

**LOGIC OF SELECTION OF DIVINITIES AND REVOLVING HIERARCHICAL
PANTHEON OF THE SINHALA BUDDHIST TRADERS MERCHANDISING IN THE
CITY OF KANDY**

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“ Only one form of social activity has not as yet been explicitly linked to religion: economic activity.....we see that the idea of economic value cannot be unrelated ; but nature of these relationships has not been studied.”

Emile Durkheim *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life.*

1995: 142

“ The account for the infinite diversity of practices in a way that is both unitary and specific, one has to break with linear thinking.”

Pierre Bourdieu *Distinction* 1989: 107

“*From one representation to the another, there is no autonomous act of signification, but a simple and endless possibility of exchange*”

Michael Foucault *Order of Things* 1991 : 179-80

The logic of selection and arrangement of spiritual personalities in commercial stall-shrines, unlike in other religious contexts, appears to be related more to the ‘lived in ‘ economic realities of traders than to the moral logic and notion of merit underlying the conventional and fashionable (anthropological) interpretation of the Sinhalese Buddhist pantheon. The traditional and popular Sinhalese Buddhist pantheon, as interpreted by local and foreign scholars alike, presents a linear hierarchical moral logic. The traditional Buddhist pantheon of the Sinhalese does not take into account the role of the economic factors in a person’ s relationship with deities and spiritual personalities. The pantheon of traders, or the commercial pantheon, undergoes mutations through selection and consequently represents a greater variation and complexity than the traditional Buddhist pantheon. As the selection of deities for personal stall shrines of traders is made on the basis of the merchandising commodities, what is generated as a consequence , is not a linear and static hierarchy , as in the case of traditional Buddhist pantheon, but a revolving and mobile hierarchy. The logic of the movement of the divinities generates personal or preferential hierarchies. within the commercial context. The Buddhist concepts of merit and morality and the authority of the Buddha, which played, and which still play, a central and dominant role in the popular interpretation of the traditional Sinhalese Buddhist pantheon and in the logic underlying it, therefore, become peripheral and dormant, if not totally inactive in the religio -cum-commercial setting of the Sinhalese Buddhist traders.