote (a part of) this chronicle, and when it was written exactly. As Leslie Gunawardana rightly stated, 'the manner in which the Nayaka king is presented in the chronicle may suggest that these kings consciously sought to cultivate this identity' while on the other hand, 'the authors themselves did not hesitate to present them in this manner.'[46]

Besides the indigenous primary sources this study is based on primary sources produced by external actors. As stated above, Sri Lanka had a long history of European influence and these European powers, respectively the Portuguese, the Dutch East India Company, generally known under its acronym VOC, and the British East India Company, or EIC, were the creators of most of the 'external' primary sources. The Portuguese were present during the rise of the Kandyan kingdom in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the VOC have had the longest history with the Kandyan kingdom, from 1636 until 1796, while the British, the English East India Company, were present during the fall of the Kandyan kingdom, from 1796 onwards. The long history of European presence on the island resulted in a large number of records produced by these three powers. An advantage of the European records is that these records are 'precisely dated' and according to some even the only 'truly contemporary sources available'[47] Which makes these records a valuable addition to the indigenous sources.

As far as 'European' materials go, the present study is for the most part based on VOC records. In Sri Lankan history Dutch archival sources have for the most part been neglected by historians, even though the VOC has had the longest history with the Kandyan kingdom and with the Nayaka kings in particular.[48] This relative neglect of Dutch archival records has multiple reasons, the first being the accessibility of the Dutch records. The most important VOC archives for the study of Sri Lanka are the archives of the 'various chambers' and of the Company directors in the Dutch Republic, which are nowadays kept at the National Archives in The Hague, or at the Sri Lankan National Archives.[49] Nowadays many VOC documents

[46] Gunawardana, 'Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past', 200.
[47] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 18.
[48] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 206.
[49] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 20n66. For the VOC documents that are kept at the National Archives in the Netherlands see: Jos Gommans, Lennart Bes, and Gijs Kruijtzer, *Dutch Sources on South Asia c. 1600-1825 Vol 1: Bibliography and Archival Guide to the National Archives at the The Hague (The Netherlands)* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001). For the VOC documents that are kept outside of the Netherlands see: Jos Gommans, Lennart Bes, and Gijs Kruijtzer, *Dutch Sources on South Asia c. 1600-1825 Vol 3: Archival Guide to Repositories outside The Netherlands* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2015).

have been scanned and therefore been available online, however, this has happened only recently, which is why the accessibility has played a part in the relative neglect had its influence of these records. A second reasons for the neglect of Dutch sources is a language barrier. Not many people in the world have the skills to read, or in some cases decipher, early modern handwritten Dutch. This has made it difficult for researchers to use these records.[50] The third reason for this neglect lies in the fact that most historians who have used VOC records were mainly focussed on the Dutch presence on the island. Documents relating to the Kandyan kingdom were of secondary importance for these historians and therefore not received a great deal of attention.

One type of document that is both relevant for the study of the Kandyan kingdom, and has thus far received little attention from historians, are reports of embassies, or the so-called 'embassy reports.' The VOC would usually send an embassy to a certain court for two reasons, either for ceremonial purposes or for business purposes. A ceremonial embassy was conducted to offer condolences on the death of a ruler, or to congratulate a ruler on his accession or on his marriage. A business embassy was conducted to offer gifts to the ruler in order to gain concessions from that ruler.[51] The embassy reports are often lengthy reports and diaries of diplomatic missions to the Kandyan court and contain a wealth of information on multiple aspects at the court like court protocol, the subjects at the court, relations at the court, and on royal display.[52] These reports are lengthy because ambassadors were instructed to keep 'a daily journal of everything of importance that take place during his stay in the Kandyan territories.'[53] Because of their wealth of information embassy reports are sometimes seen as 'the most spectacular sub-genre in Western travel literature.'[54]

The number of embassies could differ between courts, the VOC sent, for example, between 1657 and 1735, twelve embassies to the court of South Indian kingdom of Ikkeri, while during a similar period, between 1645 and 1764, the VOC 'only' sent seven embassies to the court of Tanjavur.[55] In Sri Lanka, however, the VOC was expected to send an embassy to the court every year, because the Company wanted to obtain the rights to peel cinnamon in

[50] S. Arasaratnam, 'Ceylon and the Dutch, 1630-1800; an essay in historiography' in: S. Arasaratnam (ed) *Ceylon and the Dutch 1600-1800; External Influences and Internal Change in Early Modern Sri Lanka* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), pp. 1-18, there 3.
[51] Tikiri Abeyasinghe, 'Embassies as Instruments of Diplomacy: A Case Study from Sri Lanka in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka Branch*, n.s., 30 1985/1986, 1-40, there 4.
[52] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 20.
[53] Abeyasinghe, 'Embassies as Instruments of Diplomacy', 11.
[54] Markus Vink (ed), *Mission to Madurai: Dutch Embassies to the Nayakkar court of Madurai in the Seventeenth Century* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), 13.
[55] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 20.

the territory of the king and to transport convoys of tame elephants over the king's roads and these rights had to be renewed annually.[56] In order to obtain these rights, the Dutch paid the king their respects and provided the king with several gifts.[57] This has led some historians to claim that the Dutch purchased these right with their gifts.[58] However, it is important to state that in some cases the Kandyan king also needed help from the Dutch, to bring Buddhist monks from Arakan or from Siam for example, or to contract marriage alliances with Indian princely houses.[59] The embassy reports were the pre-eminent source of information for the VOC about everything that happened at the Kandyan court, which also explains their length, because, slight changes at the court, in either court protocols, in the relationship between subjects at the court, or in royal display could shed vital information for the next embassy.

In examining these embassy reports, many aspects can be monitored over a longer period of time and gradual changes can be picked up more easily though the examination of these reports, which is why these reports play a vital role in the present study. For the present study, however, only the embassy reports from a decade before the Nayaka accession until a decade after the Nayaka accession, from 1729 until 1750 CE, will be analysed. There are two reasons for this, the most prominent reason is that these reports are often extensive: everything that happened during an embassy should be written down, and since an embassy could last over three months, these reports kept growing. Another reason for the focus on these two decades is that if the accession of the Nayaka kings was indeed a break, differences in several aspects of kingship should become clearly visible in the examination of the last decade before the accession of the Nayaka kings and first decade under their rule. The present study is therefore focussed on the decade before and the decade after 1739, the accession of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha, the first of the so-called Nayaka kings.

Relevance

The present study is relevant in three areas. In the first place, in focussing on the Kandyan kingship itself, this study adheres to Obeyesekere's call to move away from trying to explain the nature of the Nayaka kings in a static way, to see them either as 'aliens' or 'integrated', to explore the impact of the Nayaka kings, which is something that has so far hardly been done.

[56] Tikiri Abeyasinghe, 'Princes and Merchants: Relations between the Kings of Kandy and the Dutch East India Company in Sri Lanka, 1688-1740' *Journal of the Sri Lanka National Archives* 2 1984, 35-60, there 46-49.
[57] Lodewijk Wagenaar, 'Knielen of Buigen? De gezantschappen van de Companie naar Kandy na het vredesverdrag van 1766' in: C.A. Davids, W. Fritschy and L.A. van der Valk (eds), *Kapitaal, Ondernemerschap en Beleid* (Amsterdam: NEHA, 1996), pp. 441-466, there 446.
[58] Abeyasinghe, 'Princes and Merchants', 46-49.
[59] Idem, 'Embassies as Instruments of Diplomacy', 3.

Secondly, according to Alicia Schrikker, in the historiography on the Kandyan kingdom there has been a 'tendency to look at the Kandyan kingdom as an isolated case' this means that historians have been 'overemphasizing its specifically Buddhist ideological characteristics' which 'limits the view of the political processes at stake.'[60] This lack of comparisons is however not limited to the Kandyan kingdom, in Sri Lankan historiography in general there has been a lack of comparison.[61] The main reason for this general lack of comparison is that since the independence of Sri Lanka in 1948 the historiographical project of Sri Lanka was to 'furnish the new-nation state of Sri Lanka with its own past as a distinctive entity.'[62] As a result of this post-independence tendency, the main focus of Sri Lankan historians was on the island itself, not on a comparative perspective, and although recently this is starting to change, more work can be done in this direction, which is why the comparison between several South Indian kingdoms and the Kandyan kingdom is not only important for the present study, but it can also show how valuable it is to examine Sri Lanka in a connective and comparative perspective. Thirdly, in using the Dutch sources, this thesis can show how valuable the hardly used VOC records can be, not only in for the study of the VOC on Sri Lanka itself, but also as a unique window on the Kandyan court society in the eighteenth century.

[60] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 206.
[61] Alan Strathern, 'Sri Lanka in the Long Early Modern Period: Its Place in a Comparative Theory of Second Millennium Eurasian History' *Modern Asian Studies* 43, 4 (2009), pp. 815-869, there 815.
[62] Strathern and Biedermann, 'Querying the Cosmopolitan', 13.

Chapter 1: Kingship in the Kandyan Kingdom

In this first chapter the focus will be on the Kandyan kingdom itself, how did the Kandyan kingdom rose to power, how was Kandyan society arranged and, most importantly, what does Sri Lankan kingship in general, and Kandyan kingship in particular, entail?

History of the Kandyan kingdom

Geographically, the island can be divided into three regions, a lowland dry zone that is located in the north and east of the island, a mountainous region in the centre of the island, and a lowland wet zone in the south and west of the island.[63] In the fourteenth century the kingdom of Kotte emerged in the southwestern zone of the island and over time Kotte grew more powerful. For about two decades in the fifteenth century the whole island was even under control of king Parakramabu VI (1411-1467).[64] However, after the death of Parakramabu VI Kotte's power began to decline, which cased multiple revolts that in some cases even amounted to breakaways from the kingdom, for example in the end of the fifteenth century when in the north of the island Tamil speaking immigrants broke away from Kotte and created the kingdom of Jaffna.[65] There was also a break away in the central highlands, Senasammata Vikramabahu profited from the revolts and carved out a new kingdom, the kingdom of Kandy.[66]

In the beginning of the sixteenth century, at the eve of the Portuguese arrival on the island, the situation is as follows: there were three kingdoms on the island, in the north the Tamil kingdom of Jaffna, in the southwestern part of the island the kingdom of Kotte, and in the central highlands the kingdom of Kandy. In 1521, the king of Kotte, Vijayabahu VI, was assassinated, and the kingdom was split into three separate kingdoms, of which Kotte and Sitavaka were the most important.[67] After the death of king Bhuvanekabahu in 1551, Kotte's power started to decline, and by the 1560s Sitavaka even surpassed Kotte as the most powerful kingdom on the island.[68] In the meantime, the Portuguese also grew more powerful

[63] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*), 13.
[64] C.R. de Silva, 'Sri Lanka in the Early Sixteenth Century: Political Conditions' in: K.M. de Silva (ed) *University of Peradeniya, History of Sri Lanka Vol. 2 c.1500-1800* (Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 1995), pp. 11-36, there 12.
[65] C.R. de Silva and S. Pathmanathan 'The Kingdom of Jaffna up to 1620' in: K.M. de Silva (ed) *University of Peradeniya, History of Sri Lanka Vol. 2 c.1500-1800* (Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 1995), pp. 105-121, there 105.
[66] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 25.
[67] C.R. de Silva, 'The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Sitavaka (1521-1593)' in: K.M. de Silva (ed) *University of Peradeniya, History of Sri Lanka Vol. 2 c.1500-1800* (Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 1995), pp. 61-104, there 62.
[68] De Silva, 'The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Sitavaka', 61.

on the island, and although the rise of Portuguese power on the island is, beyond the scope of the present thesis, a few remarks do need to be made, though.[69] In what Schrikker has called a classic case of "reluctant imperialism" the Portuguese promised their support to Kotte to defeat Sitavaka in 'exchange for concession in the cinnamon trade and the possession of coastal forts.'[70]

In the central highlands, the kingdom of Kandy, had been strengthening its local power. The precise date of the foundation of the Kandyan kingdom has been subject of some debate, but, following Abeyasinghe, this could not have been later than in 1474 CE.[71] Most historians, however, claim that the Kandyan kingdom started in 1591. The reason for this discrepancy is that there actually have been two separate Kandyan kingdoms, from 1474 to 1581 and a 'second' Kandyan kingdom from 1591 to 1815. There is not much known about the 'first' Kandyan kingdom, sixteenth century Kandy has even been described as 'extremely murky' by some historians.[72] It clear, though, that the Kandyan kingdom stood 'in a field of tension' between Sitavaka, Kotte, and the Portuguese for a majority of the sixteenth century, partaking in numerous alliances while also having to deal with 'unpredictable diplomatic games.'[73] To signify the tensions some historians even state that in its external relations Kandy 'had no permanent enemies or friends.'[74]

During the second half of the sixteenth century, the rulers of the 'first' Kandyan kingdom 'embraced Catholicism' as a strategy in order to gain 'full independence' from the lowland kings.[75] By 1565, Sitavaka was seen as the greatest threat to the Kandyan kingdom, and, since the Portuguese were also enemies of Sitavaka, an alliance between Kandy and the Portuguese was formed almost naturally, it is important to note that 'embracing Catholicism' helped the creation of an alliance with the Portuguese.[76] It is unclear, however, on what terms

[69] For more information about the rise of Portuguese power on the island see: T. Abeyasinghe, *Portuguese Rule in Ceylon, 1594-1612* (Colombo: Lake House, 1966); Z. Biedermann, *The Portuguese in Sri Lanka and South India: Studies in the History of Diplomacy, Empire and Trade; 1500-1650* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014); P.E. Pieris, *Ceylon and the Portuguese, 1505-1658* (Tellippalai: Ceylon Missions Press, 1920); A. Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Sri Lanka: Portuguese Imperialism in a Buddhist Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); G. Winius, *The Fatal History of Portuguese Ceylon: Transition to Dutch Rule* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).
[70] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 19.
[71] T.B.H. Abeyasinghe, 'The Kingdom of Kandy: Foundations and Foreign Relations to 1638' in: K.M. de Silva (ed) *University of Peradeniya, History of Sri Lanka Vol. 2 c.1500-1800* (Peradeniya: University of Peradeniya, 1995), pp. 139-161, there 139n2.
[72] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 211.
[73] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 161.
[74] T.B.H. Abeyasinghe, 'The Politics of Survival: Aspects of Kandyan External Relations in the Mid-Sixteenth Century', *Journal of the Sri Lanka Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, n.s., Vol. 17 (1973), pp. 11-21, there 21.
[75] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 161.
[76] Abeyasinghe, 'Politics of Survival', 20.

this alliance was created, but the Portuguese did have soldiers stationed permanently at the Kandyan capital.[77] From the 1570s onwards, Sitavaka actively tried to conquer the Kandyan kingdom, but the hill country could not be subjugated by their campaigns. This would change in 1581, when Sitavaka again sent a large force to the Kandyan kingdom and this time their campaign was successful: the king of the Kandy was killed by the army of Sitavaka.[78] With the death of the king the Kandyan kingdom ceased to exist, however, this did not mean that Sitavaka was in full control over the Kandyan territories, because even without its royal house, Kandy did enjoy some degree of autonomy.[79] A point that is clearly signified by the many rebellions that threatened Sitavaka's hold on the hill country.[80]

In the meantime, the Portuguese were gaining more and more control over Kotte, especially after the 1580s when Dharmapala, Bhuvanekabahu's successor and then king of Kotte, had 'donated the power', in what Zoltan Biedermann has called a 'translatio imperii', to the Portuguese 1580s.[81] The last decade of the sixteenth century was chaotic, or as Strathern has stated, 'contingency and complexity have to be our bywords' in describing the 1590s.[82] By 1593, Kotte had even come 'entirely under Portuguese influence'.[83] Additionally in 1593, Rajasimha I, the king of Sitavaka, had also died and he 'did not leave behind 'any legacy of stable authority', and in the power vacuum that followed Rajasimha's death, none of his successors 'could retain a foothold' and Sitavaka collapsed.[84] After Sitavaka was defeated, the Portuguese took control over Sitavaka's territories, and shortly after 1593, the Portuguese also managed to conquer the kingdom of Jaffna and put a puppet regime on the throne.[85] At the end of the sixteenth century the Portuguese thus effectively controlled the entire northern and southwestern coasts of the island, but it is important to note that the Portuguese were not in control over the central highlands.

In 1591 the Portuguese tried to take advantage of the many rebellions against Sitavaka in the highlands and sent an expedition to Kandy to gain full control over the Kandyan territories by installing a puppet on the Kandyan throne, however, soon after this instalment the Portuguese puppet died and a power vacuum arose in Kandy.[86] This power vacuum was

[77] Idem, 'Kingdom of Kandy', 145.
[78] Patrick Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 36-37.
[79] Abeyasinghe, 'The Kingdom of Kandy', 145-146.
[80] Wickremesekera, *Kandy at War*, 34.
[81] Zoltan Biedermann, *(Dis)connected Empires: Imperial Portugal, Sri Lankan Diplomacy, and the Making of a Habsburg Conquest in Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 159-161.
[82] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 206.
[83] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 19.
[84] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 206.
[85] De Silva and Pathmanathan, 'The Kingdom of Jaffna', 114.
[86] Wickremesekera, *Kandy at War*, 34.

quickly filled by a certain Konappu Bandara, a Sinhalese nobleman who, during the war with Sitavaka, had fled the Kandyan territories to the Portuguese, and who was now in charge of the Portuguese expedition to Kandy.[87] Yet, on claiming the throne of Kandy, Konappu Bandara took the name Vimaladharamasuriya I 'apostatized' the Catholic faith, converted to Buddhism, and expelled the Portuguese from the kingdom.[88] With these actions the Kandyan kingdom was, as Strathern has stated, 're-founded' and since the Portuguese were effectively in control over the other kingdoms that were present on the island a century earlier, the Kandyan kingdom was the last 'indigenous' kingdom left on the island, not controlled by a European power. This is why most historians who study the Kandyan kingdom use 1591 as starting point for their research.

