

[READ: 5]



Maritime Lanka

Avondster 1659:

- [story](#)
- [site](#)
- [areas](#)
- [finds](#)
- [excavation](#)

Hercules 1661

Dolfijn 1663

Galle

- [VOC shipping](#)
- [harbour](#)
- [Zheng He records](#)

[Research](#)

[Subject index](#)

[Image archive](#)

[What's new](#)

[People/contacts](#)

[Links & books](#)

[MaritimeLanka](#)

Last modified:
27 July 2002

Ship graffiti at Natha Devale in Kandy

Lieutenant Commander Somasiri Devendra, SLN (Rtd.),
Maritime Heritage Trust of Sri Lanka

Adapted from an article first published as

'Sailing ships and temple walls'

in *'Honouring Martin Quéré o.m.i'*, ed. Gérard ROBUCHON, Viator
Publications 2002, ISBN 955-8736-00-7



Preamble

The present paper is an account of work in progress on a subject the writer has been desultorily researching over some years. Work has not been systematic and much remains yet to be done. However, it is felt useful to make the preliminary work available so that others more knowledgeable, and/or with better access to primary sources, would be able to add to it. The paper is therefore tentative, and none of the conclusions should be taken as final.



Prof. P.L.Prematilaka, of the Central Cultural Fund, drew my attention to graffiti representing sailing ships in the paper read at the annual 'D.T.Devendra Memorial Lecture' in 1996. He described finds of the UNESCO-Sri Lanka excavation on the Natha Devale site, including:

The exposure of a layer of painting with scribblings of sailing ships on the painting. The designs of the ships indicate that they imitate the Portuguese sailing ships of the time. Thus, the paintings should pre-date the Portuguese invasion of Kandy in the 16th century.

This graffiti, which was incidental to the paper he presented, forms the subject of the present paper, which is an account of attempts to identify the ships, either through details of rigging and construction or through an identification of the flags.

The site: history and significance

It is necessary to describe the location and history of this site in sufficient detail to place it in historical context. Prof. Prematilaka's dating of the graffiti and the underlying wall paintings depended much on events recorded in history.

Antiquity

Although the present building can be traced to the 16th century and to a period before the arrival of the Portuguese, it cannot be precisely dated. The historical chronicle, the *Culavamsa*, describes improvements effected to it:

In the midst of the town, he (King Narendrasingha) had erected round the great Bodhi tree, the chetiyas and the temple of Nathasura and encircling them on all four sides a fine wall of stone, massive, lofty, brilliant in its coating of stucco.

Location

The graffiti are found on the walls of a desecrated shrine located at the Natha Devale complex in Kandy. This complex, has a special significance in relation to the Kingdom of Kandy, the last independent kingdom of Sri Lanka, which came under British rule in 1815. It is situated within a stone-walled square with the Vishnu Devale on the north, the Dalada Maligawa on the east, the

Maha-maluwa on the south and the (then) Eth Vidiya on the west. Immediately across the road, to the east, is the Dalada Maligawa, or 'Temple of the Tooth', the shrine which houses the Buddha's Tooth Relic. The oldest known map of Kandy - a Portuguese one of 1601 - shows a 'small tower-like structure' close to the north-east corner, immediately facing the King's Palace, which is possibly the Yuktiya Istakirime Gantava or 'the bell to call upon the king to perform his duty'. In historical times, such bells could be rung by any citizen who felt that justice had been not been done to him, as a direct appeal to the King who was 'the Court of Last Resort' and 'the Font of Justice'. The 'Mahavamsa' and popular history link this practice to the time of King Elara in the second century before Christ.

