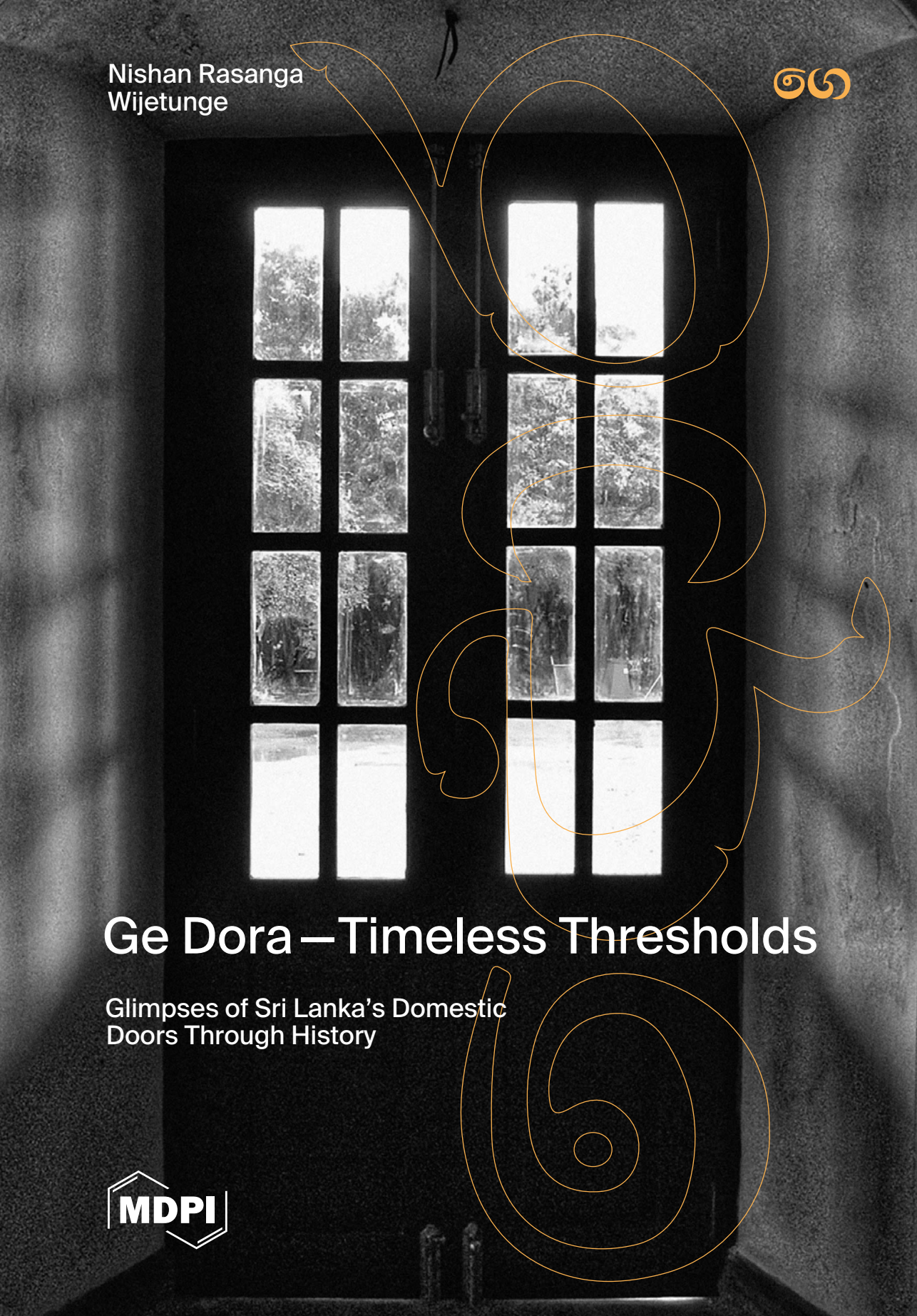
Nishan Rasanga
Wijetunge



Ge Dora—Timeless Thresholds

Glimpses of Sri Lanka's Domestic Doors Through History

MDPI

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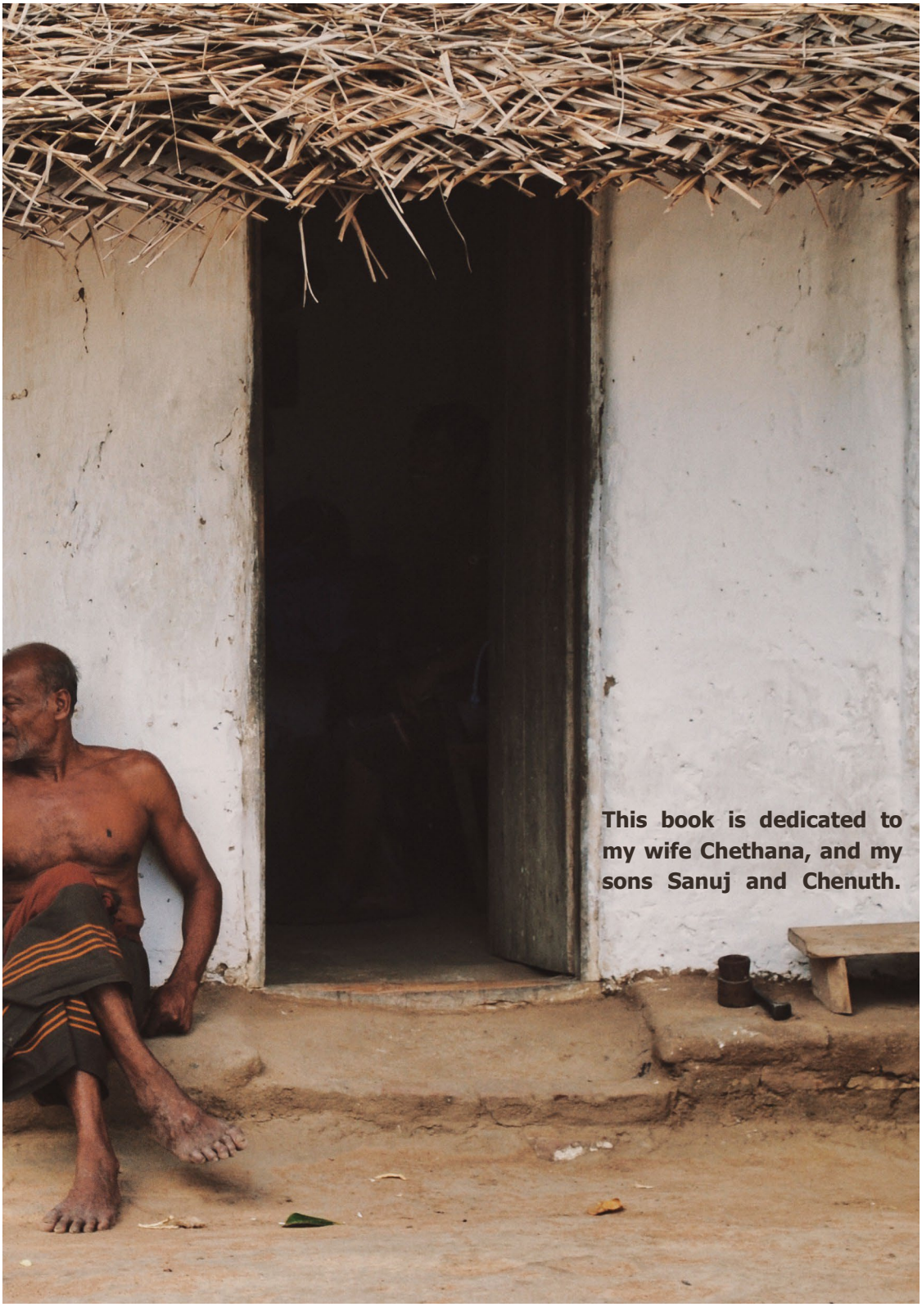
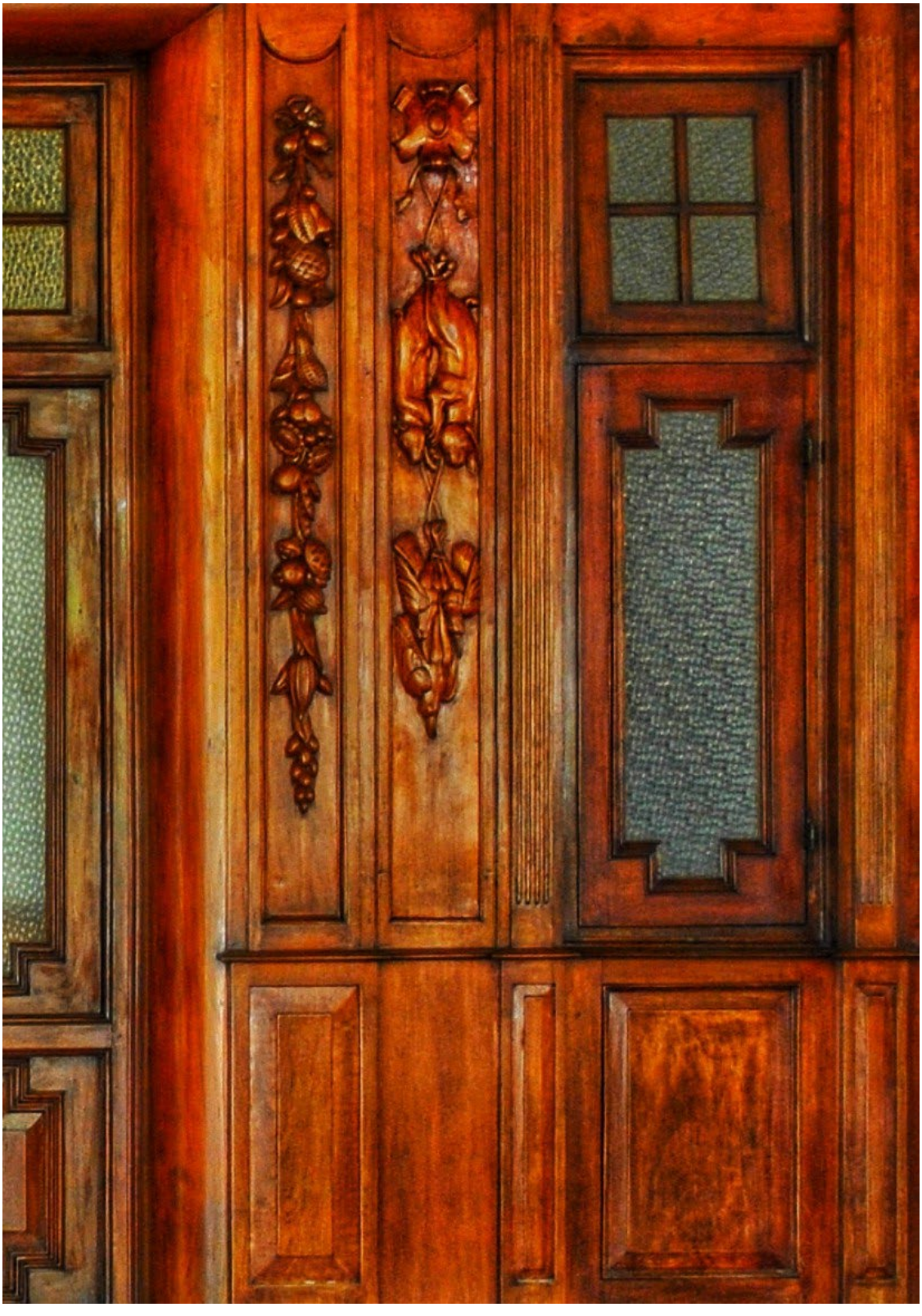


This book is dedicated to my wife Chethana, and my sons Sanuj and Chenuth.



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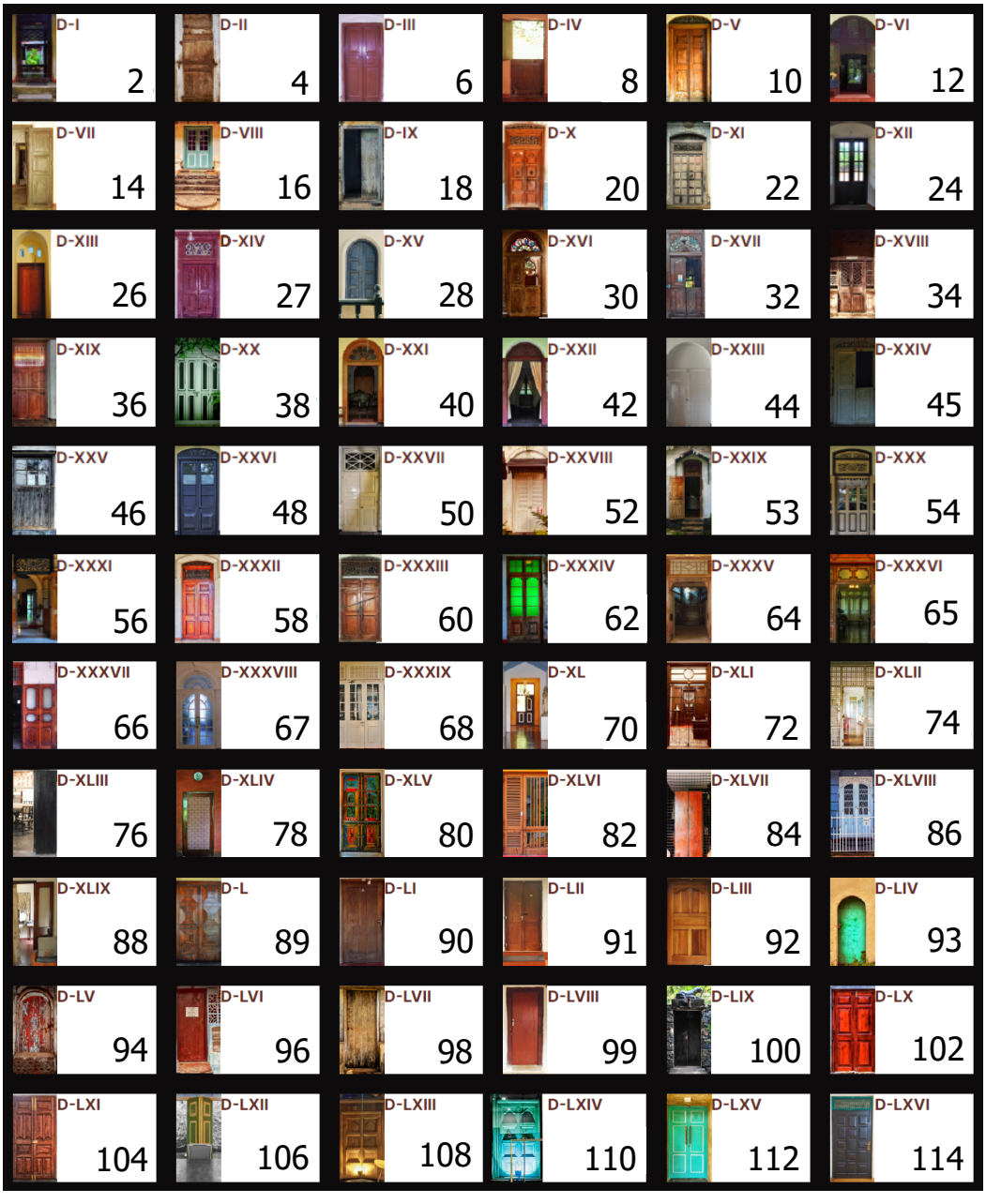

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FOREWORD

Domestic and public buildings are enclosures that provide sanctuaries for private and institutional lives to unfold. All cultures have thus placed much attention on how we transition from the outside world of urban squares, streets and passages, into a secure world of relative privacy. Front yards, gates and steps, but above all, doors, provide this sense of entry, and crystallise centuries-old social and cultural practices, rituals, and ideas about privacy and security into one essential physical and architectural artifact. The door is often the most prominent element of a threshold configuration that is immediately visible, and acts always to modify and modulate the relationship between the outside and the inside.

It gives me great pleasure in writing this foreword for an excellent assemblage of Sri Lankan domestic doors and doorways from the 18th to the 19th century. Dr. Wijetunge has curated this collection with great expertise, which draws on his very extensive research on Sri Lanka's domestic architecture and its rich diversity. Domestic architecture represents our individual, familial and communal identities. Such identity constructions are never static, as they draw on, and process, the many influences that a person, a community or a society experience. In today's world, torn by violent conflicts as well as the suppression and destruction of communities and cultures, we often forget that our identities are inherently hybrid—fluid in nature and porous at the boundaries.

The doors in this collection are excellent examples of the ease and agility with which Sri Lanka embraced cultural influences in its domestic architecture: between the many island communities, from the neighbouring Peninsular India, but resulting from the impact of Portuguese, Dutch and British colonial presences. The Kandyan doors and doorways preserved many of the pre-colonial entry rituals, crafting practices and iconographic traditions. The 19th century doors from Jaffna, on the other hand, incorporate striking British-influenced Indian decorative traditions. What this collection highlights is the continued need for understanding thresholds and doorways as essential devices for regulating social and environmental attributes of a building interior, even if some of these attributes are no longer the same. This collection is precious as a record of a rich and diverse tradition that is unfortunately under serious threat from a myopic view of progress, and a poor understanding of how history and heritage could contribute to sustained economic development.

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20 December 2024

PREFACE

Long before I became an architect, I was enchanted by doors as a child. My formative years unfolded in a mid-19th century ancestral home adorned with exquisite doors, each one brimming with allure and mystery. This fascination deepened during my architectural studies and reached its zenith during my PhD fieldwork days. Armed with *Architecture of an Island: The Living Heritage of Sri Lanka* (2002 edition) and always accompanied by an enthusiastic architectural escort, I traversed the towns and villages of Sri Lanka, capturing photographs of aging houses, each whispering tales of the past.

Two decades ago, my beloved ancestral home succumbed to the pressures of commercial development, a necessity my father undertook with great reluctance to secure our family's future in the volatile economic landscape of Sri Lanka. I cannot blame him—now that I am a parent, I understand his sacrifice. Yet, the demolition left a profound scar on my soul!

As a sensitive student of architecture, I began to grapple with the stark reality of Sri Lanka's colonial heritage. This truth amplified when I learned that many of the buildings documented by Barbara Sansoni, Ronald Lewcock and Laki Senanayake, in the 1960s and 70s, had simply vanished into memory.

Then I became an architect, eventually stepping into the world of academia. Embracing a regionalist perspective, I endeavored to incorporate salvaged architectural elements into my modernist projects, inspired by the legacies of Minnette de Silva and Geoffrey Bawa. However, each visit to the salvage yards left me astonished by the sheer volume of old building materials they offered. This overwhelming sight ignited a troubling thought: Am I, in my pursuit of integrating these salvaged elements, inadvertently contributing to the erosion of our traditional architecture?

The realization hit hard—especially in a context where the economic struggles of the land drive a disruptive, profit-driven salvage industry. Each salvaged piece, while a nod to the past, also raises questions about the value we place on our architectural heritage. I find myself at a crossroads, grappling with the implications of my choices. How do I honor tradition while engaging with a system that may undermine it? This dilemma lingers, a puzzle I am still striving to unravel as I seek a responsible and thoughtful approach to architectural preservation. This book is my humble homage to those who came before me!

It features sixty six doors I have captured in amateur photographs over the past two decades. They serve not only as a repository of architectural beauty, but also as a vibrant phenomenological narrative of the lives intertwined with them.

Archt. Dr. Nishan Rasanga Wijetunge
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13 October 2024

INTRODUCTION

Prelude to an Island

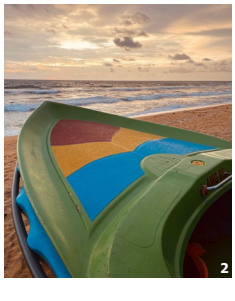
The modern nation state presently known as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, through the centuries, has been known by many names—*Taprobane* to the Greeks, *Serendib* to the Arabs, *Si-Lan* to the Chinese, *Ceilão* to the Portuguese, and *Lanka* to ancient Indians as well as to its own people. It stands as a jeweled teardrop in the Indian Ocean, where history, myth and beauty converge in timeless harmony. This enchanting island, once affectionately called the 'teardrop of the Indian Ocean' by the ancients, has borne the weight of many unjust names—branded a Third World country, a war-torn land, a failed state, a banana republic, and, in recent times, a geopolitical chessboard—each label a shadow cast by its turbulent history and strategic position.

Yet, beneath these fleeting shadows, the island endures, timeless and defiant, its spirit unshaken and its beauty untouched. The island lies gracefully south of the Indian subcontinent, cradled by shimmering azure waters. This emerald isle, small yet radiant, rests like a gem on the world map, a timeless meeting point where nature's beauty and ancient history intertwine in quiet harmony. It has long been a coveted destination, fought over for centuries, yet its people have fiercely safeguarded its beauty, heritage and unique identity, standing resilient through the tides of time.

Indian Oceanic Echoes

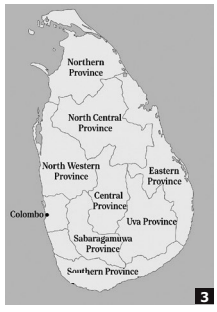
This brief introduction to Sri Lanka barely scratches the surface of her rich and intricate civilization, which deserves far greater elaboration. Its history is profoundly shaped by her position in the Indian Ocean. This small island, nestled between east and west, has for at least over 2,500 years served as a vital haven, fostering connections between the peoples of this vast region, and those from far beyond. While the uniqueness of Lankan civilization must be celebrated, it is equally vital to acknowledge its multitude of cultural influences, and especially, connections with the outside world.

The foundational cultural identity of her people was firmly established in antiquity. However, the arrival of individuals and small groups from distant lands brought artifacts and ideas that inspired the Lankan people to pursue parallel or subtly distinct developments, often unseen elsewhere in South Asia.



1. Child playing in the sand, *Unawatuna* Beach, Galle, Southern Province
2. Fishing boats, *Kalutara* Beach, *Kalutara*, Western Province

Sri Lanka, positioned in close proximity to India, shares a relationship akin to that of England with France, Japan with China, or Greece with Rome—close enough to absorb profound influences in culture, trade and traditions, yet fiercely independent, preserving a unique individuality that distinguishes it from its larger neighbors. A mere thirty miles separate the island from India. Although a majority of her people hail from north-eastern Indian heritage, the island's cultural dependence on the subcontinent is often thought to relate primarily to *Tamil Nadu* and *Kerala* in the south. However, it is noteworthy that Buddhism is believed to have reached the Lankan shores from northern India, maintaining a tradition of connections and migrations from the great urban civilizations of the *Ganges* basin. Over time, dozens of invasions brought Hindu influences deeply into the island's culture.



