

**THE CHOLAS PERIOD'S HINDU TEMPLES AND CULTURE IN THE
RULE OF SINHALA KINGS: BASED ON POLONNARUWA KINGDOM**Aniththa Sasikaran¹

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Abstract

Archaeological Evidence assures that Hinduism has developed in Sri Lanka from prehistoric times. Evidences of corroboration of this is found in the terracotta figure, sculptures and religious symbols found in the megalithic cultural sites of Sri Lanka like Tamil Nadu. Some Scholars refer to these as symbols of worship that proto Hinduism. Since 6th A.D many non-agamic symbols of worship and village temples were influenced by the agamic tradition in Sri Lanka, like Tamil Nadu. During pallava period temples built in Dravidian art, worshipped idols and sculptures are discovered in Anuradhapura. These are the best evidence. From 10th and 11th century, when the Chola government emerged as a marine empire, its domination extended beyond the natural boundaries of South India to the Southeast Asian countries including Sri Lanka. Thus the influence of the religious and cultural revival of the Chola rule in South India was influenced in other countries whose political and commercial domination prevailed at the time. In this background, as in Tamil Nadu in Sri Lanka, many Hindu temples were built by the Chola rulers, merchants and administrators. Most of them were centred-around state capitals, ports and commercial establishments. The administration of temples, temple festivals and rituals were organized often synonymous with South Indian temple practices. When the rule of the Sinhala Kings after the Chola period in Polonnaruwa started, there is some evidences that the temples and their culture developed under the rule of the Sinhala Kings. However, in 13th century Polonnaruwa kingdom's decline, the affect of nature, the spreading of European Christian religion and the policies relating to the destruction of art were the reasons for it. Many Hindu temples were destroyed and disappeared into the soil. Thus, the continued history of Hinduism, its temples and cultural symbols are largely unknown. The archaeological excavations carried out in Sri Lanka especially Polonnaruwa have revealed the ruins of temples, sculptures, statues, copper mounds, shrines and inscriptions. They are new credible evidence for examining the temples of Polonnaruwa kingdom period. So main objective of this research is examining the status of the temples in the Sinhala monarchy in Polonnaruwa. Information was gathered from literatures, epigraphy, relevant artefacts have been discovered in archaeological excavations within Polonnaruwa and other megalithic sites in Sri Lanka, interviews from Archaeologist and related document such as books of Hinduism in Sri Lanka ,History of Hindu temples, Polonnaruwa kingdom, research papers and magazines.

Keywords: Cholas, Hindu temples, Culture, Artefacts, Polonnaruwa kingdom, Sinhala monarchy

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