The re-founded Kandyan kingdom

In the first few decades after the 'revival' the Kandyan kingdom was mainly focused on surviving attacks from the Portuguese, the sole source of danger left on the island. To combat the Portuguese Vimaladharmasuriya I received support from indigenous inhabitants of the Portuguese territories, according to Sri Lankan historian Abeyasinghe this was because after the decline of the indigenous kingdoms, many Sinhalese began to look upon Kandy as 'the guardian of their common heritage', a sentiment that was also strengthened by the conversion of Vimaladharmasuriya I to Buddhism.[89] It should be noted, though, that this interpretation by Abeyasinghe fits perfectly in the idea of 'Sinhala consciousness', a term that was recently been put forward by Sri Lankan historian Michael Roberts.

Roberts examined Sri Lankan war poems to see if the Sinhalese were conscious of their 'Sinhalaness' during the period of the Kandyan kingdom, and according to Roberts, there was 'an absolute sense of Sinhala consciousness in the Kandyan period' and this sense was not restricted to the area's under Kandyan control, but 'encompassed all Sinhala-speaking people on the island.'[90] Roberts is on the one hand often praised for his 'careful and precise' examination of the Sinhala war poems, but not every historian has been fully convinced by Roberts' conclusion. Dutch historian Alicia Schrikker, for example, states that although Roberts 'convincingly shows that these texts reveal a degree of Sinhala consciousness, his conclusion that this consciousness was at all times widespread among all segments of society

[87] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 161.
[88] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 214.
[89] Abeyasinghe, 'Kingdom of Kandy', 150.
[90] Michael Roberts, *Sinhala Consciousness in the Kandyan Period, 1590s-1815* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2003), 110-140.

is not persuasive.'[91] War poetry could, according to Stephen Berkwitz, help in the renewal of kingship, to 'render the king more potent and like the gods to whom he was regularly compared to in such texts.'[92] Other types of poetry 'typically string together highly embellished verses to praise the qualities and accomplishments of kings', but war poems, on the other hand, 'generate the classical poetic sentiments of disgust and fear in their accounts.' A characteristic of these war poems therefore is that they 'portray Portuguese soldiers in unflattering terms as immoral, bloodthirsty, and even demonic beings opposed to the heroic Sinhala king and his army.'[93] Alan Strathern does admit that a 'deep connection between the 'us' and the land of Lanka' that does emerge from these war poems.[94] On the other hand however, and in line with Berkwitz, Strathern states that 'the Sinhalese texts do not often explicitly champion the 'Sinhala' name. The term is certainly found, typically to refer to armies, but often it is the island of Lanka and the king's overlordship over it that is exalted.' Strathern therefore questions 'whether this is because it was taken for granted that the 'we' were Sinhalese, or because a propagandist emphasis on a broader king-centred indigenism was more useful, is difficult to ascertain.'[95] In other words, was this 'Sinhala consciousness' at all times widespread among all segments of society, or was it created by the war poems and their authors?

The few examples noted above show some of the different positions in this 'Sinhala consciousness' debate, and without taking a side in this debate, it is clear that one has to be careful in accepting that 'Sinhala consciousness' was at all times widespread among all segments of society during the Kandyan kingdom. Therefore, coming back to Abeyasinghe who stated that Vimaladharmasuriya I received support from 'indigenous inhabitants' of the Portuguese territories to combat the Portuguese, since Vimaladharmasuriya I was seen as 'the guardian of their common heritage', especially because of his conversion to Buddhism, one has to be careful in blindly accepting this statement as well. There could be multiple reasons for the support the Kandyan king received from the 'indigenous inhabitants.' What is clear, though, is that with the support from the lowland inhabitants the Kandyan king could easily outnumber the Portuguese forces, and this support was the most important reason why Kandy could hold its own against the military superior Portuguese. However, even with the support

[91] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 206.
[92] Stephen Berkwitz, *Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism: Alagiyavanna and the Portuguese in Sri Lanka* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 174.
[93] Ibidem.
[94] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 240.
[95] Ibidem.

of the 'lowlanders' the Portuguese could not be defeated. King Rajasimha II, ascended the Kandyan throne in 1635, realised that if he wanted to defeat the Portuguese, he would need additional support and Rajasimha II therefore reached out to the VOC, the Dutch East India Company.

After a rough start between Kandy and the Dutch, a Dutch envoy was even killed for 'undiplomatic conduct', a treaty between Kandy and the VOC was concluded in 1638. In this treaty the VOC would provide the king with military assistance to completely expel the Portuguese from the island, and in exchange for their support the Kandyan king would bear the costs of supplying, among other goods, cinnamon.[96] In addition to the cinnamon, the Dutch would receive the exclusive right to foreign trade and the country would be closed to Catholic missionaries. There was also a controversial third article that stipulated if the Dutch would capture forts from the Portuguese, these forts would be garrisoned and armed by the Dutch. In the Kandyan version of the treaty the capturing of the Portuguese forts was only allowed 'if the king so desired' but this final addition was omitted from the Dutch version of the treaty.[97] Besides the controversial article, the Dutch-Kandyan alliance was quite successful and led to several combined assaults on Portuguese possessions on the island. In 1658 the last two Portuguese strongholds were taken by the Dutch, which meant that the Portuguese were completely extinguished from the island.[98]

The Dutch did not only take over the Portuguese possessions on the island but also its role. In practice this meant that hardly anything had changed from a Kandyan perspective: the Kandyans were still in control of their territories in the central highlands and the sole danger for the kingdom on the island was still a powerful European naval power that was too strong to be defeated without outside help. At the same time, the Dutch were not strong enough to defeat the Kandyans and fighting them proved too costly, therefore, a treaty between Kandy and the Dutch was concluded in the 1680s in which the Dutch would retain most of their coastal possessions but give up much of their inland territories.[99] The treaty affirmed the status quo on the island and can be seen as a blue print of how the power was divided on the island in the next century: the Kandyans controlled much of the inland territories, the Dutch were present on the south-western and northern coasts of the island, and neither party was

[96] Piet Emmer and Jos Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 290.
[97] S. Arasaratnam, 'Dutch Sovereignty in Ceylon: A Historical Survey of its Problems' in: S. Arasaratnam (ed) *Ceylon and the Dutch 1600-1800; External Influences and Internal Change in Early Modern Sri Lanka* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), pp. 105-121, there 106.
[98] Wickremesekera, *Kandy at War*, 37-38.
[99] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 21.

strong enough to defeat the other party. This status quo is also visible in the yearly embassies the Dutch conducted to the Kandyan court. As stated in the introduction, the Dutch needed permission from the king to peel cinnamon in his territories, and to be allowed to transport elephants through his territories, while the Kandyans needed Dutch help to bring monks from the mainland to the island or in some cases to help in bringing brides to the king, and since both parties knew that they were not strong enough to defeat the other, the status quo needed to be retained.

This status quo was maintained until 1766, when, after a few years of warfare, the Dutch signed a new treaty with Kandy in which the 'right to peel cinnamon freely in the king's territories' and the expansion of its territorial possessions' were secured by the Dutch.[100] From 1766 until the end of the eighteenth century, the Dutch were in control over the coastal area of the entire island, after which the British received the Dutch possessions in Asia by degree. In contrast to both the Portuguese and the Dutch, the British would eventually succeed in conquering the Kandyan kingdom and control the entire island, something that had not happened since the fifteenth century. Now that it has been explained how the Kandyan kingdom rose to power, it is time to shift our attention to Kandyan kingship itself.

Kingship on the island

Kingship and Buddhism were on the island closely connected, it is therefore important to briefly discuss Buddhist kingship before moving on to Sri Lankan kingship in general, and Kandyan kingship in particular. In ancient times it was in Southern Asia widely assumed that having a king or queen, was necessary for a society to not be lost, to not decay, or even to not be ruined.[101] The reason for this was that only a king or a queen could guarantee protection for a society, in other words, kings were understood to be the necessary basis for an orderly and peaceful society.[102] This is also visible on Sri Lanka, as John Davy has stated: the Sinhalese 'say, the king is so essential that without him [the king] there would be no order or

[100] Ibidem, 39; For more information about the Dutch-Kandyan war, see also: L. Wagenaar, *Galle, VOC-vestiging in Ceylon: Beschrijving van een Koloniale Samenleving aan de Vooravond van de Singalese opstand tegen het Nederlandse gezag, 1760* (Amsterdam: De Bataafche Leeuw, 1994).
[101] Berkwitz, 'Divine Kingship', 49.
[102] M.B. Ariyapala, *Society in Medieval Ceylon: The State of Society in Ceylon as depicted in the Saddharama-Ratnavaliya and other Literature of the Thirteenth Century* (Colombo: Department of Cultural Affairs, 1956), 45.

harmony, only confusion and dissention.'[103] Apart from this assumption there was not, however, a unified view of kingship in South Asia.[104]

Several different models were used to describe Hindu or Buddhist kingship in Southern Asia, and among historians the dominant model or way of describing Buddhist kingship has been that of king Aśoka, as the 'righteous Universal Monarch' the *Cakkavatti* or *Cakravarti*.[105] In this 'Aśokan' model of kingship, king Asoka, who lived around the third century BCE, is seen as the personification of the ideal Buddhist king, or as Stanley Tambiah has stated: 'Asoka's conception of benevolent kingship and the exercise of political authority are in particular inspired by Buddhist ideas and values' which means, Tambiah continues, that the 'Asoka-type kingship should been seen as 'the embodiment of a socio-political morality.'[106] Or as Alan Strathern has stated: 'The king ought to act as the fountainhead of Buddhism throughout his kingdom. He cannot simply patronize the *Sangha*, he must take responsibility for its continuing vitality and discipline.'[107] In other words, the ideal Buddhist king, a *cakravarti*, is a king that protects the *Sangha*, the order of the Buddhist monks, is the upholder of the *dharma*, the teachings of the Buddha sometimes also referred to as the Buddhist doctrine, and therefore protects the integrity of the orthodoxy of Theravada Buddhism, the oldest and most orthodox form of Buddhism, on the island.[108]

There is, however, evidence that these models were not exclusive to a single religion, or as Stephen Berkwitz stated: 'notions of kingship in premodern South Asia formed a complex stew of ideas and images associated with sovereignty and divinity', and it is therefore necessary, Berkwitz continues, to 'move beyond a single idea or model to describe kingship in the Buddhist tradition.'[109] Thus, in following Berkwitz, instead of only using the theoretical 'Asokan' model of Buddhist kingship to describe Sri Lankan or Kandyan kingship, it is interesting to see what Kandyan kingship looked like in practice.

It is important to understand that kings and queens occupy a special, almost paradoxical, place within a society: a king stands both at the centre of society, while at the

[103] Davy, *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon*, 105-106.
[104] J.C. Heesterman, 'The Conundrum of the King's Authority' in: J.F. Richards (ed), *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1978), 1-27, there 1.
[105] Berkwitz, 'Divine Kingship', 48.
[106] Stanley Tambiah, *World Conqueror World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against a Historical Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 60.
[107] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 146.
[108] Max Deeg, 'The Order of the Dharma and the Order of Rulership: On the Relationship Between Monastic Community and Worldly Power in the History of Buddhism' *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* Vol. 50 (2016), pp. 297-314, there 305.
[109] Berkwitz, 'Divine Kingship', 49.

same time he is also imagined outside of society.[110] Stated differently: a king is simultaneously united to, yet separated from, all of his people.[111] How is it possible for an individual to get 'extracted' from the same economic, political, and kinship relations that 'ordinary people' have, and be made into a person that stands outside of conventional society, someone who is literally extraordinary?[112] According to Alan Strathern there are several ways for kings to get 'extracted' from society and become 'extraordinary.' In the first place, looking at installation rituals and origin myths for example, it becomes clear that a king or queen was often represented as committing one, or more, 'transgressive acts' that break 'kingship rules', think for example of parricide, cannibalism, or incest, and by breaking these 'rules' an individual becomes 'extraordinary.'[113]

The Sri Lankan origin myth is no different: Vijaya, the first Sri Lankan king, was born under 'extraordinary' circumstances, to say the least. Without going into too much detail, the origin story of Vijaya goes as follows: there once was an Indian princess that was abducted and imprisoned in a cave by a lion by 'whom she bears a son and daughter.'[114] When the children reached adulthood, the princess and her children fled the cave and were reunited with her family, however, the lion was angered by their escape, and he began ravaging the country in search for his offspring. For the next few years, the country was ravaged by the lion but in the end, it was the son who freed the country by killing his father, the lion. The lion-slayer founded a new kingdom and took his sister as his queen. Together they had many children, most of which were twins, except for the first child, Vijaya. Vijaya was not very loved and when he reached adulthood he was even exiled to the shore of the island of Lanka. At that time the island was inhabited by demons, however, the demons were defeated by Vijaya and because of his heroics, the people of Lanka crowned Vijaya as the first Lankan king.[115] With bestiality, parricide, incest, and heroism, this example clearly shows how 'transgressive acts' are used in the Sri Lankan origin myth to show the extraordinary character of an individual. In other words, a king, or one of his forefathers, used to be a 'normal' (human)being that was confined to societal rules, but after one, or multiple, 'transgressive act' he was transformed to an extraordinary individual, someone who was more 'godlike' that stood outside of society.

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[110] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 11.
[111] Declan Quigley, 'Introduction: The Character of Kingship' in: D. Quigley (ed), *The Character of Kingship* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005) pp. 1-23, there 6.
[112] Ibidem, 4.
[113] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 11.
[114] *The Mahavamsa: Or, The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, translated by Wilhelm Geiger (1912: reprinted New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2003), 50.
[115] Alan Strathern, 'The Vijaya Origin Myth of Sri Lanka and the Strangeness of Kingship', *Past & Present*, Vol. 203 (2009), pp. 3-28, there, 5.

Another way by which kings and queens also created distance between themselves and the rest of society, was by placing themselves 'outside' of society, or at least above their subjects, for example by claiming 'godlike' status. In earlier times divine kingship was typically associated with Hindu kingship, however, from the tenth century onwards, Sri Lankan *vamsa*-authors, those who wrote the Lankan chronicles like the *Mahavamsa* and later the *Chulavamsa*, began expanding the kingship image by incorporating ideas and symbols mainly associated with Hindu kings into their works.[116] In the *Chulavamsa*, there were increasing references that linked Lankan kings to the Solar dynasty, for example king Parakramabahu I, about whom was stated that 'the Sun' was 'the ancestor of his race.'[117] A few centuries later king Mayadune, in addition to being seen as 'an illustrious Ruler of men' came from an area where 'kings sprung from the race of the Sun,'[118] while Vimaladharmasuriya I, the first king of the Kandyan kingdom, was a 'scion of the Sun Dynasty.'[119]

In addition to links with the Solar dynasty, *vamsa*-authors also did see Lankan king as *Bodhisattvas* as 'future Buddhas', a Lankan king was therefore 'someone who would become a Buddha'[120] A good example of this is Vijayabahu I, king in the eleventh century CE, who was addressed as 'our Bodhisatta Vijayabahu.'[121] It is clear that these Lankan *vamsa*-authors embraced and incorporated metaphors of 'divine beings' into their works to 'enhance the fame and power' of the Sri Lankan kings.[122] However, it is important to note that these assertions about the kingly divinity of the Sinhala kings was expressed mostly in metaphorical terms, or as Berkwitz has stated: 'Sinhala kings are *like* certain gods, without clearly claiming that they were in fact divine.'[123] From the fifteenth century onwards the image of the 'divine' king, and the *Bodhisattva* had merged and penetrated Lankan society. In practice this meant that a Lankan king was often addressed as '*deva*' or 'god' and was therefore seen as a 'god who would be Buddha.'[124]

Besides being seen as 'god' or 'god who would be Buddha', Lankan kings also wanted to be seen as *cakravarti*, an ideal Buddhist ruler. It appears, however, that from the sixteenth

[116] Berkwitz, 'Divine Kingship', 54.
[117] *Culavamsa: Being the more recent part of the Mahavamsa,* vol I, translated by Wilhelm Geiger (Colombo: Ceylon Government Information Department, 1953), 330, line 121.
[118] Ibidem, 224, line 2.
[119] Ibidem, 227, line 1.
[120] Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 342-343.
[121] *Culavamsa:* 185, line 35.
[122] Berkwitz, 'Divine Kingship', there 58.
[123] Ibidem.
[124] Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, 2.

century onwards all Lankan kings considered themselves *cakravartis*.[125] This was remarkable, since 'the precondition' of the *cakravarti* ideal was the 'domination of the island of Lanka.'[126] The last king who dominated the entire island of Lanka was, however, Parakramabu VI in the fifteenth century, it therefore appears that the practice of actually conquering the entire island had been replaced by a more theoretical claim to be in control over the entire island. As stated above, after the defeat of the kingdom of Sitavaka, Kandy was the last remaining kingdom on the island, and as Strathern has stated, this essentially meant that 'Kandy was left as the sole indigenous claimant to the *cakravarti* title.'[127] In addition to being the last remaining indigenous kingdom on the island, the Kandyan kings also claimed that the entire island was under their control, that it was their domain. The Dutch presence on, and control over, parts of island was explained by claiming that the Dutch were 'vassals' of the king and the lands they controlled actually belonged to the king.[128] This is for example visible with Rajasimha II, who ruled the Kandyan kingdom between 1635 and 1687, in a letter to the Dutch, Rajasimha II referred to himself as 'emperor of Ceylon' and not as 'king.'[129]