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Despite establishing dependencies, such invaders were eventually expelled, yet they all left their indelible legacies. A long-standing tradition of Sri Lankan rulers seeking queens from Southern India—particularly from *Madurai* —played a significant role in shaping the island's cultural and political landscape. Additionally, the cultural, defense and economic migrations between the 13th and 18th centuries wove intricate threads into the Sinhalese caste system, rendering it more complex than that of its neighbor's. These dynamics further entwined the shared histories of these two intimately connected regions. Another significant but little-understood early influence on the island stems from its unique strategic position in the Indian Ocean. Akin to other islands such as Madagascar, Sri Lanka too was exposed to the prehistoric maritime expansion of many peoples from the region, though the extent of these connections remains uncertain and unexplored.


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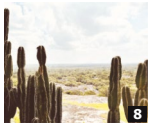
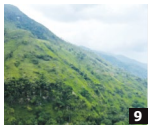
Geographical and Climatic Dynamics

Sri Lanka's geography is defined by its striking diversity, where a broad coastal belt of plains and gently rolling hills forms a welcoming fringe around the island. Moving inward, the landscape transforms dramatically as steep slopes ascend to the central highlands, crowned by majestic peaks such as *Pidurutalagala* and *Sri Pada* (Adam's Peak), and sprawling plateaux that dominate the heart of the island. These elevated regions are interspersed with lush green forests, cascading waterfalls, and cool, misty climates that contrast starkly with the surrounding lowlands. To the northwest and northern reaches of Sri Lanka, the landscape transitions into an arid thorn-bush terrain, where dry, rugged expanses dominate. This region, shaped by lower annual rainfall and a harsher climate, features sparse vegetation, resilient shrubs, and hardy trees adapted to arid conditions.

3. Map of Sri Lanka, showing provincial boundaries
4. Map showing Sri Lanka's unique position on the Indian ocean
5. *Udawalawa* Lake, *Udawalawa* National Park, *Sabaragamuwa* Province
6. Unknown lake, *Dambulla*, Central Province
7. Beach, *Tangalle*, Southern Province


The terrain often appears desolate, yet it supports unique ecosystems and communities that have learned to thrive in its challenging environment. Ancient irrigation systems, including tanks and canals, stand as enduring testaments to the ingenuity of the island's early inhabitants, who transformed these arid zones into fertile agricultural lands in certain areas. In stark contrast, the southwestern part of the island is a lush haven of dense rainforests, nurtured by the island's highest levels of annual rainfall, brought by the southwest monsoon. These rainforests are a sanctuary for an incredible diversity of flora and fauna, including endemic species such as the Sri Lankan leopard, purple-faced langur, and vibrant birdlife. Towering trees form a thick canopy that filters sunlight into dappled shades below, where a rich understory of plants thrives in the humid conditions. This region's ecological abundance plays a crucial role in the island's status as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. Rivers originating from the highlands further enrich the forests, fostering fertile floodplains that support both wildlife and human habitation. Together, these contrasting landscapes highlight the extraordinary environmental diversity that defines Sri Lanka. A shared thread among the regions encircling the Indian Ocean is the striking similarity of their climates—hot, humid, and deeply reliant on the life-giving monsoons for both rain and trade. These seasonal winds, steady and predictable, blow for months in one direction before reversing for an equal span, knitting the ocean's littoral into a web of easy communication. This climatic unity has shaped the rhythm of life, enabling the swift transfer of methods for cultivation, the architecture of houses and towns, and innovations in crops and technology, all flourishing in response to shared physical conditions.

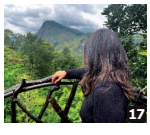


Evolution of Settlements and Trade

Historically, Sri Lanka's towns emerged in the dry, sparsely forested plains nestled between the hill country and the sea, predominantly on the island's northern and eastern flanks. This region was the cradle of the ancient Sinhalese civilization, whose roots stretch back to the 9th century B.C.E., carrying whispers of a storied past etched into the land. In this zone of sparse rainfall, a remarkable and sophisticated system of irrigation emerged, built around hundreds of man-made lakes (tanks), some vast in scale. These shimmering reservoirs nourished the land, giving life to lush green rice paddy fields that spread like patchwork quilts across the arid plains, a testament to ancient ingenuity and harmony with nature.

8. Cacti and arid landscape, *Dighavapi*, *Ampara*, Eastern Province
9. Mountains, *Ella*, *Uva* Province
10. Lotus on *Tissa* Reservoir, *Tissamaharama*, Southern Province
11. Hibiscus flower, *Ella*, *Uva* Province
12. White water lily flower, *Dighavapi*, *Ampara*, Eastern Province
13. Leschenault's snake-eye Lizard, *Dambulla*, Central Province
14. Elephant, *Yala* National Park, *Tissamaharama*, Southern and *Uva* Province
15. Asian Vine Snake, *Dighavapi*, *Ampara*, Eastern Province

The island once flourished with ancient towns and vibrant ports, where commerce wove connections across continents. Among these, the great port of *Mantota* (*Mantai*), strategically perched on the straits of the island's western coast, stood as a vital nexus of trade—linking the East, as far as China, to the West, reaching the distant realms of Rome. Beyond its maritime significance, *Mantota* served as a gateway to India, with roads stretching fifty miles inland to *Anuradhapura*, the Sinhalese-built capital of the 4th century B.C.E., a sacred seat of Buddhist culture and civilization. On the eastern shores, the ancient port of Trincomalee further anchored the island's enduring ties with India, solidifying Sri Lanka's place as a timeless crossroads where cultures, ideas and goods converged. These bustling trading hubs brought immense affluence and prosperity to the kingdom, funding grand endeavors such as the construction of massive tanks and *stupas* of awe-inspiring scale. Ancient Sri Lanka, often called the 'Granary of the East' during the 11th to 13th centuries A.D., earned this title for its advanced irrigation systems and vast rice production, which sustained its population. Advanced agriculture and thriving trade wove a fleeting tapestry of prosperity and regional influence, drawing the envy of neighbors and making it a coveted prize.

Building Traditions

The coastal regions of the Indian Ocean share a profound architectural kinship, shaped by common materials and functional needs, with Sri Lanka standing as no exception to this harmony. Along the shores of the island, where humidity reigns high, light materials such as palm leaves were commonly used for construction, their porous nature allowing cooling breezes to filter through. In hotter areas, thick walls of stone, coral rock or bricks shaped from the clayey soil of agricultural lands offered solace from the heat. Roofs, crafted from palm mats, thick thatch or layered tiles made of the same clayey soil, shielded homes from the penetrating rays of the sun. Among these, palm mats and straw thatch were favored for their superior insulation, often preferred even in affluent households.

The challenges of a humid climate and the dampness brought by monsoon rains spurred architectural ingenuity. Buildings were often raised two feet or more above ground level, either on masonry platforms built from stone or coral or supported by short, moisture-resistant hardwood posts embedded in the earth. Structures were planned to embrace courtyards or designed as elongated, thin forms, ensuring cross-ventilation reached every chamber. Small openings left in masonry walls kept the heat gain down, allowed breezes to flow, while matting, latticework or shutters provided privacy and intricate patterns to delight the eye.

16. Man sitting on the beach, Batticaloa, Eastern Province
17. Woman looking at the mountains, *Ella*, *Uva* Province
18. Man riding a scooter, Jaffna, Northern Province
19. Man selling vegetables, Mt. Lavinia, Western Province

The need for security and seclusion led to the creation of courtyard homes, where rooms encircled a central court or clustered around smaller courtyards enclosed by screen walls. The narrow proportions of these courtyards offered shade throughout the day, creating cool havens within. Alternatively, in some regions, platforms were built higher, enabling elevated structures that caught winds above trees and shrubs, enhancing ventilation. These elevated buildings, though less convenient, often took rectangular, 'L' or 'T'-shaped forms, negating the need for courtyards.

In urban centers, buildings traditionally stood closely together, shading one another in tight clusters. Narrow lanes wound between them, with wider streets reserved for goods and military movement. Public spaces were rare; instead, large shaded assembly halls served multiple purposes—markets, religious gatherings, audience chambers, or communal meeting places.

The materials used in architecture reflected the region's abundance, emphasizing affordability and ease of replacement. Their simplicity justified architectural features such as wide eaves, thick walls, and shaded verandas, all designed to counter the harsh sun. These eaves allowed for latticework or grills to maintain cross-ventilation. During the brief yet fierce wet season, cane blinds (*i.e.* tats), hung from the eaves, shielding interiors from rain and wind.

While the majority dwelled in humble vernacular forms that paid homage to the vernacular traditions (*chūla siritha*), it was by decree that the royals and religious establishments embraced the grandeur of its elevated design. These noble structures adhering to the grand design tradition (*mahā siritha*), with their thick, insulative walls of compacted earth, stone, or brick, rose adorned with roofs of clay tiles. Their whitewashed finishes and commanding scale set them apart, radiating a timeless elegance and permanence amidst the transient simplicity of the vernacular. Impermanence, a cornerstone of Buddhist teachings, found harmony in the fragility of the vernacular forms, their ephemerality a reflection of life's fleeting nature. The prominence of the royals and the religious was no accident, for the former safeguarded the latter, and together, they nurtured the soul of the masses. For over two millennia and a half, this ethos shaped the island's built form—until modernity swept ashore in the 16th century, forever altering its timeless rhythm.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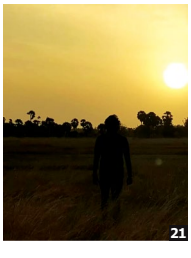
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20. Elephant fence of *Parivara Chaitya* (companion stupa) of *Dighavapi*, *Dighavapi*, *Ampara*, Eastern Province
21. Unknown Hindu Temple, Jaffna, Northern Province
22. Painting of Deity, Cave Temple, *Mulkirigala*, Southern Province

Complex Cultural Stimuli and History

Long before the first pages of recorded history were written, Sri Lanka rested within the distant yet tangible sphere of powerful empires. Their influence traversed across oceans and continents, leaving subtle traces that continue to endure to this day. At ancient *Anuradhapura*, fragments of Hellenistic ceramics speak of connections to the far-flung realms of Alexander's successors, while Roman coins and shards of pottery, scattered across the island's soil, tell tales of bustling trade routes and cultural exchanges. These relics, silent yet profound, weave a tapestry of Sri Lanka's ancient interconnectedness, hinting at a time when its shores welcomed the echoes of distant civilizations. By the end of the 4th century A.D., the stately junks of Chinese traders began gracing Sri Lanka's shores, their sails billowing like celestial wings across the Indian Ocean. The chronicles of Chinese Buddhist monks who journeyed to the island in the 5th to 6th centuries paint vivid portraits of Sri Lanka's flourishing prominence in the maritime world. They speak of bustling harbors alive with activity, where grand merchant ships from Java arrived, laden with treasures and exotic goods. These vessels were not mere traders of wares but vital links in a vast network that connected the island to Indonesia, China, and the thriving ports of India's western coast.

Further, the island was a pivotal hub in the maritime Silk Road, linking East and West through its strategic position in the Indian Ocean. Its ancient ports thrived as centres of exchange for silk, spices, and gems, while also serving as conduits for cultural and religious interactions. Archaeological discoveries highlight its vital role in global trade and cultural exchange. Nestled at the crossroads of oceanic commerce, the island emerged as a shimmering jewel, where cultures, faiths, and fortunes intertwined under its tropical skies. Arab Muslim traders had reached Sri Lanka's shores by 850 A.D. at the latest, and by 1000 A.D., inscribed tombstones testified to their presence, mirroring similar finds in Malaya and Sumatra. By the late 13th century, Marco Polo observed Arab dominance in Sri Lanka's trade, and by the mid-14th century, Ibn Batuta described the island's bustling Muslim port towns as "*fine and large".* A century later, Chinese writer Fa-Hsien detailed Sri Lanka's thriving trade in goods such as Chinese musk, porcelain and camphor, with Arab merchants serving as carriers of Chinese wares. Yet, the Chinese themselves were no strangers to the island; six grand naval expeditions landed there in the early 15th century, their ships immense, carrying up to a thousand men, as described by Ibn Batuta. The precise depth of Arabian influence on Sri Lankan culture remains elusive. The enduring Islamic lifestyles among the island's Muslim communities may reflect continual reinforcement from Arabia and India in earlier centuries. At the same time, Chinese architectural influences, seen in the ports of western India, and the Islamic relics across Southeast Asia, suggest that these rich cultural exchanges left an indelible mark on Sri Lanka's built heritage. One such striking influence is the pitched roof design with varying slopes, creating a resemblance to the curving roofs of China, which is a feature echoed in radiating corner rafters. Sri Lanka's cultural influence was not one-sided. In the 5th century A.D., Sinhalese monks are said to have contributed to the spread of Buddhism in South East Asia, while Sinhalese nuns established a Buddhist nunnery in China. During this same era, the priest *Amargabodita* traveled from Sri Lanka to Japan, where his writings continue to be studied.

Throughout its history, the Sinhalese have fiercely guarded their independence, seldom bowing for long to foreign domination and steadfastly preserving the continuity of their culture. Yet the island's geographic position meant parts of it were, at times, ruled by foreign dynasties or governors. Centuries of intermarriage blurred the divisions among ethnic and religious groups, weaving a rich and complex tapestry where only a few families remain untouched by ties to other races or creeds. With time flowing swiftly over the centuries, the steady filtering of Hindu peoples, through waves of invasions and migrations, predominantly from Southern India, into the island's northernmost tip—the Jaffna Peninsula—is witnessed. In this arid region, where water was scarce, agriculture flourished through an ingenious system of wells, with water carefully drawn and carried to sustain fields of rice and other grains. While Buddhism once dominated the landscape, as attested by place names, monastic ruins, and ancient inscriptions, the passage of time saw the region richly infused with the culture and civilization of the Tamil peoples, leaving an enduring imprint on its heritage and identity.

Over the centuries, invasions from South Indian kingdoms—alongside the forces of drought and disease—fractured the Sinhalese kingdom, prompting the creation of a new capital further east in *Polonnaruwa*, still within the dry zone. Gradually, the Sinhalese adapted their systems to the wetter, rain-rich lands of the south-west. From 13th century A.D. onwards, the Sinhalese capitals began a steady southward shift: first to *Kurunegala*, then to *Dambadeniya*, *Yapahuwa*, and eventually *Gampola*, which offered refuge from South Indian incursions. By 15th century A.D., *Kotte*, near the bustling Arab trading port of Colombo, rose as a royal city. The once-flourishing dry zone surrendered to the quiet embrace of encroaching forests, while the island's story unfolded anew in the lush, rain-drenched lowlands of the fertile wet zone.

The Western advent in the 15th century swept into Asia like an uncharted tide, driven by the quest to spread the Christian faith, exploit untold riches, and impose the mantle of modernity. With the European ships of conquest and curiosity, laden with the weight of humanistic change, a medieval world collided, forever reshaping the rhythms of time. The Portuguese set the course, followed by the Dutch, English, and others, each driven by a self-proclaimed mantle of superiority over the 'Orient,' wielding their supposed God-given right to civilize.

The Portuguese policy of pursuing and seizing Arab merchant ships by force in the Indian Ocean was a strategic move to infiltrate the lucrative East-West spice trade, which had long been dominated by Arab middlemen from the Middle East. Muslims of Middle Eastern and North African origin migrated to Ceylon centuries ago, especially via Southern India, establishing themselves as traders among the largely agricultural indigenous population, who showed little interest in commerce. During such a pursuit in 1505, a storm drove Lorenzo de Almeida's fleet ashore at Galle. This accidental arrival subsequently led to trade agreements with *Kotte*, to see the eventual establishment of fortified coastal control.

XXIV

Following the breaking of pacts and their rigorous conquest of the island's coastal plains in the early 16th century A.D., the Portuguese established the ancient port city of Colombo (*Kolon Thota*) as their capital. By the 17th century, they had forged a vast, globe-spanning archipelago of fortified coastal cities, stretching from Europe through Africa and into Asia, carefully guarding the sea routes of empire while leaving the hinterlands largely untouched. In the island of *Ceilão*, their unyielding colonial reach extended across the coastal wet zone, sweeping south to the port cities of *Galla* (Galle) and *Matara*, and eventually encompassing the island's vital lowlands, *Yalpanam* (the Jaffna Peninsula) in the north, and also the eastern coast—an occupation that left an enduring imprint on the island's history and its culture. Consequently, the Sinhalese shifted their power into the island's central hill country as a defensive strategy. This rugged region, previously sparsely populated, was shaped by heavy rains, dense forests, and the chill of its lofty highlands, offering both refuge and natural fortification against colonial advances. Buddhism and Sinhalese authority, retreating from *Kotte* and *Sitawaka*, became focused more and more on the central Kandyan (*Kanda Udarata*) kingdom, in the urban centers of Kandy, *Gampola*, *Badulla* and *Hanguranketha* etc. These towns were situated just below the uninhabitable highest plateaux and the mountain ranges.

Approximately a century and a half later, Sinhalese efforts to expel the Portuguese from Sri Lanka led to invitations for the newly ascendant Dutch to intervene. By the mid-17th century, the Dutch—the most powerful seaborne empire of the time—entered into a pact with the Sinhalese. They gradually seized the coastal regions of the island from the Portuguese, though they harbored no intention of returning the land to their owners. The Sinhalese had been deceived once again by yet another western colonial power. The Dutch occupation of Sri Lanka was executed by the Dutch East India Company (VOC), a formidable trading corporation operating under a royal charter from the Dutch Republic. This unprecedented arrangement granted it the authority to trade, govern, and wage war in overseas territories—an extraordinary and unparalleled situation for its time. Although the Dutch presence, as that of the Portuguese, remained confined to the coastal regions, by the dawn of the 18th century A.D., they had secured control of the entire coastline, effectively leaving the Sinhalese landlocked within the central hill country. This diminishing of Sinhalese territory left a profound mark on the island's economy and political landscape. Expanding beyond the lucrative harvesting of wild cinnamon, the commercially-driven Dutch introduced the cultivation of pepper, coffee and tobacco, while pearl fishing, iron mining, and elephant breeding too flourished into thriving industries. The Dutch did not prioritize the spread of religion as a central policy.

Another century and a half passed, and by the late-18th century A.D., the British seized the opportunity presented by the Dutch Republic's alliance with the French Revolution in Europe to take control of its Eastern empire—claiming the most valuable territories that yielded the most lucrative spices. In 1796, the British seized the last of the Dutch coastal territories in Ceylon. While they returned many possessions under the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814, they retained Ceylon for its immense strategic importance and economic value, formally annexing it as a Crown Colony in 1815. The British called it Ceylon.

In the same year, they deceived the Sinhalese elite and, with their unwitting assistance, took the decisive step of conquering the fiercely independent Kandyan Kingdom. They manages to surpass their colonial predecessors and advanced further to establish a full-scale colonization of the entire island. The naivety of the Sinhalese, once again, became their undoing, a quiet betrayal that cost them dearly. During this juncture in the 19th century when the British Empire's global reach was swiftly expanding, the last bastion of Sinhalese independence, unconquered for two millennia, finally fell. This marked the end of an era, and the fading of a sovereignty that had endured the tides of time.


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Then, the largely uninhabited highlands were invaded as a part of a grand strategy to unlock the entire island, and draw its resilient people—long sheltered under medieval conditions—into the currents of modernity. The Sinhalese-led freedom struggles of 1818 and 1848 were harshly suppressed, paving the way for sweeping economic and administrative reforms. In 1833, the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission famously introduced these reforms, marking a pivotal moment in the island's history. Among the most significant changes was the abolition of the century-old *Rājakariya* system, a land-tenure framework deeply rooted in the caste hierarchy. This move dismantled the traditional obligations tied to caste and labor, integrating the local population into a nascent monetary economy. These reforms aimed to create an economically conducive climate, legally incorporating individuals who had previously lived entirely outside of a formal economic system. Consequently, just as in other British overseas possessions, new cash crops such as coffee and tea took root in the Ceylonese high plateau with the aid of British planters, while coconut and rubber plantations emerged elsewhere, funded largely by local capital. Mining industries, particularly graphite, began to flourish, fostering the rise of a local bourgeoisie class. Roads spread like veins across the island, breaking the isolation of nearly every region. Railways soon followed, tracing the paths laid by these roads. The island, once cloaked in forests was steadily stripped of its trees until, by the late 20th century, only a quarter of its lush forests remained. In the aftermath of World War II, Ceylon gained its political independence from the British Empire.

In the postcolonial decades, the island's cities steadily expanded, yet the political and economic prominence long held by Colombo remained intact. Ceylon became 'Sri Lanka' in 1972, as the country transitioned from a British dominion to a republic. The name Sri Lanka, meaning 'resplendent island' in Sanskrit, reconnected the nation with its ancient cultural heritage and identity. This change was further solidified in 1978 with the adoption of the official name, the 'Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka', symbolizing its sovereignty and post-colonial rebirth.

23. Budhdha statue of *Parivara Chaitya* (companion stupa) of *Dighavapi*, *Dighavapi*, *Ampara*, Eastern Province
24. Hindu Festival, *Wellawatta*, Colombo, Western Province
25. Muslim boys riding home from religious school, Batticaloa, Eastern Province
26. Stained glass, St Peter and Paul Catholic Church, *Moratuwa*, Western Province

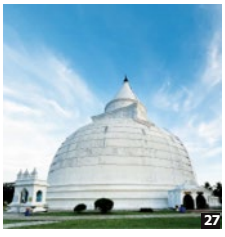
During the British colonial era, the island's once predominantly Sinhala-Buddhist demographic landscape was reshaped to a hitherto unforeseen degree, far exceeding the impact of all prior invasions and colorizations. For the first time in centuries, the long-standing Sinhala-Buddhist dominance was profoundly challenged. The plantation sector saw an influx of Tamil indentured workers from southern India. Meanwhile, other smaller Indian-descended communities engaged in trade—such as the Colombo Chetties and Bharathas—gradually expanded within the commercial capital. The Muslim population also grew steadily, with the arrival, for various reasons, of new contingents ranging from Indian Moors and Malays to Khojas and Bohras, further increasing their numbers. In addition, the arrival of other lesser-known communities, from Sindhis to Parsis, added yet another layer of cultural vibrancy to British Ceylon. On the other hand, the British occupation in Ceylon too fostered mixed-heritage communities, blending genetic and cultural expressions. By then, communities of Portuguese and Dutch descents had already solidified their identity as 'Burghers'. Together with the smaller Anglo-Lankan population, they occupied the second uppermost echelon of Ceylonese society, functioning as the essential low-level bureaucracy. While the Portuguese Burghers and more numerous locals who had converted to Catholicism contributed to their own vibrant culture, the less numerous Dutch Burgher descendants upheld the legacy of the Dutch Reformed Church and its cultural ensemble. Anglican Christians—predominantly, converted locals—attended the Church of England and observed British customs. In addition, smaller communities, such as Jesuits and Methodists, further enriched the Christian diversity of the island. The multifarious influences of the European colonial legacy extended across Western-inspired education systems, architecture, art, language, cuisine, dress, and customs, as well as festive cultural celebrations such as Christmas and Easter. These changes irrevocably altered the indigenous way of life that had prevailed for centuries prior to the European advent.

