

Fashion Identity; a Self in Context and Visual Expression

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According to the trickledown theory of fashion diffusion the royalties set fashion and it diffused down the social hierarchy. The objective of the study is to explore how the royalty anticipated what identities they would like to have in the social situation and how they presented themselves accordingly to others, thus generating basic theoretical concepts to the field of fashion. Kotte era (1411-1597AD) was the selected study setting whose significance is of much concern because the period had enormous Portuguese influence in socio, political and cultural dimensions. The Portuguese influences directly affected the dress code of the royalties and immediately visible ambiguities embraced in their process of appearance management because of their imitation of western fashion. Relief carvings in two special ivory carved boxes presently at the Munich Treasury in Germany of King Buwanekabahu VII (1521-1555AD), prince Dharmapala (1551-1597 AD) of Kotte, pictorial images of King Wimaladharmasooriya I (1591-1604 AD) and his nephew King Rajasimha II (1635-1687AD), Kirithi Sri Rajsimha (1747-1782 AD) and King Sri Wickrama Rajasimha's (1798-1815AD) full relief sculpture of dressed bodies were identified and analyzed according to their dresses as trouser (*pantaloons*) coat (*cabaya*), jacket (*hettaya*) short jacket with collar (*mantle hettaya*) and attached collar (*tippet*). The study is based on qualitative research method. Sequences of in-depth observational studies were carried out. The literature review employed original documents, manuscripts, chronicles and records of foreign travellers. By triangulating data the validity was confirmed. The research reveals that fashion and identity plays a major role in shaping identity, imbibing directly from material reality. Although people have only one self-concept, they have many contextually relevant identities.

Keywords: Fashion, Identity, Trickled Down Theory, Visual Expression, Royalty