Secondly, installation rituals, such as the *abhiseka*-ritual or consecration ritual, played an important role in the 'divinisation, elevation, and legitimation' of the consecrated king.[130] However, it also appears that in the seventeenth century an actual consecration ceremony was not needed for a king to refer to himself as a *cakravarti*, apparently the proclamation of an 'intention of celebrating a coronation ceremony' did suffice.[131] This does show the importance of the symbolism that was attached to the *cakravarti*-title: by proclaiming to be a *cakravarti* was in effect securing God-like status. This statement does, of course, refer to Clifford Geertz's theory of the exemplary centre in which Geertz states that 'to serve as exemplary centre was to be exemplary centre', or in other words: 'to say *cakravarti* was to become/be/be made *cakravarti*, or to be rendered *cakravarti*-like.'[132] By claiming *Devo*, *Bodhisattva*, or *cakravarti*, the Kandyan kings clearly created distance between themselves and their subjects, and creating distance between themselves and their subjects was, according to Strathern, a clear sign that Lankan kings in general, and Kandyan kings in particular,

[125] Roberts, *Sinhala Consciousness*, 59.
[126] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 25.
[127] Ibidem, 246.
[128] Roberts, *Sinhala Consciousness*, 78-79.
[129] Abeyasinghe, 'Princes and Merchants', 36.
[130] Tambiah, *World Conqueror World Renouncer*, 122.
[131] K.W. Goonewardena, 'Kingship in Seventeenth Century Sri Lanka: Some Concepts, Ceremonials and other Practices relating thereto', *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. 3 (1977), 1-32, there 17.
[132] Roberts, *Sinhala Consciousness*, 58. For more information on the 'exemplary center' see: Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

conformed to a model of early modern East Asian Theravada kings which was described by Victor Lieberman in which the king becomes both 'increasingly distant from their subjects in ritual terms, and conceptually bound to them as a coherent moral community.'[133]

It is important to note here that Buddhism was not the only religion that was present on the island, Lankan kings ruled over other religious communities as well and the presence of these other religious groups meant that the 'religious propriety' of Buddhism was not the sole determinant of legitimacy for the king.[134] According to Strathern, Lankan kings needed to adhere to other principles as well in order to legitimize their position as king. The two most important principles for the Kandyan kings were, in the first place, the proclaimed ancestry of the king and his *mahesi* (queen), who should belong to the 'kingly caste' and therefore be of *ksatriya* origin.[135] On Lanka one could only be of *ksatriya* origin if one belonged to a royal family, in other words, kings could only marry other royals. However, after Sitavaka was defeated and Kandy was the only indigenous kingdom on the island left, there were no other royal families and therefore *ksatriya* princesses on the island for a Kandyan king to marry. To solve this problem, marriages were contracted with South Indian *ksatriya* families.[136] It has also been stated that bringing brides from India was done because the royal family did not want to intermarry with the *radala* or aristocracy on the island, to keep the *ksatriya* caste pure of blood.[137] These princesses often came to the island accompanied by a large retinue, mainly consisting of family members.[138]

The practice of procuring brides from India was not new though, the legendary Vijaya had 'refused to be consecrated unless he had a queen of equal rank', envoys were therefore sent to Madurai, the capital of the Pandyan kingdom in Southern India, to procure a *ksatriya*-bride for Vijaya, and after a successful mission Vijaya a was consecrated with his 'Indian' *mahesi*.[139] Additionally, according to the laws of succession on the island the throne was passed (almost) always from father to son or from brother to brother. It is important to note here that Kandyan kings were polygamous, and a king could have several 'secondary wives of lower rank', but the offspring of his lower ranked wives was not considered 'as legal

[133] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 10; See also: Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 36.
[134] Ibidem.
[135] Ibidem.
[136] Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 69.
[137] Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, 9.
[138] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 168.
[139] *Mahavamsa*, 59, lines 48-50.

claimants to the Kandyan throne.'[140] In other words, *ksatriya's* were indispensable to ensure dynastic continuity, even if they came from outside the island.

The second important principle was that the king must be in possession of a capital city and several 'sacra and regalia' with the *Dalada*, the Tooth Relic, being the most important.[141] The Sacred Tooth Relic, which was the Relic of the tooth of the Buddha, was seen as a legitimizer for Kandyan kingship, and only the king was the appropriate person to have custody of the Relic.[142] Many kings have therefore tried to capture this relic, and it was for this reason that the first action of Vimaladharmasuriya I, the first Kandyan king, was the 'reinstatement of the Tooth Relic.'[143] When the British captured the Tooth Relic in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British governor was, because of the possession of the Relic, even addressed as 'king' and his residence was seen as 'the king's house.'[144] Which shows that the importance of the Tooth Relic for Lankan kingship is not to be underestimated, not only as an important Buddhist Relic, but also as a legitimizer of kingship itself.

In short, Lankan kings in general, and Kandyan kings in particular wanted to be seen as the ideal Buddhist king, as a 'righteous Universal monarch', a *cakravarti*. A *cakravarti* protects the *Sangha*, the order of Buddhist monks, and upholds the *dharma*, the Buddhist doctrine on the island. A *cakravarti* was thus the fountainhead of Buddhism on the island, who not only patronized the *Sangha* but was also responsible for its vitality and discipline. In addition to acting as a *cakravarti*, Kandyan kings in particular adhered to two important principles to both create distance between them and their subjects and to legitimate their position. The first principle was the emphasis on the *ksatriya* origin of both the king and his queen, because only a *ksatriya* queen could provide a legitimate heir to the throne, and because the Kandyan kingdom was the last indigenous kingdom left on the island, *ksatriya* queens were frequently brought from India during the Kandyan kingdom. In addition to the emphasis on royal blood, the possession of the Tooth Relic was also important for the legitimization of the Lankan kings. Since the king was the only appropriate person to be in control of the Relic, the one who controlled the Relic was therefore seen as king, which is

[140] Lorna Dewaraja, 'Matrimonial Alliances between Tamilnad and the Sinhalese Royal Family in the 18th Century and the Establishment of a Madurai Dynasty in Kandy', Fourth International Tamil Conference Seminar, January 1974, Jaffna. https://tamilnation.org/conferences/tamil_studies/iatr74_jaffna/lorna#7 (accessed on 18 October 2022).
[141] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 10.
[142] Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, 15-16.
[143] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 216.
[144] Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, 15-16.

why the reinstatement of the relic was the first act of Vimaladharma Suriya I, the first Kandyan king.

It is important to note that the *cakravarti*-ideal over time developed into the idea that a Lankan king was a 'Buddha aspirant', someone who one day would become a Buddha, phrased differently, Lankan kings were thus also seen as *Bodhisattvas*, as 'future Buddhas.' In addition to being seen as future Buddhas, *vamsa*-authors increasingly used metaphors of 'divine beings' into their works to 'enhance the fame and power of the Lankan kings', in other words, for the *vamsa*-authors, Sinhala kings were *like* certain gods, albeit in the metaphorical sense. However, from the fifteenth century onwards, the image of the *Bodhisattva* and that of the *divine* king had merged on the island, Kandyan were therefore often addressed as 'god' and 'god who would become Buddha.' This clearly shows an increased divinity of the Lankan kings from the fifteenth century onwards, which means that Lanka remarkably follows the developments on the Indian subcontinent since 1000 CE, as we will see in the following chapter.

Chapter 2: Nayaka Kingship

The present chapter will primarily focus on the characteristic of Nayaka kingship, because if we want to know whether or not Kandyan kingship indeed became Nayakarized after the Nayaka succession, it is important to know what these characteristics are, but before we can focus on Nayaka kingship, we first need to discuss the role of the king in Indian society.

For a long time, it has been thought that Indian society was divided by a four-tiered caste system, in which the *Brahmin*, the ritualist, held the top tier.[145] In this view, most notably put forward by Louis Dumont, the Brahmins are followed by the *ksatriya's*, the warrior caste, also seen as the kingly caste, who are followed by the *vaisya's*, the merchants and farmers, and finally the *shudra's*, who were seen as the servants.[146] Caste, according to Dumont, is the 'expression of a pure form of hierarchy in which the values of the king, of politics, are subordinate to the purer values of the priests.'[147] In other words, the Brahmin represents the 'religious principle', the highest form of purity attainable by Hindus, while on the other hand, the king, a *ksatriya*, represents the 'political domain' and while the king is important and powerful, he is 'inferior to, and encompassed by' the Brahmin.[148] One of the reasons for this, according to Dumont, is that the Brahmins 'would guarantee the spiritual welfare of their political masters', phrased differently: Brahmins 'serve as the personal priests and perform sacrifices on behalf of their political patrons', often described as *yajamana's*.[149]

However, as Jennifer Howes recently has stated: 'any study that places caste as the foundation of hierarchy in India runs into problems when considering the relative positions of *brahmins* and kings. If the king, who is a *ksatriya*, controls the land and the people who live on it, then surely, he will hold a higher social rank than a priest.'[150] Declan Quigley was more direct in his commentary on Dumont, according to Quigley: 'Dumont was wrong in echoing popular Hindu opinion by constructing a ladder-like structure that implied that the dynamic of

[145] Monika Horstmann, 'Theology and Statecraft' in: R. O'Hanlon and D. Washbrook (eds), *Religious Cultures in Early Modern India: New Perspectives* (London/New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 52-72, there 67n8.
[146] Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 68.
[147] Declan Quigley, 'Kings and Priests: Hocart's Theory of Caste', *Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol 29, no. 2 (1989), pp. 99-118, there 100.
[148] Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 4.
[149] Declan Quigley, *The Interpretation of Caste* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 28.
[150] Jennifer Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India: Material Culture and Kingship* (London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 26.

caste relations placed priests 'higher' than kings.'[151] Quigley follows A.M. Hocart who had stated: 'we can best sum up the first caste as the one that provides the king.'[152] For Hocart the king, and not the Brahmin, was the highest performer of sacrifice, the *yajamana*, which meant that it was the king who was 'higher' than the Brahmin.[153] Phrased differently, it should be the *ksatriya* or kingly caste which is the 'apex of the system.'[154] Now that the position of the king within Indian society has been clarified, it is time to shift our attention to seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century Nayaka kingship.

The Nayaka kingdoms were successor states of what often has been described as the last indigenous empire of Southern India, the Vijayanagara empire or Vijayanagara for short. From the fifteenth century onwards, the king of Vijayanagara had appointed, among others, warrior chiefs, as governors to ruler the territories far from the imperial centre.[155] A number of the warrior chiefs had the title of *nayaka*, but, the definition of what a '*nayaka*' is, and who should be counted as one, has been debated.[156] Landholders and local notables could, for example, also bare the title of *nayaka*, yet, it was first and foremost a title connected to military leaders, for instance to warrior chiefs.[157] Being far removed from the imperial centre meant that these warrior chiefs, or governors, experienced less direct control, which in turn meant that these governors had great(er) autonomy, and this created opportunities: several governors 'founded dynasties of their own' that over time 'grew ever more autonomous', and because of their 'martial origins' many of these kingdoms bore the name *nayaka*.[158] The most prominent of these Nayaka kingdoms were Tanjavur, Madurai, Senji, Ikkeri, and Mysore.[159]

Until a few decades ago, the Nayaka kingdoms had not received a great deal of attention from historians, it has even been stated that historians had neglected the Nayaka kingdoms in their research.[160] From the late 1980s this changed, and since then multiple studies on the Nayaka kingdom have appeared of which *Symbols of Substance* by Narayana

[151] Declan Quigley, 'Kingship and Untouchability' in: D. Quigley (ed), *The Character of Kingship* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005), 123-139, there 126.
[152] Quigley, 'Kings and Priests', 105.
[153] Horstmann, 'Theology and Statecraft', there 67n8.
[154] Quigley, 'Kings and Priests', 105; See also Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), especially, 283-284.
[155] Howes, *The Courts of Pre-Colonial South India*, 28.
[156] Nobuhiro Ota, 'A Study of Two *Nayaka* Families in the Vijayanagara Kingdom in the Sixteenth Century', *The Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* Vol. 66 (2008), 103-129, there 103.
[157] Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 58.
[158] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 7.
[159] Burton Stein, *Vijayanagara* (The New Cambridge History of India I, 2) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 130.
[160] Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, x.

Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, is the most well-known.[161] In *Symbols of Substance* the three authors have shown that 'Nayaka kingship represents an exotic departure from earlier political forms.'[162] More recently though, Lennart Bes has shown that in subjects like court protocol, the role of courtiers, and the role of Brahmins, did indeed closely resemble each other, and that the Nayaka kingdoms therefore should be seen as a 'distinct group of kingdoms.'[163] However, Bes has also shown that it seems 'that the break between the Nayaka kingdoms and preceding polities was not that fundamental, at least not in every respect' the abovementioned scholars have stated.[164]

A good example of this are the origin stories of the Nayaka kingdoms. In their foundation myths, the different Nayaka kingdoms tried to emphasize their linkage with Vijayanagar. For example in the origin story of Tanjavur, their founder, a certain Cevvappa Nayaka, married the younger sister of one of the consorts of the Vijayanagara *raja* and received the governorship of the Chola country as dowry.[165] In the origin story of the Madurai Nayakas, the father of a certain Vishvanatha Nayaka was rebelling against the Vijayanagara *raja* over a tribute dispute, and Vishvanatha showed that his loyalty towards the *raja* was more important than the loyalty towards his own father and defeated his own father in battle. For this loyal act, the *raja* rewarded Vishvanatha with a kingdom of his own, and that is how the Nayaka kingdom of Madurai came into existence.[166] It is clear that in their foundation myths, both the Tanjavur and Madurai Nayaka's established a linkage, in terms of personal loyalty or through marriage, with a 'higher centre of authority' in this case the Vijayanagara *raja*.[167] It is important to understand that the purpose of these linkages was twofold, on the one hand these links signified the loyalty and 'subordination' of the Nayaka kings to the Vijayanagara *raja*, which would in turn enhance the power of centre, albeit symbolically. On the other hand, the links to Vijayanagara legitimized the rule of the Nayaka kings in their subsequent territories, and thus helped these Nayaka kings to increase the autonomy of their own territories. According to Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, these links, or 'vertical ties' as these authors describe them, were 'necessary' for the Nayaka state to

[161] Ibidem.
[162] Ibidem, 56.
[163] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 315-316.
[164] Ibidem, 318.
[165] Ibidem, 43-45, especially 44; Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 40-41.
[166] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 50-54, especially 52; Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 44-53; See for the Tamil version of this origin story: Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, 99-106.
[167] Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 54-55.

'increase their horizontal autonomy.'[168] In other words, the links to Vijayanagara were of necessary importance for the Nayaka kingdoms.

However, linkages to previous kingdoms were not new, each of the imperial houses of the Vijayanagara empire had claimed ties with earlier dynasties.[169] The origin story of the Saluva dynasty of the Vijayanagara empire (ca. 1485-1503 CE) linked them to a previous dynasty through marriage, while the Saluva's were also said to originate from the Chalukya's, an earlier South Indian kingdom.[170] In other words, although the linkages to previous kings and kingdoms were important, or even necessary, as the authors of *Symbols of Substance* have stated, for the Nayaka kingdoms, this did not signify a clear break with the Vijayanagara empire. It does show, however, that South Indian kingdoms in general often used vertical ties to legitimate their rule, and although claiming vertical ties was no novelty, it still had an important place in Nayaka origin stories. Other aspects of Nayaka kingship did signify a break with Vijayanagara though, for example their martial pride and *bhoga*.

Martial pride

The Nayaka's belonged to a mobile warrior 'elite' that was not tied down to specific lands, and therefore not 'bound up' with the cycle of agricultural production, which meant that these warriors were able to travel around, fight wars, and find fortunes far away from the imperial centre.[171] It is important to note here that although it has often been stated that warriors and kings had to belong to the '*kshatriya*' caste, the Nayaka kings 'prided' themselves on being low-caste Shudras, instead of being Kshatriyas.[172] Or as Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam have stated: 'In Nayaka politics, we see that the Sudra now proudly claims the summit.'[173] This means that it apparently was not necessary to be a Kshatriya to become king during the Nayaka period, while it also shows that the classical 'varna' ideology with the Brahmin at the top of the pyramid, that was most notably put forward by Dumont, was not true in practice. The king, which could be a Kshatriya or a Shudra, was the most important figure in early modern South India.

Closely connected to the martial pride of the Nayaka's was the aspect of money. Military campaigns cost money and, when successful, should produce money. Interestingly,

[168] Ibidem.
[169] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 39.
[170] Ibidem, 37.
[171] Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 56.
[172] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 27.
[173] Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 78.

in earlier medieval times, the normal sequence that once a king could claim (to have) a kingdom, he then could have (the right to) wealth that came with that kingdom.[174] This had changed under the Nayaka's, because through their campaigns the Nayakas accumulated a lot of wealth, even before they rose to power. Additionally, from the sixteenth century onwards, Southern India 'witnessed a marked change in its economic profile' as well. New crops were introduced, manufacturing production expanded, and market centres were created.[175] While the European trading companies also became more prominent in Southern India. The Nayaka's used this changing environment to increase their wealth in several ways, for example, by deploying revenue-farmers, by buying shares in ships that were involved in the Bay of Bengal trade, and the Nayaka's were also overseeing the trade in several ports. As Narayana Rao and Subrahmanyam have stated: Nayaka kingship is based strongly on ties to the 'accumulation of liquid resources.'[176] It is clear that money was an important aspect for the Nayaka kings, but everything started with the martial pride of these warriors.