Architectural Saga

Geography and cultural influences are two fundamental forces that shape architecture, intertwining to define the character of built environments. However, an accepted school of thought argues for the primacy of cultural influences over geographic constraints, asserting that the values, beliefs, and aspirations of a society possess greater potency in dictating architectural expression than the physical conditions imposed by land, climate and weather. This perspective highlights the human capacity to adapt and innovate, transcending geographic limitations to create spaces that resonate with cultural identity and purpose. Given this view, Sri Lanka's architecture traces a graceful metamorphosis, shifting from its pre-modern origins to the currents of contemporary times. From classical periods through the medieval era, its traditions stood steadfast, untouched by time's hand. Yet, with the arrival of modernity came a swift and sweeping transformation—colonial and modern styles washed ashore, interwoven with the ingenious hybrid expressions of the locals. In their journey to define themselves as a modern Asiatic people, these creations unfolded across five epochs, each a chapter in a tale of enduring evolution and cultural resilience.

As mentioned, Sri Lanka's architectural heritage flows from two primary streams—the grand design tradition and the humble vernacular. These forms, a serene tribute to simplicity and harmony with nature, were often overshadowed by hybrid creations born of colonial influence, where tradition and foreign elements intertwined in intricate fusion.

Ancient *Anuradhapura* and *Polonnaruwa* are home to numerous ruins that have been extensively studied and documented, offering insights into the grandeur of their palaces and religious edifices. Other kingdoms, though to a lesser extent, also bear remnants that hint at their architectural heritage. However, a significant gap persists in our understanding of finer domestic buildings from these classical periods, leaving much of their architectural legacy shrouded in mystery. The only tangible connection to these lost forms lies in the medieval period, which provides clues to earlier traditions. Vernacular architecture, with its regional variations, endured remarkably well into the dawn of the open economy, only to gradually succumb to the allure of modernist trends that accompanied the times.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Medieval Kandyan architecture embodies a refined simplicity and a profound harmony with the natural environment, distinguished by low, sprawling structures with graceful proportions. Palaces and religious edifices, including Buddhist temples and Hindu *devales* (shrines), showcase intricate wooden craftsmanship, tiered tiled roofs with deep, protective eaves, and exquisite carvings that reflect the spiritual and cultural opulence of the era. In contrast, finer domestic buildings feature understated, blank façades, simple roof forms with sweeping tiled eaves, and deep internal courtyards, emphasizing vernacular sensibilities, functionality, and climatic adaptability. This architectural tradition achieves a delicate balance between aesthetic elegance and practical ingenuity, embodying the cultural and environmental ethos of the Kandyan Kingdom.


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27. *Ruhuna* Kingdom: *Tissamaharama Chaithya* (pagoda), *Tissamaharama*, Southern Province
28. *Anuradhapura* classical period: *Kuttam Pokuna* (Royal twin Ponds), *Anuradhapura*, North-Central Province
29. *Polonnaruwa* classical period: *Polonnaruwa watadage* (circular relic house), *Polonnaruwa*, North Central Province
30. *Anuradhapura* classical period: *Kalu Diya Pokuna* Monastery, *Anuradhapura*, North Central Province
31. Vernacular house, *Kurunegala*, North Western Province
32. Kandyan medieval period: Vernacular granary, *Yapahuwa*, North Western Province

From the 16th century A.D. onward, colonial architecture gradually intertwined Portuguese, Dutch, and British influences into the island's fabric, leaving a lasting modern imprint on its built environment. The Portuguese introduced fortifications and coastal adaptations, drawing on their colonial experiences elsewhere, tailored to suit their religious, domestic, and auxiliary functions. Their architecture in Europe already bore an Eastern influence, shaped by eight centuries of Moorish rule over the Iberian Peninsula prior to the 16th century. Additionally, their presence in regions such as Goa, with climatic conditions similar to those in Ceylon, likely infused elements of local adaptation into their designs. The Portuguese can indeed be credited with weaving the eye-pleasing, retinal-centric façades of European Renaissance tradition into the tapestry of local architecture. Where once the built form humbly coexisted with the environment, seeking harmony rather than dominance, this new aesthetic celebrated the pleasure of the gaze. In this subtle yet profound transformation, the Western tradition of hedonism—once but a faint echo in the grand design tradition—began to seep into the soul of local architectural expression, altering its rhythm and narrative forever. However, apart from their heavily altered forts and a few surviving churches, examples of Portuguese domestic architecture in their original condition on the island are exceedingly rare, if not entirely non-existent. The Dutch, on the other hand, largely replaced the Portuguese architectural legacy, not only by rationally modifying residual Portuguese traditions but also by directly importing European counterparts—a fact widely acknowledged by scholars.

The Dutch practices prioritized brute practicality, shaped by their prior colonial experiences in Southeast Asia, where climatic conditions mirrored those of Ceylon. This blended legacy reveals itself in the finer constructions of the era, where façade- emphasis intertwined with vernacular wisdom. Heavy masonry walls and columns rose gracefully, supporting gabled roofs with generous overhangs, their lines mirroring the rhythms of the land. Expansive courtyards and lanky fenestrations invited light and air, while deep verandas stood as the crowning feature—an eloquent union of functionality and climate-responsive elegance, embodying a dialogue between tradition and adaptation. By the close of the Dutch occupation, Ceylon stood enriched with guilds of Dutch-trained masons and carpenters, masters of their craft who carried forward the legacy of Western construction techniques.

33. Kandyan medieval period: *Wattegedara Hathara-andi-gedara* (yeoman's house), Kandy, Central Province
34. Kandyan medieval period: *Aluvihare Maha walauwe* (manor house), *Matale*, Central Province
35. Kandyan medieval period: *Karagahagedara Ambalama* (way-side resting place), *Kurunegala*, North Western Province
36. Kandyan medieval period: *Dalada Maligawa* (temple of the sacred tooth relic), Kandy, Central Province

Alongside this technical mastery flourished a fully fledged architectural lexicon, interwoven with borrowings from Portuguese and Dutch tongues—a linguistic testament to the fusion of cultures, shaping the island's building traditions and its enduring architectural identity. No records exist of specific Portuguese or Dutch designers who contributed to this architectural saga, leaving their identities shrouded in mystery. What we do know is that they were primarily military engineers, blending utilitarian expertise with the demands of colonial ambition. Their creations bear testament to their skill, even as their names fade into obscurity, leaving behind only the enduring legacy of their craft.


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British colonial rule in Ceylon initially embraced the architectural traditions inherited from the Dutch, but gradually enriched this foundation with a tapestry of revivalist aesthetics, including Neo-Classical and Italianate styles. By the dawn of the 20th century, these influences had crystallized into a distinct Victorian architectural identity. By the time the British departed in the mid-20th century, they had left an indelible mark on the island's built environment. Pragmatic in their approach, the British adapted the 'bungalow'— borrowed from their Indian colonial territories—to suit Ceylon's domestic needs, blending it seamlessly with lingering Dutch architectural elements. At the same time, the lofty grandeur of European high styles, such as Neo-Classical and Gothic Revival, was employed for elite residences and religious edifices, exuding status and spiritual gravitas. Embarking on an ambitious building program unlike anything the island had witnessed before, the British transformed Ceylon's landscape with courts, hospitals, schools, and commercial structures. These constructions reflected a careful amalgamation of global architectural trends and local traditions, establishing a legacy that balanced functionality, aesthetic aspiration, and cultural synthesis. Towards the twilight of their rule, the British introduced the 'Indo-Saracenic Revival' style to Ceylon—a captivating fusion of Indian and Islamic motifs with European architectural forms. This eclectic style found its grand expression in public buildings and railway stations, standing as monuments to colonial ambition and artistic synthesis. Almost simultaneously, British architects introduced the so-called 'pseudo-architecture' to Ceylon, a blend of superficial ornamentation and functional forms designed to emulate the grandeur of local high culture. These efforts stemmed, in part, from a conscience seeking to atone for the disruption of local traditions, and, on the other hand, from a humanistic intent to provide what was deemed 'best' for the locals—leveraging the finest Western ideas and technological advancements of the time. This style found its expression through the architects of the empire, often in collaboration with local counterparts, in the creation of symbolically-charged structures. Monuments celebrating independence and the breaking of colonial shackles stood as testaments to the resurgence of indigenous cultural and political hegemony. Similarly, newly established universities adopted this architectural approach, embodying a vision to cultivate a learned generation steeped in Western epistemology, yet rooted in local identity.

37. Dutch-period: 'Lodge Harmony' Manor house, *Matara*, Southern Province
38. Dutch-period: 'Naval Commander's Residence' in Classical Dutch Colonial style, Trincomalee, Eastern Province
39. Dutch-period: 'Governor's Residence' in Classical Dutch Colonial style, *Pettah*, Colombo, Western Province

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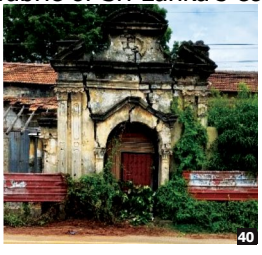
On the other hand, the 'Public Works Department' style emerged, marrying utilitarian design with colonial grandeur. This pragmatic approach catered to the island's administrative, infrastructural, and domestic needs, giving rise to structures such as the 'PWD bungalow'—a reinvention of the traditional bungalow, imbued with a distinctive colonial character. The first five decades of the 20th century also bore witness to the subtle infiltration of global architectural currents championed by Western Europe and America into the island's built fabric. The 'International Style,' with its clean lines and functional ethos, and the vibrant allure of 'Art Deco' and 'Art Moderne,' began to shape the domestic and commercial landscapes. Together, these trends introduced a modernist spirit to Ceylon's architecture, foreshadowing the transitions that lay ahead in a rapidly evolving world. Apart from notable individual names such as James Smither, Edward Skinner, and Austin Woodeson, as well as prominent practices including Adam and Small alongside Edward, Reid and Booty (later Edward, Reid and Begg), the contributions of many other empire builders have largely faded into oblivion. Their works, though integral to the island's architectural narrative, remain anonymous echoes within the fabric of Sri Lanka's colonial and postcolonial legacy.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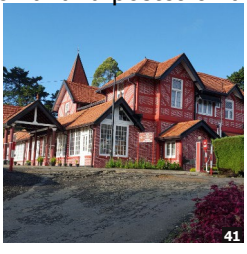
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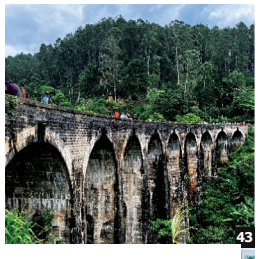
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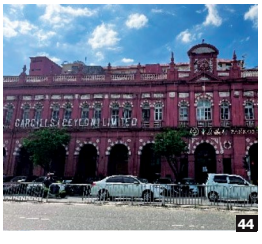
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40. British-period: Unknown petty-bourgeoisie suburban house in Italianate style, Jaffna, Northern Province
41. British-period: '*Nuwara Eliya* Post Office' in Tudor Revival style, *Nuwara Eliya*, Central province
42. British-period: Unknown petty-bourgeoisie suburban house in Italianate style, *Kalutara*, Western Province
43. British-period: 'Nine Arches' Railway bridge exemplifying great Victorian Engineering, *Ella*, *Uva* Province
44. British-period: 'Cargills' department store building in Neo-classical style, Colombo Fort, Colombo, Western Province
45. British period: ' Victoria Memorial Eye Hospital' in Indo-Saracenic style, *Maradana*, Colombo 10, Western Province
46. British-period: 'Gaffoor Building' in Neo-classical style, Colombo Fort, Colombo 01, Western Province
47. British-period: Unknown commercial building in Art Deco style, *Pettah*, Colombo 01, Western Province
48. British-period: Unknown suburban petty-bourgeoisie residence in Art Deco style, *Dehiwala*, Western Province
49. British-period: *Kelaniya Raja Maha Viharaya* Buddhist image house in Pseudo architectural style, *Kelaniya*, Western Province
50. British-period: *Walukarama Purana Maha Viharaya* Buddhist Temple Image house, *Panadura*, Western province
51. Post-colonial Period: *Nidahas Chathurashraya* (Independence Suare) in Pseudo architectural style, Colombo 07, Western Province

In the immediate aftermath of political independence, Sri Lanka's architectural landscape evolved further. The first modernist architects of mostly European origin who practiced in Ceylon had been primarily oriented towards the Modernist '*avant-garde*.' They adhered to international style norms, producing sleek and functional designs. The first generation of postcolonial architects in Ceylon, by contrast, embraced 'Tropical Modernism'—a movement rooted in the adaptation of modernist *avant-garde* principles. This architectural approach, another humanistic invention of the West, was thoughtfully reinterpreted to harmonize with the island's tropical climate, cultural context, and emerging postcolonial identity. The validation of Tropical Modernism was solidified when British architect Andrew Boyd's *avant-garde* experiments in Ceylon failed to resonate, convincing the new generation of the viability and relevance of climate-responsive designs. Consequently, Ceylonese architects from Hebert Gonsal, Justin Samarasekara to Visva Selvaratnam, and their western collaborators such as Leon Monk practiced in this style.


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A shift emerged with the second generation of architects, who sought to harmonize local architectural traditions with the ideals of modernity. This evolution unfolded in the immediate aftermath of independence, a period when the nation was in search of a renewed identity. As visual and performing arts, literature, and film began to reflect a distinctly local essence within a western foundation, architects too were inspired. They were consequently compelled to infuse their designs with a sense of cultural authenticity and modern relevance.

In the 1950s, Minnette de Silva embarked on a groundbreaking journey, introducing the concept of a 'Modern Regional Architecture for the Tropics'. Her vision blended modernist principles with the use of local materials and a deep sensitivity to regional contexts. This architectural dialogue was enriched by the contributions of Danish architect Ulrik Plesner, who practiced briefly in Ceylon. His collaborative efforts played a pivotal role in shaping and refining the evolution of this unique style. Geoffrey Bawa carried this legacy forward in the 1960s, refining it into what became known as 'Tropical/Neo Regionalism' by the 1980s. Leveraging his elite political connections, Bawa expanded the style from domestic architecture to the civic realm, elevating it as the defining architectural identity of post-independence Sri Lanka.

In contrast, 'Expressionist Modernism', introduced by Valentine Gunasekara in the 1960s, offered bold and experimental forms characterized by symbolism and functionality.

52. Post-colonial Period: 'Harry Pieris House' by Andrew Boyd in Architectural Modernist style, Kandy, Central Province
53. Post-colonial period: 'Kolpetty Super Market' by Justin Samarasekara in Tropical Modern style, *Kolpetty*, Colombo 03, Western province
54. Post-colonial period: 'Sumanadasa Building' by K. R. S. Peiris in Tropical Modern style, University of Moratuwa, *Moratuwa*, Western Province

Despite its artistic merit, the style reached its peak in the 1980s, but faded into obscurity due to its largely middle-class patronage, aesthetic unfamiliarity, complex execution, religious (Catholic) associations, and perceptions of socialist inclinations. On the other hand, Roland Silva's unique contribution, described as 'Retro-Classical Modernism', reinterpreted classical elements through a modern lens, creating spaces that balanced historical reverence with contemporary aesthetics.


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In the 1960s, the so-called 'American-style' emerged, resonating strongly with the newly educated, aspirational middle-class of Ceylon. Viewing the United States as a symbol of anticolonialism and modern progress, this group embraced 'California' and 'Mid-century Modernism' as a subtle rebellion against the colonial architectural legacies favored by the elite. This accessible style propelled by largely non- architects, marked by affordability and simplicity in construction, quickly spread island-wide, finding application not only in domestic architecture, but also in commercial and institutional spaces. However, its popularity waned within a couple of decades, as the neo-liberal economic reforms of 1977 ushered in new architectural trends and priorities.


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With the advent of open economy, the island's exposure to the relentless forces of globalization reached unprecedented levels, ushering in a second wave of the International Style. The commercial realm saw the rapid rise of Western-inspired, gas-guzzling mid and high-rises with shimmering glass façades, brought to life through local–foreign architectural collaborations, reshaping urban skylines with unapologetic modernity. This shift reverberated across other realms as well. Even Geoffrey Bawa, a stalwart of 'Tropical Regionalism', began pivoting towards the new trend with his urban compact 'tower houses', reflecting the zeitgeist of the era. Simultaneously, architects such as Valentine Gunasekara ventured boldly into more adventurous styles such as 'Architectural Deconstruction', signaling a dramatic and transformative chapter in Sri Lanka's architectural evolution.


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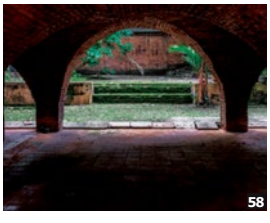
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55. Post-colonial period: 'Kandyan Art Centre' by Minnette de Silva in Neo Regionalist style, Kandy, Central Province
56. Post-colonial period: 'Seema Malaka' by Geoffrey Bawa in Neo/Tropical Regionalist style, *Gangaramaya* Buddhist Temple, Colombo 02, Western Province
57. Post-colonial period: 'Jesuit (Nirmala) Chapel' by Valentine Gunasekara in Expressionist Modernist style, *Bambalapitiya*, Colombo 04, Western Province
58. Post-colonial period: 'Nirma and Gehan de Silva-Wijeyeratne House' by Roland Silva in Retro-classical Modernist style, *Borella*, Colombo 08, Western Province
59. Post-colonial period: 'Supreme Court Complex' by Pani Tennakoon in International Style, Hulftsdorp, Colombo 12, Western Province

Meanwhile, a diverse array of architects—and notably, many non-architects—championed eclectic architectural forms that spanned forward-looking innovations and nostalgic revivals of the past. Among them, Alfred Kalubovila stood out as the foremost non-architect of the period, profoundly shaping the capital's architectural landscape. His designs for numerous commercial buildings and houses captured the eclectic spirit of the time, skillfully blending creativity with functionality and embodying the broader trends of architectural experimentation that characterized the era. State-sponsored mass modernization programs, such as *Gam Udawa* (Village Reawakening), further propelled this movement, blending vernacular inspirations with modern approaches to address the nation's socio-economic aspirations. These programs not only shaped rural development but also enriched the architectural landscape, leaving a lasting imprint on the island's built environment. This vibrant period of innovation established the 1980s as a defining decade in Sri Lanka's architectural evolution. It was a time when more styles emerged than in any previous era, mirroring the dynamic and transformative spirit of the age.





These formative architectural rubrics became the foundational pillars, shaping the postcolonial decades of architecture on the island. It was the generation of architects and non-architects, nurtured under the influence of the pioneering practices of this transformative period, who carried their legacy forward into the present. They are the visionaries responsible for crafting the evolving morphology of contemporary Sri Lanka, skillfully blending past traditions with modern aspirations to define the nation's architectural identity in a constantly changing world. This area undoubtedly warrants a serious and in-depth study. These diverse styles and approaches reflect Sri Lanka's layered architectural narrative, from its colonial past to its quest for a distinct modern identity, making the island's built environment a living tapestry of cultural, historical, and ideological synthesis.

The doors, the soul of this book, are indiscriminately drawn from the aforementioned rich and vibrant tapestry of Sri Lanka's architectural legacy—each one a silent sentinel to the stories of the past.

60. Post-colonial period: 'American Style' middle-class suburban house by an unknown designer in California modernist Style, *Nawala*, Western Province
61. Post-colonial period: 'Geoffreys Studio' by an unknown designer in International modernist Style, *Moratuwa*, Western Province
62. Post-colonial period: Suburban neo-riche house by an unknown designer in International modernist Style, Colombo 07, Western Province
63. Post-colonial period: Commercial building by Alfred Kalubovila in International modernist Style, Colombo 03, Western Province
64. Post-colonial period: New additions to the Colombo skyline by foreign architects in International modernist style, Colombo 02, Western Province

Relevance

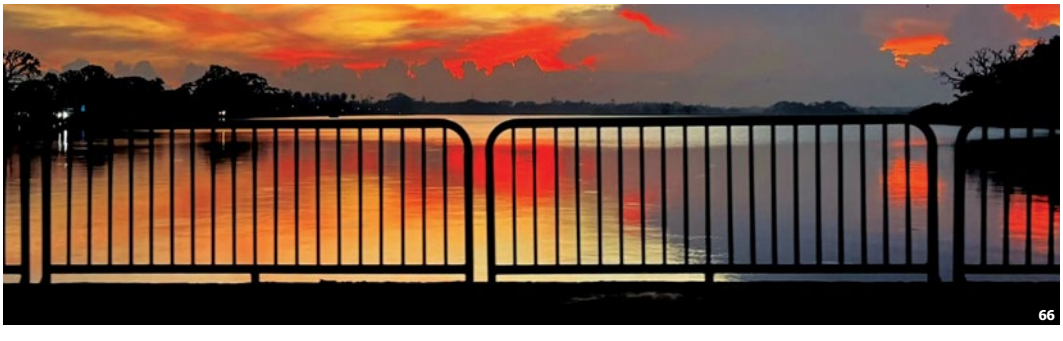
The relevance of this book stretches far beyond the confines of its title. To our knowledge, it marks the first exploration of doors—a singular and evocative architectural element—drawn from a rich and diverse building heritage. These doors, shaped by time's metamorphosis, stand resilient, bearing witness to history while embracing transformation. This modest endeavor underscores a profound realization: we stand merely on the threshold of a deeper, more serious exploration in a phenomenological viewpoint. Here, traditional beliefs, stories, and legends have not been dismissed but approached with thoughtful circumspection. When widely held, they grasp their own significance, offering a portal into the popular associations and cultural resonance of the architecture.

Doors

"There are things known and there are things unknown, and in between are the doors of perception".

Aldous Huxley (1954)

This book delves into house doors derived from the island's narrative of domestic architecture, representing three pivotal centuries—the 18th, 19th, and 20th. It celebrates 66 iconic house doors that represent the architectural evolution of the aforesaid three centuries. Some are associated with widely recognised projects, while others persist in relative obscurity. A door on one hand offers a glimpse into the lives and stories within in private sanctuary. On the other, from within, it frames a glimpse of life unfolding outside, ever responsive to a dynamic array of external changes. Doors are portals into bygone times. These doors invite us to peek into a vibrant past, revealing the political, economic, and socio-cultural dynamics that shaped their existence. Together, they create a rich tapestry that showcases the transformation of a cross-section of the island's architectural heritage, which invites readers to reflect on the evolving narrative of the island itself.



