

# EARLY SINHALESE SCULPTURE

NANDADEVA WIJESEKERA



GUNASENA



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## EARLY SINHALESE SCULPTURE

The study of the civilization of the Sinhalese is as fascinating a subject as that of her neighbouring countries India, Mesopotamia and Egypt. The peculiar genius of each race helped to create objects of beauty, which became the wonder of succeeding generations. Sculpture is one medium through which the beauty of form found expression. How the Sinhalese came to acquire and develop the skills for creating such wonderful masterpieces, within such a short time, would baffle even the firm believer. Nevertheless, the art and knowledge remain a mystery. The spirit that inspired the people to such activity and sustained their interest has remained and will, for the most part, continue to remain unknown, though, undoubtedly, Buddhism played a dominant role.

This book entitled "Early Sinhalese Sculpture" tries to explain the process of cultural evolution through the relics of a people's artistic expression in stone. The objects are only representative products of the process and these are so carefully analysed and so aptly described and commented upon in this volume as to be profitable not only to the scholar and student, but also to the general reader as well.

It deals with the sculpture from the earliest times up to the end of the 12th century A.D. During this survey, the reader is given a fair insight into the social, historical and religious background of the period in order to enable him to understand the causes that lead to the creation of beauty through art as well as its destruction through conflict and dissension. The extant material so far discovered is discussed and presented here, and these are carefully classified under various categories. The objects presented herein are sufficient to bear eloquent testimony to the inherent creative activity of a people who gave expression to the supremely beautiful concepts when inspired by the spirit of religion. The text and illustrations aim at providing the reader with the knowledge of an art tradition of the Sinhalese in a style and language characteristic of their genius.

The classification of such objects is difficult; so is their description and analysis, but these have been rendered with all possible completeness. Nevertheless, the ultimate and final decision regarding them still remains with the future.

# EARLY SINHALESE SCULPTURE

By

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TO  
MY WIFE  
&  
DAUGHTER



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- |                |   |  |
|----------------|---|--|
| 80<br>81<br>82 | } | Signs and figures inscribed on stone slabs and pillars<br>which also contained datable inscriptions. |
|----------------|---|--|

## BIBLIOGRAPHY WITH ABBREVIATIONS USED

- A.A. — *Artibus Asiae*  
 A.A.I. — *Art and Architecture of India*—Benjamin Rowland  
 A.B.K.I. — *Annual Bibliography of the Kern Institute.*  
 A.B.I.I. — *Annual Bibliography of the Indian Institute.*  
 A.C. — *Ancient Ceylon*—A.A. Parker.  
 A.I. — *Ancient India by Macrindle*  
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 I.A.L. — *Indian Arts and Letters*—Journal.

- I.S.P.** — Indian Sculpture & Paintings—E. B. Havell.  
**I.S.** — Indian Sculpture—S. Kramrisch.  
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**J.B.A.S.** — Journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society.  
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**S.Z.** — Spolia Zeylanica.  
**S.S.** — Silpa Sastra.  
**Saddha** — Saddharmaratnavaliya, Sinhalese, ed.  
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## HOW THE FIGURES HAVE BEEN GENERALLY DESCRIBED

- A. General :
  - a. Subject.
  - b. Material.
  - c. Site.
  - d. State of preservation.
  - e. Probable date.
  - f. Measurements.
- B. Details :
  - a. Outer description of object such as physical features, etc.
  - b. Lower and upper dress, ornaments, jewellery on head, ear, neck, chest, waist and feet.
  - c. Treatment in general—limbs, muscles, face—proportion.
  - d. Posture—flexed or not.
  - e. Style—round, high or low relief or flat.
  - f. Foreign influences.
  - g. Function in relation to architectural set up.
  - h. Symbols borne.
  - i. Pedestal or vehicle.
  - j. Purpose.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