Significance

The Tooth Relic has specific significance, in that any claimant to the Kandyan throne had to have it in his custody. The Palace of the incumbent king also formed part of the same premises as the Dalada Maligawa. The Natha Devale complex was the closest, and only, neighbouring set of buildings. Apart from mere proximity, it had other links with both the Dalada Maligawa and royalty. The Esala Perahera, Kandy's major religious event did not, prior to the reign of King Kirthisri Rajasingha, include the Dalada Perahera. It was a procession held in honour of the divinity enshrined in the Natha Devale in which the other three devales of Kandy (Vishnu, Skanda and Pattini devales) also participated. Traditionally, this devale served as the venue for the coronation of the Kings of that kingdom, and it was before the statue of this devale - not at the more highly venerated Dalada Maligawa - that the king placed his head, worshipped and made the promise to rule virtuously. The Natha Devale is dedicated to 'Natha', or 'Lokeswara Natha' who, in Mahayana Buddhism, is the Bodhisatwa 'Avalokeswara Natha' - perhaps the only Bodhisatwa of the Mahayana pantheon who is venerated by Sri Lankan Buddhists. The actual bronze statue enshrined within the devale is, unmistakably, that of Avalokateswara on iconographic grounds.

The deity venerated

At this devale, Natha is venerated as Senkadagala Devindu (the god of Senkadagala, or Kandy), due to a legendary link between with the establishment of the kingdom of Senkadagala Nuwara, or Kandy. The main shrine itself, built in the architectural form of a gedige, carries a decorative frieze around the base of the vaulted roof above the inner sanctum. This feature, not found anywhere else in Sri Lanka, repeats a traditional legend about the selection of Kandy as capital city. It was selected for this purpose, according to the legend, during the declining years of the Gampola kingdom as it was the site of a miracle: a spot where a hermit had witnessed a hare being hunted by a jackal, turning on his pursuer making the hunter become the hunted. The Sagama inscription of Buvenekabahu V, dated to 1381 AD refers to Senkadagala Devindu as Nathasami, confirming the identification. The slab inscription on the walls of the devale itself supports the fact that it existed in its present form in the 16th century and refers to a ruler named Jayaweera maha Veda-hun tana to persons for their help in defeating the Portuguese forces invading Kandy.

The above remarks would make the point that, whatever function the ruined shrine may originally have served, it was one of a complex of buildings with more than religious importance: they were closely linked to the institution of kingship in Kandy.

Kandy: political history

The kingdom of Kandy had emerged as at least a semi-autonomous state by the time the Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka at the beginning of the 16th century. By that time, Kandy - and Jaffna - had been developing into autonomous kingdoms but, in the previous century, the growing power of Kotte had led to Parakramabahu VI imposing his power over them and subjugating them to subordinate status acknowledging his suzerainty. In the 16th century however, Kotte lost its pre-eminent status, due to its rulers' acceptance of Portuguese sovereignty. This resulted in its disintegration into the autonomous regions of Sitawaka, and Raigama. Resistance to foreign domination was led by Sitawaka, which, shortly annexed Raigama. Its kings, Mayadunne and Rajasingha I, lay siege to the Portuguese at Colombo, with the assistance of the Rajah of Calicut and the backing of Kandy. Although the siege was raised, both Sitawaka and the Portuguese realized the strategic value of the Kandyan kingdom. Both tried to gain control of it, carrying the war into Kandyan territory seeking to subdue it. Both failed. Eventually it was Sitawaka that fell first, and Kandy emerged as the last centre of indigenous resistance to the growing power of the Portuguese over the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka, and later, of the Dutch and British.

In the formal Sinhala classification of fortified sites, Kandy was both a 'Giri Durga' (protected by mountains) and a 'Wana Durga' (protected by forest). During the south-west monsoon season it could also be considered a 'Jala Durga' (protected by water). Kandyan defence strategy, dictated by its inability to regularly raise and maintain large, well-equipped armies to take on the foreign troops and their native levies in pitched battle, capitalised on the strengths that Nature had provided. Look-outs positioned on hilltops overlooking the roads and passes relayed information on the type and strength of the invading columns, which were harried by guerilla attacks and ambushes. This tactic did not always succeed and, on occasion, the invaders entered and gained temporary control of parts of the kingdom and even the city of Kandy itself. The Kings of Kandy, on such occasions, carried out the pre-planned manoeuvre that was their second line of defence: evacuating the city and taking refuge in the less accessible countryside. The temporary occupying forces in Kandy, unable to reach the king, resorted to destruction and desecration of buildings of importance, among which was Natha Devale. Many temples within the complex were destroyed in this manner and although the more important of them were rebuilt, not all were restored. The drawings which form the subject of this paper were part of the desecration resulting from the general destruction carried out during one of these raids. In the third part of the strategy, supplies were prevented from reaching the occupying forces that, wracked by disease and unable to sustain themselves, were forced to retire. They were then subject to the same sort of guerilla attacks, often more effective on an army in retreat than on one in the flush of success.