65. Jaffna Door for sale in a Salvage Yard in *Kesbewa*, Western Province
66. View of sunset from a bridge, *Tissamaharama*, Southern Province

Doors

D-I

This door originates from an 18th century *hathara-andi-gedara* in *Medawala*, near Kandy. It exemplifies the domestic architecture of a mid-ranking official of the *Govi* (farmer) caste within the administrative hierarchy of the medieval Kandyan Kingdom. The house remains occupied by descendants of the same family, tracing their lineage to a long line of *arachchi mahattayas* (village headmen). Crafted from jak wood, the door provides access from the front *midula* (open forecourt) into the elevated living area, or *maha maduwa*, which is set upon a prominent plinth approached by a solid granite step. Aligned axially with the central courtyard and a simpler rear-facing door—connected through the utilitarian space of the *heen maduwa*—this door frames a clear longitudinal vista. Notably, its substantial bottom jamb mirrors the thickness of the top and side jambs and requires a step to cross—an architectural gesture that reflects overt Hindu influence within this otherwise Buddhist household. Such features likely resulted from cultural importations facilitated by waves of South Indian migration into the Kandyan Kingdom, during which settlers would have brought with them ancient architectural treatises such as the *Maya Matha*, which codified principles of domestic construction. The low top jamb of the door is crowned by a solid timber fanlight adorned with a restrained Sinhala motif. The rusticated brass ironmongery appears to be original, while the stained timber frame and its two inward-opening shutters show significant wear due to long-term neglect. Although the door itself remains unaltered, the house façade has been significantly compromised by numerous modern interventions, including the insertion of contemporary windows and, more conspicuously, a side garage accommodating a worn passenger van. These additions render the historic door visually incongruous within its altered context. The house thus stands as a poignant example of how globalization and utilitarian adaptation have disrupted the integrity of an architectural relic rooted in pre-modern Sri Lankan tradition.

D-II

This door serves as the main entrance to a traditional Kandyan *hatara-andi-gedara* known as *'Wattegedara'*, nestled in *Matale* and belonging to a lineage of petty officials, with the last notable occupant being an *arachchi mahattaya* (village headman) of the *Govi* caste. Ascending the two stone steps to reach the raised plinth, visitors encounter the only door of this 18th century home, which opens into the expansive living area, or *maha maduwa*. Crafted from *Kohomba* (neem) wood, the frameless and rather short single door sash exhibits a rustic, robust charm. It comprises three vertical planks, reinforced with three horizontal braces, resulting in a solid yet somewhat crude construction. Side-hung on prominent steel hinges reminiscent of the low- country Dutch influence, the door features a unique locking mechanism—*haras polla* which is a horizontal strip of steel secured by hooks attached to either side of its *thappa bichchi* (compacted earth walls). The weathered door, devoid of stain and paint, illustrates a history of repairs and marks, beautifully contrasting with the whitewashed walls and polished cement floors, both of which are later additions, enriching the character of this historic residence. It has somehow survived the haphazard repairs over the years at the hands of unskilled village carpenters.

D-III

This door exemplifies the low-country Dutch architectural influence that had permeated the Kandyan provinces by the early-19th century. Since their arrival in 1796, and continuing after the complete conquest in 1815, the British largely adhered to the enduring Dutch building traditions. It was these traditions that were subsequently appropriated by the Kandyans. The *Atipola Walauwe* belongs to a *Govi* caste family that once held the position of *vel vidane* (village chief in charge of irrigation water) in their village in *Atipola, Matale*. The door, crafted from jak wood, opens from one of two side rooms flanking the wide front verandah of a new extension. This is likely an early-19th century addition to the original *hatara-andi-ge*, which still stands at the rear. Unfortunately, many fenestrations and architectural details from the original structure have been lost in this renovation, which aimed to create a more fashionable colonial interpretation of Western-inspired living. This period marked a transformation for the Kandyan elite, as an aesthetically pleasing façade—previously unconsidered—emerged as a new essential. The underlying reason for this shift was that the strict regulations imposed on building fine houses by the King ceased to exist after the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom. The chamfered shallow paneling, the indented masonry arch above, the deep brown paint and the brass ironmongery of the double-door all reflect 19th century design traits. Together with the meticulously maintained white lime-washed walls and cement-rendered floors, the door contributes to a rustic charm that echoes the rich history of the home, seamlessly blending tradition with evolving tastes.

D-IV

This door elegantly showcases the enduring influence of low-country Dutch architecture, which began to resonate in the Kandyan provinces in the early decades of the 19th century. This influence predates the emergence of a distinct British architectural character on the island during the mid-century. The door belongs to *Ratninda arachchi mahattaya*'s (village chief's) house (*walauwe*) in the rural village of *Atipola* in *Matale*. The door, fabricated from jak wood, presents a subtle outer frame adorned with two side-hung sashes, each ingeniously divided to function as distinct top and bottom sections—paying homage to the enduring Dutch legacy. Interestingly, the absence of a fanlight adds a unique charm to the entrance, enhancing its character and inviting warmth. This service door, which leads from the rear *midula* into the *kussiya* (kitchen) area has plain shutters. Each shutter is made by joining upright planks with top and bottom cross brazes, using timber dowels. All sections of the door are finished in a dark brown enamel that clashes with the orange-ish walls, resulting in an odd and somewhat dissonant appearance for a house of this character. The wall color is a later intervention, much like the jarring red polished floors that disrupt the character of this historic house. The ironmongery too appears to be fairly recent additions. Despite the passage of time, the house still exudes its colonial charm, which is often misunderstood and misinterpreted as authentic Kandyan.

This door providing access to one of the two side bedrooms flanking the inner front verandah, originates from *Ekneligoda walauwe* in *Ekneligoda, Ratnapura*—an area steeped in the history of the former Kandyan kingdom. The manor house is now occupied by the *Deraniyagala* family, traditional custodians of the *Saman Maha Devalaya* (temple dedicated to the local deity *Maha Saman*) in *Ratnapura*. Their Kandyan aristocratic lineage stretches back centuries. Crafted from resilient jak wood in the early-19th century, this door embodies the architectural style of Dutch maritime houses that flourished before British influences took hold, several decades after the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom. The near distance of *Ratnapura* to *Colombo* largely accounts for this exposure. The *'mal lēli'* (floral panel) fanlight, embellishedwith exquisite floral motifs, graceful tendrils, the geometric indented design of the sash paneling, and even the brass ironmongery, all evoke the later British influence on the piece. Notably, the motif of three ostrich feathers encircled by a golden coronet—representing the Prince of Wales's heraldic badge—at the center of the floral panel vividly symbolizes the allegiance of this traditional Kandyan aristocratic family to the British throne. The slightly uneven edges and absence of glazing hint at the artisanal craftsmanship typical of an era before woodworking machines, a hallmark of industrialization, made their impact on Ceylon. The timeworn patina of the lime-plastered walls and the polished terra cotta floor beautifully complement the weathered stained timber of the door, infusing the space with a delightful rustic charm.

D-V

D-VI

This door opens into the *Zaal* (great hall) of the former residence (*walauwe*) of the infamous *Ehelepola Disawe*, accessed from a spacious rear-facing verandah. Built between 1811 and 1814 in *Ratnapura*, the house showcases unmistakable low-country Dutch architectural features, yet its fenestration reflects significant alterations made during the British period. The unusually tall four-panel door made of teak, crowned with a half-circular fanlight, exemplifies this blend of influences, with its wide outer frame indicating its low-country origins. The two central sashes pivot on the sides, while the outer sashes remain fixed, each adorned with small rectangular panes that occupy the upper two-thirds. Notably, the fanlight includes a central section that pivots, flanked by two elongated quarter-circle fixed panes. Intricate brass ironmongery facilitates the moving parts. Since glass became available in Ceylon only by the mid-19th century, these modifications were likely introduced later in the period to improve illumination within what was presumably a dimly lit interior. Similarly, the red polished cement floors and replastered lime-washed walls have also been updated, further illustrating the evolution of this historic space. Following *Ehelepola*'s exile to Mauritius in 1825 due to British suspicions of his involvement in the 1818 rebellion, the house became a residence for government agents, and was ultimately transformed into a national museum in 1946. The door opens onto a serene haven of a spacious, well-landscaped garden at the back of the house, just as it once would have done for the *Disawe* long ago.

This door belongs to *Kappetipola walauwe*, an exquisite Kandyan manor from *Badulla* in the *Uva* Province. Nestled in the former Kandyan territory, this residence belongs to a traditional Kandyan aristocratic family. The *Monarawila Kappetipola Disawe* holds a special place in this familylineage for his leading role in the famous 1818 independence struggle against the British. The door opens from the *zaal* into the wide rear verandah of the house, where much of the household's daily life unfolds. The architecture of the manor reflects a blend of late-18th to early-19th century influences, oscillating between Kandyan and Dutch architectural trends. The wide outer frame and unusually broad double sashes of the tall jak wood double- doors showcase simple shallow paneling—understated yet elegant. The sashes are side-hung onto the outer frame using brass hinges. The brass locks and door pulls are simple in design. Above, an indented half-circular masonry arch echoes the strong Dutch architectural influence that permeates the design. The house's white lime-washed walls and plain cement-rendered floors exude colonial charm, while the weathered dark gray paint tells a story of time and history. Despite its Kandyan provenance, the residence maintains authentic colonial characteristics, creating a unique harmony that celebrates its rich heritage. This blend of influences not only highlights the architectural beauty of the *walauwe,* but also honors the cultural tapestry of the region.

D-VII

This door at the *Maduwanwela walauwe*, located in the village bearing the same name within the former Kandyan region, reflects the rich history of this Kandyan-era aristocratic house. Originally built in the early-18th century by *Maduwanwela Maha Mohottala* and subsequently expanded by the family until 1905, the structure manifests a great sense of eclecticism. This Burma teak double-door unmistakably exemplifies early-20th century British architectural influence. Positioned at the front center of the octagonal section of the house, it is flanked by two windows on the adjacent legs, creating a harmonious design. The slender outer frame and sashes feature a lower panel with low-relief, while the upper section displays eight square glass panes, divided by slender timber members. The brass hinges, door locks, and pulls remain discreet. The door showcases a two-toned palette of turquoise and white, a classic British trait. Decorative buttress-like short columns in masonry flank the entrance, and the lime-washed, lily-white walls contrast beautifully with the fenestrations. A rugged flight of outward-curving rubble steps, reminiscent of the Dutch era, leads to the door, completing the aesthetic with *pethi ulu* (flat roof tiles) that enhance the structure's charm. The jak wood door, which has survived the test of time, still serves its purpose, even as the building is currently administered by the Department of Archaeology, and open to visitors.

D-VIII

D-IX

This door is a remarkable survivor. While the *Naachiyar* (four-sided) house in *Vattukkoddai* village in the *Jaffna* peninsula has crumbled around it, this door remains standing as a testament to resilience. Its thick *siyambala* (tamarind) wood outer frame, devoid of a bottom jamb, hints at mid-19th century British colonial influences, while the indented masonry arch above further affirms this affinity. The two side-hung solid shutters of the same wood, once integral to connecting internal spaces within the now-partly ruined home, serve as a gateway to the outside world. In the absence of a door handle, there is a small brass keyhole instead. The hinges too are executed out of the same material. Once painted in a soft gray, the elements have taken their toll, leaving the door with visible signs of decay, mirroring the coral stone façade that surrounds it. The deterioration of domestic architectural traditions in *Jaffna* can largely be attributed to the decade-long civil war, which disrupted the fabric of its community. Today, impoverished owners are offered meager sums for what they fail to recognize as treasures, as salvage hunters descend upon the remnants of their heritage. This tragic reality threatens one of the least-explored architectural legacies of the island, as history is lost to indifference and exploitation. The door stands as a vivid reminder of both cultural heritage and the fragility of time.

This door traces its origins to an early-20th century house in *Arali*, located in the *Jaffna* peninsula, inviting visitors into its dimly-lit drawing room. During the 19th century, it appears that traditional Jaffna doors evolved, losing their bottom jambs to embrace the latest fashionable trends set by British-designed buildings. They still maintained their thick and elaborative outer frames adorned with intricate router work. The sashes, likely salvaged from an older 18th century genuine *Jaffna* door, are seamlessly integrated into this turn-of-the-century reinterpretation, distinguished by a striking rectangular floral-paneled fanlight and an arched, frameless floral panel above. Crafted from hard *siyambala* (tamarind) wood, each sash features four square panels, with the upper section showcasing a pointed top that hints at Hindu influence. While the two ornate brass door pulls, shaped like rings on the second panels from the top, are noteworthy, the strap hinges that secure the sashes are fabricated from forged iron. The locking mechanism consists of a cross iron bar on the inside, resting on two iron arms fixed to the outer frame of the door. Although the door has seen better days, its history is palpable. The crumbling white plaster wall surrounding the peeling, stained wood is two-toned—a hideous light blue band of rubber paint at the bottom contrasts with the brilliant white enamel that covers the rest. It is remarkable that this door has endured in the once war-ravaged peninsula. Now, the door is increasingly vulnerable to the predations of profit-driven salvage hunters. Its survival is a testament to the resilience of its custodians.

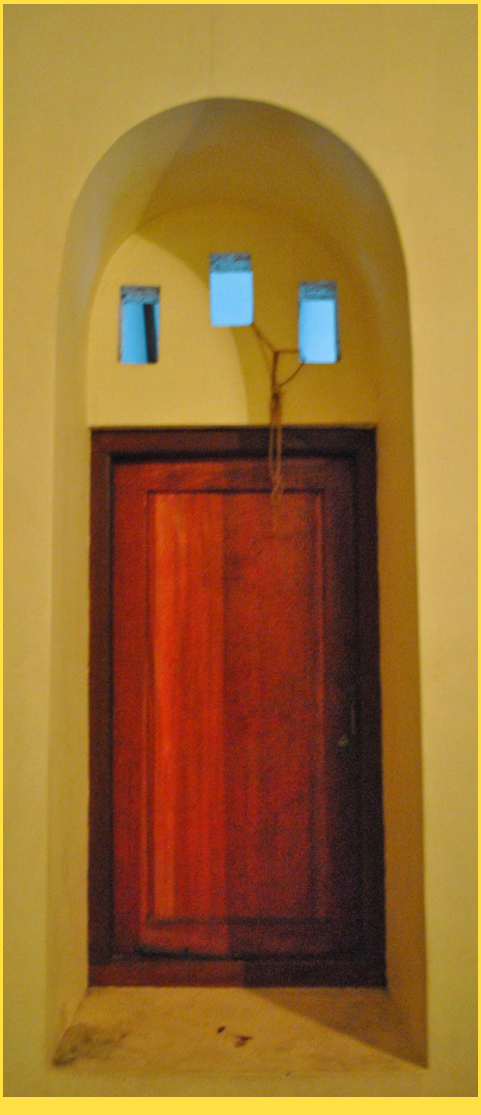
D-X

D-XI

This door has its origins in an early-20th century house in the village of *Udupiddi*, located in the *Jaffna* peninsula, inviting visitors from the outside into a softly lit drawing room. The lack of a protective verandah in this case is both striking and unusual. Built in 1929, the house is fashionably called 'Ratna Villa'. It seems that traditional Jaffna doors underwent significant transformation during the British period that almost rendered them out of recognition. The distinctive bottom jamb had long disappeared, yet the robust and ornate outer frames, embellished with intricate router detailing, still remained intact. What were once short doors had by now become tall and elegant with striking rectangular floral-paneled fanlights and arched, frameless floral panels above, exuding a sense of colonial glamor. For the modernized Hindu inhabitants, embracing British colonial modernity likely took precedence over perpetuating traditional design beliefs. Crafted from hard *siyambala* (tamarind) wood, each of the two side-hung solid shutters features two rows of six vertically arranged square panels, all lavishly adorned with intricate router work. Although the door pulls and locks have long disappeared, strap hinges with long leaves crafted from forged iron secure its sashes to the outer frame. Moreover, an internal cross iron bar ensures added security. Two prominent pilasters flank the door, and the decorative stucco frieze, upon which the family crest in high relief rests, creates a door-surround effect that accentuates its presence. Although once coated in dark brown, the enamel paint has peeled and faded due to direct exposure to the harsh elements of the North. The white lime-washed façade is slowly crumbling, having been haphazardly repaired with cement infills. Nevertheless, this blatant act has not compromised the integrity of this magnificent door.

D-XII

This door provides access from the expansive verandah to the drawing room of the former Dutch Naval Commissioner's residence, dating back to the 17th-18th centuries A.E. It perches on the seafront at the mouth of the colonial fortification known as 'Fort Frederick' in the historic city of *Trincomalee*, located in Eastern Sri Lanka. The double-door is seamlessly integrated into the outer edge of the unusually thick walls, designed for thermal insulation to withstand the hot, arid seaside climate. It is without a fanlight. Although the door openings are modestly sized to minimize heat gain, the inward chamfer of the surrounding walls creates the illusion of a larger door size. While the double-sashed door features a glazed top third, glass being a material with mid-19th century provenance suggests that the original shutters were replaced at some point to allow light into the otherwise dim interior. These changes likely occurred while the residence was home to a succession of Civil Service Commissioners during the British colonial era. The bass ironmongery appears new, a result of the most recent wave of renovations. The richly stained jak wood doors stand in striking contrast to the lime washed walls of white and terracotta floors of earthy brown, beautifully embodying the rustic charm of Dutch architecture. Following extensive renovations, the building was transformed into the Maritime and Naval History Museum of *Trincomalee*, officially reopening in 2013 to honor and celebrate its rich heritage.



This door belongs to the 'Dutch Tavern', situated on a hill overlooking the Indian Ocean within the historic 'Fort Frederick' at *Trincomalee*. The door leads into one of the bedrooms from the *Zaal* of the house. The 18th century building, in ruins for years, was restored around 2009-10, almost returning it to its former glory. Once a tavern for officers of the Dutch *VOC*, it now serves as a guest house managed by the Department of Archaeology. The thick jak wood outer frames, unusually tall and unadorned solid wood sash, and the half circular indented masonry arch are characteristic of the more economically built austere Dutch military architecture in the maritime region. The three rectangular punctures—with the central one positioned slightly above the flanking pair—serve as ventilation points, and are a distinctive feature of this arch. Even the lock and door pull appear to be period-appropriate, though executed anew in brass. Standard brass hinges have been used instead of strap hinges atypical to Dutch doors. While only a ruin of walls was discovered on site, it appears that the restoration process has been sensitive to the original materials and techniques. However, the overly neat finish of the woodwork—a result of machine saw and sander usage—somewhat detracts from true authenticity. The lime-plastered walls with a yellowish tint, stained sashes that showcase wood grains, and the terracotta floor tiles all evoke a romantic colonial past when the Dutch ruled the waves in the Indian Ocean.

D-XIII

This door is a distinguished feature of the *Attapattu Walawwa*, originally built by *Mudliar Don Bastian Gooneratne* in 1742. It still serves as the ancestral home of the *Dias Abeysinghe* and *Gooneratne* families. Nestled in the serene neighborhood of *Walawwatte*, just a stone's throw from the vibrant *Galle* town center, this historic house welcomes visitors with its stunning main door, which leads into the drawing room from an enchanting double-verandah arrangement. Crafted from fine jak wood, the door features exquisite woodwork that epitomizes the elegance of mid-18th century design. The substantially thick door frames, adorned with intricate routing, support a graceful rectangular fanlight above. This fanlight showcases the overlapping copper plate initials of the original owner—a unique detail that speaks to its storied past. Complementing this is the striking frieze that crowns the door, further enhancing its architectural splendor. Though the door lacks visible handles, a sophisticated brass lock ensures robust security. The prominent strap hinges with long leaves are crafted from forged iron. Drenched in a rustic hue of earthy dark brown, the door stands in beautiful contrast to the white lime-plastered walls and warm terracotta floors. Remarkably, it continues to fulfill its intended purpose nearly three centuries after its creation, lovingly preserved by the family that has cherished it for generations.

D-XIV

D-XV

This door gracefully connects the drawing room to the external verandah of one of the enchanting row houses along Rampart Street in Galle Fort. The distinctive feature of this Gothic inspired arched double door is that it is devoid of a fanlight. Crafted from jak wood, this door unmistakably evokes a bygone Portuguese influence. After all, it is widely believed that the British coined the term 'Dutch Architecture' to describe what they encountered upon arrival, where the Dutch had largely maintained the architectural traditions of their predecessors. Each shutter of the door forms a half-arch, creating a striking semicircle when closed, reminiscent of those found in traditional Catholic church buildings. On each shutter, the lower part of the paneling design incorporates squares on top and bottom of an upright rectangle. This arrangement culminates in a half pointed-arch on top. Each panel is adorned with intricate routing and refined indentations, while the door frame maintains a relatively narrow profile atypical of its era. The wide, prominent routed stucco molding encircling the door enhances its visual stature, making it appear grander than its true dimensions. On the outside, the door reveals no ironmongery, as new forged iron reproductions of strap hinges with long leaves and a brass-made lock have been employed inside. Recently restored, the door now boasts a charming turquoise hue, artfully complemented by a weathered peeling effect. This captivating color combination of the door, white walls, and cement-rendered floors beautifully upholds the colonial charm of the building façade. The intentional retention, and perhaps even exaggeration, of these elements captures the stark reality of the growing demand for rentable accommodation, fueled by the tourism trade.

D-XVI

This door elegantly swings open into the front-facing verandah, revealing the charming foyer of an 18th century Dutch period house nestled within the historic *Galle* Fort. This verandah is part of a charming series that lines the narrow streets of the colonial fortification. Each of such verandas is typically connected to a narrow *Kleine Zaal (lobby)* inside, via foyer. The door frame is wide and prominent, featuring an elegant half- circular top that forms a fanlight. The robust double door panels are cleverly designed, allowing only the upper set of side-hung sashes to open when needed, providing both functionality and style. The exquisite paneling showcases meticulous craftsmanship. When the lower two sashes display upright rectangles, the upper panels transition into graceful triangular shapes with splayed edges. The jak wood door, beautifully stained, adds warmth to the entrance. The most captivating aspect is the intricate wrought iron grille work of the fanlight, adorned with geometric patterns that catch the eye. Its resemblance to the 18th century 'Adam Style' hints at British influences arriving long before their official advent, into the island. The vibrant stained glass is likely a mid-to-late-19th century addition, as it was common during this period to use translucent flat oyster shells (nacre) to adorn window panes and fanlights, long-predating the use of glass. The door hardware, crafted from forged iron, exudes a modest charm. The detailed strap hinges with long leaves stand out. This sensitively preserved door, set against the backdrop of *samara* (a locally known exterior wall finish) washed walls and terracotta floors of the house, stands as a testament to its rich history, continuing to serve with grace. Once a gateway for family and visitors, the door now invites tourists into the house, which has since been repurposed as a cozy guesthouse for backpackers.

