



THE FLAME TREE HERALD TRIBUNE

IN
THIS
EDITION

news, views,
reviews,
& off - grid
jungle intel

THE TALISMAN OF CHARLEMAGNE
THE ROAR THAT WAS
KING OF THE MONTH
KITTEL ROASTED CASHEW NUTS
IN MEMORY OF SLAVES

June 2026 flamefreestate.com



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“Serene
setting and
fantastic
interior
design. “

”

CHILLI



Chilli only reached Asia in the past five hundred years, originating from Peru and Bolivia before being brought to the attention of a marvelling Spanish court by Christopher Columbus after his first voyage to the New World. Within decades, it had become a commonplace plant in Spanish gardens. And almost as quickly, it found its way to Sri Lanka and other parts of Asia, due in large part to the Portuguese.

Rich in such vitamins as A, C and E, chilli's natural chemical compounds, especially capsaicinoid, have prompted a wave of ongoing scientific research into harnessing it to promote weight loss, relieve pain from arthritis, reduce inflammation, control LDL (bad) cholesterol to lower the risk of strokes and heart attacks and regulate blood sugar. Some studies have also indicated its potential use in killing cancer cells. But it is, of course, for its taste and flavour that it is most widely celebrated. Barely a dish in Sri Lanka fails to include it – from sambals and curries to the sweetly exquisitely spicy banana pepper curry - and of course Lunu Miris, one of the island's top pickles, made from finely chopped onions, red chilli flakes, salt, lime juice, and Maldive fish, and able to go with just about anything.



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“Incredible
breakfast spread.
Stunning pool.”

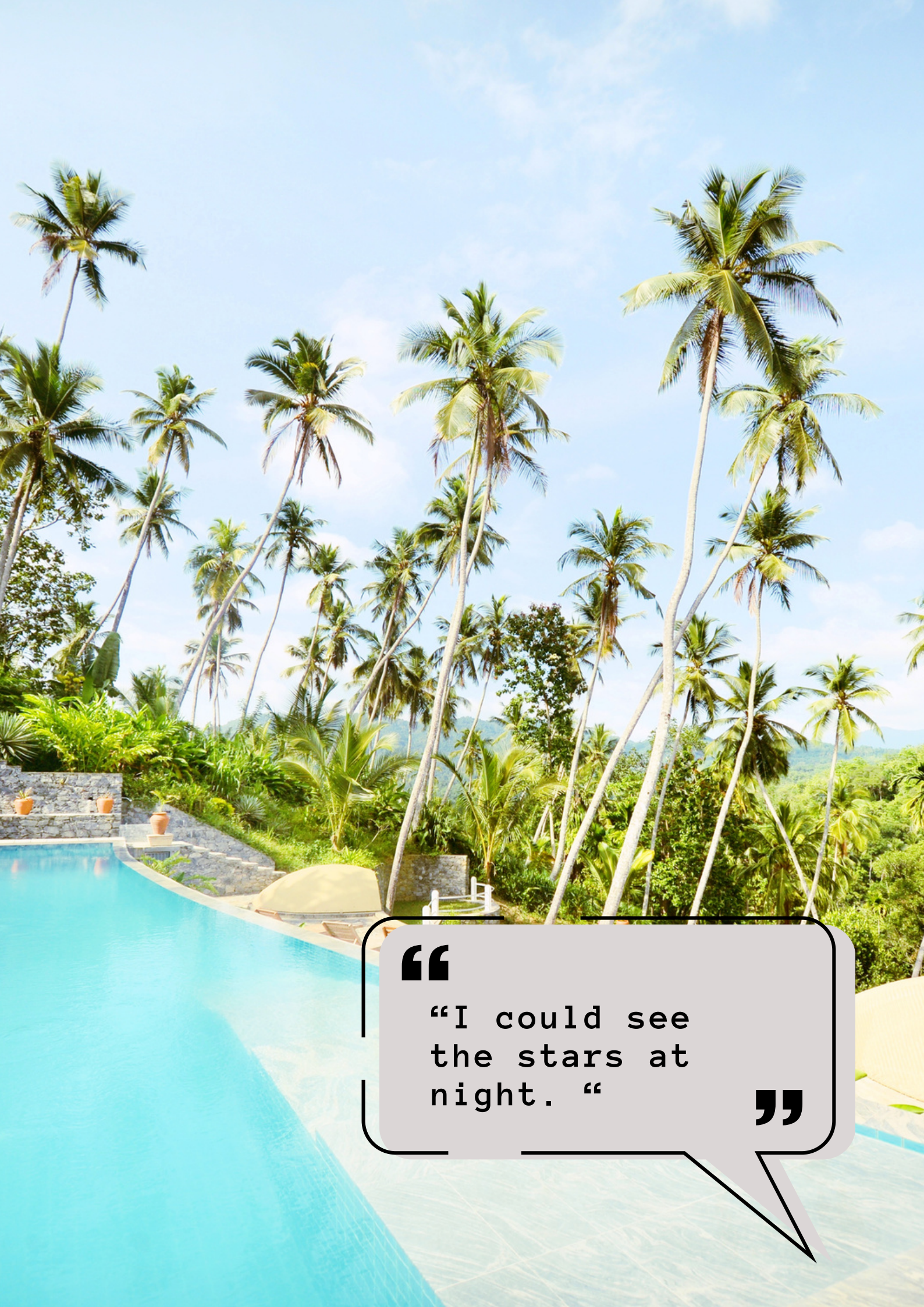
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THE TALISMAN OF CHARLEMAGNE