5

4

3

2

1

Indian Dynasty & Period	Culture Centre	Probable Age	Ceylon Dynasty & Period	Monuments
1. Indus	{ Mohenjo-daro Harappa	2500 B.C. 1500 B.C.	Legendary do.	Signs & symbols on coins, inscriptions, script.
2. Vedic	Vedic	1500 B.C. 800 B.C.	Legendary	
3. Maurya Asoka	Patna, Saranath, Sanchi	300-200 B.C.	Devanampiyatissa	Thuparama, Bodhi tree
4. Sunga	Mathura, Saranath, Sanchi, Buddhagaya	200-100 B.C.	Dutugemunu	Kantaka cetiya, small carvings, Ruanveli seya.
5. Kushan	Gar dhara	100 B.C. 300 A.D.	Historical	
6. Andhra	Amaravati, Nagarjuna- konda	100 B.C. 400 A.D.	do.	Marble image, plaques, etc.
7. Gupta	Ajanta	300-600 A.D.	do.	Buddha image, Naga figures.
8. Pallava	Mamallapuram	600-750 A.D.	do.	Elephants in ponds, Horse and man.
9. Chola	Madura	900-1050 A.D.	do.	
10. Rastrakutas	Ellura, Pattadakal, Elephanta, Karle.	750-1000 A.D. 750-1000 A.D.	do.	Vigorous image, Mahi- yangana, Buduruvegala, Kustaraja, bronzes, and Hindu images, bathing ponds, images.
11. Palas	Nalanda	750-1200 A.D.	do.	

## PREFACE

The best thinking minds have wondered about two dominant factors of the civilization of the Sinhalese. One is their uncanny skill in irrigation engineering and the other the uniqueness of their arts and sculpture. The Sinhalese themselves have been satisfied so far by explaining them as the creative efforts of giants blessed with superhuman strength of body and mind. But this answer, if it did suffice in the past, is deemed inadequate for the present. The foreigners always attempted to explain them in the light of their own civilization and contemporary society. It is their explanation that is still recognised and accepted. Few have dared to question these interpretations and criticisms. But, in fact, these belonged to a different people of a different age having different traditional values. Most of the critics, therefore, did not seem to understand the beginning and the development of Sinhalese civilization. They never wondered how a simple people could have built up such a civilization.

When the ancient civilizations of China, Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley are carefully examined and studied one common factor emerges distinctly. That is that all these civilizations started from humble beginnings of the Neolithic age and flourished along river valleys until they developed in an extraordinarily short space of time and attained supreme heights. The same is true of Ceylon.

What is the explanation as to how from a simple river valley civilization the Sinhalese themselves came to develop their own superhuman skills and artistic genius within a very short period of a few centuries? From the time of Vijaya, Pandukabhaya, Devanampiyatissa to Dutugemunu it is only a matter of three centuries. During this period the Sinhalese people had attained almost full development in art and architecture as well as irrigation engineering skill. What is the mystery? What was the way of life that enabled them to produce such results? What were the thinking processes that generated such inherent skills in this community? If the basic elements of this civilization are carefully examined, it would be apparent to any one that their achievements constitute a revolution in the story of human development. It is not strange that people of the present times are still unable to interpret and understand the forces of this mystery.

An answer is perhaps suggested in a recently published book entitled "Egypt—Architecture, Sculpture, Painting 1961," where somewhat similar questions are asked and answered in the

introduction by Kurt Lange. He asks "Can we of today ever penetrate to the core of the nature of an age old creative community with a way of thinking foreign to us, based on another form of human life and drawing inspiration from a different milieu? In our efforts to know to explain and to feel ourselves corroborated, are we not attempting to grasp a mirage?"

In order to understand the Sinhalese way of life and their thinking, we must avoid the error so far committed by the majority of persons. We must take our minds and eyes to the contemporary times during which such elements dominated and genius flourished. The modern eye and mind are either prejudiced, ignorant or incompetent to evaluate the factors which dominated those of the ancient times. Kurt Lange says "The whole problem of our appreciation and interpretation of ancient Egypt in reality consists in the fact that we rely on modern methods of thinking in our attempts to decipher her peculiar intuitive world."

The Sinhalese had possessed a peculiar creative genius of their own which helped to produce sculpture, painting and architecture of a very high order unique for this country. But the fact remains that in so short a time a primitive community of the 5th century B.C. had made such great strides by erecting temples and palaces during Pandukabhaya's day, i.e., a century later. During the same time the basic elements of her civilization had evolved and developed to such a high degree as to be considered wonderful even by modern standards. Kurt Lange continues "The most learned scholars of today rack their brains in their efforts to explain the ideas of primitive men whose processes of thought were based on the observation of nature and on the main elementary facts of life."

If during the three centuries after the foundation of the Sinhalese race, the people were able to attain such a peak of development through a way of life and a tradition of art, what was it that helped to perpetuate this tradition and sustain these values? One may accept without question that it was the spirit of religion. And it was that same spirit that encouraged development and continued to sustain this tradition. These were not necessarily the values of the ancient Indian religions, but certainly the new values and fresh spirit of a new dynamic religion introduced in the 2nd century B.C. This was Buddhism. The new religion introduced a new tradition and laid the foundation of an unique civilization. This Buddhist Sinhalese community consolidated the emotional values of the people and organized emotional expression through worship of an idealism and objects of deep

reverence. Amongst them the Dagoba stands as the supreme symbol, and the image of the Buddha as its unique idealism. These two ideologies produced a revolution in the minds of the Sinhalese which, it is believed, led to their achievements in the ages that followed. One aspect of this is the art and sculpture of the ancient Sinhalese. And the other their irrigation system.