D-XVII

This door leads from the vibrant bustle of *Prince Street*, welcoming visitors through a distinctive double-height verandah into the narrow *Kleine Zaal* (lobby) of the renowned 17th-18th century A.E. Dutch Governor's residence in *Pettah*, *Colombo*. The elegant double-door, framed in rich *ebony* wood, features a rectangular fanlight above. Each door panel features the unique capability to open its top and bottom sections independently, a remarkable design detail that reflects the Dutch influence. The simple yet exquisite paneling includes a curvy configuration on the top half of each sash, while the bottom remains a classic upright rectangle with decorative router edges. The fanlight is adorned with an intricately carved panel of floral patterns. It is punctured in a curvy configuration of an arch to allow light to filter through. Once, in the absence of glass as a building material, these openings would have been covered with flat translucent oyster shells (nacre), allowing soft light to filter through. Today, however, they have been replaced with glass—seemingly a 19th century intervention. Completing the grandeur of the door is a rectangular Latin stucco inscription in black and white —surrounded by a sandstone-colored relief border of vines and tendrils—placed on top of it. The dark-stained door beautifully contrasts with the crisp white façade of the building. The hardware is crafted using forged iron and appears heavy. The shape of the strap hinges inside is noteworthy. After fulfilling a variety of roles during the British period, this beautifully restored mansion now functions as a museum overseen by the Department of Archaeology. It celebrates the rich legacy of nearly one and a half centuries of Dutch colonial influence on maritime Ceylon. The visitors to the museum remain captivated as they pass through this historic front door, just as *VOC* employees would have been, centuries ago.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D-XVIII

This door faces directly onto a busy road at the Southern town of *Weligama*, with the house set back a couple of feet to perch on a low plinth. The road ledge serves as the first step, while the plinth becomes the second, leading to this centrally positioned door which forms the first point of entrance to the town house. Although unusually tall, the house displays only a single story on its façade. The façade features a verandah flanked by two rooms. The entrance door, with its modest outer frame, stands prominently at the center, flanked by two slender round masonry columns. Remarkably, the door only rises halfway up the height of these columns. Between the columns and the rooms on both sides, half guard walls decorated with geometric motifs in high relief stucco provide privacy. The double-sashed door is modestly paneled at the bottom, with a trellised upper half. Two long horizontal timber screens in the same trellis design cover the space above the aforesaid guard walls. The brass hardware of the door is modest. Painted in dark gray, the door has withstood the elements, attesting to the durability of its jak wood fabrication. The weathered lime-plastered façade with a patina beautifully embodies layers of late-18th century Dutch and early-19th century British architectural traditions, evoking the rich tapestry of Galle's colonial past. It is indeed remarkable that such a structure has endured, especially given its location along a busy road that often brings commercial pressure.

D-XIX

This door warmly greets visitors from the bustling *Maliban Street* in *Pettah*, at the heart of *Colombo*'s central business district, guiding them through a wide verandah into the drawing room of the house it adorns. The modest house was once home to a renowned American Buddhist expatriate. He was none other than Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, a military officer turned journalist, lawyer, and Freemason. Arriving in British colonial Ceylon in 1880, he founded the Theosophical Society and played a pivotal role in reviving Buddhism on the island. The proportions and architecture of the house, along with its prime location, reflect its late-18th century Dutch to early-19th century British temperaments of stylistic hybridity. The wide verandah abuts the street, and features an overhanging roof supported by sturdy masonry colonnade, evoking the charm of Dutch period townhouses found within the Southern Galle Fort. The lanky door, topped with a prominent frieze, and its thick outer frame echo strong Dutch architectural influences. The door's placement at the center of the thick masonry wall has wielded chamfered edges around its outer frame that in turn, appear as a surround from afar. The upper third of the door is trellised with thin wooden strips arranged in a crisscross pattern. The sashes are secured to the frame using strap hinges with long decorated leaves fabricated from forged iron. The locking mechanism consists of a cross-timber bar on the inside, resting on two forged iron arms fixed to the outer frame of the door. Finished with a light stain, this jak wood door has been recently restored along with the building, now overseen by the Department of Archaeology.

D-XX

This door opens from a side room into one of the many external gardens of the 'Sun House', situated in a suburb of the colonial city of Galle in Southern Sri Lanka. Once a merchant's residence, the house has been beautifully restored and now serves as a delightful boutique hotel. The door showcases a harmonious blend of architectural elements from the 18th century Dutch and 19th century British colonial periods, reflecting subsequent modifications. The quarter- circular arch and thick door frame hint at Dutch influence, while the louvered fanlight, slender sash paneling with intricate routing, and two-tone color scheme of dark green on a crisp white background evoke British design sensibilities. The height of the transom disrupts the formation of a proper half-circular fanlight, likely due to the shutters being added later to the outer frame. The door, crafted from jak wood, features elegant brass hardware. The traditional latch from outside enables the two sashes to be secured with a padlock, providing a straightforward yet effective locking mechanism. The narrow stucco molding, also in dark green, elegantly highlights the door against the brilliant white wall. This door integrates seamlessly into its surroundings, almost camouflaged by the dappled shade of the mango tree canopy and the lush ferns that embrace it. The door which has been braced on the outside has seemingly lost its function of connecting the inside and out, evolving instead into a mere symbolic feature. Yet, it evokes a sense of romantic colonial nostalgia for the cultural tourists who visit the hotel, especially as tourism has become a significant economic reality on the island.

This door connects the front-facing verandah to the drawing room of an early-19th century British house in *Wadduwa*, situated along the historic Galle Road. Once a grand residence known as *Parana Walauwe*, this palatial home has largely faded from view along Galle Road, as its front yard has been subdivided to accommodate a modern commercial building—a fate shared by many roadside houses from that era. This grim reality underscores the imminent loss of the island's domestic architectural heritage to commercialization. The thick door frame reflects lingering Dutch influence, while the glazed fanlight, resembling the British 'Adam Style', is a striking feature. The two paneled solid timber shutters open inward, which is somewhat unusual. While the lower two sashes showcase upright rectangles, the upper panels elegantly transition into graceful triangular shapes with splayed edges. The intricate routing around the frame and paneling reflects the artistry and skilled craftsmanship of an era prior to the advent of industrial techniques. Over the years, the ironmongery has been replaced, creating a captivating eclectic mix that adds character to the door. The jak wood door is painted deep-brown, a common choice in the early-to mid-19th century homes. Its distinctive color feels out of place against the lime-plastered, yellow-painted walls, and especially, the modern polished floors. This serves as a reminder that gems such as this door are often subject to the whims of their owners, who continuously seek to modernize their historical homes.

D-XXII

This door opens into the drawing room of the ‘Residency’—a bungalow once home to British government agents serving in *Matale*. Nestled in the Kandyan highlands, the building dates back to the mid-19th century, and manifests quintessential features of a British colonial period bungalow. The ‘bungalow’ style, adapted from the humble huts of Bengali peasants in India, began to flourish in colonial Ceylon after extensive experimentation in the sub-continent, signifying the emergence of a distinct British architectural identity in the island. The door is crafted from resilient local hardwood teak. It is supported by a thick outer frame characteristic of doors from the period. While the double sashes featuring glazed top halves and austerely paneled bottom halves hint at the bungalow identity, the quarter-circular *mal lńlla* (floral panel) coarsely carved with stylized flowers, leaves and tendrils reflects a lingering Dutch influence. The proportions and overall feel of the door still largely hark back to the 18th century. The precision of the edges of frames and sashes, the use of fine brass hardware, and especially the decision to resort to glazing, all indicate that industrial techniques were becoming somewhat accessible to local craftsmen by this time. The original white stucco walls and the shimmering black polished cement floor create a striking contrast against the slightly walnut-red finish of the door stain, which appears somewhat incongruous.

D-XXIII

This door, once flanked by two others of similar design—which have long since been closed off —connects the extensive living and dining spaces of the 'Whist Bungalow'. Situated in *Mattakkuliya* (Mutwal), Colombo, the building commands a vantage point that overlooks the expansive Indian Ocean. This mid-19th century British bungalow was once a lively venue for balls and games among British expatriates, which is reflected in its name. It was commissioned by Henry Augustus Marshall, an esteemed officer in the Ceylon Civil Service, who would later rise to the position of Auditor General of Ceylon. Reflecting the trends of a typical British bungalow from that era, it thrived when Mutwal was the most fashionable area in Colombo. However, it was eventually abandoned for the greener 'Cinnamon Gardens', primarily due to the menacing coal dust from steamships that had replaced sailing ships by the late-19th century. Now serving as a reception venue operated by the National Housing Development Authority, the bungalow's former glory is a distant memory. Waves of haphazard alterations have taken their toll, particularly evident in the closure of many fenestrations. This fate is common to many colonial-era bungalows now managed by government organizations that remain indifferent to their architectural significance. A lingering Dutch architectural sensibility is evident in the simplicity of the outer frame and shuttered double-door made of imported Burma teak, and the indented half-circular masonry arch that tops it. It is noteworthy how the two doors flanking the central entrance have been insensitively closed off while still retaining their original profiles to now appear as niches. In the wall pier sections on either side of the central doorway, two smaller arched niches have been carved out, echoing almost the width of a door sash. The white door, equipped with modest hardware also painted in white enamel, nearly disappears against the white walls and the unappealing off-white contemporary floor tiles.

D-XXIV

This door embellishes the façade of a mid-19th century A.E. British-period *petty-bourgeoisie* house nestled in the tranquil village of *Thuduwa*, in the Colombo suburb of *Madapatha* at *Piliyandala*. Opening from the drawing room, it leads to a wide front verandah, a delightful space of shade that invites relaxation. The door features a thick outer frame with two side-hung sashes, each cleverly divided to operate as separate top and bottom sections—an echo of bygone Dutch architectural influences. Notably, the arched crown features a delicate *mal lēlla* (floral panel), elegantly unframed. The paneling on each sash is understated, lacking prominent router edges. Yet, it possesses a certain charm that complements the overall aesthetic. Painted in crisp white enamel, the jak wood door is prominently positioned at the center of the façade, aligning gracefully with one of the two striking arches supported by short, stout columns. Visitors approach the door by ascending a series of steps that lead to the welcoming verandah. The white door seamlessly blends with the pristine white walls and light-colored cement floor, creating a harmonious visual. Its modest brass hardware is also painted in a white enamel to nearly vanish in the background. Despite the passage of time, the house remains remarkably unscathed by modern changes, continuing to exude its colonial charm, and inviting a sense of nostalgia for the era it represents.

D-XXV

This door aesthetically enhances the façade of a quaint estate bungalow named ‘Hare Park’, nestled in the cool, hilly landscape of *Knuckles*, in Sri Lanka's Central Province. Completed towards the end of the 19th century, this low-roofed, modestly scaled bungalow likely served as the residence of a minor administrative role within the surrounding tea estate. The construction, appearing to be a cost-conscious endeavor customary to the profit-driven plantation sector, is evident in the fenestrations too. The door aligns perfectly with the gable of the central block that protrudes from the long horizontal façade of the house which is asymmetrical. Set upon a prominent plinth, the door is accessed by three sturdy masonry steps. Notably, the two side walls and the ridge of the central block appear lower than standard heights of the period, adding to the bungalow’s unique petite character. The side-hung, single-sashed door features a moderately sized outer frame. Its sash is half-glazed, comprising six panes—three squares at the top, and three upright rectangles below. The paneling is shallow, comprising four slender upright rectangles. A dark plaster band, painted dark gray, runs along the outer edge of the frame, accentuating the door’s presence. The door's hardware, crafted from brass, remains discreet. The dark gray Burma teak door has weathered over the years, exposed to the elements without the shelter of a verandah or a pronounced overhanging eave. Meanwhile, the lime-washed stone walls, painted light gray, show signs of decay, as does the dark gray plinth. They all contribute to the rustic charm of this inviting entrance.


CLOSED

D-XXVI

This door, located at the ‘Mount Mary Railway Bungalows’, built for British railway workers in Ceylon, stands as a charming testament to Colombo’s architectural heritage. Nestled near the railway yard in bustling *Dematagoda*, these cost-effectively realized residences were likely completed in the late-19th century, following the establishment of the Ceylon Government Railway in 1858. Economically designed for replication, they are also found in other destinations such as *Kurunegala* and *Anuradhapura*. A high plinth supports a flight of steps that leads to the verandah, with the door centrally-aligned to both the steps and the space. The door, beautifully crafted of jak wood, showcases the era's distinctive design elements. Its modest outer frame supports two side-hinged sashes, each adorned with a solid lower section and two rows of five equal glazed rectangles above. The lower shutter is adorned with a modest rectangular panel. Notably, the arched crown features a delicate *mal lēlla* (floral panel), elegantly unframed. The brass door hardware is modest and understated. Finished in dark gray enamel, this door has withstood the test of time, thanks to its robust protection. Together, these features create a captivating blend of functionality and historical charm, reflecting the enduring legacy of the railway workers who once called this place home and continue to do so today. It is encouraging to see that the Sri Lankan state continues to care for its colonial architectural legacy, despite facing numerous economic challenges. These climatically suited buildings, originally designed modestly by British engineers, ironically remain unmatched today when compared to many modern counterparts created by qualified personnel in the state-run sector.

D-XXVII

This door grants access to a ground floor bedroom in the Governess' bungalow of the 'School for the Deaf and Blind' in *Kandawala*, *Ratmalana*, near Colombo. Established in 1912 by Mary F. Chapman of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (C.E.Z.M.S.), the charitable organization was created to support neglected and marginalized children with hearing and sight impairments. It now occupies land generously gifted by A. J. R. de Soysa of the esteemed 19th century industrialist de Soysa clan. The bungalow, dating from the same period, features architectural details that reflect its historical significance. The outer door frame is unusually tall, topped by a generously sized rectangular fanlight divided into four rectangular quadrants, each crossed with thin timber strips. This fanlight design is indeed unique. The side-hung double- door sashes consist of longer vertical rectangles flanking on top and bottom a smaller horizontal center panel, creating a harmonious composition. The panels are not very pronounced and remain austere. The brass barrel hinges and door locks painted in white enamel disappear into the background of the door—also painted in the same color. The Burma teak door has remarkably endured, largely due to its sheltered location, remaining in much better condition than the damp-ridden, peeling walls, and floors that have lost their luster. Now serving its purpose for over a century, the door stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of the institution and its mission.

D-XXVIII

This door is placed on one side of the façade, offering direct access to the garden from a ground-floor room in this early-20th century palatial Italianate villa in Mt. Lavinia, called 'Ivanho'. This Colombo suburb, rooted in the British colonial era, became a favored domain for the *bourgeoisie* and *petty-bourgeoisie* Ceylonese elite who commissioned such exquisite structures. The delicate Burma teak door frame and slender sash frames exemplify the British architectural identity that culminated during this period. Noteworthy features of this aforesaid identity include the louvered upper sections of each sash and the unique paneling below, crafted by joining timber strips at a forty-five-degree angle. Moreover, the timber-framed *vehi kuduwa* (rain canopy), topped with flat clay tiles and adorned with a *mal lēli* (floral panel) valence board, provides protection from the elements while enhancing the door's charm. The original hinges, locks and latches of brass still remain intact. The quarter arch stucco relief with a key stone above the fanlight-less door is a hallmark of early-20th century design. The white-painted door seamlessly blends into the villa's pristine white façade, and contrasts with the black painted strip in the form of its plinth. The door is flanked by two protruding wall sections with a brick pattern engraved on them to resemble quoins. All these intricate details enhance the overall elegance of this splendid residence, which continues to be impeccably maintained.

This door belongs to the *Amarasuriya walauwe*, located on the land-side facing Galle Road, near *Unawatuna*, in the historic Southern city of Galle. Originally named *'Amargiri'*, it was built by *Muhandiram Thomas de Silva Amarasuriya* in the early-20th century A.E. The affluent background of its *bourgeoisie* patron is evident in the lavish construction of this palatial mansion, where no expense was spared. The trend of building grand residences that emulated stately homes of Great Britain reflects the significant economic success of the low-country *bourgeoisie* of the time. This door leads to a bedroom overlooking a side garden, and is crafted from exquisite Burma teak, showcasing slender doors and sash frames that are stained. The solid single sash frame is cleverly designed to mimic the appearance of double-doors from a far. The fanlight features both a rectangular section and an arched component above, intricately adorned with floral panel screens known as *mal lēli*. This early-20th century architectural style, referred to as *mal lēli ge* (floral panel house), is characterized by the extensive use of such decorative elements in fenestration, valence boards, roof edges, etc. Such houses derive their name from this excessive form of floral-inspired decoration. The door boasts of elegant brass hardware. With its overhanging protective *vehi kuduwa* (canopy)—likely a later addition—the door continues to serve its purpose in this slowly crumbling mansion, a testament to its storied past. It now serves as the government-run Teacher's Training College of *Unawatuna*, having been gifted for this purpose in 1970. This generous gesture embodies the family's vital contributions to the nation's Buddhist revival and its journey toward political independence.

D-XXIX

D-XXX

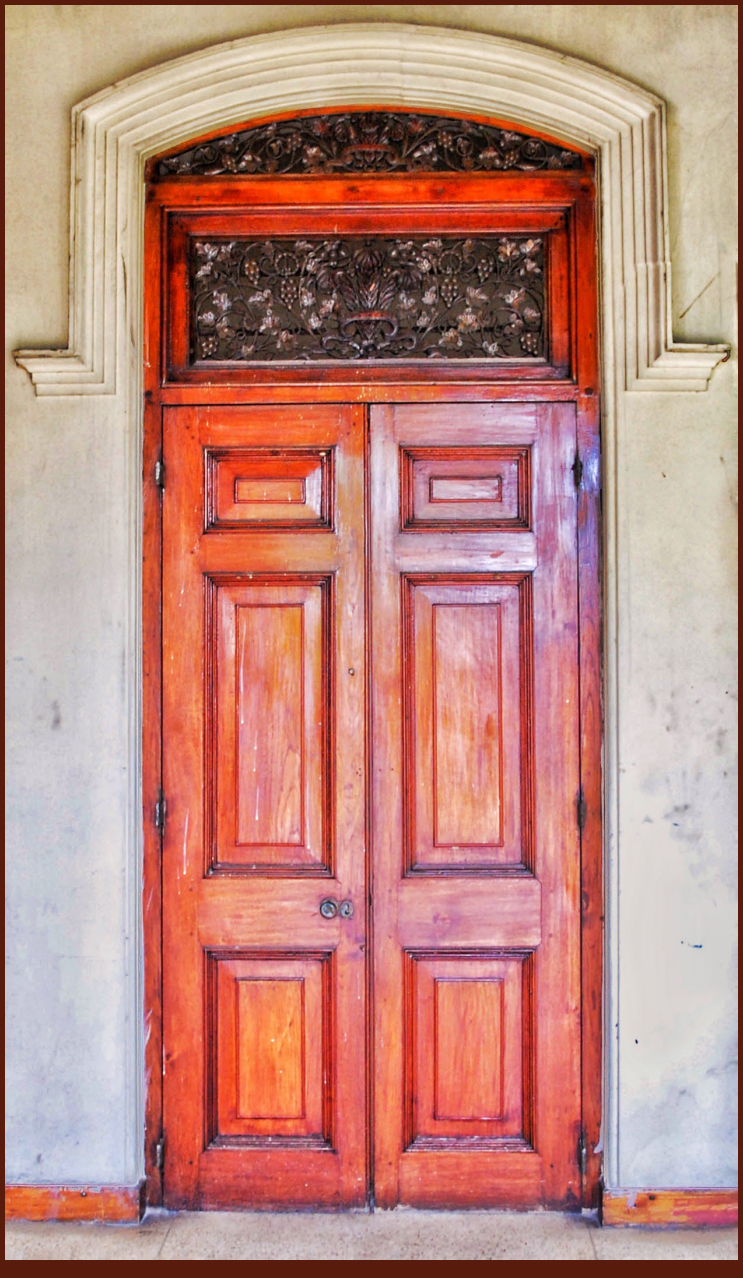
This door is one of two similarly designed entrances gracing the front verandah of 'Salgado Villa' in *Panadura*. While this door leads into the drawing room, the other intriguingly opens into a side courtyard. The villa belonged to the British period *bourgeoisie Salgado* family, well-known across the island for their bakery business and various other economic ventures. It is believed that *Merennege Mathes Salgado*, born in 1860 A.E., is responsible for the house's current grandeur. The house, seems to hark back to the mid-to late-19th century, would have been enhanced at the turn of the century with fresh changes that transformed it into a lavishly decorated *mal lēli* (floral panel)-type house. The Burma teak door features a striking outer frame with a fanlight above, intricately adorned with floral motifs. Crowned by a unique frameless floral arch, the door displays two solid shutters opening towards the outside. The door's charm is further enhanced by three extra glazed collapsible internal shutters that serve as a secondary layer. The two solid outer shutters showcase a playful arrangement of rectangular panels below and graceful half arches above, reminiscent of traditional Dutch designs. The inner shutters are divided into a lower shutter with modest paneling and an upper section glazed into three equal panes. The door boasts of elegant brass hardware. The two-tone color scheme, with dark brown accents and a lily-white finish, highlights its colonial charm amidst modern updates. This marks the dawn of a new and more exhilarating trend in color composition from that period. Aside from the initial modifications that predate independence, the house has been largely preserved in its original condition by the family that has owned it for generations. This dedication to preservation is encouraging, particularly given the fate that many houses from that era have suffered.