Attributed to the 8th-century Emperor Charlemagne, the Talisman of Charlemagne is a reliquary said to contain fragments of the Virgin Mary's hair and a remnant of the True Cross.

A dazzling early medieval jewel in its own right, it bears at its centre what experts at the Palace of Tau Museum in Reims say is a 190-carat blue grey sapphire from Sri Lanka.



“

“I could see
the stars at
night. “

”

THE ROAR THAT WAS



Adoring the national flag, the Sri Lankan lion is thought to have become extinct in 37,000 BCE. *Panthera leo Sinhaleyus* only came to light in 1936 when the P.E.P. Deraniyagala uncovered two fossilised teeth in Kuruwita, near Ratnapura.

With the passion of a forensic detective, the archaeologist studied his modest clutch of teeth. One was so damaged as to be of little use in identifying the animal, but the other, a left molar, presented such a distinctive structure as to not just twin it with lions, but set it apart from all known species, too. From this single tooth, a lost subspecies was uncovered, its size indicating that the beast was a lion much larger than the present Indian lion.

Back in 37,000 BCE, Sri Lanka was a very different place from what it would become, an island of open grasslands – a habitat perfect for lions. But over time, as the monsoon rainforest fuelled the proliferation of trees, its habitat became ever more restricted and at some point, the creature just died out. The National Flag aside, the lion lives on still in many a temple and ancient fortress, in statues and new ones.



“

“Possibly the best property we stayed at during our 10 days in Sri Lanka. “

”

THE PIN-UP POST-IT REPTILE



Amongst skinks, Haly's Tree Skink, is a proven pin-up. First discovered in Sri Lanka back in 1887 by an intrepid zoological double act, Haly & Nevill, it later became embroiled in impassioned taxological arguments ignited by sightings of what was thought to be endemic to the island, but in various parts of India.

For decades, the argument went first one way, then the other: it was endemic. No, it wasn't. Currently, the consensus seems to be that it is – the Sri Lankan variant being sufficiently different to its Indian cousin as to be considered a separate species.

Bearing four feet and four toes on each limb, at a colossal 80mm, it nevertheless hovers on the edge of conservation misery, being in the Near Threatened category. But it bears such striking horizontal dark brown stripes across its golden bronze back as to have won itself a place on one of Sri Lanka's stamps – and for just 125 rupees, you can post the beast anywhere across the island.