All the other constituent elements of this civilization are secondary and are intended to subserve the needs of these two. In order to preserve such an ideology the king and the people worked on the basis of co-operation. The State organized these activities of development and the people responded to their fulfilment. The principle of *raja-kariya* helped to realize such co-operation. This helped to mobilize all the labour for employment during peace time, before and after wars. And thus the people during times of peace helped to produce the colossal tanks that irrigate the vast fields to produce the staple food of the entire population. The people in turn upheld the right of the king and helped to maintain his State. The spirit of this mutual co-operation emanated through Buddhism. They built the dagobas and Buddha images for the salvation of the people and the glorification of their religion and Master. The image of the Buddha became the central figure of the spirit of this symbolism.

There are still preserved, it is believed, in Ceylon, early examples of the portraits of kings sculptured in stone. This practice, it will be remembered, was obtaining in Egypt during very ancient times. There are in Egypt ancient images which may have first suggested the concept of the Buddha images in Ceylon. Could these be an inherited tradition diffused directly or indirectly from another land? Can anyone see this through modern eyes as such? Could these have been created as the symbolism of this synthesis? If the "sphinx" at Giza for all its mutilation and decay is regarded as being the greatest work of sculpture produced by mankind, what about the wonderful image of the Sedent Buddha in a state of *Samadhi* from Anuradhapura?

Another question that needs explanation is how did the Sinhalese preserve, maintain and continue this unique tradition for so many centuries in the face of so many odds from friends and foes alike? It is true that the people at times suffered from emotional exhaustion, physical debility and loss of political freedom and sovereign power. It is a historical fact that foreign invaders destroyed so much of the material achievements of the people and left so little of the eternal values of such a civilization for posterity. But the strange fact is that no one was able to destroy it

wholly or undermine their morale and their religious spirit absolutely. What saved these was the *classical tradition*. It preserved the moral, emotional, literary and religious values. This is the mystery of this civilization and the secret of its survival.

A case for the study and interpretation of Sinhalese sculpture in this new light exists and it should be the earnest endeavour of those who undertake this study to remember this new approach to the problem. One may now examine the variety of foreign impacts that took place throughout the course of Sinhalese history and try to understand how the Sinhalese have sustained their moral and traditional values and artistic heritage. In every single instance, it will be observed that each new impact may have shaken the foundation of society and its classical tradition, but, after a period of oscillation, regained its equilibrium. It does not follow that new impacts did not influence this foundation. They certainly did. But these influences reacted so subtly as to have enabled the classical tradition to absorb everything without sacrificing elements of its characteristic identity. In examining the art tradition of the Sinhalese, one may observe this process at every stage of such influence. During the pre-Vijayan period, suspected trends of art influences may have diffused from the Indian, Indus, Mesopotamian or Egyptian epicentres, directly or indirectly. The Vijayan influences are those of a known period in Indian art, but the elements that were introduced to Ceylon remain specifically unknown, except for the references to Pandukabhaya's period in the Sinhalese tradition.

When we come to the Buddhist period, more definite forms of art influence are known and these can be identified in the material remains. These are the Dagobas, their decorative motifs and carvings and sculpture in stone. The impacts of those influences were first felt by the popular art elements and then the classical art tradition reacted from the innermost recesses of that tradition. After several years of interplay of forces, both traditional and new ; and interaction of influences, moral and religious, the people evolved a synthesis and this appears to some as a revolutionary change in art and sculpture ; whilst to others it seemed a continuing manifestation of this classical tradition with new factors and new values which helped to enhance the beauty and lustre of the old.

Then came the influences from the Andhra kingdom. These came probably from two directions, both East and West of India, Nevertheless, these are provincial aspects of one common tradition. Their influences are revealed in painting, sculpture and carving.

but nowhere can they be established as imported foreign elements. These too were absorbed and the basic tradition continued, never in suspension but ever with animated strength imbued with new styles and new philosophies. The ancient *Theravada* form of religion laid emphasis on the ideal of the Buddha, whereas the new *Mahayana* concept changed it to that of Bodhisattva. A new avenue was opened up by the people when they with strong opposition almost imperceptibly admitted new ideas and ideals of a new tradition and ceremonial. These may have shaken the moral and religious foundations of art and literature, but they did not stultify the growth and development of the art tradition. It continued. The people may have been mostly exhausted at times through overpowering physical obstacles and moral degeneration, but the classical traditions survived in the innermost depths of their hearts and minds and these were jealously guarded and nursed.