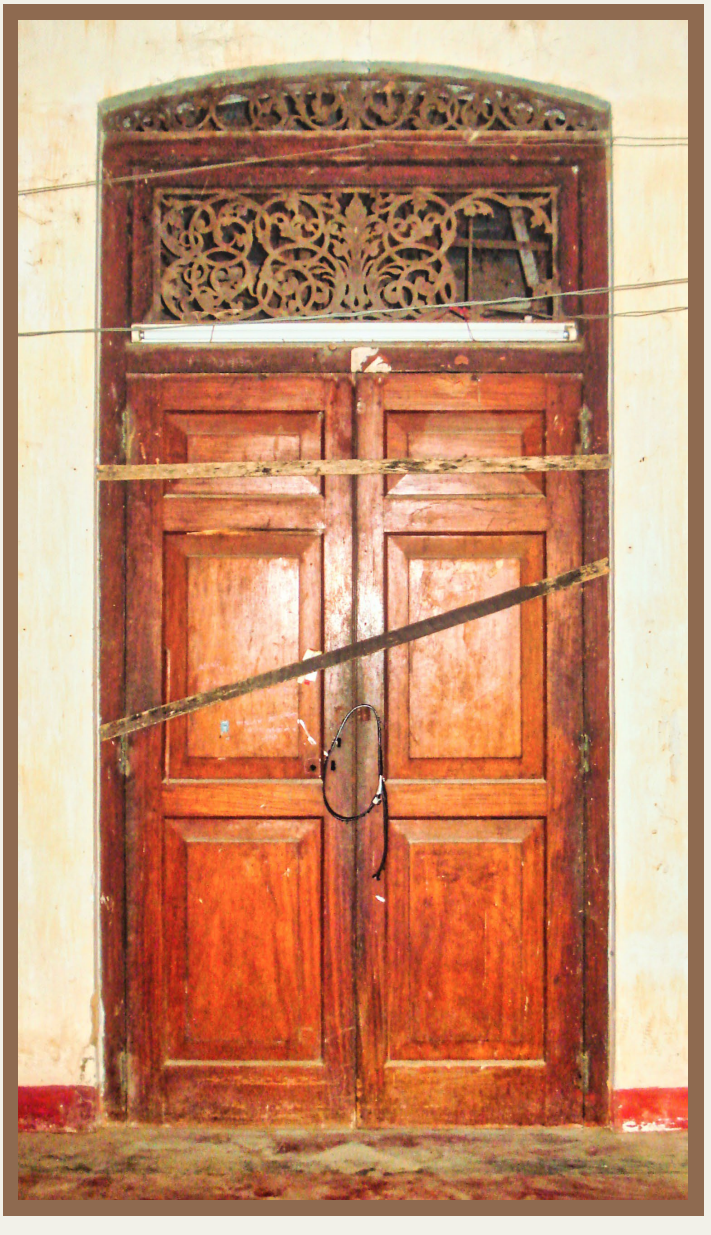
D-XXXI

This door leads from the front verandah into the living room of a villa in the colonial city of *Panadura*, built in the early-20th century. It belonged to a member of the *Salgado* family from the area, renowned for their *bourgeoisie* status. It was executed in the so-called *'mal lēli'* (floral panel) style that represents the British architectural identity that had finally taken shape after a century of colonial rule in Ceylon. The outer frame and the fanlight of the Burma teak door is strangely coloured in black, while the rest of the door is stained. The paneling of the sashes differs from earlier periods, featuring a playful three- dimensional composition of upright, horizontal, and parallel rectangles. Uniquely, the fanlight above the door is square, indicating advancements in 20th century construction materials that allowed for lintels instead of arches. The precision of the door's execution suggests a hint of machinery used in the fabrication process. The inner half-glazed door shutters appear to be a later addition. The door features elegant brass hardware. After a century, the door feels somewhat out of place amid the contemporary batik-brick walls and modern tiled floors. This highlights a troubling trend from the 1980s and 1990s, where old houses were modified to the point of losing their design integrity. In the quest for modernization, many homes underwent alterations that stripped away their historical character. During the age of neoliberalism, the appeal of the international style was marketed as progress, effectively persuading even owners of colonial houses to embrace these changes. This door serves as a clear example of that alarming shift.

D-XXXII

This door serves as the entrance to one of the rooms flanking the verandah of a house along Galle Road, in the heart of *Moratuwa* town. This vibrant colonial city still showcases numerous examples of such turn-of-the-century domestic architecture. Constructed in the 1920s by a prominent businessman, this particular case is an excellent example of a house belonging to a member of the *petty-bourgeoisie* class of the time. The house is lavishly adorned with floral panels both inside and out, making it a quintessential *mal lēli* (floral panel)-type house. The Burma teak door features a striking outer frame that incorporates a fanlight above, intricately decorated with floral motifs. Topping this fanlight is a unique frameless floral arch, enhancing its charm. The two shutters display deep geometric paneling playfully achieved with rectangles of varying sizes, accented with deep routered details. The brass door hardware is modest. A thick decorative plaster band in stucco wraps around the door's top, adding further elegance. The stained door contrasts beautifully with pristine white walls and polished cut cement floors—a later addition—while providing access to a room that now functions as a private dining area in the family restaurant that occupies the home. The house's current state reflects the sobering reality of the gradual economic decline of the British colonial *nouveau riche*. However, this trend of repurposing former domestic buildings often works in favor of their preservation, especially when knowledgeable professionals are involved in such efforts.





D-XXXIII

This door marks the entrance to one of the rooms flanking the verandah of a *mal lēli* (floral panel)-type house in *Koralawella*, near *Moratuwa*. Once a vibrant hub for 19th century Ceylon's *bourgeoisie*, this colonial city is rich in turn-of-the-century domestic architecture such as this. The house is believed to have been completed in the 1920s. Adorned lavishly with floral panels both inside and out, these houses derive their name from this elaborate form of decoration. The door is executed with imported Burma teak, which was becoming an increasingly common fabrication material in fenestrations by the early-20th century, especially in well-to-do houses. The door features a striking outer frame topped by an intricately decorated fanlight, crowned with a unique frameless floral arch that adds to its allure. The two shutters showcase deep geometric paneling, skillfully crafted from rectangles of varying sizes, enhanced by prominent routered details. While the brass hardware seems modest, the stained door beautifully contrasts with the lily-white walls and plain cement floors, offering entry to a bedroom that overlooks the verandah. The jarring red skirting seems to be a later addition. The door now lies in a sorry state, with sections of the floral panels fallen away, the stain having lost its luster, and the shutters secured together with iron crossbars to prevent entry. The house's current lamentable condition serves as a poignant reminder of the gradual economic decline of the colonial *nouveau riche*, leading to abandonment, dereliction, and its eventual listing for sale. In this particular case, the property is currently abandoned, and the whereabouts of its patrons remain unclear, as it is entangled in a court case seeking to resolve its contested ownership. This situation is common among many such properties, where rival siblings contest their claims, often driven by the skyrocketing value of such lands.

D-XXXIV

This door leads to one of the first-floor bedrooms of the palatial 'Richmond Castle', which is a stunning example of British colonial architecture. It was built in the early-20th century by a wealthy local *bourgeoisie* businessman, *Don Arthur de Silva Wijeysinghe Seneviratne*. The castle features a blend of Gothic and Indo-Saracenic styles, based on such examples the patron experienced in his visits to colonial India. No expense was spared in crafting the doors out of imported Burma teak of the best quality. The free trade established by the British with the rest of their empire in the 19th century reached its peak by the early-20th century, making such fine and rare materials accessible in Ceylon. This lavishly ornamented double-door is taller than an ordinary bungalow door from the British era. The lower third is exclusively timber-paneled, while the upper section features glazed sections made from green-tinted pinned glass, adding a touch of magic to the interior. The glazing is divided into equal panes with horizontal strips, and the openable glazed fanlight is crossed to form four small panes of equal size. The upper glass pane on each sash is adorned with a perforated strip of timber that transforms it into an arch, adding a distinctive touch to the design. The brass hardware is of the highest quality, and imported from India. The intricate routing around the timber door paneling enhances its beauty, while the peeling lime plaster walls of this crumbling stately home add a rustic charm, harmonizing beautifully with the elegant door, which remains in excellent condition. The door of the mansion, now open to visitors, remains closed, concealing a dusty bedroom filled with broken furniture that it keeps hidden behind it.

D-XXXV

This door ushers visitors into the expansive front verandah of *'Kethumathi'*, an early-20th century grand mansion nestled in a leafy *Panadura* suburb. Commissioned by the esteemed *Dias* family, prominent members of the 19th century local *bourgeoisie*, the residence draws inspiration from elegant Tuscan villas. Gifted to the nation decades ago, it now serves as a maternity hospital. The wide door, crafted from exquisite Burma teak, features a highly ornate outer frame that incorporates a striking fanlight. The central section comprises two glazed double sashes, flanked by single sashes of similar design, separated by upright frames. While these sashes open inward, the exterior boasts four solid, collapsible paneled sashes on either side of the door. The door fittings are made of brass, making a striking impression. Further noteworthy are the two fences made of turned upright timber members that elegantly frame the fronts of the two side sashes. Notably, the top edges of each opening are adorned with chamfered foliage. The pin-head glass fanlight and the glazed sections display a lozenge pattern at the center, surrounded by a geometric grid. The imposing design of the stained door once welcomed distinguished dignitaries such as *Jawaharlal Nehru*, *Rabindranath Tagore*, and Lord Donoughmore. Today, the door is meticulously maintained, creating a stunning harmony with the pristine lily-white walls and elegant period tiles.

D-XXXVI

This door, gracing the entrance of the early-20th century aristocratic '*Beragama walauwe'* nestled in the hills of *Matale*, exudes unparalleled Italianate-style glamor. At the center of the doorway, a modest thin outer frame forms a double-shuttered entryway flanked by two single-shuttered entryways on either side. Above the double sashes sits a long rectangular fanlight, with square counterparts over the single sashes, all designed to pivot-open. Each shutter is glazed two-thirds of the way, featuring rectangular paneling with prominent chamfered edges that reflect the glazing patterns. The most striking characteristic of this door is its impressive surround, which creates an illusion of grandeur. This surround that resembles an elaborate altar piece of a low country Catholic church also frames beautifully the two vertical slit windows on either side of the doorway. It culminates in a Chippendale-inspired prominent top at the center, flanked by crown-like adornments on the two sides. Crafted from expensive Burma teak, the door and its surround narrate a story of exquisite craftsmanship by skilled carpenters of the time. The timber ensemble harmonizes beautifully with the door hardware, frosted glass and floral-patterned period floor tiles, all imported from England. Moreover, the white walls elegantly decorated with pilasters and cornices enhance the overall opulence of the entrance. This door encapsulates the refined elegance of its era, making it a captivating focal point. It still welcomes visitors into the drawing room of the mansion, which now serves as a reception hall, highlighting the stark reality of the economic challenges in maintaining such exquisite period homes. In today's economic climate, for the latest inheritors with contemporary aspirations, residing in and maintaining such a grand edifice feels impractical, it serving more as a symbol than a viable living space.

D-XXXVII

This door opens onto the front verandah of one of Colombo's most renowned residences, set against a landscaped rectangular lawn that extends to the access road. Completed in 1912, the house in 'Cinnamon Gardens', Colombo 07 was built by Thomas Henry Arthur de Soysa, a prominent businessman and the son of industrialist-philanthropist Sir Charles Henry de Soysa. Named *'Regina Walauwa'* after his wife, Regina Perera Abeyewardene, the house features striking elevations adorned with towers and turrets, blending Gothic and Indic architectural elements. These influences reflect the 'British Picturesque Movement', and a revived interest in arts and crafts traditions, reminiscent of the 'Travancore Style' popularized by British architect Robert Chisholm in late-19th century India. The regal door, crafted from durable Burma teak, boasts a prominent routered outer frame that encompasses a top fanlight. Its four collapsible shutters open outward, with each bottom section paneled and the top glazed sections elegantly chamfered. The fanlight consists of a larger horizontal sash flanked by two smaller pivoting sashes, each divided into smaller panes of glass. The fine brass hardware of the door appears to have been imported. Sold in 1920, the house became the University College Colombo, and now serves as the College House of University of Colombo. The mansion stands as a poignant reminder of the fragile existence of the colonial *bourgeoisie* class at the height of society. The glittery stained door continues to exude its regal charm, framed by whitewashed walls and elegant tiles manufactured in Victorian Britain.

D-XXXVIII

This door leads into one of the grand halls of ‘Saifee Villa’, located in the prestigious ‘Alfred House Gardens’ neighborhood of *Colombo 07*. Originally named ‘*Lakshmigiri*’, it was constructed in 1910 as the opulent residence of Hon. A. J. R. de Soysa, a prominent member of the renowned de Soysa industrialist family, on a sprawling 125-acre estate. It was subsequently acquired by the *Adamjee Lukmanjee* family, members of the Muslim *Dawoodi Bohra* community known for their commercial endeavors, and they continue to own it to this day. The villa is a striking blend of Baroque and Italianate architectural styles. Crafted from exquisite Burma teak and finished in glossy brilliant white, the door is a true masterpiece. Its slender outer frame supports soaring double sashes, crowned with a half-circular fanlight. When closed, the shutters, glazed with delicate pin-head glass, also form a stunning ‘Adam-style’ arch. The fanlight arch is enhanced by a radiating intricate wrought-iron grillwork featuring stylized floral patterns and tendrils. The door hardware is crafted from brass, and stands out prominently. Flanking the door are two prominent fluted pilasters supporting a finely detailed stucco arch, showcasing a keystone motif. On either side of the door, two other side pilasters with their ionic style tops reach the ceiling that carry decorative cornices at its edges. The floors are elegantly adorned with 19th century British- made tiles in a rich terracotta hue, showcasing intricate geometric patterns that add timeless charm.

D-XXXIX

This door leads into the foyer of the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology (PGIAR) at the University of *Kelaniya*, housed in a modern tropical colonial bungalow on *Bauddhaloka Mawatha*, Colombo 07. Built toward the end of British occupation in Ceylon, this structure represents a last refined iteration of British bungalows in the region, originally serving as a government residence for public officers. The door features a modest outer frame with four collapsible shutters and a full-width fanlight that almost reaches the ceiling. The fanlight is elegantly covered in a trellis design, crafted from two layers of geometrically arranged lattice strips for ventilation. Each sash includes a solid lower section with modest paneling and two rows of five glazed upright rectangles above. The brass hardware that originally came with the door remains in excellent condition, though it has been painted in white enamel to match the door itself. In contrast, the main lock and shiny stainless-steel handle seem to be later replacements that do not harmonize with the original design. While one half of the *duplex* retains its residential function, the other half of the bungalow has now been transformed to serve the PGIAR. The jak wood door of shimmery white warmly welcomes visitors, competing beautifully with the polished red cement floors for attention. A modern glazed aluminum door has since been added, enclosing the verandah and enhancing the space's functionality, while preserving its historical charm. Although the lightweight, transparent modern aesthetic of the aluminum fabrication contrasts sharply with the old door, it proves to be a more suitable design intervention—whether deliberate or not—than another competing heavy timber door.

D-XL

This door hails from the 1930s plantation bungalow at '*Lunuganga'*—the private estate of renowned architect Geoffrey Bawa. In 1949, Bawa acquired this historic cinnamon cum rubber plantation, envisioning a weekend retreat and a tropical rendition of an Italian Renaissance garden. The 25-acre property, located on the banks of the *Dedduwa* Lake in Southern *Bentota*, is named after the *Sinhala* term for 'Salt River'. The bungalow reflects architectural trends characteristic of the final phase of British colonial bungalow design in Ceylon, which saw its culmination in the 1940s. Bawa likely reimagined this door, as he did with many fenestrations throughout the house. It features a modest outer frame crowned by a prominent fanlight, now fitted with a single sheet of horizontal clear glass. Each side-hung shutter is divided into top and bottom sections, with four openable pieces, adorned with distinctive paneling. The lower sections display upright rectangular panels, while the upper sections feature upright rectangles topped with graceful half arches, reminiscent of traditional Dutch doors. The paneling is highlighted in white enamel against a dark gray backdrop, while the orange-yellow wall paint creates the illusion of a door surround when viewed through the white hallway, complete with a gabled ceiling. The hardware has been rendered insignificant in this two-toned jak wood door. Dark brown polished floors bring an elegant touch to this inviting space, perfectly complemented by the attractive door. The door now welcomes the steady stream of enthusiastic visitors who arrive to experience one of Bawa's celebrated masterpieces.

This door embodies the ‘Art Deco’ style that emerged in the 1920s and reached its zenith in the 1930s. Drawing inspiration from various artistic movements, such as cubism and futurism, as well as ancient cultures, Art Deco resulted in a rich array of designs across architecture, fashion, furniture and visual arts. Characterized by streamlined forms, intricate patterns, and lavish ornamentation, the style reflects the optimism and exuberance of its era. In Colonial Ceylon, however, Art Deco only appeared later, in the 1940s-50s A.E. as exemplified by this townhouse in Galle Fort on Rampart Street. The Burma teak doorway is modestly sized and marked by a prominent outer frame with district router work that features two curved half window sections flanking it, along with a curved fanlight above. The side windows, fanlight and glazed door sashes are all divided into smaller panes with thin timber strips, creating a dynamic geometric pattern. Translucent pinhead glass has been used for the glazing, providing privacy, while allowing light to filter through. The two side-hung sashes open inward toward the drawing room from the verandah that faces the street. The brass hardware is all period-appropriate, reflecting the era of construction. A slender iron grill, mirroring the door's geometric patterns, provides additional security in this busy urban setting. The dark frame and black grillwork contrast against the white walls outside. The use of reproduction 19th century tiles on the verandah floor feels mismatched. It seems likely that a colonial house was effaced to realize this modern 1950s intervention. What was once a family residence has now been transformed into a local bank, showcasing the new possibilities emerging in this popular destination.

D-XLI

This door, a remarkable departure from conventionality, exemplifies the tropes of modernist architecture that British architect Andrew Boyd embraced during his UK training. Commissioned by affluent Colombo businessman Harold Pieris in 1943, this residence stands as one of the island's first modern houses, set on a hillside above the picturesque Kandy Lake. The door separates the entrance porch to ground floor living room, from a private family veranda. When closed off, its slender frame divides the vertical rectangular opening into twelve equal quadrants. A sash comprising the three central bottom quadrants of the screen opens inward, while the top quadrant remains fixed. Crafted entirely from Burma teak, the door features a grid of vertical and horizontal strips that fill the aforesaid quadrants, enhancing its sleek appearance. This bi-layered trelliswork sashes not only frames the view between spaces, but also facilitates thoroughfare. The stainless-steel hardware—now painted over in white enamel—remains understated. The door's pristine white finish harmonizes with the walls, while offering a striking contrast to the polished black cement floors. While the door's function has remained steadfast over the years, the purpose of the house has transformed dramatically. Once a modernist architectural symbol of colonial era leisure of the playful *bourgeoisie* class, it now serves a more practical domestic function for a contemporary middle-class family, reflecting the ever-shifting nature of domesticity over time.

D-XLII

D-XLIII

This door connects two robust gallery spaces within a charming late-19th century British colonial period bungalow, located on a quiet by-road in the heart of a prestigious residential neighborhood in Colombo 07. Once home to the pioneering ‘43 Group’ of artists, who broke away from traditional ‘Ceylon Society of Arts’ to embrace experimental forms, this space now houses their evocative works. They drew inspiration from European modernism and local art traditions, interpreting their vision in unique styles. The ‘Sapumal Foundation’ occupies the former site of three workers' cottages attached to Harry Pieris's lavish residence on 'Barnes Place', thoughtfully converted by Andrew Boyd. Pieris was a wealthy businessman who hailed from a 19th century *bourgeoisie* family. An initiative such as this, which converted a simple domestic environment into an art gallery, was unprecedented in the island's architectural history when it was realized. The double-door, striking in its simplicity, is a testament to its humble origins as worker's accommodation. The modest outer frame supports two shutters crafted from three jointed vertical pieces, stained to showcase the rich *kaluwara* (ebony) hardwood beneath. The brass hardware used for the door is as simple as it gets for that period. Against the backdrop of lime-washed white walls and plain cement-rendered floors, the door stands out, embodying a blend of heritage and artistry that invites visitors to explore the rich cultural legacy within. The patches of color brought in by the artwork on the walls, along with the rustic surroundings, make the space ideal for an art gallery. Building on this precedent, this trend has since been applied to several colonial buildings throughout Colombo, also transforming them into art galleries.

D-XLIV

This door, which led to a ground floor bedroom, has recently been lost along with the renowned ‘Fernando House’, from the residential suburb of *Wellawatta*, Colombo that once accommodated it. The middle-class house was designed by the renowned female architect Minnette de Silva in the late-1950s A.E., embodying her vision of ‘Modern Regional Architecture for the Tropics’. It also traps the international orientation of the so-called ‘American Style’ middle-class suburban home that had become commonplace in the early-1960s. The door features a slender jak outer frame without a fanlight, along with a side-hung sash. The sash is fully glazed and showcases a thin frame all around. Inside, the uninterrupted glass is adorned with a floral-patterned fabric curtain for added privacy. This blend of sleek glazing and traditional *Batik* fabric hints at its dual heritage, bridging the Orient and the Occident. After all, it was Minnette who pioneered the integration of traditional crafts to soften the modern aesthetic of her architecture, setting a precedent before anyone else in Ceylon. The door hardware is modest, and executed using stainless-steel. Its elegance contrasts beautifully with the rustic red fare-faced brick wall and the shiny black polished floor. The British colonial period ceramic plate mounted above the door serves as a subtle homage to the Fernando family’s maritime heritage. The loss of the house starkly reminds us that such modern pieces of architecture are aging with their patrons, making maintenance increasingly difficult. Consequently, their disappearance is directly tied to the demise of those who commissioned and lived in them for so long. Their children, unwilling to bear the burden, are ready to cash in, particularly as these Colombo lots have exponentially increased in value over the years, especially with the area becoming an enclave for the ethnic Tamil population.