Bhoga

It is clear that money counted, and the Nayaka kings had it, but how did these *nouveaux riches* spend it? Traditionally the king did spend his money by handing out land grants to Brahmins and temples.[177] While, additionally, the king commissioned literature and works of art that focussed on the king's military prowess. The Nayaka kings had other priorities, though, a new fashion called *bhoga* had developed at the Nayaka courts. *Bhoga* means physical or sensual enjoyment and it was mainly focussed on erotica and food, and, more importantly, the Nayaka's spend lavishly on it. Several literature works have been commissioned in which the focus on the king's heroism on the battlefield shifted to a focus on the king's heroism in the bedroom.[178] In paintings a king used to be portrayed as a strong warrior with a toned body, but the Nayaka king were now shown as 'heavier figures, often sporting protruding bellies.'[179] Both examples show a clear shift from the military

[174] Ibidem, 54.
[175] Ibidem, 107.
[176] Narayana Rao and Subrahmanyam, 'Ideologies of State Building in Vijayanagara and post-Vijayanagara South India: Some Reflections' in: P. Fibiger Bang and D. Kolodziejczyk (eds), *Universal Empire: A Comparative Approach to Imperial Culture and Representation in Eurasian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 210-232, there 225.
[177] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 27.
[178] Narayana Rao and Subrahmanyam, 'Ideologies of State Building', 225; Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 113-168.
[179] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 27; Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 170.

achievements to the consumption and display of the physical and sensual enjoyments of the king, on which they spend extravagantly.[180]

The concept of *bhoga* was not only visible in works commissioned by the Nayaka kings, but it was also visible in their actions. The Brahmins did no longer receive the 'old royal gift of land', but they were gifted food and fed by the Nayaka kings. This almost religious deed became very important: not only was it an act of 'ultimate symbolic importance', but it also 'defines the player in his ritual role'[181] By feeding the Brahmin, the Brahmin became (almost) dependent on the king, which in turn highlights the importance of the king vis-à-vis the Brahmin. Additionally, the giving of food and the commissioning of literature and paintings, highlight the Nayaka's generosity, which, in combination with the increasing focus on *bhoga*, do define the Nayaka kings, as the following seventeenth century Telugu poem underlines:

> Giving gifts, enjoyment, loss: there are only these three paths for money on this earth.
> The ignorant fool who does not take the first two paths will see his money take the third.[182]

That the Nayaka kings were not presented as toned warriors in art and in literature anymore, did not mean that warfare, or martial pride, became less important, however, the authors of *Symbols of Substance* have stated: 'to say that the Nayak period is one of almost constant conflict over resources is to state the obvious.'[183] Both the martial pride and the teleology of *bhoga* were typical characteristics of Nayaka kingship, and in this respect Nayaka kingship did differ from previous types of kingship.

The role of the Brahmins

An aspect that has divided the historiography was the role of the Brahmin. As stated above, it was the king, not the Brahmin, that was the most prominent in South Indian society. This does not mean, however, that Brahmins did not have important functions in and around the South Indian courts. At the Vijayanagara court several functions were occupied by Brahmins, ranging from ministers and advisers to recipients of lands and/or gifts. Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam claim that this changed in the Nayaka kingdoms, according to

[180] Vink, *Mission to Madurai*, 55.
[181] Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 67.
[182] Ibidem, 81.
[183] Ibidem, 220.

these authors, the role of the Brahmin decreased, or as they have stated: there was 'no immediate need' for Brahmins.[184]

This is for example visible in the role of the court poet. In the Vijayanagara empire a poet was required to be born in a Brahmin family, to be a male, to have competence in grammar, metrics, and most importantly, in Sanskrit. Sanskrit was the most important language as a legitimizer of status. A poet was not considered a good poet if he was not a Sanskrit scholar, while, at the same time, a king was not considered a superior king if he did not patronize Sanskrit poets.[185] The most important reasons for this was that it was the task of the poet to legitimize or even elevate the status of the king through his poetry, and the type of poetry that was most often used by these Brahmin scholar-court-poets was *kavya*. The task of a poet was therefore clear: to dedicate his *kavya* poems to the ruler, to elevate his status.[186]

In the Nayaka kingdoms this did change, however. In the early seventeenth century, it had become common practice for the king's son to compose a certain form of poetry that was not written in Sanskrit but in Telugu, the so-called *dvipada* poetry. In *dvipada* poems, the poet, the son, equated the king, his father, to Visnu, and because the father/king was seen as the God himself, the son was now able to describe the love life of the king, something that was unheard of in *kavya* poetry. This focus on the love life of the king also shows how the physical enjoyments of the king, *bhoga*, became more important than the focus on military success in the Nayaka kingdoms. Another important aspect of the *dvipada* poems was by assimilating the king with God, the Nayakas assumed some sort of divine status, they were represented as human incarnations of their gods, something that did present a clear break with Vijayanagara times.[187]

As stated above, in Vijayanagara times, the Brahmin poet used his *kavya* poems to raise the status of the ruler, but now that the king became equated with the god in the *dvipada* poems, the god-king was now the highest in the hierarchy, he therefore did not need to have his status elevated, and it was now the task of the poet to praise and 'devotedly' serve this god-king.[188] The poet thus became the 'servant-devotee' of the 'god-king.' In addition, a king could now be both a poet and ruler, writing about his own father who was also a king. Which means that the king could be both the hero and the patron of the poem, and if that is the case,

[184] Ibidem, 57.
[185] Velcheru Narayana Rao, 'Kings, Gods and Poets: Ideologies of Patronage in Medieval Andhra' in: B. Stoler Miller (ed), *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 142-160, there 144.
[186] Velcheru Narayana Rao, *Text and Tradition in South India* (Albany: Statue of New York Press, 2016), 63.
[187] Narayana Rao and Subrahmanyam, 'Ideologies of State Building', 227.
[188] Narayana Rao, *Text and Tradition*, 62.

the poet, as 'servant-devotee' did not have to be a Brahmin either. It is therefore not surprising that non-Brahmin courtesans became court poets in the seventeenth century. In other words, the role of the Brahmin as scholar-poet became marginalized in early seventeenth century Nayaka states.[189]

Although this example clearly shows that the role of the Brahmin as court poet became marginalized in early seventeenth century, recent research has shown that the Brahmins still played an important part as 'ministers and advisers' at the courts of the Nayaka kingdoms.[190] One of the most important factions as the court of the Ikkeri Nayakas was, for example, of Brahmin descent.[191] While a governor of the Madurai kingdom was a Brahmin as well.[192] Not only at the courts of Ikkeri and Madurai, but all the Nayaka courts 'included Brahmins.'[193] Therefore, and contrary to what Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam have stated, only in specific functions did the role of the Brahmin became marginalized, but the Brahmins did generally retain their importance at the Nayaka courts, occupying several important functions.

Conclusions

The present chapter has tried to show several important aspects of South Indian kingship in general and some aspects that were particular to the Nayaka kingdoms. However, before we can summarize the characteristics of Nayaka kingship it is important to understand that because the (Nayaka) king became 'Vishnu itself', in other words, became divine, 'the Brahmin becomes the servant of the king.'[194] This meant that the Nayaka (warrior) king took on the ritual role of the Brahmin, which in turn meant that the distinction between the temple and the court became more and more erased.[195] Thus, as Jos Gommans recently has stated: 'we arrive at a model of Indian kingship that departs from that of the classical, contradictory alliance between king and Brahman, and instead approaches that of Hocartian divine kingship in which the king acts as the main sacrificer (*yajamana*) and the Brahman merely assists him in this role.'[196]

[189] Ibidem, 62-63.
[190] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 318.
[191] Ibidem, 158.
[192] Ibidem, 178.
[193] Ibidem, 317.
[194] Narayana Rao, *Text and*, 62.
[195] Jos Gommans, 'Cosmopolitanism and Imagination in Nayaka South India: Decoding the Brooklyn Kalamkari', *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (2020), pp. 1-21, there 6.
[196] Ibidem.

Nayaka kingship can, therefore, be characterized as follows: the Nayaka king was a rich, almost divine, God-king. A king with a strong warrior connection, that was not a Kshatriya, but a Shudra, with a large involvement in trade and revenue farms. The Nayaka king was generous, supported the Brahmins, albeit in food and not with land, and for whom the enjoyments of life, like food and erotica, became increasingly important. In this sense the Nayaka king was clearly different from his predecessors. However, the linkages to previous kingdoms and the importance of Brahmins in several positions at the court, also showed the similarities between the Nayakas and their predecessors, which, in turn, makes it difficult to state that the Nayaka kingship represented an 'exotic department from earlier political forms' as the authors of *Symbols of Substance* had stated.[197]

[197] Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, 56.

Chapter 3: Kandyan ceremonialism between 1729-1739

In the next two chapters, the characteristics of Kandyan kingship during the decades before and after the Nayakas rose to power will be analysed. With a special focus on the ceremonies at the court, because, as Obeyesekere has stated, 'it was during the Nayaka reigns' that 'the divinity of the king and the ceremonialism associated with it developed to a degree unthinkable earlier', and that these ideas were even 'carried to an extreme degree' with the Nayaka kings.[198] If we want to see if and how these ceremonies have changed, it is important to see what the ceremonies looked like before the Nayakas rose to power. The present chapter will therefore focus on the period between 1729 and 1739, the last decade of the reign of Narendrasinha.

Narendrasinha's reign (1707-1739)

After the death of his father Vimaladharmasuriya II in 1707 CE, Narendrasinha became king of the Kandyan kingdom. For a long time, Narendrasinha's reign has been remembered quite negatively among historians. Most historians have stressed Narendrasinha's 'inadequate support for Buddhism.'[199] According to Wagenaar, the Order of the *Sangha*, the order of Buddhist monks, had degenerated rapidly during the reign of Nadrenasinha.[200] Malalgoda has stated that one reason for this was that the '*upasampada* ordination' or 'higher ordination' had disappeared, and Narendrasinha had failed to re-establish it during his reign.[201] According to Dewaraja, Naredrasinha inherited 'neither his grandfather's warlike nature, nor his father's religious zeal', while elsewhere she describes Narendrasinha even as a playboy.[202] And according to James Duncan, Narendrasinha 'allowed the palace buildings in Kandy to fall into disrepair.'[203] While one historian even described the reign of Narendrasinha as 'comparatively uneventful.'[204]

[198] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 175.
[199] Ibidem, 164.
[200] Lodewijk Wagenaar, 'Looking for Monks from Arakan: A Chapter of the Kandyan-Dutch Relations in the 18th Century', Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka, n.s., 48 (2003), 91-110, there 91.
[201] Kitsiri Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750-1900; A Study of Religious Revival and Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 61.
[202] Dewaraja, *The Kandyan Kingdom*, 21, 75.
[203] James Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 71.
[204] Minivan P. Tillakaratne, *Manners, Customs and Ceremonies of Sri Lanka* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986), 4.

More recently, however, Obeyesekere described Narendrasinha in a much more positive light. According to Obeyesekere the main reason for the negative press surrounding Narendrasinha was his openness and acceptance for other religions, mainly for Catholics and Hindus, especially for the Nayakas.[205] The Catholics were for example allowed to build many churches and hold many feasts during the reign of Narendrasinha.[206] The accession of the Nayakas is generally seen as the 'beginning of the end' for the Kandyan kingdom, therefore, for many historians this openness towards other religions signified that Narendrasinha was not supporting Buddhism. However, according to Obeyesekere this was not the case, because 'tolerance for another religion ought to be a compliment towards Narendrasinha as an expression of his Buddhist values.'[207] Especially when the openness towards the Nayakas can be explained quite easily, like his father and his grandfather, Narendrasinha brought his first *mahesi*, his first queen, from South India. [208] A stated in the first chapter, it was necessary for a Kandyan king to marry a *ksatriya*, because only male off-spring of a *ksatriya*-bride could become king, and since the Kandyan kingdom was the last 'indigenous' kingdom on the island, *ksatriya*-brides had to be brought in from somewhere else, in this case from Southern India. In turn, this would also mean that Narendrasinha's mother came from South India and that his openness to (South Indian) Hindus is therefore not that strange.

Additionally, openness towards other religions does not mean a neglect of one's own. According to the *Chulavamsa*, Narendrasinha was 'an abode of discernment and manly virtues' that 'performed meritorious works such as giving alms' and who also 'celebrated daily a festival for the Tooth Relic.'[209] Narendrasinha also 'showed care for the bhikkhus who had been admitted to the Order' and 'had many sons of good family submitted in faith to the ceremony of world-renunciation' and 'thus furthered the Order.'[210] Narendrasinha also rebuilt the Temple of the Tooth that had fallen into decay with 'all kinds of brilliant ornaments', provided it with a 'graceful roof' and even had 'thirty-two jatakas depicted in coloured painting on the wall of the courtyard.'[211] While, according to Duncan, Narendrasinha 'surrounded the Natha Devale', an important shrine in Kandy, 'with a high wall.'[212]

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[205] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 166.
[206] V. Perniola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: The Dutch Period, Vol 3, 1747-1795* (Dehiwala: Tissara Prakasakayo, 1985), 24.
[207] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 166.
[208] H.L. Seneviratne, 'The Alien King: Nayakkars on the Throne of Kandy', *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, n.s., Vol.6 No.1 (1976) pp. 57.
[209] *Culavamsa*, 241, lines 23-26.
[210] Ibidem, 241, lines 26-27.
[211] Ibidem, 242, lines 35-39.
[212] Duncan, *City as Text*, 71.

It is clear that the *Chulavamsa* remembers Narendrasinha as a pious and virtuous monarch, and although it might be true that the *upusampada* ordination was not re-established during Narendrasinha's reign, this does not mean that Narendrasinha was an 'inadequate supporter' of Buddhism, as many modern historians have claimed. Narendrasinha did indeed do many things that signify his support for Buddhism. Additionally, openness towards other religions should, according to Obeyesekere, be seen as 'an expression of his Buddhist and cosmopolitan values.'[213] Yet, what does this mean for the ceremonies at the court?

An embassy

The Dutch often sent embassies to the Kandyan court, and from 1713 onwards, sending embassies became an annual practice for the VOC.[214] These embassies had two main objectives, the first was to obtain the right to peel cinnamon in the lands of the Kandyan king, because the territories VOC did not produce enough cinnamon to fulfil the needs of the Company.[215] And secondly, to obtain permission to transport elephants that were captured in the Company's territories through the territories of the king over the so-called 'kingly road' towards Jaffnapatnam in the north of the island, from where the Dutch could export these animals.[216] Additionally, the Dutch also hoped that through good relations with the Kandyans they would to receive help in the return of cinnamon peelers that had fled to the king's territories, or to receive help to crush rebellions in the Company's territories.[217]

The embassies followed strict protocol, and court protocol could, as Lennart Bes showed, be seen as 'symbolic expressions of establishing, confirming, altering, or ending relationships' at the court.[218] The reason for this is that even though relationships 'may have appeared harmonious (…) certain ceremonial – or the departure from it – in fact hinted at the opposite.'[219] Which is why a good understanding of court protocol, and the ceremonies associated with it, was of great importance for the Company and this is also the reason why the Dutch ambassadors wrote extensive reports about their embassies.

In the period between 1729 and 1739, the Dutch sent eleven 'normal' embassies to the Kandyan court. In 1739, in addition to the annual embassy, the VOC sent two more embassies

[213] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 166.
[214] Abeyasinghe, 'Princes and Merchants', 46-49.
[215] Idem, 'Embassies as Instruments of Diplomacy', 2.
[216] *Nationaal Archief*, The Hague (hereafter NA), Archives of the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company, access no. 1.04.02, hereafter VOC), no. 2167, ff. 281: instructions for Ambassador (hereafter instructions), December 1729.
[217] Abeyasinghe, 'Embassies as Instruments of Diplomacy', there 3.
[218] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 198.
[219] Ibidem, 30.

to the court: a so-called *rouwbeklag* to give their condolences after the death of the king, and another embassy to felicitate the new king on his accession. An annual embassy between 1729 and 1739 generally went as follows: the ambassador(s), a scribe, and two interpreters, accompanied by personnel like musicians and soldiers, who carried the gifts and the letter for the Kandyan king, departed from Colombo castle under gun salute and marched towards the Sitavaque river, which was the border between the Dutch and Kandyan territories. During the whole journey, the presents for the king were wrapped in white linen cloth and the letter for the king was carried on a silver tray on the head of one of the soldiers.[220] The embassy party arrived the following day at the border, and after the river crossing, they were greeted by a Kandyan dignitary. The dignitary notified the court about the arrival of the embassy and the court dispatched a party to greet the ambassador and to inspect the gifts and the letter for the king.[221] This party always consisted of several important courtiers, among which the *disava* of the three korles, the head province closest to the Dutch territories, was the most prominent, and the Dutch always welcomed these important courtiers by offering them betel-leaves, areca-nuts, and by 'sprinkling them with rosewater.'[222] In the territories of the king, an embassy was only allowed to travel with permission of the court and under guidance of important courtiers and soldiers.[223] This meant that the embassy had to wait at Sitavaque until the court dispatched a new party to guide them to another resting place, which in practice would usually take several weeks. Under guidance of the new company that consisted of soldiers, musicians, elephants, and several important courtiers, the embassy was guided to the second resting place, Attapitiya, a journey that generally took three days, after which the embassy was greeted by the *disava* of the four korles province.[224] At Attapitiya, the embassy again had to wait for few more weeks after which they were guided to the last resting place, Gannoruwa, a journey that generally took three days, and upon arrival the ambassador was greeted by the second *adikar*, or second minister, of the Kandyan court. At Gannoruwa the embassy had to wait until the ambassador was invited for the first of his two audiences with the king. The ambassador did not rest and/or wait for his audience inside the city, he was only allowed to enter the city during the embassy itself.

[220] NA, VOC, no. 2126, ff. 1352r-1355v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1729.
[221] NA, VOC, no. 2167, ff. 724-726: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1730.
[222] NA, VOC, no. 2458, ff. 1256v-1257v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1739.
[223] Rowland Raven-Hart, 'The Great Road', *The Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, n.s., Vol.1 4, No. 2 (1956), pp. 143-212, there 150.
[224] NA, VOC, no. 2273, ff. 2045r-2047r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1733.