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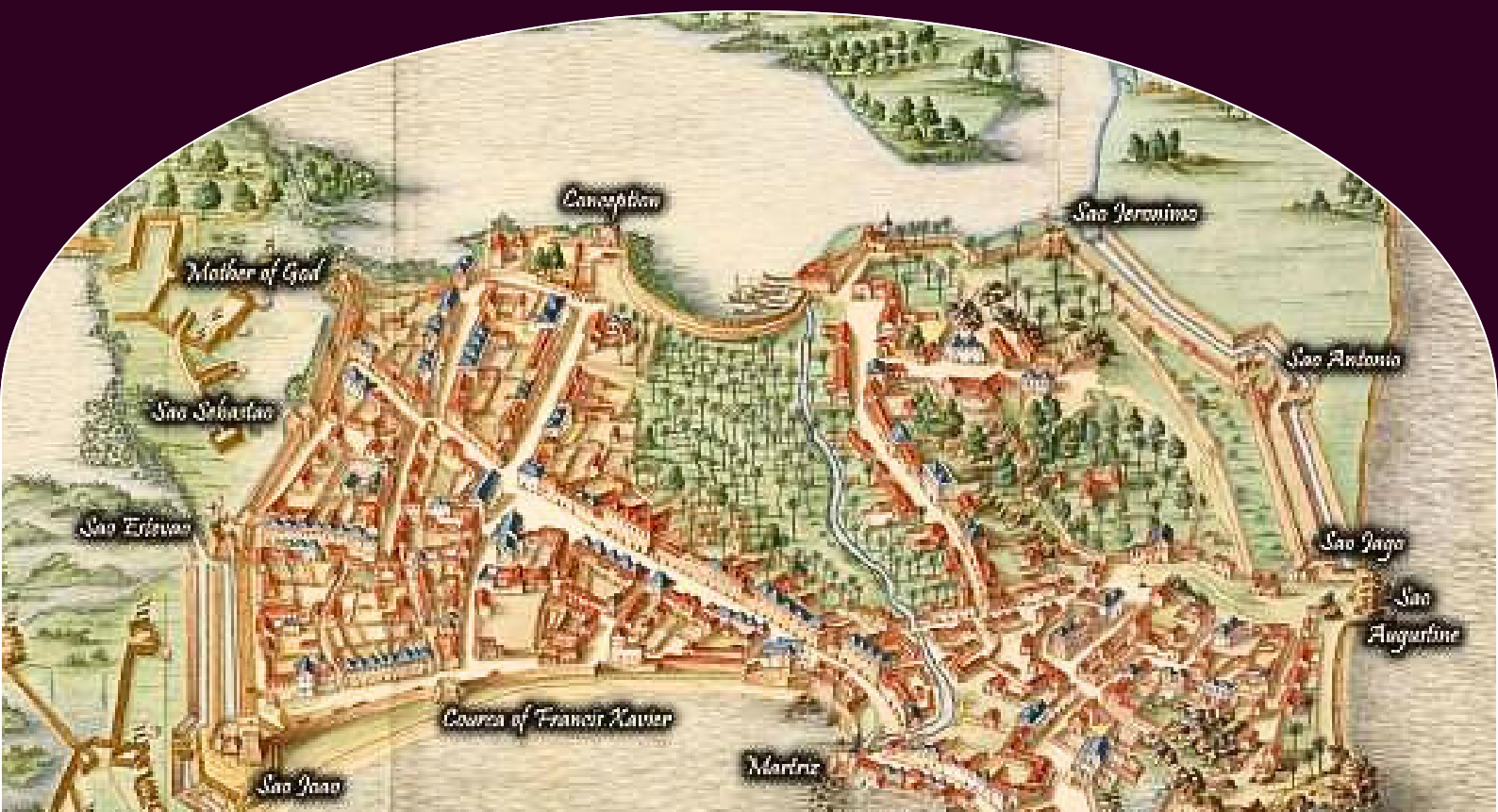
“We wish
we’d stayed
for more
than 1
night.”

”

IN MEMORY OF SLAVES

Sailing in, green dragons blazing on the flags of their stout galleons, the Portuguese set about building themselves a small fort on the “Hook of Colombo” on the southern boundary of the harbour of Colombo around 1528. It was soon upgraded and given three bastions, with stone and mortar replacing mud walls, and was christened “Our Lady of Victories.” A town, complete with Franciscan friars, grew around it. When, in 1656, the fort and the island fell to the Dutch, the fort was restructured to better sit astride the natural defences offered by the lake and the sea, and a moat was dug on the landward side, stocked with crocodiles.