D-XLV

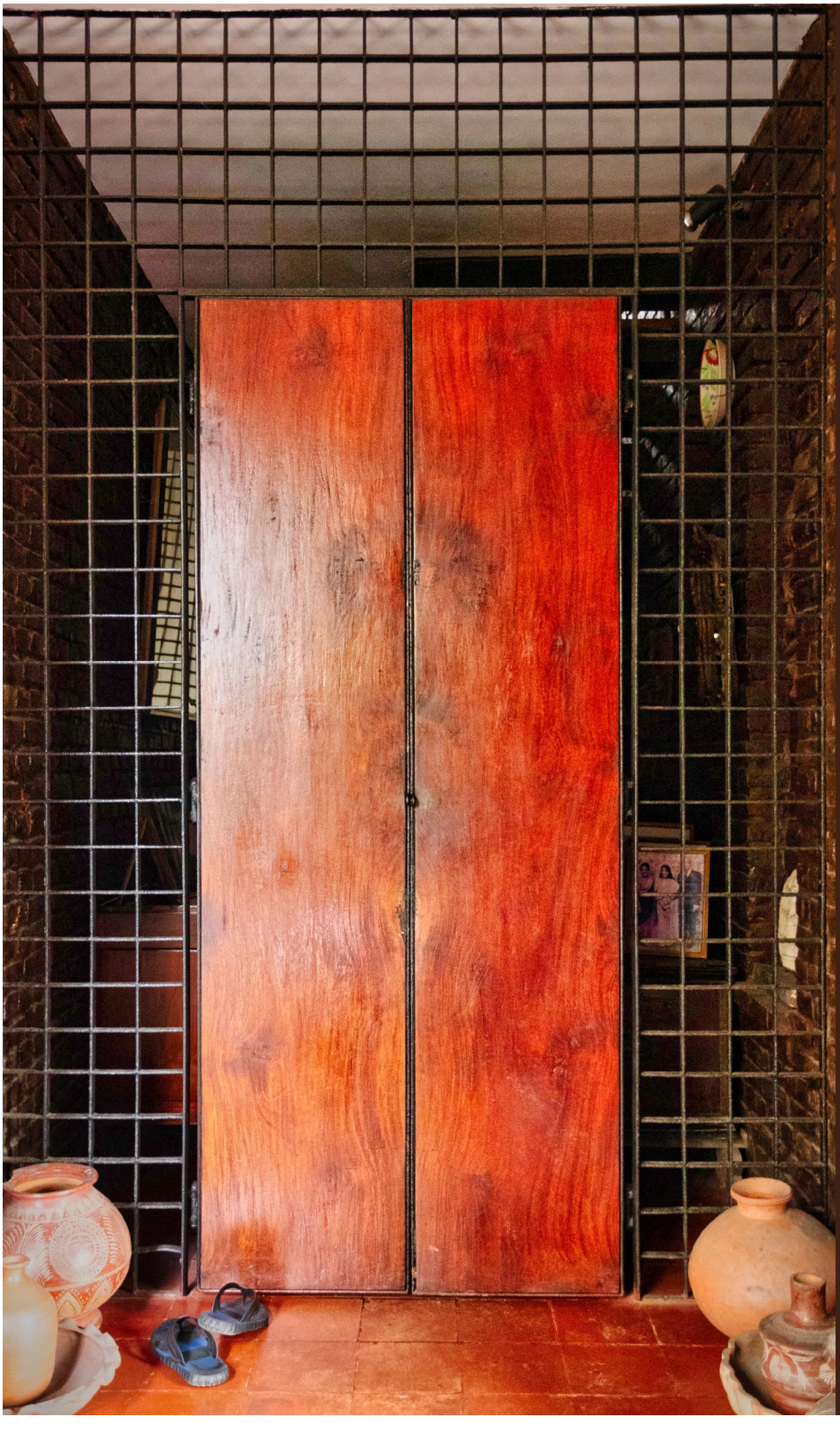
This door is in fact, an intriguing piece of artwork in Geoffrey Bawa's iconic 33rd Lane residence in Colombo 07. The artwork beautifully depicts a functional double-door located at the end of a corridor, intricately adorned by its celebrated foreign artist. The outer frame is painted in a stark white, mirroring the floors and walls of the interior, which together create a white matrix that allows the colors to flourish. Characterized by its bold design, each divided panel of the two sashes offers a unique glimpse through wall openings into distinct outside scenes. Together, they create a cohesive narrative when viewed as a whole. Each frame showcases vibrant scenes of nature and architecture, celebrating the island's lush landscape and the colorful buildings within it. The vivid colors also reflect the rich tapestry of cultures that contribute to the island's architectural legacy. The door executed of teak symbolizes a threshold between worlds—the private and the public, the natural and the built. It embodies Bawa's appreciation for local materials and craftsmanship, showcasing Sri Lankan vernacular architecture. The renowned Australian artist Donald Friend's portrayal suggests elegance and intricacy, highlighting the synergy that can exist between art and architecture. It is a striking patch of color amid the surrounding matrix of white walls, floors, and ceilings. It seems that the door's symbolic function has taken precedence over its practical use, serving as a true gesture of modern architectural 'Regionalism'.

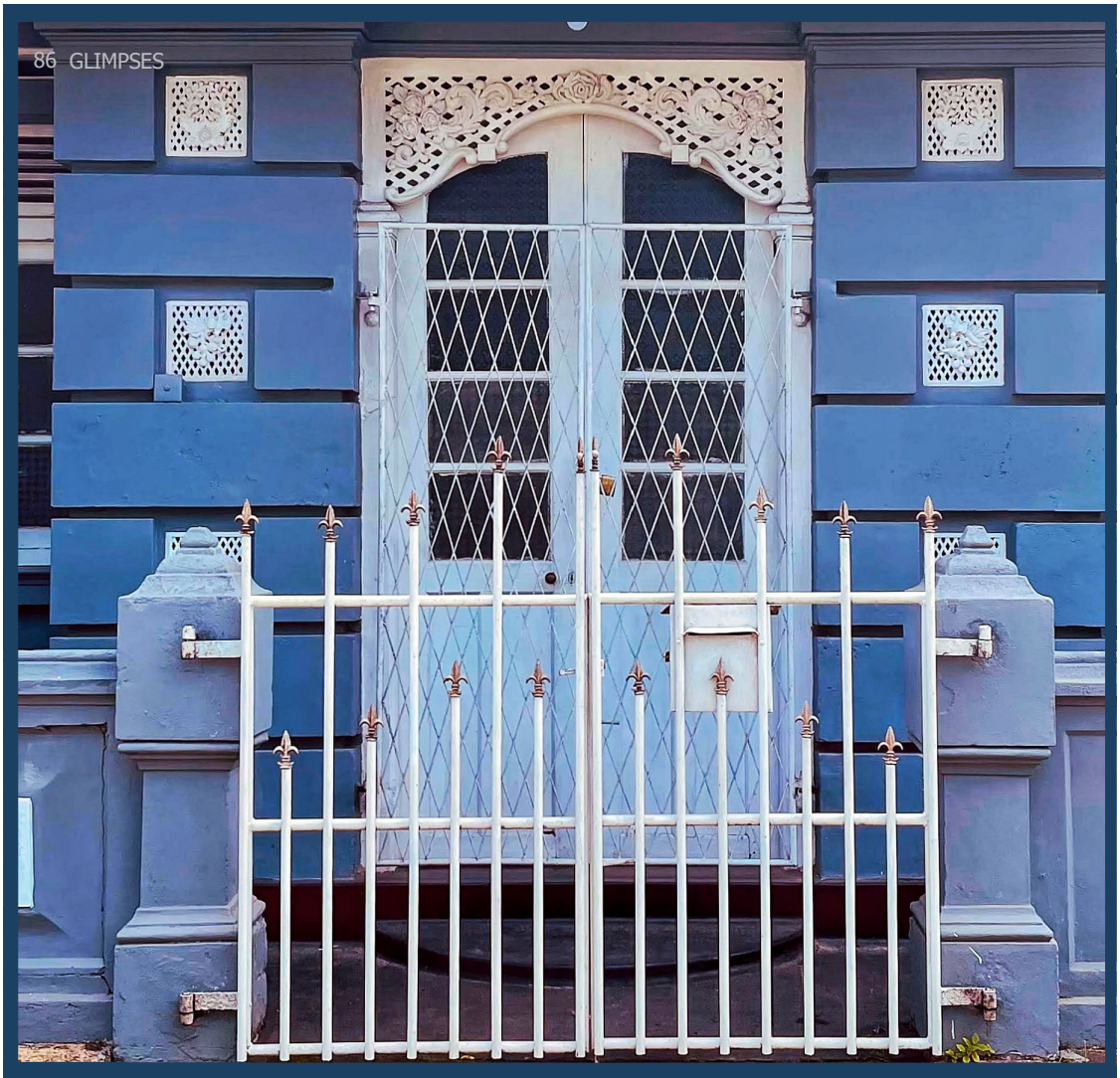
D-XLVI

This door bridges the connection between inside and outside, part of a pinwheel layout of four rectangular pavilions reminiscent of Richard Neutra's famous Kaufman House (1946). The revolutionary pinwheel design allows the courtyard to open up to the exterior, eliminating the rigidity of the corridors typically surrounding it. Designed by the esteemed postcolonial architect Valentine Gunasekara in 1967, the *Munasinghe* House in *Dehiwala*, near the entrance to metropolitan Colombo has seen better days. The unique mahogany door features a sleek outer frame, divided into two sections; a thin sash on the left and a wider one on the right. Each is further segmented into top and bottom sections for added flexibility. The thin sash is fully louvered horizontally for ventilation, while the wider sash is for regular access. This distinctive design, with each sash opening separately at the top and bottom, pays homage to Dutch architectural legacy of the maritime. The playful fretwork arrangement divides the glazed sections of the windows into slender vertical pane segments of varying sizes, harmonizing with the dynamic layout of the plan. The stainless-steel hardware remains understated, while the light brown paint of the fenestration complements the fair-faced yellow hue of the house's walls. Unfortunately, as the cantilevered timber pergola over the fenestration are long gone, the doors and windows have become more exposed to the elements, leading to some deterioration. The choice of materials in both the fenestration and the overall design reflects the architect's commitment to making architectural modernism accessible to his emerging middle-class clients. The style, once the domain of the elite, was now reaching lower social strata at a time when the country was gearing towards a socialist political trend.

D-XLVII

This door, crafted from quality Burma teak, features two elegantly simple sashes. It serves as the main entrance from the car porch, into the narrow and dark hallway leading to a duplex, in Roland Silva's residence, located in a prestigious neighborhood of Colombo 07. Designed by the architect himself for his extended family between 1978 and 1981 A.E., this composition showcases a frameless tall double-door, elegantly framed by a floor-to-ceiling-height striking black cast-iron grille. The sashes are secured to the aforesaid grille with barrel hinges and held in place by traditional latches made from the same material. Locking from the outside is achieved with a simple padlock, in a rudimentary way. The naturally stained door is beautifully complemented by exposed stained brick walls and rustic terracotta floors, with a series of disparate clay pots artfully placed on either side, enhancing the warm and inviting atmosphere. This arrangement reflects the architect's admiration for the rich classical architectural heritage of the island. His reverence to the aforesaid produced the architectural style 'Retro-classical Modernism'. This was made possible owing to Roland Silva's decade-long tenure at the Department of Archaeology, where he gained deep insights into architecture and archaeology. The contrasting white ceiling and the overall simplicity of the elements composed around the door all hint at the lingering influence of 1950s 'Tropical Modernism' style, shaped by his formative education in the UK when the rubric was being exported internationally. On the other hand, the use of locally made materials in both the door's fabrication and the overall structure is noteworthy. The design process, completed during a period of economic austerity, likely influenced this choice of materials, even though ground was broken in 1978, following the introduction of neoliberalism in the nation. Remarkably, the door remains in excellent condition.





D-XLVIII

This door opens directly to the narrow front garden strip facing a busy road in *Weligama*, in Southern Sri Lanka. Dating back to the mid-1950s, both the house façade and the door are epitomes of the residual British bungalow, executed in what is known as the 'Public Works Department' (PWD) style. Developed by draftsmen within the PWD, this style was favored by both *bourgeoisie* and *petty-bourgeoisie* homeowners from the late-1940s, through the 1950s. A.E. The double-door, crafted from jak wood, features a beautifully adorned outer frame. Each sash is two-thirds glazed, with the solid lower section embellished with two parallel vertical panels. The glass is divided into three panes, separated by slender timber members, while the top pane of each sash forms a half arch, completing a full arch when closed. A distinctive feature of the door is the decorative perforated timber screen that encloses the top of the opening, beautifully adorned with a trellis design and floral patterns. The door hardware is modest, and of brass. The white enamel-painted door, complemented by the well-maintained house, stands out beautifully against the dark flint gray color walls. The *liya vela* (floral pattern) motifs, reminiscent of ancient *Sinhala* designs, may have been a subtle attempt to veil the colonial modernity of the composition, during a time of postcolonialism that in turn trapped anti-colonial and nationalist sentiments.

This door provides access to a small bedroom that faces the foyer of a modest house built by a government official belonging to the *petty-bourgeoisie* stratum, in suburban *Piliyandala*, near Colombo. While the architecture reflect the typical design aesthetic of the 1950s 'Public Works Department' (PWD) style, the house was actually completed in the early-1960s A.E. —an intriguing detail validated by the doors themselves. Crafted from *burutha* (satinwood) timber, the modestly sized door features a thin outer frame with two identical side-hung sashes. Each sash is divided into two equal sections, showcasing a glazed upper half and a shuttered lower half. The translucent diamond-patterned glass used in the glazing adds a unique touch, while the absence of a fanlight is compensated by modest round ventilation holes high up on the walls. By this point in time, it appears that paneling had gone out of fashion. The barrel hinges and locks of the door appear to be made of brass. The lock and handle designs reflect a sleek Scandinavian style rather than a heavy British colonial influence. Well-maintained for over half a century, the stained doors remain in excellent condition, mirroring the care afforded to the house itself. The door harmonizes beautifully with the lily-white walls and polished red cement floors of what was once a family home, now transformed into a commercial warehouse following the owners' demise—a fate shared by many similar properties.

D-XLIX

This door leads from a shady verandah into the entrance foyer of a PWD-style mansion in the leafy residential suburb of *Kolpetty*, Colombo. Although the *bourgeoisie* house dates back to the early-1950s A.E., it includes several later additions, such as this door, which was likely installed in the early-1980s. This double-door's two side-hung shutters showcase a rather tacky diamond-inspired paneling, marking a departure from the simple elegance of generic British colonial- or PWD-style counterparts. Oddly, only half of the bottom panel appears on each paneled sash. The jak wood outer frame is painted a crisp white, harmonizing with the home's other fenestrations, while the door itself is stained to reveal the natural grain of the hardwood. The door hardware is a mix of older brass pieces and later stainless-steel components, creating a noticeable mismatch.

Above the door, a cement grill provides ventilation, compensating for the absence of a fanlight. Such geometric or stylized foliage grills are characteristic of homes built in the late-1940s, and throughout the 1950s. The door stands out against the red mock brick walls, polished black cement floor, and the upper lily-white wall band above, creating a striking focal point that enhances the home's unique character. Together, these elements reflect the evolving architectural taste during the 1980s, while preserving a sense of charm and history. The house now stands empty, seemingly unused for domestic purposes for decades, having been repurposed for commercial use instead. The post-1977 surge in rental potential in Colombo, driven by rapid commercial growth and an increasing population, likely contributed to this situation.

D-L

D-LI

This door opens directly to the narrow front garden of a mid-1960s ‘American Style’ house in *Ratmalana*, a middle-class satellite town of Colombo. Designed for economy, these homes prioritized essential spaces, which explains the absence of a front-facing verandah. Built on a smaller plot with a modern palette of materials, the compact design reflects a utilitarian approach. A three-foot concrete overhang above provides modest protection for the wide single-sashed door, placed against two windows. Constructed from inexpensive mahogany timber, the seven-foot-high door features a plain, unadorned frame and sash. In the absence of a fanlight, a rectangular series of ventilation holes are visible over the awning, which has not effectively shielded the door over the past five decades. The stainless-steel door hardware comes across as both modest and unassuming. The door has weathered significantly and lost its aura, along with its stain. Juxtaposed against the white-painted windows, it stands out on the home’s white façade, which also showcases a red plinth line and a granite-lined wall, embodying a playful yet self-conscious design ethos. The use of vernacular elements, such as the plain door and granite, may have aimed to impart a sense of familiarity to its new *Swabasha*-trained (educated in local languages) middle-class inhabitants. They had recently migrated from rural towns to the capital city’s fringes as this, for sake of employment.

This door remains steadfast in its role, fifty years after being installed in a mid-1960s 'American Style' house, located in the leafy colonial suburb of *Havelock Town* in Colombo. Given its prestigious setting, it appears that the patron, from the colonial *petty-bourgeoisie*, likely sought to embrace the latest contemporary domestic trend set by the nascent middle-class of the nation. The door invites visitors from the covered porch outside, into the open-plan living room. Raised on a modest plinth, accessed by a low pavement and a couple of steps, and sheltered by an overhanging concrete awning, this double-sashed door remains in excellent condition. Crafted from mahogany and stained to reveal the true material, the modest outer frame and unadorned solid shutters reflect a simple modern aesthetic that complements the black polished floors visible through the plinth, and the white weather-shielded walls. Even the slender stainless-steel door hinges and the lock paired with its sleek door handle, remains in excellent condition. However, the pavement and steps leading to the door have been recently covered in cheap ceramic tiles—resembling terra-cotta counterparts used in the past—somewhat diminishing its progressively modern appeal. Despite being well-maintained, the ground floor of this former family residence has now been rented to a non-governmental organization (NGO). After the owners migrated to a Western country in search of better opportunities, this house, like many others in the area, has faced a similar fate.

D-LII

This door, a 1980s-90s A.E. addition, replaces what was once a traditional plain entrance in this 1960s 'American-style' middle-class house in *Nawala*, at the edge of Colombo. While the home retains its original architectural features, the stained single side-hung mahogany door introduces a design that echoes colonial paneling—a far cry from the slender white windows adjacent to it, painted in bright white enamel. This heavy, retrospective addition reflects the aesthetic shifts during the neo-liberal economic reforms, aligning with the common tastes of the time, which often fell short of the refined modernism embraced originally by the educated Ceylonese middle-class. On the other hand, the gesture was antithetical to the decolonization message carried by the modernist-driven architectural gesture by them. The original door sash may have succumbed to the elements over time, despite the frame remaining intact, or it may have been deliberately replaced to conform to evolving trends. Even the door hardware appears to be a relatively recent additions. Ironically, this change compromised the integrity of the façade, while the rest of the house façade has been meticulously preserved in its original state. The door stands as a testament to shifting tastes, encapsulating a moment in architectural history where individuality gave way to conformity in design.

D-LIII

This door dating from the late-20th century, leads into an annex structure built adjacent to a British colonial-period bungalow along the famous 'Beach Road' in *Galkissa* (Mt. Lavinia). It signifies a new trend of the time, of subdividing once-palatial elite lands to generate rental income. The explosion in Colombo's population and the paralleled growth in the tourism industry during the era of neo-liberal economic reforms have contributed to this post-1977 development, often resulting in dubious measures such as this in the period that followed. The narrow, somewhat low door opening is gracefully topped with a quarter-circular arch. The original timber door likely succumbed to the harsh beachside weather, and was replaced with a steel-framed and steel- sheet- clad version, effectively turning it into a gate. The open economy had led to large-scale steel imports, making steel items inexpensive. Even the stainless-steel barrel hinges seem to have been imported, while the latch is locally fabricated from forged iron. Such cheap imports accounted for quick-fix applications such as the one seen here. The light green painted rusty flat steel-sheet cladding with its almost invisible riveted bolts, complements the artistic contrast of the rugged cement-plastered wall painted in a sandstone hue of imported weather-shield paint. Together, the ensemble somehow manages unintentionally, to evoke a colonial maritime charm that is perfectly suited to this destination rich in vibrant colonial history.

D-LIV

D-LV

This door once functioned as a serving point for a makeshift café that catered to tourists, set in the garden of a former palatial house overlooking the Mt. Lavinia railway track and the beach. The affordable vendor would have satisfied customers' hunger with short eats and quenched their thirst with tea and soft drinks. This trend can be traced back to the government’s efforts to promote tourism in the 1980s, despite the challenges posed by an ongoing civil war. The door, which covers an unauthorized opening that has gone unnoticed by local authorities, is short and narrow, but looks to be adequate to fulfill its intended purpose. Economically crafted from inexpensive mahogany for both the frame and shutter, the door features a single openable sash with a circular top made by joining vertical timber pieces. The sash is affixed to the outer frame with barrel hinges and secured from the inside using a simple door latch, both crafted from stainless-steel. Just like the timber used for the door, the hardware, and even the enamel paint used for coloring the ensemble were all imported by this time, when the country had fully grown accustomed to neo-liberalism. This aging door shows a patina of peeling paint, blending harmoniously with the wall with its crumbling plaster and exposed brick sections. The outside concrete light post on its right accentuates not only the sporadic formation of the opening, but also suggests a state of impermanence on its part. Its rustic charm is further enhanced by the fact that it has not been opened in years, a reflection of the decline in tourism in recent times.

D-LVI

This door leads into a small makeshift lawyer's office-cum home, created by unceremoniously enclosing the verandah of a 19th century British townhouse, overlooking a narrow uphill street in the Southern colonial town of *Hambanthota*. The population surge following neo-liberal economic reforms of 1977 would have resulted in significant space shortages for burgeoning commercial activities in urban areas, prompting numerous haphazard and often illegal alterations as this one. Stepping over a few uneven cement steps, one enters a dimly lit office that once was a welcoming verandah, through this door. While remnants of the old structure such as the elegant masonry columns with their stucco bands still remain visible, the shoddy modern interventions from the late-1970s to early -1980s—characterized by locally made cement ventilation blocks for walls and imported asbestos sheets for roofing—have surely compromised the colonial charm. The plain door, devoid of a fanlight, features a slender mahogany frame, and a badly crafted short sash of the same wood. The assembly of mismatched planks in varying sizes, and the uneven joinery of the outer frame reveal a lack of concern for quality, showcasing a post-neo-liberal carpentry trend that prioritizes profit over true craftsmanship. The harsh climate has not been kind to the stained door, which shows signs of deterioration, much like the light blue façade of the building that is now crumbling and peeling. This composition narrates the tale of lost craftsmanship, highlighting an era when the industry sacrificed artistry for the allure of quick profits. The patrons' willingness to accept such inferior products also reflects the troubling mentality of the times.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Registrar of Muslim Marriages
Justice of the Peace
Hambantota Civic Division
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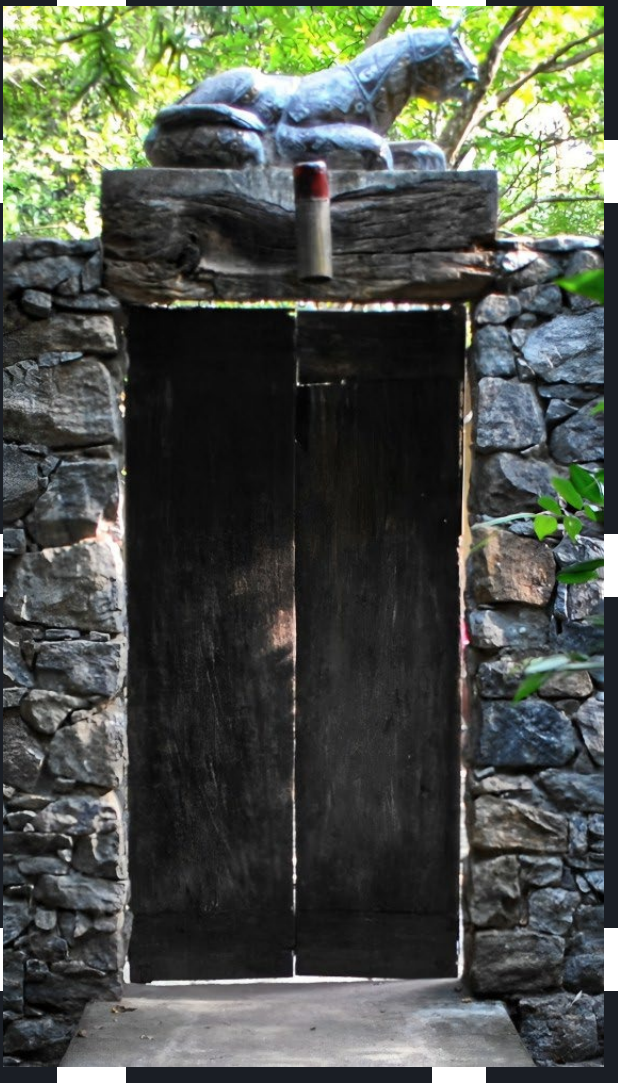
D-LVII

This door serves as the main entrance to a quaint shophouse catering to a tea plantation community in the *Knuckles*, nestled in the cool, hilly landscape of Sri Lanka's Central Province. Originally a private home for a *petty-bourgeoisie* family in the 1950s, it has since been adapted to meet the needs of an extended family. This adaptation has led to significant changes, including the enclosure of the open verandah to create a shop front. The slender mahogany door frame and its unadorned single side-hung sash appear to have been salvaged from a 1960s A.E. house. Centrally positioned where the verandah entranceway once stood, the door is flanked by two half walls. Above these, an outer timber frame made of inexpensive yet durable albesia wood holds interlocking tongue-and-groove planks arranged vertically. When these planks are removed, the contents on offer are revealed, and the shop comes to life. The frame has been carefully crafted around the door, preserving its original features, including two jutting pieces known as the *kan* (ears) at the top. The barrel hinges and modest door lock, featuring a small keyhole, seem to have accompanied the new door addition. This composition highlights the ingenuity of its resourceful inhabitants, who adapted the space in the mid-1970s in response to economic hardship and stringent government policies that affected the lives of an entire nation. The peeling paint of the door, rusted aluminum sheets, and remnants of the original walls all narrate a poignant story of resilience and adaptation.