Then dawned the era of the Guptas. That was the golden age of artistic and literary activity in India and in the neighbouring countries. The influence reached Ceylon through a variety of sources and ways. All of them had one purpose and that was to influence the local tradition. This aided the influence very seriously and the wonderful examples preserved from those times still reveal the truth of absorption and not of domination. The Sinhalese classical tradition continued rearing its head amidst multifarious elements, both of religion and art. It triumphed in the end through that same way of life and moral and religious values evolved by synthesis.

Then came the influences of the Pallava tradition. This was not an Island-wide manifestation. Its supremacy in India attracted sections of the local population. That helped to leave its imprint not in the common tradition but in areas as a passing phase of emotional expression in stone.

Finally the Cholas exerted their mighty power and dominated the moral and cultural field in South India. Ceylon fell by the might of arms and not by the conquest of moral values. The sculpture, too, came under their active influence and direct patronage and factors of that influence are mostly manifest in architecture and painting of this period. Nevertheless, the stone carvings and moulding in stucco had direct results of a synthesis of elements and styles. The absorption of these into the classical style was not difficult as the basic values were both religious and moral. These too got absorbed and the tradition continued down to the twelfth century A.D.

The need to write a book on the sculpture of the Sinhalese was felt when I was engaged in research on Early Sinhalese Painting at the Calcutta University. But the idea could not be actively pursued until that work was completed. There was the added

difficulty of finding the necessary time to be spared for reading in libraries. For, it meant sacrifice of one's leisure and holidays. These have been overcome and the volume was completed.

The form which this volume was to take has been pre-determined by the work on painting. Therefore, the reader will find that it is a companion volume to my book entitled "Early Sinhalese Painting", since published by the Saman Press in 1959. Nevertheless, certain background material being the same, the information in that volume was conveniently adopted wherever possible. Yet a third volume has to be written in order to complete the series and that will deal with Architecture. Thereafter, if circumstances permit, it is hoped to write three other volumes each dealing separately with painting, sculpture and architecture from the period 1200 A.D. to recent times.

With regard to the present work which deals with sculpture of Ceylon from the earliest times up to 1200 A.D., I must confess, though with some reluctance, that it was very difficult to find a publisher. This difficulty seems to grow with time and in the future it may be still more difficult as books in English will be in little demand.

The manuscript of this book was completed in 1957. Once again I am beholden to Mr. D. T. Devendra who, at my request, agreed to read the entire manuscript. His suggestions have been most useful and the manuscript was further revised after examining his suggestions. Messrs. Gunasena & Co., agreed to publish the book and I am grateful to Mr. M. D. Sirisena of that firm for doing so. The actual work of printing started some time later. My thanks are due to Messrs. Metro Printers for expediting their part of the work and Mr. L. Lokuliyana, Manager of the Publishing Department, of Messrs. Gunasena & Co., for the interest taken in seeing it through the Press.

My thanks are also due to the Archaeological Commissioner who supplied, on the payment of a nominal fee, most of the photographs included at the end of this volume and to Mr. N. H. R. Nalawansa of that Department for supplying the copies and to the Director of the National Museum for supplying, on payment, photographs of some of the specimens exhibited in the Colombo Museum. Mr. A. B. C. Fernando of the Colombo Museum Library helped me with reading material. I am grateful to Miss Nalini de Lanerolle for preparing the index and map showing names of places mentioned in the text. I am deeply obliged to several others whose names are not mentioned for want of space.

25.9.1962

"Gitanjali,"

34, Castle Street,  
Colombo 8, (CEYLON).

NANDADEVA WIJSEKERA.

## Ch. XIV — CORRECTIONS

Fig. No. 6 should read as Fig. No. 7

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“	“	15	—	“	“	16
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“	“	27	—	“	“	30
“	“	29	—	“	“	32
“	“	32	—	“	“	34
“	“	38	—	“	“	41
“	“	49	—	“	“	56
“	“	53	—	“	“	60
“	“	56	—	“	“	65
“	“	58	—	“	“	67
“	“	69	—	“	“	68

Ch. XV page 247 Fig. 23 should read as Fig. 22.





