

**Tourist Guide
to the
Cultural Monuments
of
SRI LANKA**

Tourist Guide to the Cultural Monuments of

SRI LANKA

**CULTURAL TOURISM PROGRAMME
BOOKLET NO. 1**

MINISTRY OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
in collaboration with the
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY
and the
CEYLON TOURIST BOARD,
SRI LANKA.

1979

Prepared by
The Department of Archaeology,
Sri Lanka.

Printed at the
State Printing Corporation,
Sri Lanka.

INTRODUCTION

SRI LANKA has been in the forefront of Buddhist culture and civilization since the 3rd century B.C. The archaeological monuments bear ample testimony to the high standards of achievement reached by our ancestors. This little island in the Indian Ocean has some of the largest architectural edifices of the Buddhist world. However, with time the phases of decline overtook the developed life styles of the people, and with an advancing jungle tide the forces of foreign rule also overwhelmed our national sovereignty. Beside the 78 years of Cola rule in the 11th century we have had the Portuguese occupying a part of Sri Lanka in the 16th century. This was followed by the Dutch and the English, the three western powers sharing evenly a near 450 years.

The path of the foreign visitor, as has been popularly taken in recent years begins from Colombo along the sunny south-west coast to the game reserve at Yala, followed by a drive through the tea country to our last hill capital Kandy, and finally ends in the historic sites of the cultural triangle in the northern plain where he would visit Dambulla, Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, Trincomalee, Mihintale, Anuradhapura, Yapahuva, Panduvasnuvara before returning to the metropolis. We have illustrated a few of the cultural sites that are likely to be seen in the sequence of this route.

KELANIYA

Kelaniya is mentioned along with the visit of the Buddha on which occasion a dispute between two royal personages over a gem set throne was settled. Later in the 4th century B.C. it became the capital of the Malaya district over which a separate king reigned. This was both a place of pilgrimage to reigning monarchs in the 12th century and a haven of refuge to others in flight. Kalyanisima of Pegu in Burma derives its name from the chapter house in the middle of the river where many Burmese monks were ordained. The ancient temple of Kelaniya which has been systematically renovated throughout the ages still remains. The town has in recent years been declared a sacred city and several planning programmes have been implemented.

TISSAMAHARAMA

Ruhuna is a distinct geographical area of Sri Lanka covering the southern and the south-east region of the island. Tissamaharama (formally Magama) was its capital. This was the last retreat of the Sri Lanka kings during the Cola domination. The monuments at the site date back to the 3rd century B.C. although these have been periodically repaired.

KATARAGAMA

It was formerly called Kajaragama and a family of Ksatriyas originally lived here in very early historical times. One of the first eight saplings of the sacred Bo-tree at Anuradhapura was taken to Kataragama and nurtured. During the troubled days of Cola occupation Kataragama became the capital of the Sri Lankans. Today this city declared sacred by the Government is the centre of Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim worship. The wellknown penances of fire walking, walking with nailed shoes etc., could be seen here during the July festival.

BUDURUVAGALA

There are seven colossal Mahayana figures at the site, the central image being a Buddha over 50 feet in height. On either side are Bodhisatva statues and to the right of the Buddha image there is one figure of Tara the consort of Avalokitesvara.

KANDY

Kandy was the last capital of Sri Lanka before it was captured by the British in 1796-1815. The character of this city still survives in the tradition of wooden architecture with pitched roofs and carved beams. The climate too is much milder being about 2,000 feet above sea level. Within 50 miles of this city is the Tea Garden of Ceylon with the mountains rising to 8,000 feet. In this hill capital is still preserved the sacred Tooth of the Buddha at the Relic Temple. Royalty and pilgrims from many Buddhist countries visit this town to pay their respects to the sacred Tooth Relic. The annual religious festival in August attracts a million pilgrims and visitors to participate in the ceremonies and in the final procession with hundreds of elephants, dancers, musicians, acrobats, dignitaries marching in an age old tradition that dates to the 4th century A.C. when the Tooth Relic was first brought to Sri Lanka.

In and around Kandy are many villages, monasteries and shrines dedicated to various gods (*devales*) that retain the wooden, architecture of mediaeval Sri Lanka. It is a tradition that is fast disappearing. The wall paintings of this period could form an important facet of world art of the 18th and 19th centuries. But the wattle-and-daub walls with their water soluble pigments are a consistent hazard to preservation. It is only with determined and extensive action towards preserving these delicate materials that one can safeguard this vast store of the art heritage for future generations.

DAMBULLA

These are Buddhist caves dating back to the 3rd century B.C. but the

last renovation had been in the 18th century. The largest among these is about 160 feet by 70 feet and has sixty one giant images of the Buddha in the traditional poses — sitting, standing and recumbent. The paintings on the rock and the walls are very extensive, but in danger of deterioration.

SIGIRIYA

Apart from the artistically laid-out pleasure gardens within the 5th century A.C. fortress there are the world famous paintings on the rock surface.

Among the historic sites of Sri Lanka this is one that attracts the maximum proportion of tourists and it can be an economic asset if the display is properly planned.

RITIGALA

This is one of the finest forest monasteries of the 9th century A.C. These sites are devoid of the traditional stupas, Bo-trees and image houses, but are replete with meditation halls, meditation walks and special meditation cells. These monasteries are conspicuous by the absence of decorative ornamentation and the only area that has been beautified are the toilets as if to say, 'we are not incapable of art, but this is how we treat art or riches'.