The excavations

Some time later, during the first decade of the 19th century, the last King of Kandy, Sri Wickrama Rajasingha, constructed the Kandy Lake, known as the Kiri Muhuda, on what had been a stretch of paddy fields. Much of the soil excavated was dumped within the premises, and behind the terraces of Natha Devale, resulting in the burying of vestiges of the complex and in the ground level within the area becoming significantly higher than it had earlier been. Prof. Prematilaka, conducting the UNESCO-Sri Lanka Cultural Triangle excavation to establish the

original level, made several significant finds, including the plastered berms of two stupas, the ancient square terrace of the historic Bodhi tree, the base of a mandapa with stone bases of timber columns, the base of another ancient Bodhi tree with 14th century features, fragments of a large bronze seated Buddha image, heaps of cannon balls and the building with the graffiti depicting sailing ships which are the subject of this paper.

The graffiti

The external walls of this small shrine had originally been covered with wall paintings of a type typical of the period. These had been deliberately defaced by graffiti. Among the graffiti was a group of sailing ships scratched with a pointed instrument. To judge from the lack of corrections, they appear to have been drawn with a practiced hand and, perhaps with no intention of correction. The three ships are different from each other, and no evidence is available to judge whether they are the work of the same person. For discussion purposes they have been arbitrarily labelled 'Ship 1', 'Ship 2' and 'Ship 3'. Note that the background, predominantly red-brown in colour, is the original wall painting. Even in these few pictures, it is possible to see some features of the original subject. Underlying the thin layer of paint, the wall itself appears as of contrasting lightness, a feature that makes the graffiti quite visible.

This paper deals with an attempt to identify the ships by nationality, which would help to date the destruction of the building and desecration of the shrine (whether by Portuguese, Dutch or British invaders) and add to the known history of the Natha Devale complex.

The search: features chosen

Prof. Prematilaka's initial hypothesis was that the ships were Portuguese, which is reasonable when taking into account the slab inscription on the wall of the devale which refers to an invasion by the Portuguese. In the present study, a less definitive working assumption was initially made: that the ships were European, of unknown nationality. However, in the course of the search some doubt was raised even as regards this, and the reasons are given below. Notwithstanding this, the working assumption was maintained and refined: that they were not only European but either 16-17th century Portuguese, 17-18th century Dutch, or 18th century British.

European ships of the 16th to 18th centuries developed in various ways in different countries, with a wide range of classes, types and sizes. Some types would not have sailed in Sri Lankan waters. Ships were also built locally by the European powers, using indigenous shipwrights and craftsmen, incorporating non-European elements chosen for their suitability to the local environment. Some of the indigenous ships also had similarities to European vessels. (The thoni of Jaffna, which survived into the 1930s, was one such, described by Hornell (1943) as '*...of purely European design. It diverges in no detail from the small wooden schooners employed in English coasting in the nineteenth century...*') Given the range of possibilities, and the lack of any specific identifying feature (such as a clearly identifiable flag), certain areas were singled out for study. These were:

- Overall view (realistic or not? proportions, disposition of parts, etc.)

- Construction details (masts, bowsprit, poop deck etc.)
- Sails and rigging (square, lateen, spritsails, etc.)
- Flags shown (designs, where flown, etc.)

The search: method followed

Sri Lanka lacks experts in mediaeval European ship-building. Local libraries have limited material. In the circumstances, the solution was to seek foreign expertise. To build upon a wider base than the few persons personally known to the writer, it was decided to make the pictures available to as many people as possible, through the email discussion group *Marhist*, an international electronic discussion group sponsored and administered by the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston with the assistance of Queen's University at Kingston, Canada, to which the writer was a subscriber. Many persons with specialized knowledge of different aspects of maritime history - historians, maritime archaeologists, and seamen - participate in the discussions. The question was posed by the writer, as a preliminary call for help, in a posting that read, in part, as follows:

Recently, an important temple complex site was being excavated by archaeologists and several older temples that had been sacked were found completely below the ground. In one of them, someone had drawn with a pointed instrument on top of the wall paintings. The subject is several 'European' style sailing ships. They are most definitely not the work of a local person, as we have no tradition of drawing nautical subjects. The drawings show a good knowledge of European ships' structure, rigging etc. and even shows the flags. My question is whether these ships are (a) Portuguese (b) Dutch or (c) British. I believe the flags are a clue, but the ships' structure will also reveal clues: it is known that all three European nations built ships in India and that they might have been slightly different from those built in Europe.