It is important to note here that an embassy would generally last about three or four months, however, an ambassador could also be held up along the way. This was a classic tactic by the Kandyans, and can, according to Duncan, be explained by way the Kandyans ritualized 'time and space.' Both 'space' and 'time' are 'highly charged' with symbolic meaning, which is why the trip to the capital taken by the ambassador was 'designed as a difficult ritual passage' to impress 'upon the ambassador the moral elevation of the king' and delaying this trip ensured that the ambassador 'not only had to overcome space, but much time as well.'[225] In other words, delaying the ambassador did increase the 'time' an ambassador had to travel to see the king, thereby creating more distance between the company, of which the ambassador was the representative, and the king himself, while at the same it was also used to show discontent towards the Dutch.

This happened for example in 1736 when the annual embassy departed on February the 23rd and only returned at Colombo Castle on the 29th of July, which means that this embassy lasted for more than six months.[226] The high tensions between the Dutch and the Kandyans should be seen as the main reason for the delaying of the embassy, because in 1736 Governor Van Domburg had raised the 'garden tax' which the Kandyan inhabitants of the Dutch provinces had to pay from 1/3 to 1/2 of their produce, this raise caused discontentment among the inhabitants who rebelled by refusing to pay the new tax and they also began to attack Company property. In addition to this rebellion, the cinnamon peelers or *chalias* were dissatisfied with their working conditions and they refused to go back to work unless they were ordered by the Kandyan court, and because their refusal to work the Company only had 2000 bales of cinnamon ready for transport while 6000 bales were required. It is clear that these rebellions had costed the Dutch a lot of money which is why the Dutch tried to crush them by using violence.[227] The use of violence against the Kandyan inhabitants caused great dissatisfaction at the Kandyan court, and the Kandyans clearly voiced their discontent during the embassy. Kandyan courtiers have for example stated that although the Dutch and the Kandyans have a close friendship, this friendship could be jeopardized by the Dutch actions and the Dutch were asked to stop with their attacks.[228] The courtiers also suggested that the only reason the Dutch sent this embassy was to 'pressure the court' to stop the rebellions.[229]

[225] Duncan, *City as Text*, 140.
[226] NA, VOC, no. 2372, ff. 1425v, 1538r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1736.
[227] Sinnapah Arasaratnam, 'Baron van Imhoff and Dutch Policy in Ceylon, 1736-1740', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, Vol 118, No. 4 (1962), pp. 454-468, there 458-459.
[228] NA, VOC, no. 2372, ff. 1467v-1471r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1736.
[229] NA, VOC, no. 2372, ff. 1449v-1459v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1736.

Additionally, by delaying the ambassador for almost twice the time of a normal embassy, the Kandyans clearly showed their discontent, while this also increased the distance between the king and the Dutch.

Audiences

In this decade, the first audience was the most important audience and would happen along the following lines: in the morning the ambassador was greeted by two servants sent by the court. These servants told the ambassador that 'provided there were no hinderances' several courtiers would come to pick him up and guide the ambassador and his party to the royal palace in Kandy where he would receive his first audience this evening.[230] Around mid-afternoon these courtiers, one of which was always a *disava*, arrived at Gannoruwa. The gifts were first sent across the river followed by a procession of musicians, soldiers, and a multitude of toothed elephants that had been decorated with bells and banners, whereafter the courtiers, the ambassador, the scribe, and the two translators followed.[231] After marching for about two hours they reached the 'covered' bridge at Bogambere, the fishing pond of the king. Here the procession had to stop and wait until it was dark after which they received permission to enter the city, usually this took about one hour.[232] While waiting for permission, the animals that would be gifted to the king would be decorated with beautiful cloths and jewellery.[233] Hereafter, the procession marched into the centre of Kandy, where the ambassador was greeted by the second *adikar* and a *disava* who greeted the ambassador into the city and guided the procession to the gates of the royal palace. Because of the darkness, the route towards the palace was spectacularly lit up by many torches and was flanked by rows of soldiers and decorated elephants. Outside the palace gates the first *adikar*, several *disavas*, and some lesser courtiers, greeted the ambassador. At this moment, the first *adikar* and a *disava* would go inside the palace to announce the arrival of the ambassador to the king, and, per his instructions, the ambassador would request if his scribe and the second translator also had the pleasure to be allowed to enter the audience hall and see the king.[234] When the *adikar* and the *disava* returned, the ambassador was told that he and the first translator were allowed to appear before the king; the scribe and the second translator, however, were allowed to enter the palace, but they had to wait outside of the audience hall. From 1734

[230] NA, VOC, no. 2307, ff. 1631v-1632v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1734.
[231] NA, VOC, no. 2223, ff. 1209v-1211r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1732.
[232] NA, VOC, no. 2372, ff. 1508r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1736.
[233] NA, VOC, no. 2373, ff. 1674r-1674v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, January 1737.
[234] NA, VOC, no. 2307, ff. 1593r-1598v: instructions for the ambassadors, February 1734.

onwards, it became customary that the second translator was allowed to enter the audience hall as well. The reason for this was that the first translator was of high age, and had a brittle physique, and if something were to happen, the second translator could take over the duties, additionally, the king also wanted to see if the translator had the capacity to maybe be sent as first translator in a few years.[235] The ambassador, the translator(s), the scribe, and the courtiers now entered the palace gates, while the gifts, the soldiers, and other personnel had to wait outside the gates of the palace.

The ambassador and the translator(s) walked up the stone stairs until they reached the audience hall, here the ambassador took the silver tray with the letter for the king and held it above his head, and after the ambassador and the translator(s) were flanked by the most important courtiers, the curtains that hanged before the audience hall were opened one by one. In 1729 the king was sitting behind five curtains, in 1730 and 1731, the king was behind six curtains, and from 1732 onwards, the king was sitting behind seven curtains. When the last curtain was opened the king, sitting on his golden throne, became visible, and the courtiers and the translator(s) all prostrated so far down that their faces touched the ground, and repeated this in total six times. Meanwhile, the ambassador kneeled three times on one knee, still holding the silver tray above his head.[236] They slowly moved into the hall until the edge of the 'expensive carpet' (*kostbare alcatief*) that covered about two thirds of the audience hall, where the translator kneeled on two knees.[237] After the king had given permission, the courtiers guided the ambassador to the stone steps at the base of the throne. On the first step there was a pillow on which the ambassador placed one knee and held the silver tray high above his head.[238] The silver tray was within reach of the king, who then personally picked the letter from the tray. The now empty tray was carried out of the audience hall by a courtier, meanwhile, the ambassador took of his hat and was guided backwards towards the edge of the carpet next to the translator(s) and kneeled on one knee. It is important to note that it would be very disrespectful for anyone to turn their back to the king, even the courtiers moved backwards until they reached the edge of the carpet.

At this moment the king personally asked the ambassador about the wellbeing of the governor, and the members of the political council, to which the ambassador always answered that at the moment of his departure, all were in good health. The ambassador was then asked

[235] NA, VOC, no. 2307, ff. 1631v-1642v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1734.
[236] NA, VOC, no. 2223, ff. 1211v-1219r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1732.
[237] NA, VOC, no. 2167, ff. 750-761: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1730.
[238] NA, VOC, no. 2307, ff. 1631v-1642v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1734.

about his own health and his treatment since entering the kingly territories, on which the ambassador always stated that his health was great and that he was treated very well, for which he thanked the king. Hereafter, the ambassador was given permission to sit in a normal way *(op mijn gemak neder te sitten)* for which he thanked the king.[239] The king then wanted to know if the governor had asked the ambassador to convey something that was not written in the letter, which always was the case. The ambassador stated that the governor and the members of the political council had send the king their best regards, the ambassador also had to inform about the health of the king, on which the king answered that 'he was in good health to provide the honourable Dutch gentlemen, as well as his own subjects, without any distinction, many favours.'[240] Hereafter, the ambassador thanked the king for the permissions the company had received the previous year (to peel cinnamon in, and to transport elephants through the kingly territories), and asked if it would be possible to renew these permissions, which the king always immediately allowed. This renewal was expected by the ambassador, so much so, that in 1738 it was even stated that the permissions were 'naturally' and 'according to habit' renewed.[241]

When the company had received the permissions, the ambassador thanked the king and asked the king if he was allowed to have all the gifts brought into the castle, which was always permitted by the king. The ambassadors, translators, and all the courtiers left the audience hall with the same ceremonial as they had entered, this meant that, while walking backwards, the courtiers and translators prostrated themselves six times, and the ambassador kneeled three times, after which they left the audience hall, and the curtains were closed one by one.[242] Outside of the audience hall, the ambassador gave the sign that the gifts could be carried into the palace, and when all gifts had carefully been carried into the palace, the ambassador had given the second *adikar* the keys to all the crates and boxes. Hereafter, the courtiers, translator(s), and the ambassador, once again moved to the audience hall, which they entered with the same ceremonial as before as before. At the edge of the carpet, the king allowed him to sit normally, and asked the ambassador if he wanted to say something that he might have forgotten during the first entry, and although this was never the case, the king would always be thanked for asking. Hereafter, the king would state that it had gotten quite late, and since it was a long march back to the resting place at Gannoruwa, the ambassador

[239] NA, VOC, no. 2337, ff. 1140r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1735.
[240] NA, VOC, no. 2185, ff. 823v-824r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1731.
[241] NA, VOC, no. 2430, ff. 1667v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, May 1738.
[242] NA, VOC, no. 2185, ff. 824r-830v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1731.

was given permission by the king to leave the audience hall and to travel back to his lodge. The ambassador thanked the king greatly for this permission and for the audience itself, whereafter the courtiers, the translator, and the ambassador left the audience hall with the ceremonial as before.

On the courtyard of the palace, the ambassador had the chance to discuss some points that had not yet been discussed during the audience, or to ask some questions, which the courtiers would, at a later moment, discuss with the king. It is important to note that although the king often asked the ambassador if there were things that he wanted to discuss with the king, many topics were actually of limits. This happened for example in 1735, when during the first entry the ambassador had just received renewed permission for both the cinnamon and the elephants, after which the ambassador wanted to discuss the sending of three expensive white horses and their saddles to the king. However, the translator was interrupted by the first *adikar* because 'this was not the right occasion to discuss this' and if the ambassador wanted to discuss this, and other subjects, we needed to discuss them personally at a later moment.[243] There were actually two moments during the audience where it was possible to address these points, the first one was while the ambassador and the courtiers waited for the gifts to be carried inside the castle, and the second moment was right after the audience. In 1734, for example, the company was of the opinion that not enough cinnamon was being peeled, and the ambassador wanted to bring this up during the first audience. He was, however, interrupted by, in this case, the *disava* of Saffragam, who stated that it was not necessary to discuss this with the majesty, this must be discussed outside the audience hall, and this decision was final.[244] Therefore, while the gifts were carried inside the audience hall, the ambassador discussed these topics with several important courtiers and he was told that he would receive an answer when the audience was finished, which would be the case. Not only the ambassador instigated these 'informal' talks, in 1731 the ambassador was asked by the courtiers about some falcons that had been requested the previous year, but had yet to be delivered, while the courtiers also asked if the company could send two 'young dogs' to the court, because the dogs that had been sent, were of high age and the king wanted younger animals.[245] After this conversation, if there was one at all, the ambassador, translators, and the scribe were all invited to a banquet with refreshments that was setup in a tent in the courtyard of the palace. This banquet consisted of several sweets as well as some fruits *(olijkoeken,*

[243] NA, VOC, no. 2337, ff. 1142r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1735.
[244] NA, VOC, no. 2307, ff. 1637r-1637v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1734.
[245] NA, VOC, no. 2185, ff. 827v-829v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1731.

piesang, peperbollen), and when the envoys had refreshed themselves, the courtiers guided the envoys to the edge of the city.[246] At the edge of the city, the ambassador was told that several courtiers would accompany them back to their lodge in Gannoruwa, whereupon the ambassador thanked the courtiers for everything during the embassy, said his goodbyes, and travelled back to his lodge, where he would arrive around midnight.

At Gannoruwa, the ambassador had to wait until he was invited for the second audience, the so-called *afscheids-audiëntie* or 'farewell audience', which would usually take place within the same week.[247] The second audience was quite similar to the first audience. In the late afternoon, the ambassador was picked up by several courtiers who guided him, and his party, to the centre of Kandy where they were greeted by the second *adikar* and a *disava*, who then guided them to the gates of the palace. The road to the palace was again being lit by many torches and several rows of soldiers. At the palace gate, the ambassador was greeted by the first *adikar* and several other important courtiers and the first *adikar*, together with a *disava*, went inside the palace to announce the arrival of the ambassador to the king, and the ambassador would ask if the second translator and the scribe were allowed to enter the audience hall, which was, contrary to the first audience, allowed in most cases. The curtains in front of the audience hall were opened one by one and, with similar ceremonial as during the first audience, the ambassador, the translators, the scribe, and the courtiers, entered the audience hall. The ambassador kneeled at the edge of the carpet, where the king asked the ambassador about his health and treatment since the first audience, both questions were always answered positively, hereafter, the king gave the ambassador permission to sit in a normal way. When the ambassador was seated normally, the king would state that he was happy with the contents of the letter as well as with the gifts that were sent by the company, and that he soon would dispatch a party to deliver a reply to the governor. Hereafter, the king would ask the ambassador some personal questions, for example where he was born and what his age was, the translators and the scribe would get asked the same questions, and all answered truthfully.[248]

After these answers, the king stated that the ambassador had spent a long time in the kingly lands, therefore, the king granted the ambassador permission to leave for Colombo the following day. It was customary for the king to give the ambassador, the translators, the scribe, and other personnel *(appohanijs en oppassers)* parting gifts. Generally, the

[246] NA, VOC, no. 2307, ff. 1640r-1642v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1734.
[247] Abeyasinghe, 'Embassies as Instruments of Diplomacy', 15.
[248] NA, VOC, no. 2373, ff. 1680v-1687r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, January 1737.

ambassador would receive a beautifully decorated ceremonial knife *(a houwer)*, a golden necklace, and a golden ring set with stones.[249] The scribe would receive a golden necklace, and a golden ring set with stones, while a translator would 'only' receive a golden necklace.[250] In exceptional cases when the king was greatly pleased by ambassador, the ambassador could be gifted a male elephant without tusks, a so-called 'alia elephant.' This was very rare, only in two instances in this decade would an ambassador be gifted an elephant, in 1730 both ambassadors would be gifted an elephant, while in 1737, only the first, and not the second ambassador would receive an elephant.[251]

Whenever the king was dissatisfied with the company or with the ambassador, this would also be reflected in the gifts the ambassador would receive. As addressed above, there was a lot of tension between the company and the Kandyans in 1736, and during the entire embassy the Kandyans voiced their dissatisfaction on multiple occasions and in multiple ways. This was no different during the farewell audience, the king was talking for almost the entirety of the audience and told the ambassador that he had received 'many complaints about the Dutch and their treatment of the inhabitants' which was 'unacceptable' not only now, but in the future as well, and in order to restore the relationship with the court, the king expected 'many favours' from the company, and when the ambassador left, he only received some 'ordinary gifts' but no knife *(houwer)* which was usually given to an ambassador.[252] After the ambassador had thanked the king for the gifts, the ambassador, the translators and the courtiers, left the audience hall with the 'usual ceremonies', which means that while walking backwards, the ambassador kneeled three times while the courtiers and translators prostrated six times. In the courtyard, before the ambassador was invited to the banquet, there was again a moment to discuss several points with the courtiers, and often this was instigated by the courtiers.[253] Hereafter, the ambassador and his party were invited to the banquet, and when all were refreshed, they were guided by the courtiers to the edge of Kandy. Here, the ambassador thanked the courtiers for everything, and after the proper goodbye's, some courtiers guided him and his party to their lodge in Gannoruwa, where they arrived around midnight. The following morning, either the first of the second *adikar* and several courtiers arrived at the lodge in Gannaoruwa, these courtiers, without the *adikar*, would accompany the ambassador

[249] NA, VOC, no. 2307, ff. 1640r-1642v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1734.
[250] Abeyasinghe, 'Embassies as Instruments of Diplomacy', 18.
[251] NA, VOC, no. 2167, ff. 765-7678: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1730; no. 2373, ff. 1680v-1687r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, January 1737.
[252] NA, VOC, no. 2372, ff. 1527r-1532v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1736.
[253] NA, VOC, no. 2273, ff. 2069vr-2072r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1733.

until, the edge of the kingly territories, until Sitavaque, for which they left a few hours later. During the return journey, the ambassador was not held up at any place and within a week the embassy party would usually be back in Colombo castle.

Characterizing Kandyan kingship between 1729 and 1739

In analysing these embassies and audiences, a few things stand out. In the first place, the king clearly embodied, or acted as, a wheel-turning monarch, a *cakravarti*. The *cakravarti* was the universal Buddhist ruler that made the world turn around, or phrased differently, a *cakravarti* was the centre of the universe. As stated in chapter one, a Lankan king could in theory only become a *cakravarti* if he had conquered the entire island, and had completed a consecration ceremony, in practice, however, proclaiming to be a *cakravarti* and/or acting as a *cakravarti* meant becoming/being a *cakravarti*, and this becomes apparent during the audiences. The king was, for example, already present when the ambassadors entered the audience hall. It was the ambassador who travelled to the king, the king himself was stationary, which could be seen as a symbolic reference of the ruler that makes the world turn around him, while he was the stationary centre, in other words, a *cakravarti*.

Whenever the ambassador would ask about the health of the king, he was always told that 'his majesty was seated on his golden throne in complete health to rule for a hundred thousand years, and to give the trusty Dutch gentlemen as well as his mighty subjects without any distinction many favours.'[254] The Kandyans clearly tried to place the Dutch at the same level as the king's subjects, to create distance between the Dutch and the king, to show that the Dutch were indeed vassals of the king. Because, in order to be considered a *cakravarti* a Kandyan king needed to have conquered the entire island, however, in practice the Kandyan kings claimed that because they were the last remaining indigenous kingdom on the island, and the Dutch were vassals of the king, they effectively were in charge of the entire island, and therefore a *cakravarti*. Thus, by stating that the king would reign for many years to give the Dutch and his other subjects without distinction many favours, the Kandyans effectively stated that the Dutch were the king's subjects, his vassals, even though this might not have been true in practice.