AVUKANA

Here stands the colossal stone image of the Buddha, very well preserved, as it was originally carved in the 8th century A.C. It is 40 feet above its pedestal.

POLONNARUVA

The presently extant monuments at Polonnaruva, which constitute the chief characteristic of this capital, are in a better state of preservation in contrast with the collapsed wooden roofs of Anuradhapura. The stone Buddha images of Polonnaruva are among the finest in the world. The Gal Vihara group with its 46 feet recumbent image, 23 feet standing Buddha and the two giant seated figures all of stone is a composition of unparalleled beauty, apart from its own religious significance. The unfinished colossal stupa of the Demalamahasaya now standing as a large circular mound about 70 feet in height if completed as was intended in the 12th century would have been about 650 feet in height. The well preserved paintings of the Tivanka Pilimage of the 12th century, the seven storeyed palace of king Parakramabahu I, the remains of the 12th century university of the Alahana Pirivena await excavation, conservation and display for cultural and economic benefit.

Numerous monuments in Polonnaruva, unlike Anuradhapura, are in danger of deterioration as they are brick and mortar structures which are far more sensitive to the weather than stone. Much of Polonnaruva still remains buried in earth and debris and these await the archaeologist and conservator to lay bare and display these for religious and cultural gain.

MIHINTALE

This is one of the first monasteries established in Sri Lanka when king Asoka of India sent his son Mahinda as a monk to introduce Buddhism to the island in the 3rd century B.C. This hill with four plateaus has a vast complex of monasteries and it had sixty four stupas in the 12th century. All these need early restoration and display to pilgrims and visitors.

ANURADHAPURA

Anuradhapura is one of the holiest cities of the Buddhists. Here, we find the oldest historic tree in the world. It was the southern branch of the one at Bodhi Gaya that was brought to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century B.C. from the original Bodhi-tree (now no more) under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. This town flourished during the heyday of Athens and Rome when ambassadors were exchanged between Rome and Anuradhapura in the period of Augustus Caesar. The town plan of Anuradhapura compares in grandeur and extent to those of Rome or Athens. With the fall of the Roman Empire in the 4th century A.C. Sri Lanka had three edifices that were much larger than the largest buildings of Rome. The Jetavana Stupa (400 feet) constructed in the 4th century A.C., the Abhayagiri Stupa (370 feet) constructed in the 1st century B.C. and the Ruvanvalisaya (300 feet) constructed in the 2nd century B.C. were the 4th, 5th and 6th tallest buildings of the Ancient World, being only smaller than the three largest pyramids in Egypt. A Chinese pilgrim living at Anuradhapura in the 5th century A.C. records that the Abhayagiri monastery had 5,000 monks and the Mahavihara had 3,000 monks. There were three other big monasteries and over a dozen smaller monasteries with a total monk population of about 12,000 at Anuradhapura alone. The ancient city extends approximately four miles north to south and about three miles east to west.

Enthusiastic excavators (scholars and the religious) have exposed nearly all the spectacular monuments mainly for intellectual and religious curiosity during the past seventy years or more. As a result the bare-monuments that lay exposed to the winds and the tropical rain, (the highest rainfall recorded in Sri Lanka for 24 hours is 35 inches)

without any vegetation or earth over them keep crumbling with every annual monsoon. The only saving factor in Anuradhapura is that the skeletal structures of a large number of these monuments are of stone.

YAPAHUVA

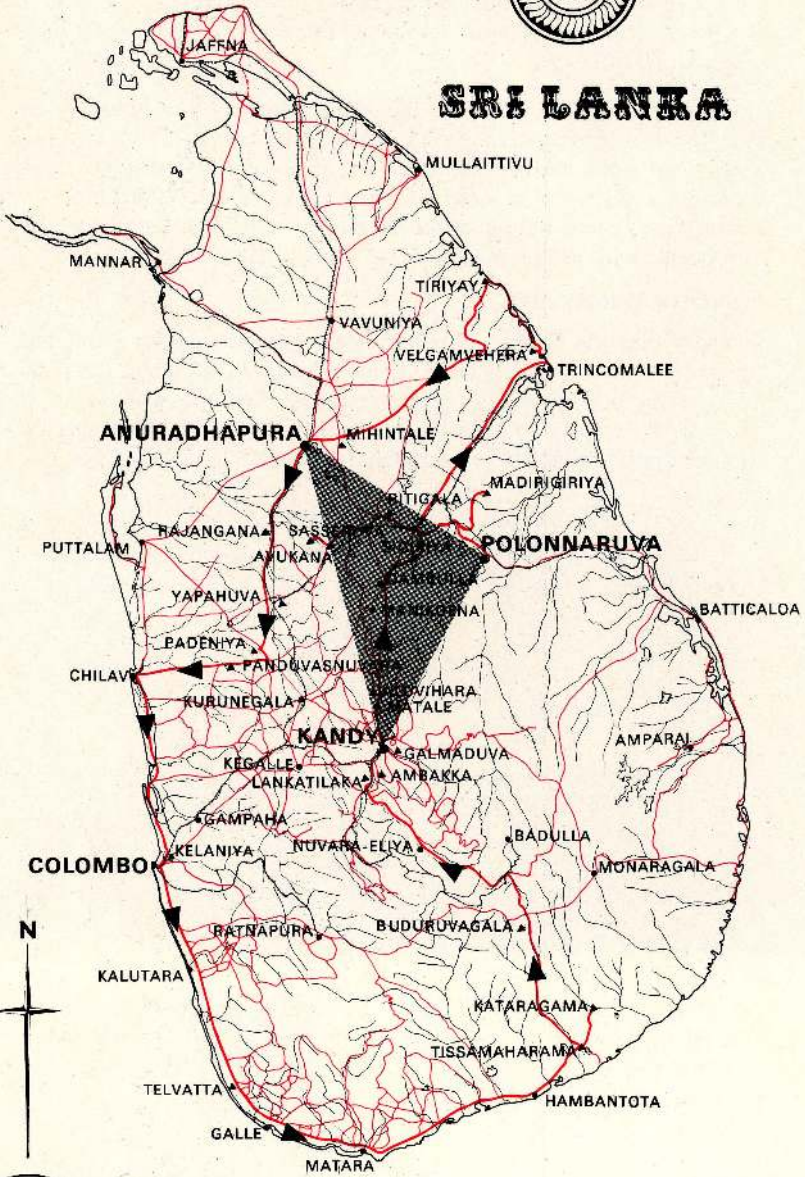
This city became the capital in the 13th century. It is in the style of a rock fortress like Sigiriya, Dambulla or Kurunagala. The Tooth-relic was taken to the Pandya country from here and later returned. This is a double walled and moated site. The stairway and its sculpture are masterpieces of the period, and even show South-East Asian influence. The panels with reliefs of dances are of particular interest.