# Map of CEYLON

giving names of places  
mentioned in the text.

SCALE: 0 20 40  
ONE INCH

----- Ancient Divisions



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

So far as the available information goes the social organization and the cultural make up of the people of Ceylon of the 4th Century B.C. (King Devanampiyatissa's time) had developed and reached such a standard as to have made it possible for them to possess and make use of the knowledge of art and architecture for building purposes. Building operations, painting and sculpture and architectural embellishments, dance and song, language and literature, philosophy and religion, would have evolved along the lines of ancient traditional attainments, perhaps based on Indian concepts and perhaps also on ancient indigenous prototypes, of which we have no surviving examples. In such a society sculpture cannot be considered to have played an inconspicuous part. It may not be unreasonable to presume that towards the artistic tradition of the people sculpture also would have contributed its due share. Nevertheless, whilst this tradition of the indigenous arts may have grown and developed these could not have altogether escaped the dominating influence of Indian cultural and social forces from the neighbouring continent that might have directly or indirectly acted and re-acted continuously. It is reasonable to believe that the Indian ideals and techniques might have actively entered into this interplay of sculptural influences.

2. But when one considers the limited geographical extent of the Island as compared to the extensive Indian Continent, one is led to the belief that these influences which penetrated into the Island and assumed a form and power in combination with the indigenous forces of the Island would have left no room to resort to different sources of influence and assume different lines of development within the Island itself. In other words, in Ceylon one can expect only one tradition wherever it may have diffused within the Island. The fact that many schools of art found their way here cannot be denied. The traits of all art movements whilst finding multilateral reception simultaneously in point of time would have attained a development and excellence almost similar at all points. Also it is unlikely that the same force would be manifest at diverse points or at any one time. Some would have escaped altogether and failed to manifest at all.

3. It is well to remember that even if the art manifestation can be detected the difference in traits might not be characterised or so marked as to suspect a difference of attainment either in material,

technique, style or feeling. There would, therefore, be present an inevitable superficial resemblance between the products of this tradition wherever they may be so found stamping them as belonging to a co-eval period. In this inquiry this fact has been kept constantly and prominently in view, viz., that the whole Island is one uniform sphere in which are distributed the products of artistic trends from time to time.

4. A further limitation in diffusion must necessarily be expected and this is due to the physical composition of the Island. The environment has pre-determined the extent and spread of the centres of occupation with which must follow a similar distribution in location of artistic attainments. The ancient political division of the Island into *Ruhuna*, *Pihiti* and *Maya*, might have been determined so as to exclude one area from the requirements of occupation and utilization for the erection of buildings. The *Maya* division may, therefore, be generally excluded from our study since it is most unlikely that within that sphere one could, as a practical possibility, expect material monumental remains of an historical era prior to the 12th Century A.D. unless distribution of ancient sites may help to upset such a pre-supposition.

5. One is therefore restricted in one's search for ancient monuments to the other two ancient divisions of the Island. It is there that the ancient art and other remains must be looked for. Of course, a note of warning may be sounded at this stage since we are all too uncertain about the material remains of a period anterior to the 4th Century B.C. That period which is so prominently recorded in legend and ancient story cannot be ignored in any study of the ancient history of the Island. According to the legendary information the Western coastal strip stretching from *Kelaniya* to *Mannar* as well as the South Eastern area extending as far as present day *Mahiyangana*, should be worthy of special mention and may for all one can say preserve a record of the ancient period of the Island's history. But as very little work of excavation has been done in this area, one is left with almost no information except the meagre records of the Sinhalese.

6. A word of explanation may be added here in reference to the possible and probable causes that contributed to the neglect, decline and desolation of these ancient centres of civilization. The same question that has been asked about the ancient centres of civilization in the other parts of the world can be asked here. But the same explanation may not satisfy in all cases and in the case of this Island. The ancient Indian, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Minoan and Mayan civilizations perished, but how and why they suffered such a fate has not yet been definitely and sufficiently

known. The same may be the case with that of Ceylon. Climate must have played a considerable part in the primary displacement of the ancient population but the climate alone is not a sufficient explanation.