But by the 1870s, the British began systematically demolishing large sections to make way for the growing city of Colombo, and the area became a fashionable address for diplomats, bankers, administrators, and tycoons. Little now remains, though hints of the old fort can still be glimpsed in several places – most movingly, The Slave Entrance, now found within the Navy Headquarters and built in 1676 to access the land between the sea and the fort, where the Dutch kept their ill-starred Kaffir slaves.



“

“Beautiful accommodation with unique views, room and service of exceptional quality,”

”





mosquito roma tearne

MOSQUITO

Roma Tearne's addictive novel begins when Theo Samarajeeva returns to his native Sri Lanka after his wife's death, hoping to escape his gnawing loss amid the lush landscape of his increasingly war-torn country.

But as he sinks into life in this beautiful, tortured land, he also finds himself slipping into friendship with an artistic young girl, Nulani, whose family is caught up in the growing turmoil. Under the threat of civil war, their affair offers a glimmer of hope to a country on the brink of destruction.

It is, write one reviewer, "a stunning and bittersweet portrait of a shipwrecked land, torn by the dualistic ideologies of a post-colonial people."

“

“A stay at The
Flame Tree Estate
is definitely
worthwhile, and we
can recommend it
without
reservation.”

”



KING OF THE MONTH

VIJAYA KUMARA, KING OF ANURADHAPURA

The 58th recorded monarch in Sri Lanka. The seemingly proscribed and normative ascension of Vijaya Kumara belied a much more malign thread running through Lambakanna family politics.

Since 195 CE, half the monarchs had murdered one another, a predilection that pointed either to some bizarre and yet to be identified DNA mutation that triggers irresistible thoughts of regicide, or the existence, now beyond identification, of cabals, alliances, schisms and inter-family power centres that surged like an unending sigh through opulent palace corridors.

Within a year, the king was dead, the 29th reigning Sri Lankan monarch to have been murdered for the succession.



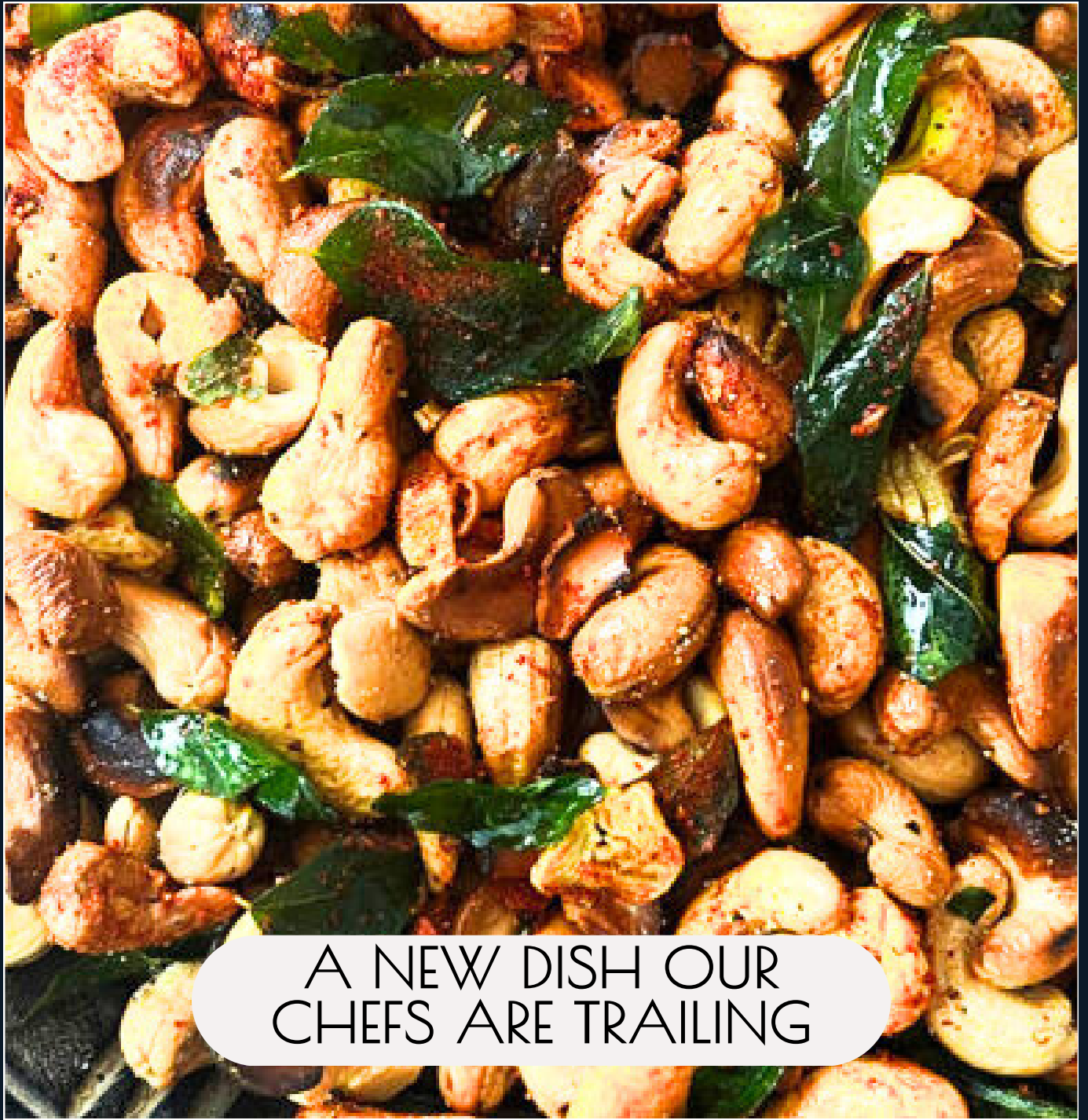
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“The main house is so tastefully furnished, and the entire complex invites you to switch off and relax.”