PANDUVASNUVARA

This city was the capital of the southern division during Parakramabahu I time. The inner city is still being excavated, although the palace has already been exposed and conserved. The monasteries to the south and north of the city are of special interest. The terracotta plaques found here are of outstanding merit.



SRI LANKA



MESSAGE FROM THE HON'BLE MINISTER OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Dear Visitor,

WE ARE presently carrying out major development programmes in every sector of the country, and Cultural Tourism is yet another area of such activity.

Tourism has been developed successfully as economic ventures in many parts of the world, in such regions as the south of Italy, the French Riviera, sunny Spain and the Carribean Islands in the west and Thailand, Bali etc., in the east. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (1963 and 1966) has recognised this sector as an economically viable area of invetment and the United Nations has approved financial assistance to these enterprises. The United Nations declared 1967 to be the Year of Tourism thereby expanding the scope of Tourism's contribution to world understanding and peace and listed the following objectives in the preamble to their resolutions:

- (1) contributing to the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples and to strengthen peace,
- (2) promoting adult, youth and child education — by facilitating exchange of knowledge and first-hand acquaintance with past and present civilisations — it contributes to the spread of culture and to popular education,
- (3) contributing to the promotion of development,
- (4) helping to finance the restoration and preservation of monuments and sites of historical and artistic value. It makes possible the safeguarding of the worlds cultural inheritance.

Cultural Tourism is a further refinement in the same progressive process where each nation exposes its accumulated social and national conventions ingrained in the culture of a country to the experience of the visitor. Whether it would have an impact on the visitor depends on his own background and appreciation, but human nature is both conservative and receptive, and a foreigner in the midst of another cultural region would either imbibe or at least be subjected to these influences. It is finally the free-will of the individual that decides whether to absorb in part or reject as a whole these cultural traits of another nation. It is in this spirit that we Sri Lankans are ready to offer the best of our cultural heritage to the visitors of the world. We have a large and living tradition in the religion of the Buddha. Our irrigation engineering of old is still serving the agricultural community. The science of ancient town and village

planning is still a living reality. Our music, dance, social habits and above all our customary loyalties to parents and elders and the ever willing sense of hospitality, the perpetual smile that welcomes any visitor are traditional traits of our people. Friends, you are welcome to enjoy these and more in the sunny shores of tropical Sri Lanka.

To make these cultural values of Sri Lanka available to the visitor in a comprehensive manner it requires the inevitable factor of funds and more funds. It is for this reason that we have to ask you to contribute in some small measure your share in this enterprise. A simple charge of \$5 to \$10 US during a stay of five to ten days for a visitor is hardly a fee as far as the guest is concerned, but it is a major contribution towards providing you with our services. As such, friends, may I earnestly request you to consider this charge to cultural tourism as a donation rather than a fee.

E. L. B. Hurulle, M. P.,

*Minister of Cultural Affairs,
Democratic, Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.*

MESSAGE FROM THE HON'BLE MINISTER OF STATE

As THE Minister in charge of the subject of Tourism, it gives me great pleasure to send this short message of goodwill to a national project that will not only help improve the facilities for the visitor, but also help develop and sustain our Cultural Heritage.

I am glad to be able to share with my colleague and friend, the Minister of Cultural Affairs, the joint responsibility of implementing a major preservation programme with the aid and assistance of UNESCO.

Sri Lanka is proud to be the home of one of the purest forms of Buddhism, namely, Theravada Buddhism. We are also humbled by this fact, and we feel that it is our duty to preserve the legacy of the culture and the civilisation that this great religion has bequeathed to us. We do it not only for the benefit of the visitor who wishes to be educated and enlightened, not only for the Buddhist pilgrim from within and without Sri Lanka, but also in the name of posterity.

With the programmed development of this major project, the triangle consisting of ancient Buddhist monuments, centred round the three ancient capitals of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Kandy, and other areas of historical interest, within the small compass of this island, will benefit by a systematic development of facilities and infra-structure, which in turn will be profitable to the visitor and pilgrim.

Whatever charges that are made in this connection from the visitor go to assist this project.

Anandatissa de Alwis, M.P.,

Minister of State,

Democratic, Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.