When responses from those interested in the subject were received, further person-to-person email discussions were continued. Apart from them, particular persons known to the writer were consulted, in particular Dr. Eric Reith of the Musee de la Maine, Paris, and Robert Parthesius of the Amsterdam Historical Museum, who is associated with me in the *Avondster* project in Galle. The comments of those who participated in the discussion is dealt with first; the contribution of Eric Reith is dealt with later.

The discussion: content and opinions

Initially there was no consensus on type, period or nationality. Yet, as of now, a consensus has emerged regarding the larger question, which is discussed below. The discussions are described below, under separate headings. The subscribers to *Marhist* merely responded to the writer's call for help. Their responses were never meant to be works of research, and must be treated accordingly, so their institutional affiliations are not shown.

Overall impressions of construction, sails and rigging

1. Robert Parthesius, Netherlands

My first reaction (I will need some more time for further study) is:

18th century, may be 19th century! I base that conclusion on the rigging. On image 2 and 3 one can see foresails, those became in use in the 18th century before that time in the 17th century the ship as characteristic spritsail and spritsail topsail.

Also the lateen mizzen has a 18th century form (4 corners) In the 16th and 17th century the lateen mizzen was a triangle which yard was running further then the mast. This was unpractical if the ship tacked, so they replaced this system with a sail that was placed completely behind the mast. Image 1 looks a bit like a brig, or small schooner (because of the visible rudder). These vessels were also in use in the 18th and 19th century.

2. Paulo Alexandre Monteiro, Portugal

(a) Unfortunately, nobody knows what a Portuguese ship looked like... Please let me know more... Good iconography on Portuguese ships is not abundant but, hopefully, we can try and match what we have so far in Portugal with what you have.

(b) I received the photos of the graffiti and I have had not much time to do some research on them. On a first impression, looking at the lines and rigging, I would say were looking at Dutch or English ships of the late XVII or early XVIIIth centuries.

(c) I will dwell into it further, but I believe I concluded that the ships might belong to the late 18th century.

3. Nick Burningham, Australia

(a) Interesting looking craft.

The first is a single master, seemingly a gaff cutter or sloop, running before the wind with square topsail, course and probably stunsails set. She is fairly flat sheered and, somewhat curiously, has a well raked stem. Apart from the stem, she seems to have the characteristics of a fast armed sloop built between about 1760 and 1840.

The second is obviously a larger vessel, also setting a full set of stunsails, and again with a well raked bow. The courses (lower sails) are very deep as if she is a schooner setting square canvas to run before the wind. The square sail set under the bowsprit is important for dating - it pretty firmly says not later than about 1830 if the vessel is European built.

The square sail on the mizzen is tiny. If the courses were not so deep one might describe her as a barque with a square topsail which would fit with the date already ascribed.

The third is similar but the lacuna hides the bow.

All three vessels are heavily canvassed with slightly unusual late-18th - early-19th century rigs.

(b) The flat sheer and use of gaffs suggests ships of about a century later (i.e. later than late XVII or early XVIII centuries) - circa 1800.

(c) It seems to me that the artist has some familiarity with ships but is probably not a professional sailor. The drawings do not show any particular concern with depicting details such as braces and sheets, anchor handling gear, and other equipment that provide the hardest physical work for sailors.

4. Rui Godinho, Portugal

I'm not an expert in shipbuilding or even in identification of ships. My research point more to the organization of India Run....If you are sure that the pictures are from the XVIth century then this are Portuguese ships, probably "naus" with 3 or 4 masts, they seem so. Also for the number of sails it seems to be Portuguese or at least European ships, local vessels didn't have a large number of sails and such big masts. Be careful with this notes because as I told before I'm no expert in this matter!