D-LVIII

This door leads into the inviting dining hall of the older section of the *Dorakumbura walauwe*. It is nestled in a village bearing the same name, at the heart of *Matale*. The original 18th century structure has undergone numerous transformations, with its fenestration similarly affected. Originally a traditional courtyard house, it has been extended at the front to create a covered gable-ended façade that discreetly conceals a drawing room behind, embodying a sense of colonial modernity. The building was entrusted to the village Buddhist temple in the mid-1950s, and has since served as a residence for monks. The extraordinarily thick door frame, crafted from jak wood, hints at its 18th century *hathara-andi-ge* heritage, while the mahogany sash likely dates to the 1970s or 1980s. The machine-cut planks of the sash are assembled with fine joints, contrasting sharply with the rugged craftsmanship typical of Kandyan doors. The hardware, from the simple hinges to the lock-and-handle combination in gleaming stainless-steel, appears to date from the time of its renovation, or perhaps even more recently. These elements, in turn, compromise the door's integrity. The reddish stain reflects a trend for walnut finishes, which lacks authenticity. Moreover, the mismatched planks of varying sizes used to create the door suggest a disregard for quality, embodying a post-neo-liberal approach to carpentry driven by profit rather than craftsmanship. Unfortunately, even nearly a century of the village temple's ownership has not been able to preserve this building, which has long lost its original character. Although this old door sash would itself have yielded to the passage of time, it is not difficult to envisage circumstances in which a modest rural homeowner—tempted by the right offer—might agree to relinquish a similar door in his dwelling. Such elements often find their way into contemporary homes, evoking nostalgia, fulfilling a regionalist agenda. This highlights the ongoing struggle for survival that traditional buildings and their architectural elements on the island must continually withstand.



D-LIX

This door connects the approach pathway to the entrance court of *Diya Bubula* (Water Lily) in *Dambulla* which is a captivating haven created by the renowned artist Laki Senanayake amidst the arid landscape of Sri Lanka's Central Province. The door, once a functional part of a British colonial period home, has now been repurposed as a gate. The double door shutters, crafted from durable and water-resistant locally sourced *kumbuk* (Arjuna) timber, remain plain and unadorned. It seems that Geoffrey Bawa's Regionalist influence had rubbed off on Laki, who shared an equal degree of fascination with the richness of Sri Lankan architectural heritage. The design process of his rural hideaway, which began in 1990, focused on local materials and a commitment to vernacular aesthetics. For instance, even the hardware—from simple strap hinges to uncomplicated latches—are locally manufactured using forged steel. At the same time, the approach remained open to modern materials and techniques, as demonstrated by the prominent use of reinforced cement concrete, which lends a raw, brutalist effect. The weathered door is flanked by a random rubble wall and topped with a fair-faced concrete lintel. Upon ascending a couple of steps to reach the doorway, visitors are greeted by a rugged concrete bridge that spans a shallow pond, leading to one of the main pavilions of the compound. Above the doorway, an abstract bronze sculpture of a leopard elegantly perches, embodying the essence of the nearby *Dambulla* forest reserve.

D-LX

This door reclaimed from an unknown early-20th century British house graces the courtyard of a contemporary home completed around a decade ago, in the Colombo middle-class suburb of *Werahera*. Although its characteristic *'mal lēli'* (floral panel) arched top has been lost, the door retains its charm. The practice of reusing old architectural elements was popularized by the 'Modern Regionalists' in the 1960s, who aimed to soften the modernity of their designs, and evoke a sense of romantic nostalgia into domestic buildings. This historicist and regionalist trend appears to resonate deeply with the younger generation of architects, even over five decades since the pioneering experiments of Sri Lanka's modernist visionaries. The choice to incorporate reclaimed elements underscores the economic and sustainability priorities of the era, addressing both the financial constraints and environmental challenges faced by the nation grappling with deep debt. The perfectly restored stained door of jak wood with its brass hardware accents, compliments well with the concrete structural elements showcasing varied cut-cement patterns, the flint-gray colored walls, and the rugged red gravel ground evoking memories of a traditional domestic *midula* (yard). In this yard, daily life once unfolded in the traditional house. Now, the main living room activities seamlessly spill into this walled space, sheltered by concrete pergolas. It appears that the purpose of this door—as an iconic symbol of familiarity—is to create a sense of psychological comfort for the city- dwelling inhabitants who have lost their rural roots. Yet, this symbolic purpose may have its hidden costs.

D-LXI

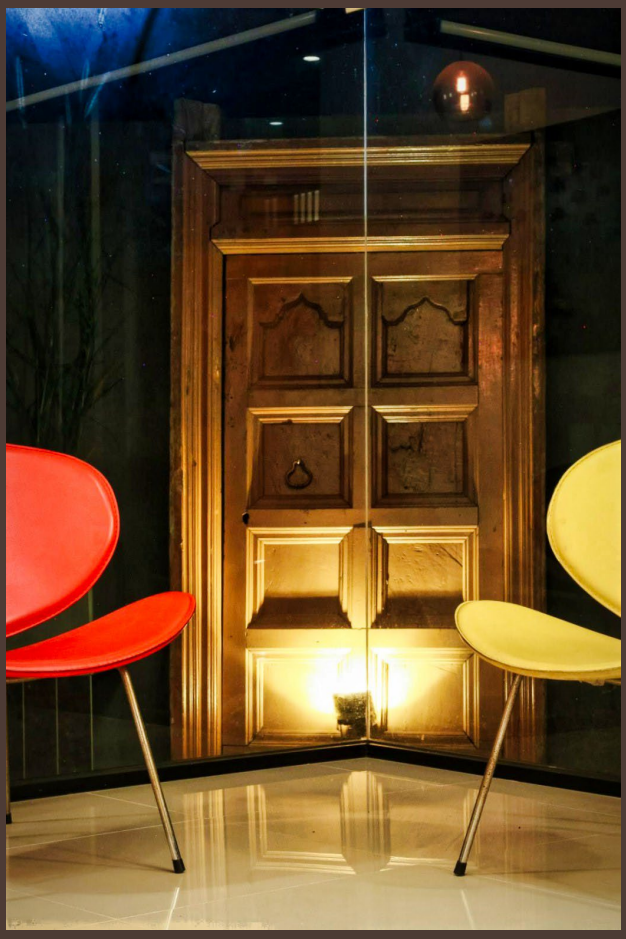
This door serves both decorative and functional purposes in a modernist house in *Piliyandala,* a Colombo residential suburb. It was commissioned by an upper middle-class client for his family about a decade ago. The paneled Burma teak door sashes, seemingly rescued from an early-20th century home, are elegantly mounted on a sleek aluminum frame, providing access from the double-height dining area to a spacious rear verandah. Flanked by collapsible glazed sashes of raw aluminum, the ensemble is crowned with a fixed horizontal glazed fanlight, enhancing the sense of openness and light. Equipped with a new set of brass ironmongery, the door sashes maintain their vintage charm, while blending seamlessly into the contemporary design. When the brass door locks and pulls were salvaged with the shutters, new hinges and latches were chosen to harmonize with them. The stained finish of the ornate door beautifully contrasts with the stark simplicity of the aluminum fenestration. Here, a dialectic is established through a dichotomy of disparate materials that embody both modern and traditional aesthetics. This thoughtful integration not only imbues the interior with a regionalist aesthetic, but also aligns with environmental and sustainability principles. The use of aluminum was likely envisioned as a solution to the rampant deforestation evident in the country today, driven by the high demand from the construction industry. The Bawas and Gunasekaras also had their fair share of such experiments in the 1980s. Given this, it is heartening to witness contemporary architects honoring the legacy of the masters, through such innovative adaptations. However, such salvaging efforts prompt a vital conversation. While salvaged elements honor past architectural traditions and offer a strong sense of familiarity for suburb-dwelling inhabitants with their rural origins, the process may also inadvertently compromise that very heritage.

D-LXII

This door represents a modern reinterpretation of bygone architectural traditions, seamlessly integrated into a contemporary extension of an existing 1980s house in the Colombo suburb of *Nugegoda*. The project was completed around a decade ago under the supervision of a younger-generation architect. Its patron family boasts a colonial *bourgeoisie* social status that had to be perpetuated via the design. For them, it was essential to evoke memories of the colonial houses they once inhabited. The side-by-side double doorways feature three identical solid Burma teak shutters on either side. While the two central shutters are hinged individually, the outer shutters on either side slide open as single units. The door frame, crafted from imported red balau, accommodates six salvaged Burma teak panels secured from a demolished early-20th century British-period home nearby. When the brass door locks and pulls came with the shutters, the hinges and latches were selected anew to complement them. Each panel showcases a design of two identical rectangles at the bottom and a square atop, finished in a two-tone palette. The background is a light green enamel with a white-wash effect that lends an aged appearance, while the panel bands and the outer frame are painted crisp white. This harmonious design complements the timber floors and white walls, enhancing the eclectic mix of period and modern furnishings throughout the space. By incorporating these salvaged elements, the design not only evokes a regionalist charm through familiarity, but also breathes new life into materials from structures that have reached the end of their lifespan, creating a thoughtful dialogue between past and present. However, promoting the use of salvaged materials to ensure their longevity carries the risk of generating demand that could compromise the architectural legacy that embodies them.

D-LXIII

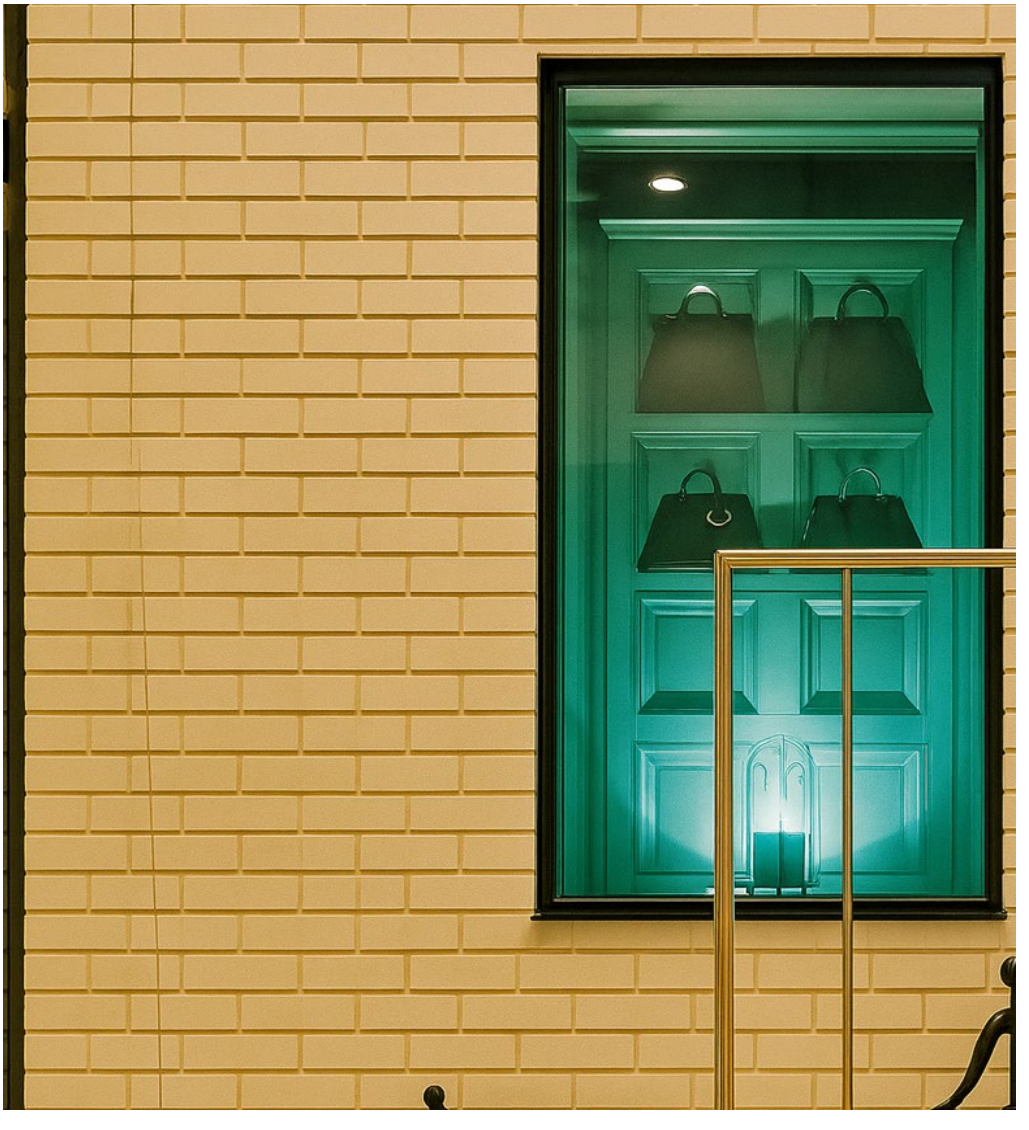
This door, once an entryway to a family home from the Northern Jaffna peninsula, has now taken on a new role. Its design embodies the Hindu belief that the head should be bowed upon crossing the entrance threshold, a gesture facilitated by the need to step over the raised bottom jamb. These beliefs are associated with the South Indian treatise called *Maya Matha* that dictates how buildings should be executed. Mostly dating back to the 18th century, such doors were typically centered on the verandah, featuring a lower middle pathway aligned with the bottom of the door, and flanked by two raised plinth-like areas *(thinnai)*. Crafted from *siyambala* (tamarind) wood, the door boasts wide outer frames that also form a narrow plain fanlight in the form of a solid shutter. Though single-sashed, it spans the width of a typical double door, and is divided into eight equal square panels. The top two panels have subtly pointed-arched tops, hinting at Hindu influences, while the lower counterparts are simply squares. The door possesses striking strap hinges with elongated leaves. These leaves, along with the ring-shaped door pull and the intricate lock, are all crafted from forged iron. At night, a floodlight illuminates the door from below, accentuating its contours and adding richness to its appearance. Now sealed shut, the door serves merely a decorative purpose, and adds a touch of regionalism to the otherwise overtly modern design. However, the geographic and cultural relevance of this regionalist impartation is debatable. It now graces an architect-designed modern upper-middle-class home in a gated community in *Piliyandala*, a Colombo residential suburb. It is positioned diagonally at the right-angle intersection of two external boundary walls, to align perfectly straight with a tall glass corner window of the living room. While it serves a purely decorative purpose today, this transformation reflects a troubling trend.



This door serves a decorative role, infusing a regionalist charm into a modernist home in suburban Mt. Lavinia, near Colombo. The architect created the design for his own family, to embody their upper-middle-class status. An 18th century A.E. Jaffna door is thoughtfully positioned beside a glazed opening in the double-height dining area. It is situated beside a narrow service passage that connects the front and rear of the house. Crafted from hard siyambala (tamarind) wood, the door boasts a wide outer frame with a prominent bottom jamb, reminiscent of Hindu traditional houses from the North. Adorned with intricate routered details, this frame also creates a narrow band for the solid austere fanlight above. The side-hung single shutter features intricate deep panels with elaborate router work.

While the lower six panels display squares, the upper two with their pointed-arched tops add a touch of elegance. A rusted ring door pull remains affixed to the front of the door sash, hinting at its storied past. The prominent strap hinges with long leaves, door pull, and sophisticated lock are all crafted from forged iron. The permanently closed door now serves merely decorative and symbolic purposes. The application of a Hindu cultural icon in a Buddhist household sparks debate regarding its cultural relevance. At night, a floodlight bathes the door, enhancing its profiles and depth. Finished in a vibrant turquoise white-wash, it harmonizes beautifully with the rustic brick wall and wooden floors of the dining space in this cozy residence. While the act of incorporating salvaged elements pays homage to bygone architectural traditions through nostalgia, it also raises concerns about the potential erosion of the very heritage it seeks to protect.

D-LXIV



D-LXV

This door represents a contemporary interpretation by a young generation architect of a quintessential colonial door. It is an apt and valid selection—considering the Southern location of the architectural statement—realized at the village of *Makuluwa*, near the vibrant colonial town of *Galle*. Architect-designed around 2020 for an academic and his family in a middle-class neighborhood, the frugally-conceived house showcases numerous retrospective adaptations that reflect its Southern locale. The double-door sashes, crafted from mahogany and framed with imported grandis *timber*, are strikingly painted in turquoise enamel. A delicate router technique abstracts traditional panel bands, accentuated in crisp white. Each panel features three rectangular segments of varying sizes, adding a dynamic visual interest. The door leads into a secure forecourt, encased in a tight cubical of masonry walls and a concrete roof. The outer surfaces of the cubicle, finished in flint gray weather-shield paint, contrast beautifully with the cement cut and polished inner surfaces around the door. Here, faded yellow walls complement the natural cement-colored floor, creating a welcoming atmosphere enriched by their vibrant interplay of patterns. Contemporary brass handles, sleek in design, harmonize with the door's aesthetic. This reproduction navigates the realm of ‘Regionalism’, celebrating diversity in design rather than conforming to a singular narrative. Overall, the ensemble captures a rich dialogue between tradition and modernity, making it a compelling architectural statement.

D-LXVI

This door graciously welcomes visitors into the open-plan living room from the covered garage of a late 1980s house designed in the ‘International Style’, reflecting a remarkable level of eclecticism. The designer patron came from a civil engineering academic background and an upper-middle-class social standing. The project was carried out on a spacious plot of land in *Katubedda, Moratuwa*—a Colombo residential suburb—which was inherited by the owner. The door is crafted from jak wood, with its outer frame extending to support a modest fanlight above the four- foot-wide side-hung door. The fanlight features a trellised design, composed of *nandun* (red sandalwood) timber strips arranged at an angle of forty-five degrees in two layers. The door’s paneling echoes the style of late to mid-British period counterparts, yet its playful layout of dissimilar-sized panels adds unique character. The craftsmanship of the door is exquisite, revealing the evident influence of machinery in its fabrication by skilled carpenters. Stained to a dark finish, it contrasts beautifully with the lily-white walls and crisp white ceiling inside. The original white terrazzo floors have since been replaced with glazed ceramic tiles in an earthy tone. While the original stainless-steel hinges remain intact, the previous door lock and handle have both been updated with a contemporary version executed with an alloy, adorned with modest floral decorations. Once a family home, the house now serves as a boarding place for female students attending the nearby University of *Moratuwa*, as the patron and his family reside in a more modern house next door. This shift towards commercial use may help ensure the house's survival for the foreseeable future.

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About the Author

Dr. Nishan Wijetunge is a highly accomplished scholar and practitioner in the fields of architecture and interior design. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in Architecture from the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. In addition, his academic qualifications include a master's in Architecture & Interior Design from London Metropolitan University, U.K., and a PhD in Architecture from Nottingham Trent University, U.K., where he also completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Research Practice. Dr. Wijetunge's research and professional expertise center on architectural and interior design history, cultural studies as well as the evolving integration of artificial intelligence into digital design and education disciplines.

Since fall 2023, Dr. Wijetunge has served as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Design & Merchandising at Oklahoma State University, USA. Prior to this, he was an Associate Professor in the Department of Architecture at the Southern Campus of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka, from 2022 to 2023. From 2014 to 2017, he held the position of Senior Lecturer in the Department of Architecture at the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. His academic contributions also include serving as a visiting lecturer in the fields of architecture and interior design at several institutions, including General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (2018 to 2022), the City School of Architecture in Sri Lanka (2014 to 2022), and Nottingham Trent University, U.K. (2010 to 2011). Additionally, he has served as an Honorary Research Fellow at University of Liverpool, U.K., from 2017 to 2018.

Dr. Wijetunge has been a Fellow Member of the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects since 2020 and has been an International Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects since 2021. He has also held leadership roles within the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects , serving as an elected Council Member and as Secretary of the Board of Architectural Publications from 2020 to 2021.

In his professional practice, Dr. Wijetunge established and led Modulus2 Architects (M2A), a Colombo-based architectural firm that has delivered over 250 architectural and interior design projects across Sri Lanka over 15 years. His innovative work has been widely recognized, featuring in approximately 30 television programs and over 50 magazine, newspaper, and online platforms, promoting architecture as a cultural and artistic discipline to the public. His scholarly excellence has been acknowledged through prestigious awards, including the Gold Medal at the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects Publications Awards, and the Silver Medal at the Research Awards by the same institute in 2017. Dr. Wijetunge's extensive body of research includes publications in peer-reviewed journals, authored and edited books, and articles in both academic and professional outlets. He has been actively involved in architectural exhibitions, scholarly research films, and editorial roles.

Notably, he has served as Editor-in-Chief for two prominent peer-reviewed international academic journals—*KDU Journal of Built Environment* (2023 to 2024) and *Built-Environment Sri Lanka* (2019 to 2020). His academic and professional trajectory highlights a profound commitment to advancing knowledge and practice in architecture, interior, design, and their intersection with emerging technologies.

The following are a selection of his publications.

- Wijetunge, N. R. (2021) *The Archaeologist-Architect of Sri Lanka: Roland Silva*, Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Architects. ISBN: 978955-9109-04-4

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