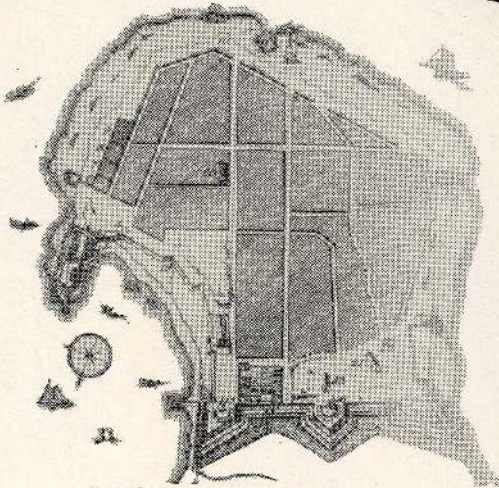
*writing down
the Pali texts
in the 1st cent. B.C.*

Wall painting
Kelaniya
20th cent. A.C.



Vessantara Jataka
painting
Telvatta
19th cent. A.C.

*red, gold, black, blue and
green paint expressing
the rich heritage of the
550 Jatakas.*



THE TOWN OF PUNTO GALE

*a complete Dutch city
with its walls and bastions
—a rarity even in Holland*

Map of Dutch Fort
Galle
1726 A.C.



Renovated stupa
Tissamaharama
originally of the
3rd cent. B.C.

*the masculine
and mighty
fortress of
Buddhism*



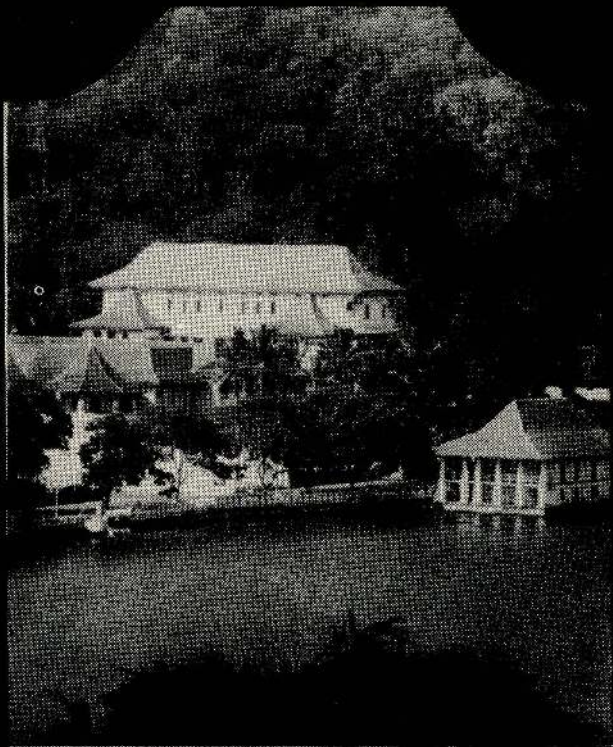
*a site of Buddhist, Hindu
and Muslim worship —
one of the holy cities of
Sri Lanka*

**Restored stupa
Ketaragama
2nd cent. A.C.**



Mahayana figures
Buduruvagala
10th cent. A.C.

*the five finger
message or the
Mahayana mudra*



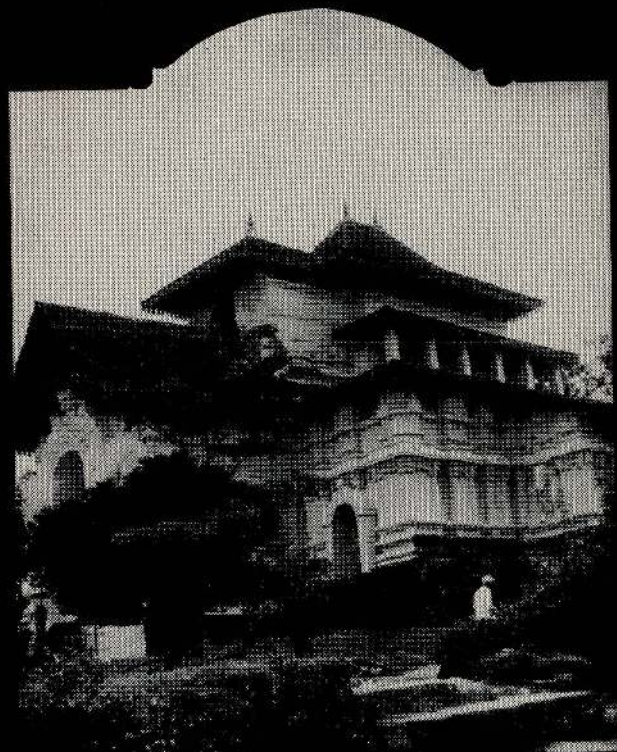
*across the mellow
waters of the
Kandy lake*

Temple of the Tooth-Relic
Kandy
17th cent. A.C.



Image House,
Galmaduva
19th cent. A.C.

*is the architecture
Buddhist, Hindu or
Islamic?*



*the mountain shrine
to Buddhist,
Hindu worship*

Shrine
Lankatilaka
14th cent. A.C.



Rafter Detail
Ambakka
14th cent. A.C.

*the grand finale
to a
carpenter's craft*



*the triple cherm
of an otherwise
decaying log*

Wooden Panel
Ambakka
14th cent. A.C.



Cave shrine
Aluvihara
2nd cent. B.C. restored in
the 19th cent. A.C.

*another cave with
scented flowers and
flickering oil lamps*



*a rotunda for
a tree*

Bo-tree shrine
Manikdena
9th cent. A.C.