Were they locally built craft?

Nick Burningham, Australia

(a) All three vessels are heavily canvassed with slightly unusual late-18th - early-19th century rigs. There were in the first half of this century, I believe, quite a number of Indian owned square-riggers that traded to Colombo carrying rice. Some of these carried interesting and somewhat anachronistic rigs, often very heavily canvassed. I don't think any of them set a square sail under the bowsprit, but, aside from that detail, the deep courses and raked bows would fit quite well.

There is evidence of gunports and guns. Some of the rice carriers were painted with false ports but, I think, we are looking at genuinely armed ships -- that doesn't exclude the possibility that they are Asian built. Approximately circa 1800 is my first impression. I'll let you know if other aspects occur to me.

Response by the writer:

Thanks for information. The possibility of the Jaffna Dhoni (Hornell's photographs) did cross my mind, but it is difficult to tie it up with the known historical record and the stratification of the site. Would an European draw a "native" ship? We have no tradition of detailed drawings/paintings of ships and those that survive from 8th. century onwards are clumsy and unreal. We could, it seems, build ships, but not draw them. Also, what do you make of the flags? Tri-colours and crosses are distinctly European 'heraldic' devices and have no place in the Indian/Sri Lankan vexicological tradition.

Do give some thought to the flags and other details and a considered opinion. As I said, we are contemplating a paper juxtaposing the archaeological and nautical parameters.

(b) Apologies for being a bit slow in responding - I've been away for a few days. It wasn't actually the Jaffna Dhoni that I was thinking of. In competition with the Dhoni were a significant number European-style square riggers that were Indian owned. Some were very fine looking vessels and, because they operated at times in light winds they tended to have very tall rigs and to retain or re-invent some of the rig details of the early clippers. However, if the site's history

and stratigraphy do not fit easily with the iconography representing those Indian ships, then there is no good reason to pursue that idea.

Rui Godinho, Portugal

For the first picture it can be a local ship? It doesn't have a forecastle and Portuguese ships have. It has one main mast and Portuguese ships usually have 3 or 4 like in the second and third picture.

Can the flags be identified?

There are two flags shown. In ships 1 and 3, a large flag is shown in the stern, in proportions that are acceptable. The flags are divided into two horizontal stripes although it is quite possible that the artist(s) intended them to be tri-colour flags. In ship 3 two flags are shown, one on the bowsprit and one at the stern, both of which feature a diagonal cross like the St. Andrew's cross. Much interest was generated by vexicologists, particularly regarding this. A sampling of the different ideas expressed is given below.

Morgiana P.Halley, USA

... my query is *which* "Scottish flag"? Is it the one with the blue field and the white X cross? Or the one with the yellow field and the red lion rampant? If the former, it's so simple that it might have been used by just about anyone, especially if there are alterations that are invisible to the naked eye in a line-drawing situation. If it's the lion, there might be more basis for serious investigation, even though it's a later item....a flag with an X on it in a line drawing might be *anything*! A lion, however, has limited possibilities, but only one of them is Scottish.

Bill Bedford, UK

Yes (it could be Scottish) - but only if the drawings were dated to before the Act of Union of 1703.

David Asprey, UK

My (untutored) observation over the years has been that Scottish-like flags (ie blue with white saltire - or sometimes black base) were widely included in 18th and 19th century ship paintings - and for all I know actually by the ships themselves. But I have not thought of them as actually being Scottish.

Bill Schleihauf, Canada

(a) Could it not be the old Russian flag?

(b) I can't say anything about the history of the Russian flag. The Naval flag was white with a blue saltire.*

(*NOTE: "Saltire" in heraldry, is "A charge consisting of a cross formed by a bend dexter and a bend sinister crossing in the center")

Nick Burningham, Australia

(a) The flag certainly looks right. Did Krusenstern (the Russian circumnavigator, not the sail training ship) ever visit Sri Lanka? He is of about the right date to fit the iconography.