In addition to embodying, or acting as, a *cakravarti*, much of the ceremonialism was used to elevate the position of the king, to create distance between the king and the rest, and to place the king above everybody else. For example, upon entering the audience hall, the

[254] NA, VOC, no. 2458, ff. 1251v-1254r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1739.

king was already present and seated on his golden throne, which stood on a platform raised from the ground at the opposite side of the audience hall. The king therefore looked down upon the ambassador and others, while, at the same time, this meant that everybody literally had to look up at the king: the king was physically 'elevated' from the rest. This was also visible when the ambassador offered the letter to the king, he was escorted to the stone steps in front of the king. Here, the ambassador kneeled on a cushion that was placed on the first of these steps and held the silver tray with the letter above his head so that the king could easily pick it up, and, according to Michael Roberts, this should be seen as if it was 'an offering to a god.'[255] It is also interesting to see that the number of curtains that an ambassador had to pass through before entering the audience hall was five in 1729, in 1730 and 1731 this number had increased to six, and from 1732 onwards, this number increased again to seven. This was mainly done to increase the distance between the king and the ambassador, because more curtains meant that the king was physically further removed from the ambassador.

Secondly, it is important to understand that these audiences could in no sense 'be regarded as discussions of bilateral issues by the two parties sitting at the conference table', the Dutch would make requests and 'out of royal grace and favour' the king would grant or refuse these requests. In other words, there was 'hardly any negotiating, only requests and answers.'[256] It is therefore interesting to see that all embassies in this decade were successful in getting permissions from the Kandyan king. Even in 1736, when the tensions between the Dutch and the Kandyans were high, and the ambassador had a difficult embassy during which he was held up for months, did not receive a ceremonial knife upon departing, and he was even personally addressed by the king himself to show the discontent with the Dutch, yet the king still granted the company their requested permissions.

In addition to following strict protocol when entering and exiting the audience hall, the ambassador had to kneel three times, while the courtiers and the others had to prostrate themselves six times, and the king had to be faced at all times and no-one as allowed to turn his back on the king. Ambassadors were only allowed to ask the king for permissions for peeling cinnamon and transporting elephants, all other topics were off-limits during the audience, unless the king himself started talking about them. These other topics needed to be discussed with the courtiers outside the audience hall or during the journey. The ambassador was in constant contact with one or several courtiers during his journey to the court, and both parties used these contacts to bring up several point or make their wishes known to each

[255] Roberts, *Sinhala Consciousness*, 81.
[256] Abeyasinghe, 'Embassies as Instruments of Diplomacy', 18.

other.[257] The Kandyans asked the Dutch for example to bring rare animals to the king, but more importantly the Dutch were asked to assist the Kandyans in bringing *ksatriya*-princesses from Southern India. In 1734, the Kandyans also asked the Dutch for information about where the Buddhist religion was practiced in the best way, because during the reign of a previous king several priests were brought to Lanka from another place and the king wanted to know if it was possible to again have some priests brought to the island.[258]

This shows both the importance of the courtiers and the influence they had, because not only were the courtiers the mouthpiece of the king, by acting as intermediary between the company and the king, the courtiers could also easily influence or control the information that reached the king. The Dutch were indeed aware of this as is shown by Governor Van Imhoff, who had stated in a letter to the ambassadors that it was important for them that nothing should be discussed with the courtiers before the audience because 'that could be interpreted in a different/wrong way.'[259] Van Imhoff was, in other words, afraid that the right information would not reach the king, either because the ambassadors were not clear enough or the courtiers would twist the ambassadors information. On the other hand, the Dutch also tried to influence the courtiers themselves by bringing gifts for them, as for example happened in 1737 when the ambassador received a case with 'goods from Neurenberg' (*neurenberger goedertjes*) to give to the courtiers.[260]

We can therefore conclude that Narendrashina clearly ruled as a *cakravarti*, as a static king, elevated from his subjects. The ceremonialism at the court was used to emphasize and elevate his position even further. Moreover, it also clear that the courtiers played an important role at the Kandyan court, not only as the mouthpiece of the king, but as intermediaries they could easily influence the king and the information that reached him. The main question now is: does this image change when Sri Vijaya Rajasinha ascended the throne after Narendrasinha's death?

[257] Ibidem, 19.
[258] NA, VOC, no. 2307, ff. 1646v-1648r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1734.
[259] NA, VOC, no. 2373, ff. 1664r-1664v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, January 1737.
[260] NA, VOC, no. 2373, ff. 1666r-1666v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, January 1737.

Chapter 4: Kandyan kingship between 1739 and 1750

In this chapter the characteristics of Kandyan kingship between 1739 and 1750 will be analysed. As stated in the previous chapter, 'it was during the Nayaka reigns' that 'the divinity of the king and the ceremonialism associated with it' developed to a 'degree unthinkable earlier.'[261] Central in the present chapter are the following questions: what changed in the ceremonies during the reigns of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha and the first three years of Kirti Sri Rajasinha compared to the previous decade? What are the main differences, between the two decades and how can these be explained? Is there indeed a clear break between the Nakkayars and their predecessors?

Sri Vijaya Rajasinha (1739-1747)

After the death of Narendrasinha on the 24th of May 1739, Sri Vijaya Rajasinha ascended the throne and became the new Kandyan king.[262] Sri Vijaya Rajasinha was the younger brother of Narendrasinha's first queen.[263] Naredrasinha had no legitimate offspring, which means that he had no male children with *ksatriya* blood who could succeed him to become king of Kandy.[264] It is important to note that Sri Vijaya Rajasinha was not 'hailed from the outskirts of Madura' as stated by Dewaraja.[265] Sri Vijaya Rajasinha had grown up in Kandy, was 'surely acquainted with Buddhism, knew his Sinhala, and was familiar with the politics and culture of the court', most likely, Sri Vijaya had come to the island as part of the retinue of a *ksatriya*-princess.[266] Additionally, many historians have stated that there was fierce opposition among the courtiers about Sri Vijaya Rajasinha's rise to power, however, this was probably not the case at all, as Goonewardena stated: it may be asked 'whether there was anyone at all in the Kandyan kingdom who opposed the accession of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha to the throne.'[267] Following Seneviratne, the ascension of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha was therefore 'the logical outcome.'[268]

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[261] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 167.
[262] K.W. Goonewardena, 'The Accession of Sri Vijaya Rajasimha', in: G.P.S.H. de Silva and C.G. Uragoda (eds), Sesquicentennial Commemorative Volume of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka 1845-1995 (Colombo: Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka, 1995) pp. 441-469, there 443.
[263] *Culavamsa*, 246, lines 1-2.
[264] Malalgoda, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society*, 61.
[265] Dewaraja, *Kandyan Kingdom*, 26.
[266] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 170.
[267] Goonewardena, 'The Accession of Sri Vijaya Rajasimha', 462.
[268] Seneviratne, 'The Alien King', 57-58.

Among historians, the so-called Nayakkar kings are often remembered as 'patrons of Buddhism' and Sri Vijaya Rajasinha is no different. Wagenaar states, for example, that Sri Vijaya Rajasinha was 'eager to promote the Buddhist cause.'[269] In the *Chulavamsa* it is stated that after his consecration, Sri Vijaya Rajasinha was 'piously attached to the Triad of Jewels' of Buddhism.[270] A similar pictures arises from the VOC sources, directly after Sri Vijaya Rajasinha had ascended the throne the Dutch reported that the new king was very religious because he 'forbade the killing of any wild animals or birds throughout the entire country' as well as 'the sale of liquor, by any name' which, according to the Dutch, were 'the main foundations of this religion.'[271] Not only Sri Vijaya Rajasinha was remembered as a 'patron of Buddhism', as per tradition the king brought several queens from Southern India to the island and these queens 'gave up their false faith to which they had been long attached' and that these queens 'adopted in the best manner possible the true faith.'[272] The queens 'worshipped the Tooth Relic day by day' and even had 'sacred books copied.'[273]

In addition to these 'pious' acts, Sri Vijaya Rajasinha has also been remembered as a king that 'persecuted the Catholics' who were living on the island.[274] According to the *Chulavamsa* the king 'had their houses and their books destroyed and banished from the country those who did not give up their faith.'[275] The Dutch sources shed more light on the situation, because according to the Dutch the king 'banished all Catholic Priests from the country and set their churches on fire' because these priests had apparently 'blasphemed the teachings of Buddha both orally and in writing.'[276] Which is the reason why some historians see this as a 'pious action' as well.

As stated in the previous chapter, the *upasampada* ordination or 'higher ordination' had disappeared during Narendrasinha's reign and Sri Vijaya Rajasinha therefore wanted to invite *bikkhus* (monks) to the island to restore 'order of the *Sangha*' the order of the Buddhist monks, for preforming the *upasampada* ritual.[277] On behalf of the new king, the courtiers asked the Dutch ambassador in 1739 to find out 'where the teachings of the Buddha were best.'[278] In 1740, the Dutch sent a ship with Kandyan envoys to Pegu in modern day

[269] Wagenaar, 'Looking for Monks from Arakan', 91.
[270] *Culavamsa*, 246, lines 2-3.
[271] NA, VOC, no. 2458, ff. 1299r-1301r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1739.
[272] *Culavamsa*, 246, lines 6-7.
[273] Ibidem, 246-247, lines 8-9 and 15.
[274] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 170.
[275] *Culavamsa*, 253, line 83.
[276] NA, VOC, no. 2665, ff. 1726v-1727r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1746.
[277] Wagenaar, 'Looking for Monks from Arakan', 91.
[278] NA, VOC, no. 2458, ff. 1442r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1739.

Myanmar, to bring back several *bhikkus*, however, on its return journey in 1741 the ship perished at sea, the mission had failed. The news of this failure reached Sri Vijaya Rajasinha only in 1742, and it is safe to say that the king was not happy about this, it even created some tension between the two parties. The Kandyan's not only suspected that Willem Maurtis Bruyninck, the Dutch Governor, withheld the information about this tragedy, but the Dutch ambassador was also accused by the first *adikar* that the Dutch provided too little support for the Buddhist priests, and it was even questioned if the Dutch hadn't deliberately sunk the ship.[279]

It is clear that reviving the *upasampada* was important for Sri Vijaya Rajasinha, and this point was exemplified in 1746 when the Dutch received another letter from the king in which he asked the Dutch again for help in bringing *bhikkus* to the island. This time the Dutch advised to go to Siam, modern day Thailand, instead of Pegu because although the route was longer, it was less dangerous.[280] During the annual embassy, the ambassador told the king that a ship was ready to bring the Kandyan envoys to Siam.[281] Without any big problems the ship arrived in Siam, however, before this mission was finished the king had died in 1747, or as the *Chulavamsa* states: 'his merit was exhausted, after he had reigned eight years.'[282] This news had reached the envoys shortly after their arrival in Siam and the death of the king meant that the 'royal letter' the envoys were carrying had lost its significance, which in turn meant that the envoys had to return to Kandy and the mission was therefore again a failure.[283] Despite his failure to revive the *upasampada*, Sri Vijaya Rajasinha is still remembered as a pious Buddhist, but is this also visible in the courtly ceremonies in his reign?

Courtly Ceremonies (1739-1747)

When Narendrasinha died in 1739 the Dutch ambassador was already present in the Kandyan territories, the Dutch were even asked to send some medicines and even a doctor *(geneesmeester)* to the court to heal the king.[284] His help was to no avail, because on 24th of May, the doctor had returned from the court and told the Dutch ambassador that there was 'no doubt' that the king had died.[285] This became clear the following day when thousands of

[279] NA, VOC, no. 2559, ff. 1338v-1343v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1742.
[280] Wagenaar, 'Looking for Monks from Arakan', 106.
[281] NA, VOC, no. 2665, ff. 1727v-1734v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1746.
[282] *Culavamsa*, 254, line 95.
[283] Wagenaar, 'Looking for Monks from Arakan', 108.
[284] NA, VOC, no. 2458, ff. 1261r-1265r, 1271r-1272v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1739.
[285] NA, VOC, no. 2458, ff. 1291r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1739.

people wearing blue robes passed the ambassadors lodge with great sadness.[286] Interestingly enough, the ambassador was only told about the death of the king on the 26th of May, two days after he had died. This shows how the Kandyan kingdom actively tried to limit the Dutch access to the political intelligence, which in turn shows the importance of the annual embassies for the Dutch. On the first of June, the ambassador was told that 'the new emperor had accepted the throne', whether or not this message was also delayed, and Sri Vijaya Rajasinha had accepted the throne within this week, remains unclear.[287]

On the 21st of June, a few weeks after Sri Vijaya Rajasinha had ascended the Kandyan throne, the ambassador was invited for his first audience. With similar ceremonialism as in the previous years, the ambassador was picked up and transported to the Kandyan court. The only major difference during this audience was that Sri Vijaya Rajasinha did not personally pick up the letter written by the governor. Upon entering the audience hall, the ambassador was specifically told that the reason for this was because the letter was addressed to the previous king, the new king could therefore not accept this letter himself, and the ambassador was asked to place this letter on a table that was situated in the audience hall.[288] Besides the fact that the king did not personally pick up the letter from the silver tray, this audience was similar to the audiences in Narendrasinha's reign.

It is important to note that even though Sri Vijaya Rajasinha is often described as the Kandyan king after his ascension in 1739, but because he did not have his coronation ceremony yet, he was actually still a prince. This becomes apparent in the Dutch sources, for example in the letter that was written by governor and delivered during the annual embassy in 1740, which was addressed to the 'most illustrious great powerful prince' of the Kandyan empire.[289] In 1741, the Dutch governor was informed about the 'celebration and absolute confirmation on the imperial throne by the girdling *(omgording)* of the sword of state' and the acceptance of the magnificent title Sri Vijaya Rajasinha, what in Dutch translates to 'blessed and most victorious king of lions.'[290] From this moment onwards, the Dutch governors addressed their letters to the 'most powerful monarch and invincible emperor' of the Kandyan empire.[291] It is also important to note that Sri Vijaya was not the first Kandyan king to have

[286] NA, VOC, no. 2458, ff. 1291r-1291v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1739.
[287] NA, VOC, no. 2458, ff. 1296r-1298v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1739.
[288] NA, VOC, no. 2458, ff. 1303r-1310r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1739.
[289] NA, VOC, no. 2492, ff. 1168r: letter for Kandyan king written by Governor, February 1740.
[290] NA, VOC, no. 2522, ff. 1266r-1270v: instructions for the ambassadors, February 1741.
[291] NA, VOC, no. 2522, ff. 1258r: letter for Kandyan king, March 1741.

been coronated, the Dutch ambassador was given two reports, one from 1688 and 1707, of the coronations of Vimaladharmasuriya II and Narendrasinha respectively.[292]

The ceremonies during the audiences in Sri Vijaya Rajasinha's reign do, on first glance, hardly show any differences with the ceremonies and audiences of his predecessor Narendrasinha. The ambassador was for example picked up and transported to the palace with similar ceremonial compared to Narendrasinha's reign. To enter the audience hall, the ambassador still had to pass through seven curtains and inside the hall the ambassador was expected to kneel three times and the courtiers prostrated themselves six times, while the letter had to be presented by kneeling on the first step and, like before, nobody was allowed to turn their back on the king. It is therefore interesting to see that compared to the audiences in Narendrasinha's reign, the audiences in Sri Vijaya's reign seem to last longer, and more noticeably, the ambassador would arrive back at his lodge much later compared to the ambassadors in Narendrasinha's reign. Before Sri Vijaya ascended the throne, an ambassador would be picked up in the late afternoon, generally around four, and would arrive back at his lodge around midnight, which means that he was gone for around eight hours in total. During Sri Vijaya's reign, the ambassador would also be picked up in the late afternoon, generally around five o'clock, however, he would not return to his lodge before three in the morning.[293]

This means that the ambassador would in general arrive back in his lodge after ten hours, significantly longer compared to the ambassador in Narendrasinha's reign, which is remarkable because there is no clear evidence that the journey from the lodge to the court, or back differed in this period. Could this mean that even though the ceremonies looked similar to the Dutch ambassadors, they were in fact more elaborate during Sri Vijaya's reign? Even if this is an interesting theory, there is no evidence that the content of the audience itself or the ceremonies within the audiences differed in these years, it is therefore unlikely that this was the case. Historians have also stated that Narendrasinha was not in good health during the last few years of his life, could his high age and fragile health have affected the duration of the ceremonies, or the 'earlier' return of the ambassador? This is unlikely, because during his short reign Sri Vijaya also experienced several health issues, yet, in Sri Vijaya's reign the duration of the audiences had not been influenced, so there is no reason to assume this had happened in Narendrasinha's reign. The most probable explanation of the longer duration was that the ambassadors were held up longer during their journeys to the court, this happened for example in 1744 when the ambassador arrived at the 'covered' bridge at Bogambere, the

[292] NA, VOC, no. 2522, ff. 1267r: letter for Kandyan king, March 1741.
[293] NA, VOC, no. 2598, ff. 1943v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1743.

fishing pond of the king, at around seven in the evening but had to wait there for two hours before he was allowed to continue his journey to the court.[294] In 1746, the ambassador even had to wait for three hours before he was allowed to enter the city of Kandy.[295] As shown in the previous chapter, delaying the ambassador was an often used tactic by the Kandyan's. The main reason for delaying the ambassador, and therefore increasing the time an ambassador had to travel to see the king, was because an embassy was 'designed as a difficult ritual passage' to impress 'upon the ambassador the moral elevation of the king.' By increasing the time, the court thus created more distance between the king and the in this case the Dutch, personified by the ambassador.