Cave shrine,
Dambulla
1st cent. B.C. —
18th cent. A.C.

the den of solace



The Buddha
thrice tempted
now resists the
forces of Mara's
army

The Buddha thrice
tempted now resists the
forces of Mara.
Dambulla
18th cent. A.C.



Rock Citadel,
Sigiriya
5th cent. A.C.

*a palace in the
clouds for
King Kassapa*



*fountains and flowers.
pond and poetry of a
5th cent. pleasure garden*

Inner city and garden
Sigiriya
5th cent. A.C.



Wall Paintings,
Sigiriya.
5th cent. A.C.

*the maiden
on the rock*



*the maiden
and the flower*

Wall Paintings,
Sigiriya
5th cent. A.C.



Pathway,
Ritigala
9th cent. A.C.

*the way to solitude and
the strict reserve of a
forest monastery*



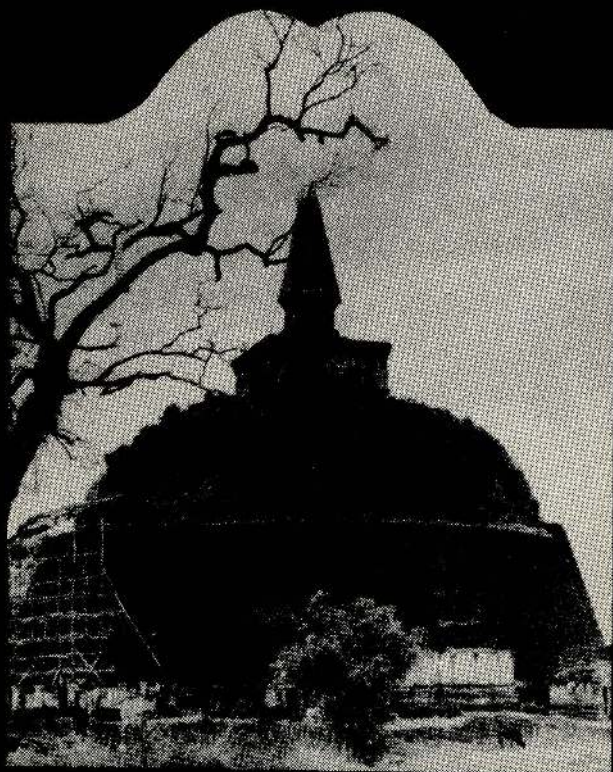
king or sage?

Figure at Potgulvehera,
Polonnaruwa
12th cent. A.C.



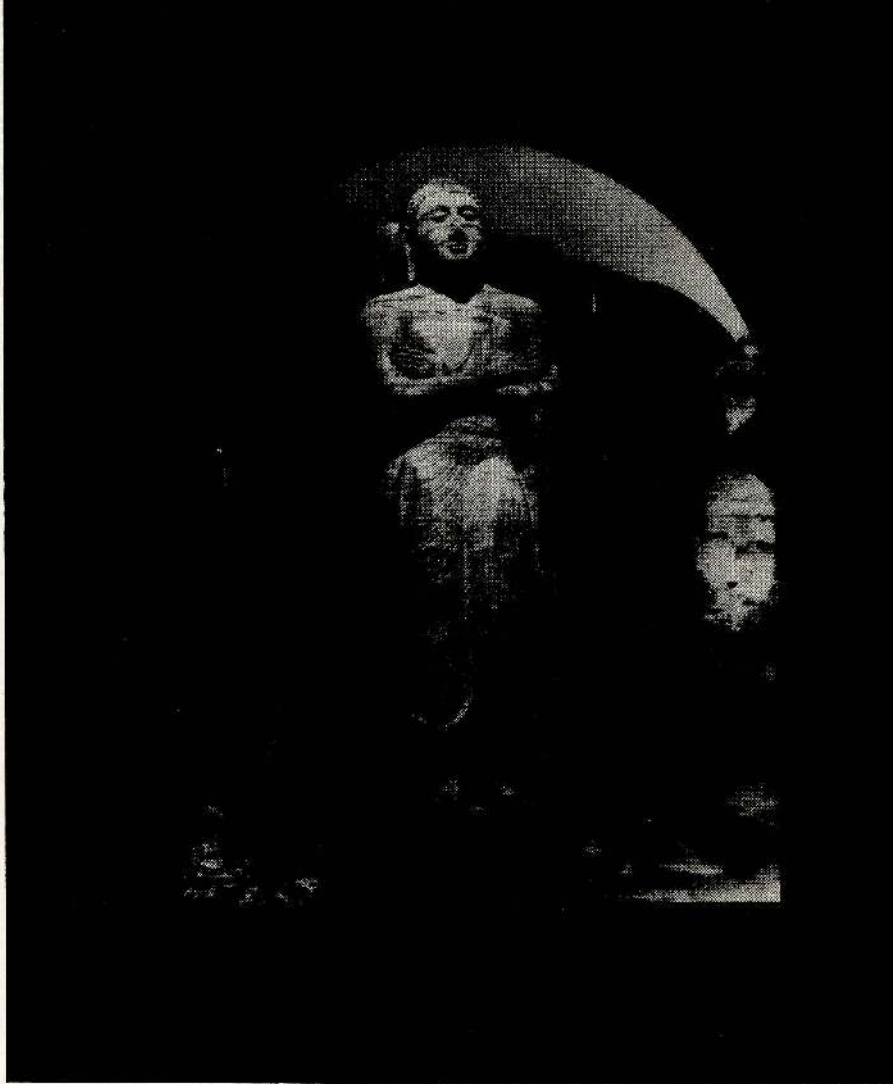
Vatadage
Polonnaruva
12th cent. A.C.