(b) I don't know what to make of those flags. Vexicology isn't one of my strong points. The crossed flag, like the flag of Scotland, is very clearly depicted and ought to be an unequivocal signifier of the ship's origin. But what country had a flag like that? Looking through the selection of flags provided by my computer's clip art only Jamaica and Scotland have flags with diagonal crosses and neither country was in the position to launch a naval expedition to Sri Lanka around the end of the 18th century. I've looked through a few books hoping to see a similar flag but haven't come up with anything. I'll keep an eye out and let you know if I do come across anything.

(c) In off-list discussion I said to Somasiri that the only national flags I knew of with diagonal crosses were Scottish and Jamaican, neither of which were likely to send naval forces to Sri Lanka circa 1800.

If Krusenstern's ships visited Sri Lanka one could posit a fairly clear identification of the ship depicted with the mystery ensign. The other two vessels appear to have tricolours which could conceivably be the tricolour carried by Russian merchant ships?

Lincoln Paine, USA

So far as I know, Kruzenshtern's ships NADEZHDA and NEVA did not visit Sri Lanka during their voyage to Russia's Pacific coast in 1803-1806. Other Russian voyages from the early 19th century include:

1807-13 Golovnin in DIANA.

1815-18 Kotzebue in RURIK.

1819-21 Bellingshausen in VOSTOK.

1823-26 Kotzebue in PREDPRIYATIYE.

I don't think that any of these ships called in Sri Lanka.

Paulo Alexandre Monteiro, Portugal

(a) The banner with the X is quite curious. I have only seen such a flag and it was displayed on a late XVIth century representation, on an engraving done by Linschoten. Does any one have any ideas as to what might represent? I don't think the Portuguese or the Spanish ever used such a flag.

(b) As for the flag, as far as I know, no Portuguese vessels ever had one as that.

David Prothero, UK

The ragged cross was a diagonal knotty cross, representing a tree trunk from which the projecting branches had been only roughly lopped. The same as the staff in the Bear and Ragged Staff of the Earls of Warwick and some Public Houses. On a small scale the irregularities are invisible. It is also called the cross of Burgundy, which suggests a connection with the Dutch through the Spanish Netherlands, but is unlikely to have been used on Dutch ships since it represented Spanish rule.

Flag charts of 1685 and c1700 show a white ragged cross on red as the ensign of Biskay/Biscays, and a red ragged cross on white as the ensign of Ostend.

There is also a rather remote Dutch possibility. Some gyronny flags, (triangles radiating out from the centre) can, depending upon the number of triangles and pattern of colouring, look something like diagonal crosses.

So not very likely (to be one of a new range of naval jacks in which the red, white and blue were arranged in a gyronny pattern radiating from the center)., particularly if your flags are also shown on mast and stern.

Robert Parthesius, Netherlands

The flags are more difficult. I find it hard to recognise a tri-colour (I can see only two), but the diagonal cross is certainly there. If we date the ships in the 18th or even the 19th century the cross can then be English (although the union jack should be in a corner of the flag and the red cross should be different).

Opinion: Eric Reith of Musee de la Marine, Paris.

The contribution of Dr. Eric Reith is dealt with separately as he was not commenting informally but in his capacity as Directeur de recherché au CNRS, Departement d'Archeologie Navale, CNRS. He is on the staff of the Musee de la Marine, Paris, and his assessment can be accepted as a considered opinion. Writing in French his comments were as follows

Doc 1 (ship 3):

Il s'agit manifestement d'un navire de guerre. On distingue une batterie avec des saborde (5 sont visible). Le greement est a trios mats avec une brigantine a l'artimon et des focs a l'avant. Il me semble que l'on pourrait dater le profil, sommaire it est vrai, de la fin du XVIIe siecle. En ce qui concerne le pavillon, je ne trouve que deux elements de comparaison, tous les deux britanniques (croix de St Andre et croix de Saint Patrick).

Translation: The subject represented is a warship. A gun battery, with 5 guns visible is to be seen on the port side. There are three masts, the mizzen mast being rigged as a brigantine, and there are jibsails for'ard. It would appear that dating has to be done on the basis of ship's profile and, although roughly, it can be dated to the end of the 18th. Century. As regards the flag, I forward two designs that may fit, both being British, the crosses of St.Andrew and St. Patrick.