Another big difference between the audiences in these two periods is that all embassies during the last decade of Narendrasinha's reign were successful, not a single one had failed, not even in 1736 when the tensions between the two parties were high. This was not the case in Sri Vijaya Rajasinha's reign, because in 1745 the Dutch did not receive permission to peel cinnamon in, or to transport elephants through, the king's territories. Usually, the Dutch ambassador would ask the king for the renewal of the permissions during the first audience, and the king would always immediately give these permissions. In 1745, when the ambassador asked for the permissions, the king told the ambassador that 'he would answer this request at a later moment.'[296] Outside the audience hall, the ambassador once again tried to discuss the permissions with the courtiers, however, instead of answering the questions of the ambassador, the first *adikar* stated that in earlier times, the court and the Dutch had a good relationship because the governor gave the court 'many good and pleasant favours' for which the Dutch were rewarded by the court, for example with the permissions.[297]

According to the *adikar*, however, the relationship in 1745 was not that good anymore, he accused the Dutch of constantly complaining about losses they suffered and the compensation they wanted, while the *adikar* stated that the court suffered many losses as well, especially because the Dutch had closed the port of Putulang, in the north of the island, and the Kandyan's desperately wanted it to be opened for trade.[298] The ambassador responded to these accusations by stating that the closure of the port was decided in Batavia, and the governor could not do anything about it, additionally, the ambassador was of the opinion that

[294] NA, VOC, no. 2621, ff. 1932r-1934v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1744.
[295] NA, VOC, no. 2665, ff. 1735v-1739v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1746.
[296] NA, VOC, no. 2645, ff. 1778r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1745.
[297] NA, VOC, no. 2645, ff. 1781v-1782v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1745.
[298] NA, VOC, no. 2645, ff. 1781v-1782v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1745.

the Dutch were, to their ability, providing the 'great court with many pleasures, favours and services' and the ambassador therefore asked the *adikar* if he could 'work the king' so that the Dutch would receive their permissions, which the *adikar* said he would try.[299]

During the second audience, the ambassador again tried to ask about the permissions, but was interrupted by the *adikar* who stated that this was not the moment to this discuss this topic, and it became clear for the ambassador that, expect from complaining about the situation, no further actions could be undertaken to obtain the permissions from the court.[300] This became even more apparent the following day when the first *adikar* came to the lodge of the ambassador to give him his farewell, the ambassador once again tried to obtain the permissions but was told that he 'had to be content with what the king already had said on this topic during the audience' and that it would be best if he would return to Colombo.[301] Although the Dutch were never told explicitly that they would not receive the permissions, and the ambassador had received the usual 'farewell' gifts, the fact that the permissions were not granted was a clear sign that their request was denied by the king, which meant that the Dutch were not allowed to peel cinnamon in, and transport elephants through, the king's territories in 1745.[302]

The Dutch thought that the main reason for not obtaining the permissions was that the king was angry at the Dutch because no priests had successfully been transported to the island, which is why the Dutch made sure that during the following embassy a ship to transport envoys to Siam in order to bring back some monks was ready for departure. However, during the embassy, the ambassador was told by a *disava* that the lack of priests was not the reason why the Dutch had were unsuccessful in obtaining permissions, the real reason was closure of the port of Putulang and more specifically that the port was not even opened for the king himself, even though this port had been closed for many decades.[303] The *disava* even stated that the king's answers to the Dutch request about the permissions were 'placed in his mouth by the first *adikar*.'[304] In other words, according to the *disava*, the first *adikar* was not happy about the fact that the port of Putulang was still closed by the Dutch, and apparently influenced the king to such a degree that the Dutch did not receive their permissions. It is, however, important to be careful with this kind of 'second hand'

[299] NA, VOC, no. 2645, ff. 1782v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1745.
[300] NA, VOC, no. 2645, ff. 1789v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1745.
[301] NA, VOC, no. 2645, ff. 1792v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1745.
[302] NA, VOC, no. 2645, ff. 1789v-1790v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1745.
[303] NA, VOC, no. 2665, ff. 1716v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1746.
[304] NA, VOC, no. 2665, ff. 1707v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1746.

information, because, during the first audience in 1746 when the ambassador told the king that a ship was ready to transport envoys to Siam to fetch *bhikkus*, the king 'expressed his great joy' and 'lauded the Governor's willingness to please the king' after which the ambassador immediately received permission to peel cinnamon in, and transport elephants across, the king's lands.[305]

This does raise the question why the embassy in 1745 had failed, had the Dutch been correct in assuming that the bringing of *bhikkus* to the island was of the utmost importance for the king, and it that the lack of action about these *bhikkus* was the reason of the failed embassy in 1745? Or was it an attempt by the courtiers to influence the Dutch in the hopes that the port would be opened? If that was the case, then it was a long shot, because, as the ambassador had told the *disava* during the embassy, the opening of the port was something that 'never would or could be permitted' by the Dutch.[306] There is also the possibility that it was a combination of both and not a case of either/or. In other words, for the king, the bringing of *bhikkus* to the island was important, while the *adikars* desperately wanted the opening of the port of Putulang.

It is clear that the courtiers played an important role in and around the court, not only serving as intermediaries between the court and the Dutch, but also as influencers of both the king and the Dutch. One could even ask the question if the courtiers in general and the *adikars* in particular had become increasingly important during Sri Vijaya's reign? If that was the case, does that also mean that the king might have become more of a ritual figure that left the so-called state business to his ministers? In other words, was Sri Vijaya more focussed on becoming, and acting as, a *cakravarti*, and was he, for that reason, more focussed on bringing *bhikkus* to the island to restore the *Sangha*, while the state business had become more the domain of the courtiers, which would explain why the courtiers advocated to have the blockade of the port of Putulang lifted? Even though this would be a very interesting theory, the Dutch sources do not provide enough evidence that would support this theory, however, maybe further research could shed some more light on this interesting question.

Characterizing kingship in Sri Vijaya Rajasinha's reign (1739-1747)

Despite his short reign, analysing the embassies and audiences in Sri Vijaya's reign do provide a clear picture of what Kandyan kingship looked like during his reign. When comparing the ceremonies and audiences in the two periods, it becomes clear that kingship in

[305] NA, VOC, no. 2665, ff. 1731v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1746.
[306] NA, VOC, no. 2665, ff. 1716v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1746.

Sri Vijaya's reign closely resembled kingship in Narendrasinha's reign. The most notable differences were, in the first place, the length of the audiences. In Sri Vijaya's reign the audiences itself would generally last longer, not because the contents differed from the ones in previous years, but because the Kandyan's delayed the ambassador even more on his way to the court. The main reason for these delays was to increase the time the ambassador had to travel to see the king, and thus creating more distance between the king and his subjects. In other words, the bigger the distance between the king and his subjects means that the king was further removed from his subjects which in essence elevated the king's status compared to, in this case, the Dutch. Another difference between Narendrasinha's reign and that of Sri Vijaya was that when Narendrasinha was king, not a single Dutch embassy failed, it was almost if these embassies were a formality, the ambassadors even expected to receive the permissions they asked for. During Sri Vijaya's reign it became clear, however, that this was not the case. In 1745 the Dutch ambassador failed to receive the permissions from the king. The most likely reason for this was because the court was of the opinion that the Dutch had failed to provide enough favours, especially in helping to bringing *bhikkus* to the island. Which showed how important the bringing of *bhikkus* to the island was for Sri Vijaya.

Secondly, like his predecessor Narendrashina, Sri Vijaya also clearly acted as a *cakravarti*. As stated above, a *cakravarti* was the ideal Buddhist king, the upholder of the *dharma*, the teachings of the Buddha, and the protector the *Sangha*, the order of Buddhist monks, which means that the *cakravarti* essentially protects the integrity of Buddhism on the island. This was also the reason why Sri Vijaya (desperately) tried to bring *bhikkus* to Lanka to have the *upasampada* ritual reinstated on the island, especially since this ritual was an integral part of the *Sangha*. It is however interesting to see that even though Sri Vijaya had failed to bring these *bhikkus* to the island, he is still remembered as a pious Buddhist. The likely reasons for this are, on the one hand, the two decrees Sri Vijaya issued directly after his ascension, in which Sri Vijaya forbade the killing of any wild animal throughout the entire country as well as the sale of liquor by any name, both of which were, according to the Dutch, the main foundations of the Buddhist religion. Furthermore, as the protector of Buddhism on the island, any attack on the religion itself needed to be dealt with. It is therefore understandable that the Catholics who, according to the sources, 'blasphemed' the Buddhist religion, not only in writing, but orally as well, were banished and had their churches and burned down.

It is also important to note that the coronation of Sri Vijaya in 1741 also can be seen as a sign that Sri Vijaya acted as a *cakravarti*. In the first chapter it was stated that a Kandyan

king could only become a *cakravarti* when he had conquered the entire island and that performed a separate consecration ceremony. By claiming that the Dutch were his vassals, the Kandyan kings 'accomplished' this first point, and Goonewardana had shown that in the seventeenth century a consecration ceremony was not needed by the Kandyan kings, but that the 'intention of celebrating a coronation ceremony' sufficed.[307] However, Dutch sources have shown that Vimaladharmasuriya II had his consecration ceremony in 1688, while Sri Vijaya's predecessor Narendrashina was consecrated in 1708.[308] This shows that already from the end of the seventeenth century, but especially during the eighteenth century, a separate consecration ceremony was of high importance for Kandyan kings to create, emphasize or showcase, their status as *cakravarti*. Sri Vijaya's coronation can thus be seen as a sign that Sri Vijaya wanted to be seen as, or become a *cakravarti*, but in this respect he was no different than his predecessors.

There was clearly a remarkable continuity in kingship between the reigns of both Narendrasinha and Sri Vijaya, both kings acted as a *cakravarti*, however, it seems like there was more emphasis on being/becoming a *cakravarti* in Sri Vijaya's reign, and even though Sri Vijaya Rajasinha did not succeed in reviving the *upasampada* during his reign he is still remembered as a pious Buddhist, maybe even more so than Narendrasinha. Was this also visible in the reign of Sri Vijaya's successor Kirti Sri Rajasinha? Did anything change the first few years of Kirti Sri's reign? Is it for example possible to see the, what Wagenaar calls 'nationalistic revival of Buddhism' that Sri Vijaya had embarked on being 'built up by' Kirti Sri Rajasinha?[309]

Kirti Sri Rajasinha (1747-1787)

The death of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha in 1747 came rather unexpectedly for the Dutch. In April the ambassador returned from his annual embassy and in June the Dutch were told that Sri Vijaya Rajasinha had married a second princess from Madura, in addition to his first marriage in 1740, whereafter the Dutch sent a new embassy to congratulate the king with his new queen. During the first audience of this second embassy there was no indication that something was wrong with the king, however, because the king was 'too ill' the ambassador never received his 'farewell' audience and since it would not be clear when the king would be healthy enough to give a proper farewell, the ambassador was allowed to leave the court and

[307] Goonewardena, 'Kingship in Seventeenth Century Sri Lanka', 17.
[308] NA, VOC, no. 2522, ff. 1267r: letter for Kandyan king, March 1741.
[309] Wagenaar, 'Looking for Monks from Arakan', 97.

return to Colombo. Before the ambassador could return to Colombo, however, any people who came from the court passed the ambassador's lodge told the ambassador that the king had passed away around five o'clock in the morning on August 11 in 1747.[310] Interestingly, on the 13th of August the ambassador was only 'notified about the election of a new king' by the court, no mention was made that the old king had passed away, but this had become clear since many people 'dressed in mourning clothes' passed the ambassador's lodge.[311] After eight years on the Kandyan throne, and only a few months after his second marriage, Sri Vijaya had passed away and was succeeded by his brother-in-law, who took the name Kirti Sri Rajasinha and who, according to the Dutch, was appointed by the king shortly before he died.[312] As stated in the first chapter, the Kandyan throne was passed from father to son, or, when no eligible heir was born, from brother to brother, and since Sri Vijaya had not eligible offspring to succeed him, the closest *ksatriya*-born male was the brother of his queen, who therefore became king of Kandy.

Kirti Sri Rajasinha, the successor of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha, was not only the longest ruling 'Nayakkar king' he is often remembered as the 'last great king of Kandy.'[313] It is stated that Kirti Sri did 'more to foster Buddhism than any other king of Kandy.'[314] According to Schrikker, the Buddhistic revival, which supposedly started during Sri Vijaya's reign, 'reached its peak' during the reign of Kirti Sri Rajasinha.[315] The *Chulavamsa* states that Kirti Sri 'furthered the true doctrine, made offerings of necessaries and so increased the store of his merit.'[316] Kirti Sri is also laureated because of his 'generous and munificent patronage' to Buddhistic and 'Sinhalese literature.'[317] Or as the *Chulavamsa* describes: 'The Lord of men called scribes together, made them copy out in one day the Digha-Nikaya', which was an important Buddhist text, 'showed them much favour and then had the sacred text preached the whole night long in the right manner.'[318] Additionally, it is stated in the *Chulavamsa* that Kirti Sri resurrected many temples that had fallen into decay.[319] While during Kirti Sri's reign many festivals celebrating the Tooth Relic were held throughout the entire country.[320]

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[310] NA, VOC, no. 2692, ff. 1062r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, August 1747.
[311] NA, VOC, no. 2692, ff. 1063r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, August 1747.
[312] NA, VOC, no. 2692, ff. 987r: instructions for the ambassador, October 1747.
[313] John Clifford Holt, *Buddha in the Crown: Avalokitesvara in the Buddhist Traditions of Sri Lanka* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 61.
[314] Duncan, *City as Text*, 33.
[315] Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention*, 27.
[316] *Culavamsa*, 257, line 27.
[317] Tillakaratne, *Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, 6.
[318] *Culavamsa*, 258, lines 31-32.
[319] Ibidem, 293-294, lines 229-239.
[320] Ibidem, 258-262, lines 42-74.

Despite all these feats, however, Kirti Sri will always be remembered as the king who succeeded in reinstating the *upasampada* ritual by bringing *bhikkus* to the island. When Kirti Sri ascended the throne in 1747, a party of Kandyan envoys had already reached Siam, but because of the death of Sri Vijaya, the letter to the king of Siam had lost its significance and became worthless. The envoys therefore had to return to Kandy, which meant that this second journey was also unsuccessful. In 1750 the Dutch received another request from the Kandyan's for assistance in bringing *bhikkus* to the island.[321] The Dutch again helped the Kandyan's and in May of 1753 several *bhikkus* from Siam arrived on the island and in with the Higher Ordination in July 1753 the *Sangha* was restored.[322]

In analysing the *Chulavamsa* it is interesting to see that Kirti Sri is described somewhat differently compared to his two predecessors. Both Narendrasinha and Sri Vijaya have been praised in the *Chulavamsa*, Narendrasinha is for example described as 'an adobe of discernment and manly virtues' who 'performed meritorious works' and 'celebrated daily a festival for the Tooth Relic' while Sri Vijaya was 'piously attached to the Triad of the jewels', arranged great festivals, and made many sacrifices to the relic. Both kings were pious Buddhist rulers according to the *Chulavamsa*, and as shown above, this was no different for Kirti Sri. What is different, though, is that Kirti Sri has been praised or described in different ways as well, it is for example stated that 'the highly famed Lord of men honoured the Tooth Relic with constant reverence even as (a world ruler) his wheel and worshipped it in every way.'[323] Which clearly was a reference to Kirti Sri being a 'wheel turning monarch' a *cakravarti*.

The *Chulavamsa* also describes Kirti Sri as a 'living Buddha.'[324] While it is also stated that 'the Rule of men himself, adorned with all the royal ornaments, like the King of the gods, betook himself after he had previously celebrated many great sacrifices of all kinds, to the temple of the Tooth Relic.'[325] Phrased differently, 'adorned with all the royal ornaments' the Rule of men was like the King of the gods. Elsewhere, it was also stated that 'in the superb, beautiful maṇḍapa', which was a temple, […] stood the King, the Ruler of men, like the King of the gods at the head of the company of the gods.'[326] By equating Kirti Sri with the gods, in

[321] Julius Valentijn Stijn van Gollenesse, *Memoir of Julius Stein van Gollenesse, Governor of Ceylon 1743-1751, for His Successor Gerrit Joan Vreeland, 28th February, 1751* (Selections from the Dutch Records of the Government of Sri Lanka), ed. Sinnappah Arasaratnam (Colombo: Department of National Archives, 1974), 18.
[322] Wagenaar, 'Looking for Monks from Arakan', 109.
[323] *Culavamsa*, 274, line 1.
[324] Ibidem, 277, line 39.
[325] Ibidem, 276, lines 27-28.
[326] Ibidem, 277, lines 36-37.

other words, these three examples clearly show the divinization of Kirti Sri in the *vamsa* literature, which is certainly different compared to how his predecessors were described. This could be an interesting parallel with the Nayaka kings or the Indian subcontinent in general, however, the divine description of Kirti Sri in the *Chulavamsa* does not automatically mean that Kirti Sri was also seen as a divine king by his subjects.

Additionally, it is important to note here that the *Chulavamsa* was probably written during Kirti Sri's lifetime, according to Wilhelm Geiger, who translated the chronicle, the original text at one point stated, 'our king' which only occurs in Kirti Sri's verse in the chronicle and nowhere else, which would signify that it was written during his lifetime, while elsewhere Geiger stated that it 'sounds as if it were addressed to a living person' which, again would mean that Kirti Sri was alive when this was written.[327] This is relevant because, as Gunawardana has stated, this could suggest that Kirti Sri 'consciously sought to cultivate this identity.'[328] In other words, because (a part of) the chronicle was written during Kirti Sri's lifetime, it could be possible that Kirti Sri himself wanted to be remembered as a *cakravarti* and as (an almost) divine being. It is therefore important to be careful in the usage of the *Chulavamsa*, especially in Kirti Sri's reign, because was Kirti Sri indeed seen as (an almost) divine king, or wanted he be remembered as one? Maybe the audiences and embassies in the first three years could shed some light on this question.