*the rotunda stupa —
house is unique to
Sri Lanka*



clearing the jungle tide

Rankotvehera
Polonnaruwa
12th cent. A.C.



Galvihara,
Polonnaruwa
12th cent. A.C.

peace and calm



*a thousand sermons
without a word spoken*

Galvihara,
Polonnaruwa
12th cent. A.C.



Nataraja.
Polonnaruva
11th cent. A.C.

*the largest Nataraja
in the world —
4 feet 8 inches high*



*the graceful
consort of Siva*

Parvathi,
Polonnaruva
11th cent. A.C.




Vatadage,
Madirigiriya
8th cent. A.C.

*the lotus columns
reach out to the
skies*



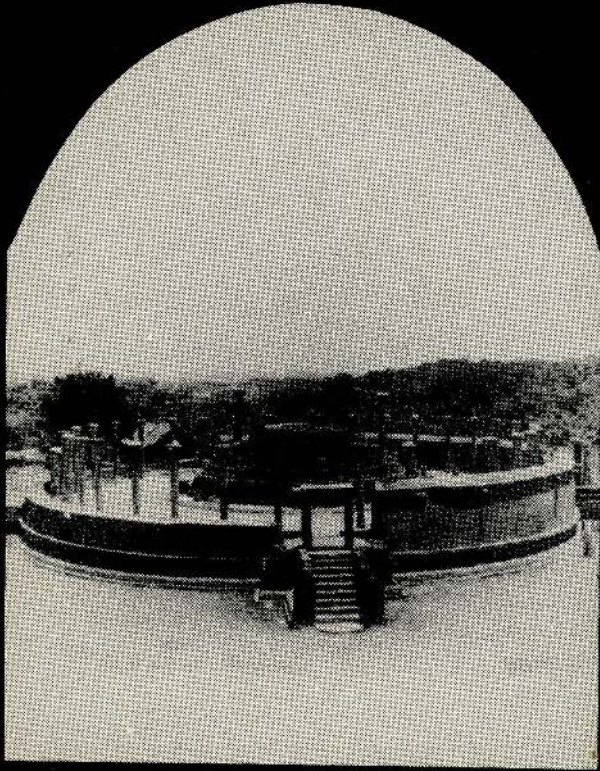
*listed as one of the
finest bronzes in the
British Museum*

Tara
Trincomalee
(presently in the
British Museum)
12th cent. A.C.



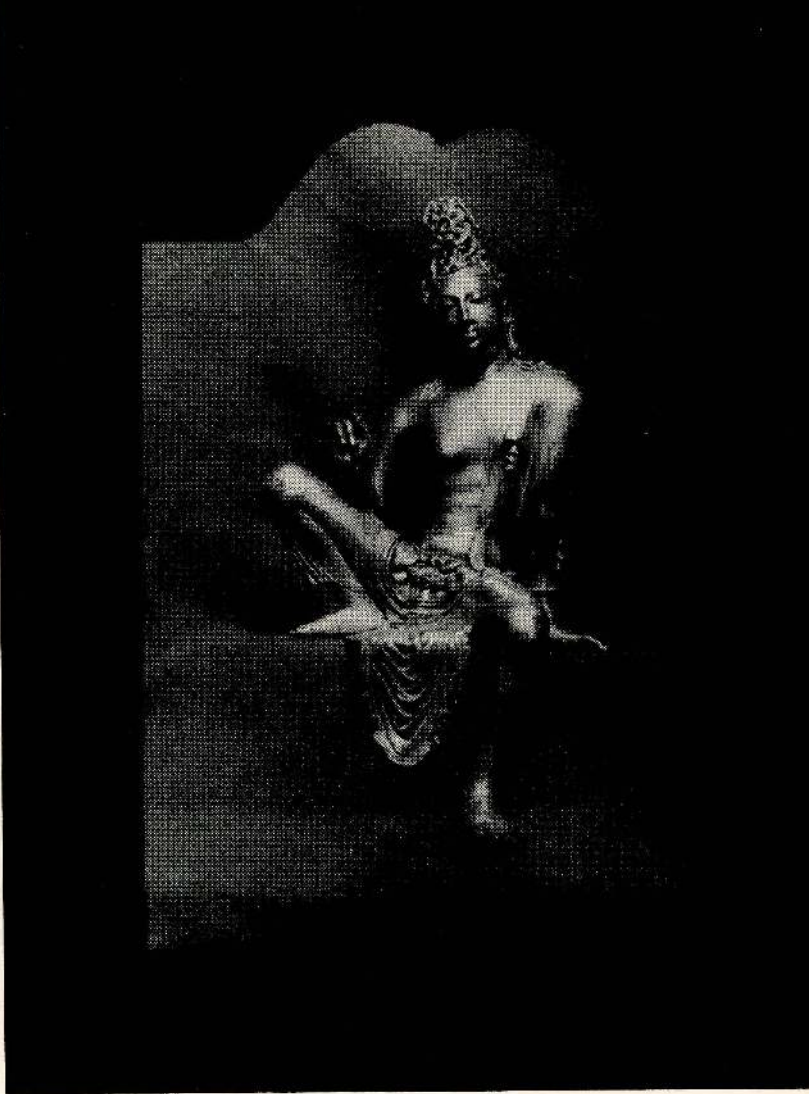
Wrestlers
Velgamvehera
10th cent. A.C.

