This excellent book is a monograph in the strict sense: a detailed and perhaps exhaustive study of a narrow, well-defined topic. Its title is slightly misleading. It deals with the rituals surrounding the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy in central Ceylon. Possession of the Buddha's tooth relic was essential to legitimate a Sinhalese monarch from at least the twelfth century; the temple built to house it was connected to the palace and the king frequently attended its rituals. The Kandyan kingdom, which had ruled central Ceylon for three centuries, ended in 1815 when the city was taken by the British. However, most of the Temple's arrangements survived both this political shift and the next one, when Ceylon became independent as a united country in 1948. Change has come, but very gradually, for the most part unintended and even unobserved. The Temple's ritual complex thus holds a double interest: in it we can witness elaborate rites of a state long dead and we can also use it as a focus for studying changes in the distribution of power and the symbolic language of Sinhalese society. While Seneviratne's title suggests only the first approach, almost half the book - and the half that is likely to appeal to a wider audience - is devoted to the second.

After providing, with clarity and concision, the necessary introduction to Kandyan society, Seneviratne describes the orientation of the relevant buildings and their internal disposition, the elaborate organisation of the Temple functionaries, and the Temple's rituals, daily, weekly and annual. Only specialists in Ceylon studies may wish to attend to every word in these pages, but they are not to be slighted on that account. There are very few such painstaking and authoritative descriptions of ritual in the entire literature on South Asia, and this work may serve as a model of careful ethnography. The daily and weekly rituals, which Seneviratne characterizes as 'rituals of maintenance', are cast in the form of attendance on a king's person. That is at the same time to say that they follow the Hindu pattern of attendance on a god in his temple. The very name of the Temple is literally 'Tooth-relic Palace'. The last kings of Kandy came from Hindu South India, where kings were divine and temple worship treated gods like kings; but Tamil Hindu influence on Sinhalese culture is far older than this last dynasty. That the object of veneration is here not a god but the Buddha's tooth, and the chief officiants Buddhist monks, is anomalous from the point of view of Theravada Buddhist orthodoxy, but within a Dravidian cultural context it appears as a normal variation on a familiar theme.

The maintenance of the Tooth and the king's associated legitimacy and well-being led to righteous rule, which resulted in the harmony of nature and society as manifested especially by adequate rainfall. In the biggest annual ceremony, the Asaile Perahüra or Pageant, a magnificent parade symbolically demonstrated in its arrangement the hierarchic integration of the Kandyan state under the king's hegemony, and at the same time helped to make that a reality by compelling the rulers of the outlying provinces to come and participate.

The king was captured, and a British writer in 1849 expected the Pageant soon to wither away. Not only has it survived; each year it grows grander and draws larger crowds. In the second half of the book Seneviratne asks how and why. A romanticized view of a glorious national past - what Dudley Senanayake called the 'tank and temple' mentality - is not the whole answer. Most of the Temple rituals now have
no function but to cater (to a very limited extent) to religious sentiment, and their performance correspondingly tends to be sloopy, whereas the Pageant now fills the national press for a week and has earned a place on the international tourist calendar because it has assumed new functions. In particular it gives the Kandyan aristocracy a chance to indulge in pomp (often at the expense of the sacred insignia of which they ostensibly appear as the humble guardians) and to use this display of their prestige to further their individual struggles for real political power. Dr. Seneviratne is very discreet, but there is quiet humour in his description of the tussles between aristocrats and bureaucrats over arrangements for conducting the Pageant. Finally, he does not rest content with having found a functional fit between modern society and the present Pageant but discusses the tension between contemporary demands for the abolition of privilege and the enactment of a pageant of inequality. Further changes are on the way. These latter chapters should greatly interest not only orientalists and conscientious tourists, but also all students of political and cultural change in the Third World.

Richard Gombrich.


*A Theory of Literary Production* was first published in France in 1966 as an attempt to work through in relation to literature the implications of Althusser's early theorising of ideology (as outlined in *For Marx*). Many of the difficulties of the book can be ascribed to a wider discursive tradition whose precise concepts and elaborated mode of argument pose particular problems to strangers in the field. Anthropologists should not, however, be daunted by the prospect of exploring new fields of discourse, nor should they be ignorant of the insights to be gained from such an exploration.

One of the attributes of an ideological concept, according to Althusser, is that:

While it really does designate a set of existing relations, unlike a scientific concept it does not provide us with a means of knowing them. In particular (ideological) mode, it designates some existents but does not give us their essences. If we were to confuse these two orders we should cut ourselves off from all knowledge, uphold a confusion and risk falling into error.

The distinction which he drew here between the ideological concept which can represent an 'existent' but cannot 'think' it and a theoretical concept which can provide us with a scientific knowledge of such an existent is of crucial importance for all practitioners of social anthropology, a discipline which has continually striven towards the production of theory but which has remained shackled by the conventions of a tradition of literary representation. It is also a distinction which lies at the heart of *A Theory of Literary Production*. Macherey