”



KITTEL ROASTED CASHEW NUTS



A NEW DISH OUR
CHEFS ARE TRAILING

Coconut Oil; Curry Leaves; Garlic, Sliced Thinly; Raw Cashews;
Ground Turmeric; Kittel; Red Chilli Powder; Black Pepper; Salt



“A true
oasis of
peace and
class.”

”

700

MAP OF ANCIENT INDIAN LANGUAGES FROM THE 3RD CENTURY BCE TO THE 7TH CENTURY CE

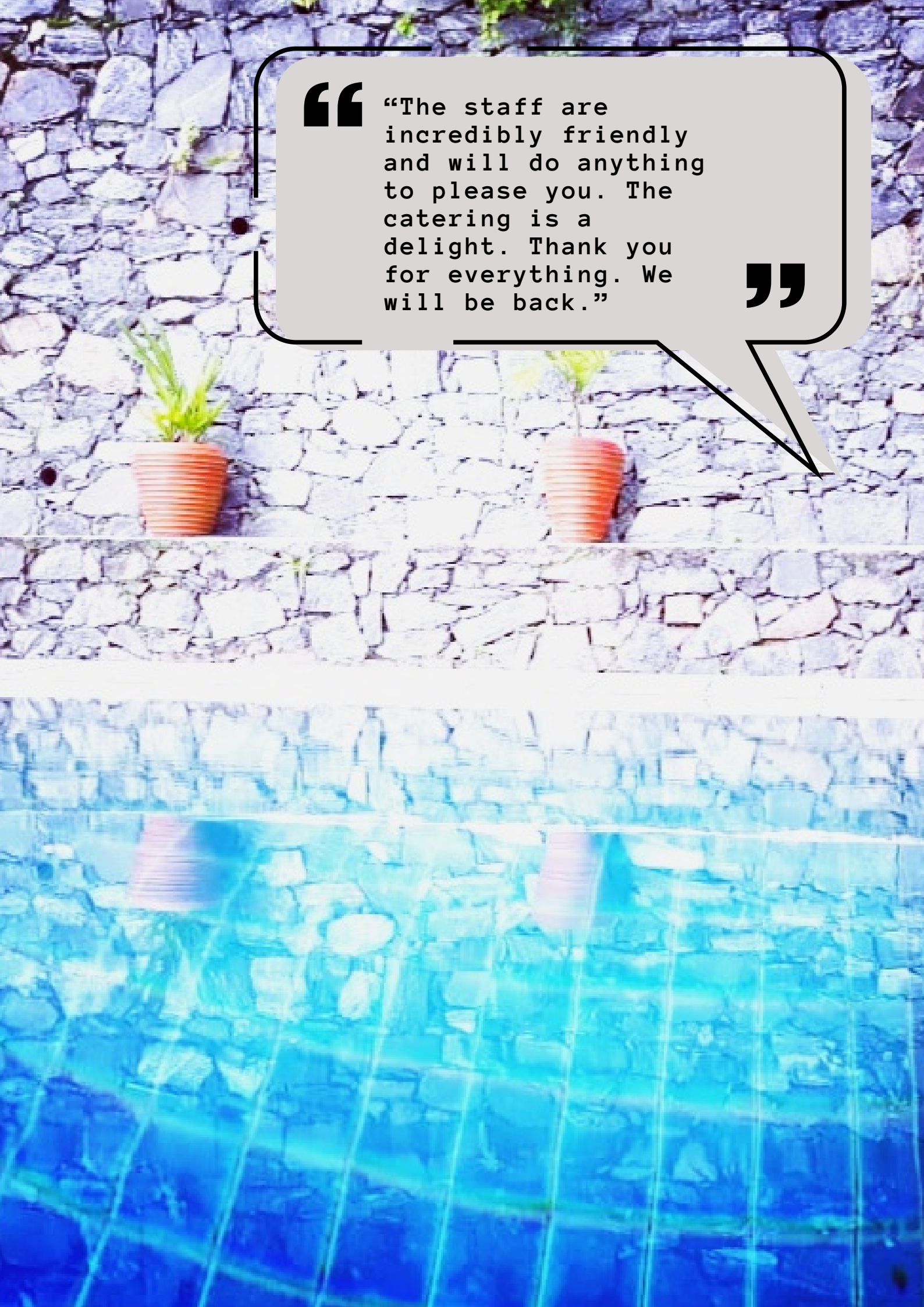


This map of the ancient Indian Middle Indo-Aryan languages shows their development and zone of influence from the 3rd century BCE to the 7th century CE. One of the two that most closely pertains to Sri Lanka is Elu, considered the earliest form of the Sinhalese language, with origins in the 3rd century BCE. The second was Tamil, one of the longest-surviving classical languages in the world, with an extensive body of literature dating back to at least 500 BCE. But whilst Singhala is a descendant language of Sanskrit, an ancient language that emerged around 1500 BCE, Tamil is not.