*in sporting
combat*



*the crown over
another sacred
hill*

**Vatadage
Tiriya y
8th cent. A.C.**



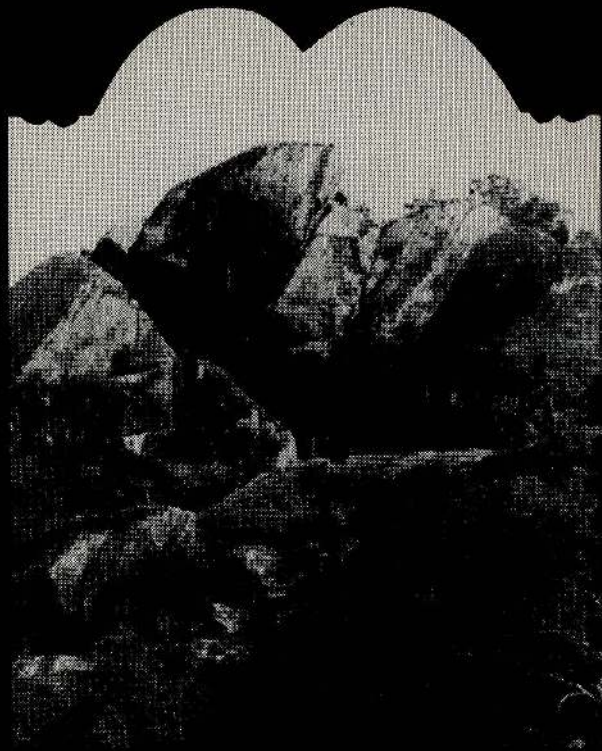
Bodhisattva at Veheragala
presently at the
Anuradhapura Museum
8th cent. A.C.

*a gift bronze of
exquisite charm*



*flowers
on the
stairway*

**Steps to the Monastery,
Mihintale
8th cent. A.C.**



Cave residence
Mihintale
3rd cent. B.C.

a hermit's home



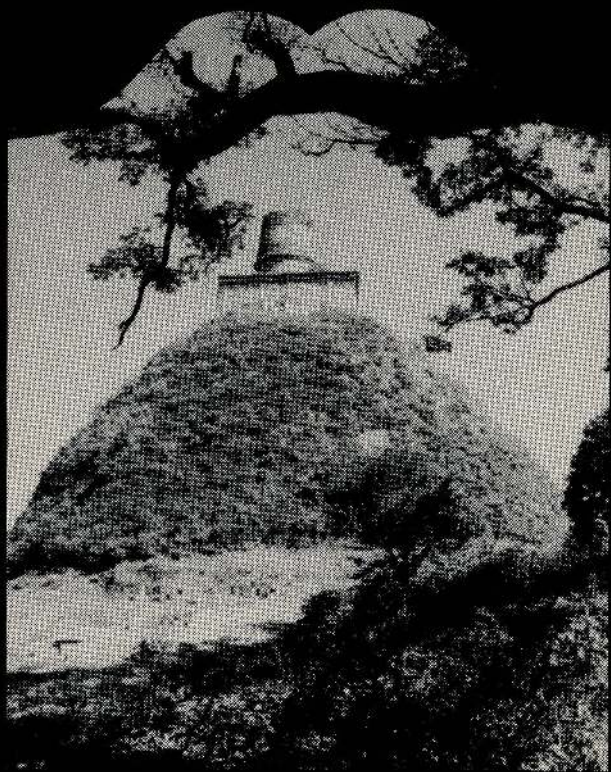
*the healing
trough*

Medicinal Bath
Mihintale
8th cent. A.C.



Samadhi Statue
Anuradhapura
3rd cent. A.C.

*the Buddha in meditation—
the image, a great
source of solace*



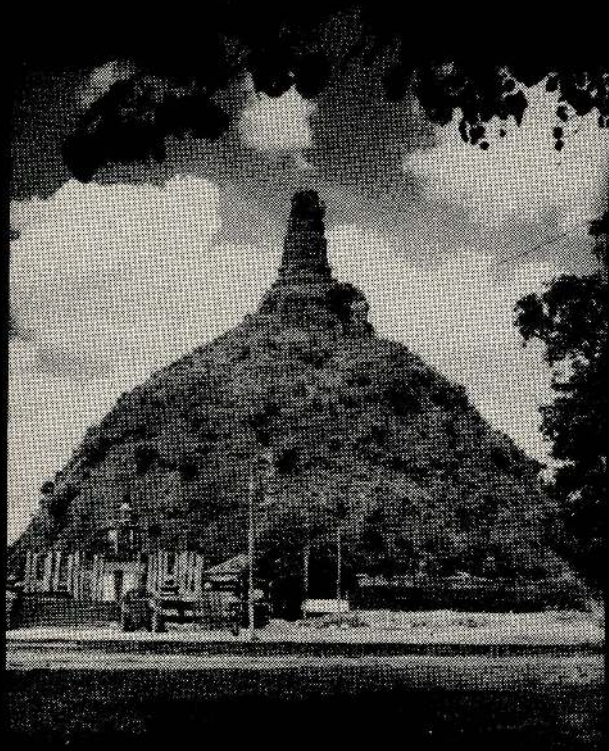
*the tallest stupa
in the world —
400 feet in height*

**Jetavana Stupa
Anuradhapura
4th cent. A.C.**



**Man and Horse at
Isurumuniya,
Anuradhapura
8th cent. A.C.**

*relaxation
personified*



*second tallest stupa
in the world —
370 feet high*

Abhayagiri Stupa,
Anuradhapura
2nd cent. B.C.