Doc 2 (ship 1):

Il s'agit d'un navire (guerre ou commerce?) a deux mats et greement carre du type des bricks. Il me semble que la datation pourrait stre la meme que celle du doc 1.

Translation: The representation is of a ship, but it is uncertain whether it is a warship or a merchantman. It carries two masts, square rigged in the style of a brig. The dating is the same as for ship 3.

Doc 3 (ship 2):

Il s'apparente au doc.1.

Translation: This is similar to ship 3.

Dr.Reith's concluding remarks are also interesting:

Ce qui est frappant, c'est que le dessin de ces trios graffiti de navires de type europeen presente, a mon avis, des resemblances qui pourraient indiquer qu'il s'agit du meme dessinateur (voir, par exemple, le facon don't est represente le gaillard arriere). Par ailleurs, il est sur que ces representations sont sommaire mais qu'elles sont bien proportionnees.

Translation: A striking feature is that the graffiti of the three ships show, in my opinion, a similarity of style which would indicate that they are the work of the same artist. For example, note the manner in which the quarter deck is represented. However, other considerations indicate that the drawings have been done rather sketchily although the proportions are rendered well.

Analysis

After a consideration of all the comments and observations, it is possible to come to some tentative conclusions.

The artist: All the ships have been drawn by the same artist. He was a skilled quick-sketch artist, used to drawing ships (Reith). However, his vagueness as regards nautical details suggests he was not a sailor, but more likely a soldier (Burningham).

Period: The ships represented belong to the late 18th century. During this period, the presence of Portuguese ships in the area can be discounted. This leaves the Dutch and the British in the reckoning, and even the French. The Dutch, however, were the power who invaded Kandy around this time and the artist has to be considered a Dutchman. (Reith, Parthesius, Monteiro, Burningham)

Ship types:

Ship 1 - a warship, or a merchantman, two-masted and square-sailed like a brig (Reith); a single master, seemingly a gaff cutter or sloop... with square topsail, course and probably stunsails set... fairly flat sheered and, somewhat curiously has a well raked stem... she seems to have the characteristics of a fast armed sloop (Burningham); the lateen mizzen is a square sail, not a lateen (Parthesius)

Ship 2 - on ships 2 and 3 one can see foresails (Parthesius); obviously a larger vessel... a full set of stunsails... a well raked bow. The courses (lower sails) are very deep... the square sail set under the bowsprit is important for dating. The square sail on the mizzen is tiny. If the courses were not so deep one might describe her as a barque with a square topsail (Burningham).

Ship 3 - a warship. A gun battery, with 5 guns visible is to be seen on the port side.... three masts, the mizzen mast being rigged as a brigantine, and there are jibsails for'ard. (Reith)

Nationality: To judge from the flags, at least two (if not all) are Dutch and one (with the flag showing a cross) may be British.(Reith, Asprey). However, it is also possible that the cross is a non-specific symbol (Halley). Nevertheless, as all the ships have been drawn by the same artist who has clearly indicated the Dutch flag on two ships, it is possible that this flag indicates that the ship is 'non-Dutch'. Certainly not Portuguese (Monteiro). The period of occurrence of invasions precludes the possibility of them being 'native craft' (Burningham).

Tentative identification:

- The artist was not familiar with ship details, so was not a sailor, but was accustomed to drawing ships. Perhaps he was a soldier who had been frequently on board ship.
- The ships are definitely European and not local or regional. At least two are Dutch ships. The other may be British, or non-Dutch at least. They are definitely not Portuguese. Prof.Prematilaka's earlier identification may have to be revised.
- Identification by type is difficult, but one is definitely a warship or an armed merchantman; another may be a small vessel, although armed.
- Chronologically they would fit into the latter part of the 18th century. Hence the unknown 'artist' would have taken part in a Dutch invasion of Kandy.

Final remarks

As stated at the beginning of the paper, the work so far is not conclusive. There remains much to be done. For example, it would be useful to compare this graffiti with the ship drawings in Dutch-period maps of Ceylon, India and Indonesia. Any dating of the wall paintings on which the graffiti were drawn would have to be considered. Scholars with specialist knowledge are invited to build upon this foundation and carry this fascinating line of inquiry further.