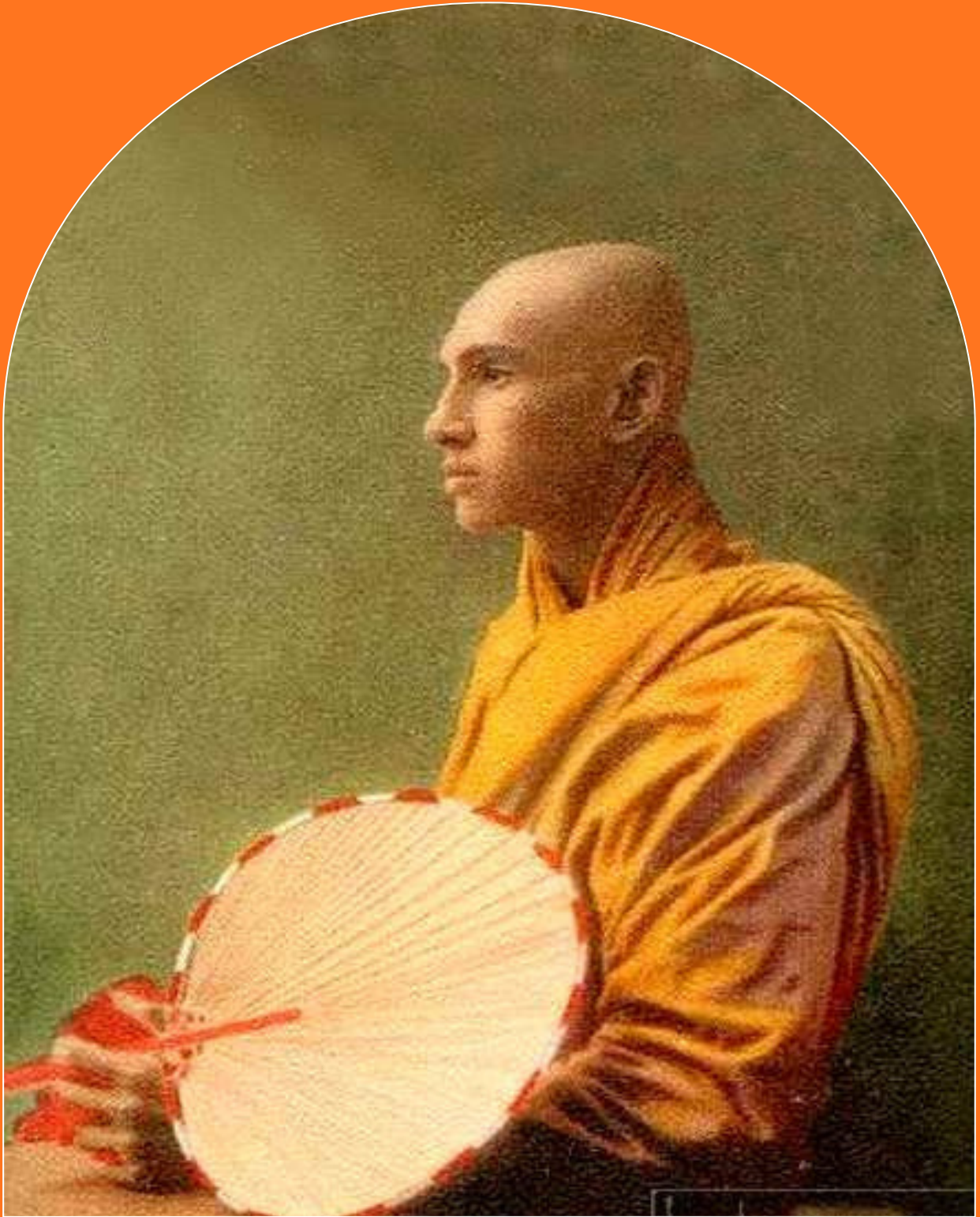
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“The staff are
incredibly friendly
and will do anything
to please you. The
catering is a
delight. Thank you
for everything. We
will be back.”

”



GILANPASA



The evening meal of Buddhist priests is restricted to beverages such as tea and coffee. Solid food is prohibited after noon.



“The breakfast
is also one of
the best we
had in Sri
Lanka.”

”



A TUK TUK HOP

Sri Lanka is littered with ancient mansions and walawwas, once the homes, ancient or merely old, of the ruling class, a class not always popular in a democratic socialist republic. They pop up in city centres, down dusty town roads, in jungles, on plantations, amidst paddy, on mountain tops, and off country roads. One such haunting building – The Paranagama Walawwa - lies within a tuk-tuk ride of the hotel, now abandoned and dating back to 1820, a remarkably early date given that the British only signed the Kandyan Convention in 1815, bringing to an end the last independent kingdom in the country and the one that ruled over Galagedera at the time.

Just two years before this mansion was built, the Great Rebellion of 1817–1818 broke out. In the two years following the end of the Rebellion and the erecting of this Galagedera mansion, the surrounding countryside, even more remote then than it is today, would have been reeling from the devastating effects of Britain's scorched earth policy in the area. Little is known about the mansion, which is thought to have been built by J R Paranagama, the Dissawa (Governor of Uva) within the old Kandyan aristocratic hierarchy, and a Mudaliyar at the Kandy Kachcheri – the district secretariat. Today, the mansion lies under the lightest of care from the Archaeological Department, which has nevertheless replaced the roof and rectified some of the most significant erosion that would otherwise have led to the collapse of the entire building.



“Wonderfully
quiet location
in the middle
of nature.”

”

ALMOST HOME



The Sri Lankan bay owl teeters on the festive cusp of endemism. There are only two variants of this species recognised globally: one from India's Western Ghats and the other from Sri Lanka.

Whilst scientists continue to argue about whether or not the Sri Lankan variant should be promoted into a recognized and distinctive separate species or not, the bird itself goes about its life with relative happiness, slightly but not too disastrously threatened by habitat loss, its democratic liking for homes as varied as cloud a tropical jungle and open grasslands, ensuring that it can set up shop most anywhere.

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