Sacred Bo-tree
Anuradhapura
3rd cent. B.C.

*the oldest historic tree in
the world and a treasured
relic to the Buddhist*



*third tallest stupa
in the world —
300 feet high*

Ruvanvalisaya
Anuradhapura
2nd cent. B.C.



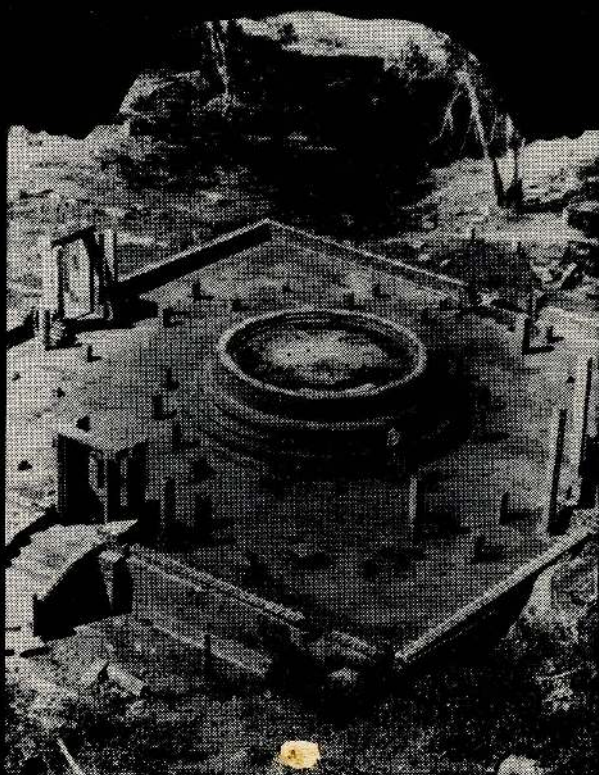
Buddha Image,
Avukana
8th cent. B.C.

*forty feet of
sublimity*



*was this the work of the
same sculptor of Avukana
or the task of two crafts-
men carving in
competitions*

Buddha Image
Sasseruva
8th cent. A.C.



Vatadage
Rajangana
8th cent. A.C.

*circles and squares
conicals and cubes
covered the central cetiya*



the laughing lions

Royal stairway
Yapahuva
13th cent. A.C.



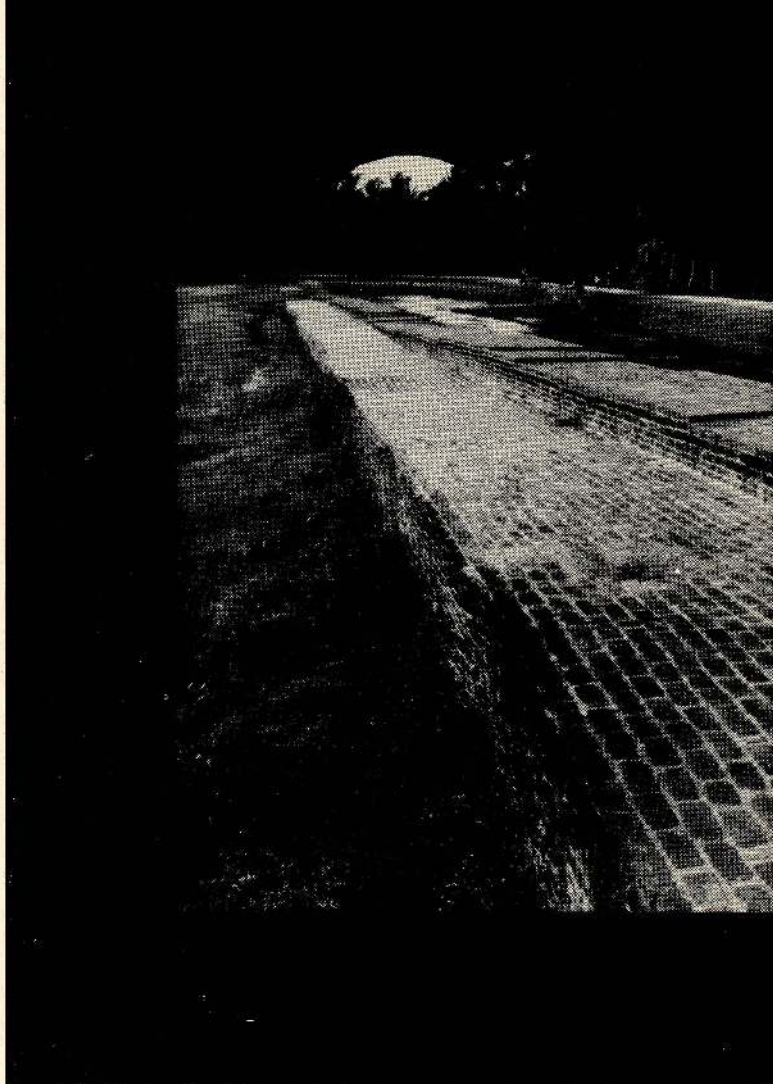
Relief sculpture
Yapahuva
13th cent. A.C.

*dance gypsy
dance gypsy
dance*



*bell, book and
oil lamp*

Ancient Library
Padeniya
17th cent. A.C.



Moat and walls
Panduvastnuvara
12th cent. A.C.

*the double double
beat of a
soldier's parade*