Kandyan kingship in the first years of Kirti Sri's reign (1747-1750)

Analysing the audiences and ceremonies in the first years of Kirti Sri's reign, shows that hardly anything had changed when the audiences and ceremonies in Sri Vijaya's reign. Ambassadors were picked up and guided to the court with similar ceremonial, at the court the ambassadors were still expected to kneel three times, while the courtiers prostrated themselves six times, the letter was presented, and picked up, in the same way, while still nobody was allowed to turn his back on the king. One thing does, however, stand out in the first years of Kirti Sri's reign, instead of passing through seven curtains to enter the audience hall, an ambassador 'only' had to pass through six curtains.

As stated in the previous chapter, until 1729 the number of curtains that hang before the audience hall was five, this increased to six in 1730 and 1731, and from 1732 onwards, this number increased again to seven curtains that an ambassador had to pass through to enter the audience hall. In 1748, during the first annual embassy the Dutch had sent since Kirti Sri

[327] Ibidem, 260, note 3; 299, note 2.
[328] Gunawardana, 'Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past', 200.

ascended the throne, the ambassador specifically stated that 'six curtains were drawn behind the others.'[329] In both 1749 and 1750 the ambassador also had to pass through six curtains before the audience hall could be entered.[330]

Why this change was made remains unclear. In the previous chapter it was stated that the increase of curtains in Narendrasinha's time, from five to seven, was probably done in order to create more distance between the king and his subjects, to have him physically further removed from his subjects. Does that mean that a decrease in the number of curtains was an attempt to decrease the distance between the king and his subjects? If this was the case, one would expect to see attempts to decrease the distance between the king and his subjects in other areas as well, and as stated above, in the other aspects the ceremonies had not been altered in these first years of Kirti Sri's reign. Could the decrease be seen as a sign that the relationship between the court and the Dutch had improved after the Dutch assisted in a new attempt to bring *bhikkus* to the island? If this was the case, one would expect the number of curtains to have varied in Sri Vijaya's reign, and be increased after the failed mission to Siam, which is why this would be unlikely as well. Additional research could maybe shed some light on this decrease, does number of curtains, for example, remain six during Kriti Sri's entire reign? Or does the number of curtains increase again after Kirti Sri was coronated in 1751?[331] Further research on the audiences and ceremonies is needed anyway to provide a better picture of what Kandyan kingship looked like during Kirti Sri's reign. It is clear, though, that in the first years of Kirti Sri's reign hardly anything had changed in ceremonies and audiences, and like his predecessors, Kirti Sri acted as a *cakravarti*, the wheel-turning monarch, the ideal Buddhist king. This image was clearly visible and even emphasized in the *Chulavamsa*, although this could also be because Kirti Sri wanted to be seen and remembered in that way.

Conclusions

The aim of the present chapter was to analyse the ceremonies and audiences in the first decade of the so-called 'Nayakkar period' from 1739 until 1750, the period that encompassed the entire reign of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha, and the first three years of Kirti Sri Rajasinha's reign, to see if and, more importantly, what had changed compared to the audiences and ceremonies in the decade before the Nayakkar kings rose to power. What are the main differences,

[329] NA, VOC, no. 2713, ff. 866r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, April 1748.
[330] NA, VOC, no. 2757, ff. 1320v-1323v: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1748.
[331] Roberts, *Sinhala Consciousness*, 48.

between the two decades and how can these be explained? Was there indeed a clear break between Nayaka kings and their predecessors?

Analysing the audiences and ceremonies after Sri Vijaya Rajasinha rose to power clearly shows a remarkable continuity with the previous decade. The most interesting difference between the two periods is that in the last decade of Narendrasinha's reign, not a single embassy had failed, the Dutch received the requested permissions during every embassy. In 1745 however, the Dutch were denied permission to both peel cinnamon in, and transport elephants through, the king's territories. The official reading of the court was that the Dutch had not provided the court with enough favours, additionally, the courtiers had stated that the closure of the port of Putulang was the main reason why the Dutch request was denied. On the other hand, the Dutch were of the opinion that the lack of assistance in bringing *bhikkus* to the island had caused the discontent at the court, and that the embassy of 1745 had failed for that reason. There was probably not a single reason for the failure of the embassy of 1745, it is likely that the court was indeed not happy that the Dutch had not really assisted in bringing the *bhikkus* to the island, while the court was also dissatisfied with the lack of access to the ports, especially to the port of Putulang. Moreover, denying the Dutch the permissions they asked for, was also a display of power by Sri Vijaya, with this action he clearly showed that the Dutch were mere vassals of the king.

Another interesting difference between Sri Vijaya and Narendrasinha was the Sri Vijaya acted more as the protector of the Buddhist religion, not only did Sri Vijaya desperately tried to restore the *Sangha* by bringing *bhikkus* to the island, but directly after he ascended the throne, two decreets were issued in his name that forbade the killing of any wild animal as well as the sale of any liquor throughout the country. All of this showed that the few differences between Narendrasinha's reign and that of Sri Vijaya can be explained by a bigger emphasize on the king acting as, and therefore being a, *cakravarti* that was even further removed or elevated than his predecessors. It is also important to note here that success in restoring the *Sangha* was not a necessary for Sri Vijaya to act more as a *cakravarti*.

In first three years of Kirti Sri's reign the courtly ceremonialism was almost identical to that of Sri Vijaya's reign, the only small difference was that the number of curtains in front of the audience hall had decreased from seven to six. The reason for this remains unclear, was this for example only a temporary change, or was it an attempt to decrease the distance between the king and his subjects? Further research could possibly shed some light on this aspect. The biggest difference between Kirti Sri and his two predecessors can be found in the *Chulavamsa*. In addition to being described as a pious Buddhist like his predecessors, Kirti

Sri is clearly being equated with the gods, it is however important to note that the *Chulavamsa* was probably written during Kirti Sri's lifetime, which could mean that Kirti Sri 'consciously cultivated' this identity, because this 'divinization' was not visible in the ceremonialism in the first years of Kirti Sri's reign. Both Kriti Sri and Sri Vijaya had a bigger emphasize on acting as a *cakravarti*, but besides this, it is clear that the courtly ceremonialism shows a remarkable continuity with before the Nayaka kings rose to power.

Conclusion

The defeat and capture of Sri Vikrama Rajasinha in 1815 by the British soldiers not only meant the end of the so-called Nayaka dynasty of the Kandyan kingdom, but with Sri Vikrama's capture, and the subsequent takeover of the entire island, the Kandyan kingdom ceased to exist, or as John Davy had stated, 'the old Kandyan government, at least two thousand years old […] is now no more.'[332] Modern historians often discern two dynasties of the Kandyan kingdom, the dynasty that ruled the Kandyan kingdom from its foundation in 1591, and the Nayaka dynasty that started when Sri Vijaya Rajasinha ascended the Kandyan throne in 1739. It is often stated that the ascension of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha was a 'breach with the former dynasty', not only because of the South Indian origins of these Nayaka kings, but, more importantly, because the Nayaka dynasty resulted in a Dravidianization or Nayakarization of Kandyan kingship, in other words, it is often suggested that Kandyan kingship became Nayakarized in the Nayaka dynasty.[333]

The study of the Nayaka period of the Kandyan kingdom has for a long time been dominated by a dichotomy about the nature of the so-called Nayaka kings, historians have analysed these kings either as 'aliens' or as 'integrated', but Gananath Obeyesekere has recently advocated that historians need to focus more on the 'impact of the Nayakas on Kandyan society' instead of the nature of the Nayaka kings.[334] This is a valid point because the question of how Kandyan kingship was actually influenced by the Nayaka kings has hardly received any attention from historians, and although it was Obeyesekere who recently stated that during the Nayaka dynasty 'the divinity of the king and the ceremonialism associated with it developed to a degree unthinkable earlier', multiple questions have yet to be answered.[335] It is for example unclear what is meant by Nayaka kingship and in what way that differed from Kandyan kingship, while Obeyesekere does also not explain what ceremonies, or what ceremonialism, had changed, or developed, during the Nayaka dynasty. These questions have played an important role in the present thesis, and all evolve around the central question, did Kandyan kingship became Nayakarized in the first decade of the Nayaka dynasty?

[332] Davy, *Account of the Interior of Ceylon,* 135.
[333] Obeyesekere, 'Between the Portuguese and the Nayakas', 167.
[334] Ibidem.
[335] Ibidem, 175.

The main aim of this thesis has been to analyse Kandyan kingship in the last decade before the Nayaka dynasty rose to power, and to compare it with Kandyan kingship in the first decade after Sri Vijaya ascended to throne to see if any, and, more importantly, in what way ceremonialism had changed, to see if Kandyan kingship indeed became Nayakarized. The first chapter was focussed on the characteristics of Lankan kingship in general and Kandyan kingship in particular, because, if one wants to see in what way Kandyan kingship became Nayakarized, it is important to understand what Kandyan kingship actually entailed. In this chapter it was shown that the most important principle Kandyan kings needed to adhere to, was that a Kandyan king needed to be of royal blood, to be born from a *ksatriya*, in other words, one could only become king on the island if he was a *ksatriya*. This aspect was so important that when the Kandyan kingdom was the only indigenous kingdom left on the island, and there were therefore no *ksatriya*-princesses to marry, *ksatriya*-brides were hailed from Southern India. In other words, being a *ksatriya* was more important than being Sinhalese.

Additionally, since Buddhism and kingship were closely connected on the island, a Kandyan king wanted to be (seen as) the ideal Buddhist king, the righteous universal monarch, a *cakravarti*. A *cakravarti* was responsible for the vitality and the discipline of the *Sangha*, the order of Buddhist monks on the island, while at the same time he was the upholder of the *dharma*, the Buddhist doctrine. A *cakravarti* was, in other words, the fountainhead of Buddhism on the island.[336] From the fifteenth century onwards, the *cakravarti*-ideal had developed to a more divine notion of kingship, the Lankan king was not only seen as an 'aspirant Buddha', as someone who would become Buddha, as a *Boddhisatva*, but they were also often addressed as 'god', this meant that Kandyan kings were often seen as 'gods who would become Buddha.'[337] This clearly showed that Lanka was influenced by developments on the Indian subcontinent, it is, however, important to note that the *cakravarti*-ideal did not disappear on the island, on the contrary, a Kandyan king wanted, first and foremost, to be seen as a *cakravarti*.

The second chapter focussed on the characteristics of Nayaka kingship, and it was shown that the Nayaka king was a mobile, rich, (almost) divine God-king, with a large involvement in trade and revenue farms. A Nayaka king had a strong warrior connection and success on the battlefield, so-called martial pride, was important for him. The Nayaka king was also generous, providing the Brahmins with food, not necessarily with land as was the

[336] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 146.
[337] Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*, 2.

case in previous times. Under the Nayaka kings, the enjoyments of life, like food and erotica, also became increasingly important, Nayaka kings were for example shown as 'heavier figures' with big bellies, while much of the literature was now more focussed on the king's 'heroism in the bedroom' compared to earlier when the achievements on the battlefield were featured.[338] Interestingly, even though the warrior background of the Nayaka's was an important aspect for these kings, it was *bhoga* that became increasingly important in the arts and in the literature. The most significant difference between Nayaka kingship and that of its predecessors is, however, the divinization of the king, because if the king became, or even was seen as, God, it was the Brahmin that needed to service him. This meant that the king took the ritual role of the Brahmin on him, and in turn the distinction between the temple and the court disappeared. Phrased differently, in Nayaka kingship the Brahmin merely assisted the God-king who acted as the main sacrificer.[339] It is important to note here that there were also plenty of similarities between Nayaka kingship and previous forms of kingship, and although this means that is difficult to state that Nayaka kingship presented an 'exotic department of earlier political forms', the divinization of the Nayaka kings, together with the focus on *bhoga* and their martial pride does justify speaking of Nayaka kingship.

The second part of this thesis was focussed on the courtly ceremonies in the two decades. Chapter three showed that Narendrashina wanted to be seen as a *cakravarti*, and that he acted like it. When the ambassador entered in the audience hall, Naredrasinha was already seated on his throne, as the stationary centre around which the world turns, as a *cakravarti*. It is important to note here that on Lanka, a king could only become a *cakravarti* when he had conquered the entire island, however, by claiming that the Dutch were vassals, the Kandyan kings claimed to control all Dutch territories, and therefore, the entire island. In this respect Narendrasinha did not differ from his predecessors, when the ambassador asked about Narendrasinha's health, the response would always be that the king was in 'good health to rule for a hundred thousand years' to give the 'trusty Dutch gentlemen as well as his mighty subjects' many favours 'without distinction', in other words, by stating that there was no distinction between the Dutch and the king's subjects, the Dutch became the king's subjects, and in this way, the Dutch territories became the king's territories.[340]

Additionally, much of the ceremonialism at the court was used to elevate the position of the king. The king was, for example, seated on his golden throne that stood on an elevated

[338] Bes, *Heirs of Vijayanagara*, 170.
[339] Gommans, 'Cosmopolitanism and Imagination', 6.
[340] NA, VOC, no. 2185, ff. 823v-824r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, March 1731.

platform at the opposite side of the audience hall, clearly physically elevated from the ground, and therefore from his subjects. This was also visible when the ambassador would present the king with the Governor's letter, because in presenting the letter, the ambassador had to kneel on the stone steps in front of the throne and raise his arms, so that the king could easily pick up the letter. Not only does this show that the king was physically elevated from his subjects, but, according to Michael Roberts, this offering was also similar to 'an offering to a god', which clearly is a more metaphorical sign to signify Narendrasinha's elevation from his subjects.[341] Narendrasinha clearly strove to be seen as a *cakravarti*, as a static ruler, that by sitting on his raised throne was clearly elevated from his subjects. It is also clear that much of the ceremonialism at the court was used increase the distance between king and his subjects, to elevate his position even further.

Central to the fourth chapter was the ceremonialism in the first decade of the Nayaka dynasty, this decade covered of entire rule of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha as well as the first three years of Kirti Sri's reign. The most noticeable difference was that the Dutch were not granted the permissions they asked for in 1745 and the reason for the failed embassy was the Kandyan dissatisfaction with the Dutch, either because of a lack of help in bringing *bhikkus* to the island, which was said to be of the utmost importance to Sri Vijaya, or because of the blockade of the port of Putulang, which was claimed to be mostly initiated by the courtiers, or it was a combination of both. It is tempting to explain the importance of the (lack of) *bhikkus* on the island for Sri Vijaya, and the focus from the courtiers on the opening of the port of Putulang in terms of Sri Vijaya becoming a more ritual figure that left state business to his courtiers, however, but the no evidence to support this claim can be provided by the sources. The reason for the failure of the 1745 embassy can therefore only be explained as that the Kandyans were dissatisfied with the Dutch, for whatever reason, while it is also important to understand that denying the Dutch their permissions was a power move by Sri Vijaya that clearly showed that Sri Vijaya viewed the Dutch as mere vassals.

Another difference, albeit not in the ceremonialism, was that Sri Vijaya presented himself more as a champion of Buddhism compared to Narendrasinha. Directly after his ascension, Sri Vijaya issued two decreets which banned drinking of alcohol and the killing of animals on the island.[342] In other words, Sri Vijaya Rajasinha clearly had a bigger emphasize on him become/being a *cakravarti*, albeit this was more visible in his actions than through the

[341] Robert, *Sinhala Consciousness*, 81.
[342] NA, VOC, no. 2485, ff. 1299r-1301r: diary of embassy to Kandyan Court, July 1739.

courtly ceremonialism, which clearly showed a remarkable continuity between Narendrasinha and Sri Vijaya.

The first three years of Kirti Sri's reign also hardly show any differences in ceremonialism compared to both Sri Vijaya and Narendrasinha. The only noticeable difference was that after Kirti Sri rose to the throne, the number of curtains in front of the audience hall had decreased from seven to six. It remains unclear what the reasoning behind this is, was it for example done to decrease the distance between Kirti Sri and the Dutch, as a sign of goodwill from Kirti Sri to again receive Dutch assistance in bringing *bhikkus* to the island? Or was it just a temporary change with a more practical reason? Further research might be able to answer some of these questions.

The biggest difference between Kirti Sri and Sri Vijaya was also not found in the ceremonies at the court but can be found in the *Chulavamsa*. In addition to being described as a pious Buddhist like his predecessors, Kirti Sri is clearly being equated with the gods. It is for example stated that the 'Ruler of men' was like 'the king of gods', while it is also stated that 'like the king of the Gods' the 'rule of men himself' had many sacrifices in temple of the Tooth.[343] These examples clearly show the divinization of Kirti Sri in the *vamsa* literature, and this is certainly different compared to how his predecessors were described. The divinization of Kirti Sri could also be seen as an interesting parallel with developments of the Indian subcontinent, however, the divine description of Kirti Sri in the *Chulavamsa* does not automatically mean that Kirti Sri was also seen as a divine king by his subjects, because the *Chulavamsa* was probably written during Kirti Sri's lifetime, which could mean that Kirti Sri 'consciously cultivated' this identity. The ceremonies in the first three years of Kirti Sri's reign do not show any sign that of an (increased) divinization. It is clear that both Kriti Sri and Sri Vijaya had a bigger emphasize on acting as a *cakravarti* compared to Narendrasinha, but it is also clear that the courtly ceremonialism shows a remarkable continuity between the two decades. In other words, the ascension of Sri Vijaya Rajasinha did not signify a 'clear breach with the former dynasty' as often has been suggested, and Kandyan kingship did not become Nayakarized in the first decade of the Nayaka dynasty.

It is clear that the development of the 'divinity of the king and the ceremonialism associated with it' did not start in the first decade after Sri Vijaya's ascension, but that does not automatically mean that Obeyesekere was wrong, further research is needed to see if, and more importantly, when the divinity of the king does develop in a later period.

[343] *Culavamsa*, 276, lines 27-28; 277, lines 36-37.

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