7. There must have been other causes, and other reasons stronger than climatic. That the vast extent of desiccated land denied the material for the sustenance of the people cannot be the only answer. But in Ceylon desiccation has played a large role in combination with the other factors. We cannot exclude from this explanation the contending forces ensuing from malignant fevers like malaria and diseases like plague and cholera, which may have on occasion devastated the population in one swoop. Wars and migration may have removed the other remaining population driven by fear of the invaders. In their wake they would have left behind a trail of destruction and ruin. The people themselves would have left in haste leaving very little that was of lasting personal value or monetary worth. References to such destructive forces find mention in the Mahavamsa. The monuments, the religious edifices and art objects stood undefended, yet undaunted, against the might of man. What the people had not destroyed, what the enemies had not plundered, what the invaders had not ravished and spoiled, nature helped to deface and also to preserve. The absence of man helped the uncontrolled growth of the jungle and continued neglect encouraged its extension.

8. In spite of the desolation and the difficulties of access a certain section of the population yet visited these sites periodically impelled by religious devotion and worship. This thin stream of religious devotees also withered in the course of time. Fresh wars and further invasions precluded any possibility of development and these facts coupled with official orders not to visit such sites removed the sites from knowledge of modern generations. The laws and injunctions of the later rulers prohibited the custom of making offerings and worship. Buddhism declined and fell. The fall was precipitated by missionaries and foreigners. New religions were introduced and enforced, new values were created and accepted. The pride in national objects and monuments died hard enshrouded by a dark and dismal veil of foreign aspersions and belittlements. Ancient art, the gem of Sinhalese culture, the only worthy legacy bequeathed by the Sinhalese kings began to lose its lustre in the jungle behind the dark cloud of new "civilizing" influences and religions. After years of neglect and, suffering under the tyranny of unenlightened authorities, religious and political, the veil was lifted. The eyes of the nation were directed once again along the vista of the past and its achievements. Thus came

to be discovered and after a long time appreciated the beauty and immensity of Ceylon's cultural and artistic heritage.

9. It is this material that has been discovered from time to time or extensively revealed in the course of excavation with which the student of art has to deal. As is natural one cannot expect a representative collection to fill the chronological gaps in all cases. Also one cannot expect to be able to know the circumstances of each archaeological find though of course that would be the ideal expectation. Nevertheless, the archaeologist has to be contented with finds about which all desirable scientific information may not be readily forthcoming. It should be his endeavour to search and analyse and inspect whatever is available with a view to fill the cultural gaps and rebuild the artistic tradition. A further limitation is the incompleteness of the material so far available for examination. It would be too much to expect all material remains of a past culture to be preserved and disclosed in as complete a form as the modern research worker desires. Periodically gaps are being filled. New discoveries help and will help to fill the gaps to a greater extent. Also the present knowledge will remain limited but liable to change with the progress of research activities. Nevertheless, even fragments and incomplete remains indicate the standard and attainments of excellence of a bygone age. Further, the field worker is fortunate in that Ceylon still preserves an ancient literary record which, though insufficient and incomplete, helps to add to the knowledge of the ancient period very materially.

10. If one looks at the history of the archaeological revelations of Ceylon, unlike in most other countries, the record is more than satisfactory. Explorations, excavations and miscellaneous discoveries have helped considerably the search for these details that pertained to the life of the Sinhalese Buddhists of the past. These also show the refinement and the excellence of that same age. In fact the knowledge one so gains supplies the flesh to the skeleton in the form of limited remains that are at our disposal. The secret of success of the ancient Buddhist civilization may remain unrevealed completely. But the medium through which it expressed the arts of the day can be felt and understood. The presentation of the traits of such cultural manifestations even after years of unremitting labour repay valuable dividends at home but still more valuable in the lands abroad. More than anything else these may have helped to win for this little Island not only an esteem and admiration but also due recognition as a civilized land.

11. The concern here is primarily with the art of sculpture and the following pages deal with that aspect of art that pertains to sculpture. The difficult point has been the selection of the order of treatment of sites. The chronological treatment, even if one knows it in relation to all sites, would be out of place when considering the materials discovered. Therefore, the sites are selected from the point of view of general importance and significance known to all. It is hoped that this order will not be confused with the chronological and other issues involved in a subject like that of the art of sculpture. It is also not possible to include in a survey of this nature each single find spot or for a matter of that to refer to every single object. It would suffice if a fully representative collection is examined and the objects showing characteristic traits and special qualities are not left out.

12. The ancient monuments of Ceylon have so far been studied by most archaeologists, epigraphists and architects generally from the artistic and historical angle in terms of foreign canons of art and beauty and not from the sociological and Buddhist religious angle of the Sinhalese. On that score it may be stated that the monuments—sculptural, architectural or artistic—have not been subjected to a treatment leading to a primary interpretation of the monuments from the sociological or religious aspect of the Sinhalese tradition.

13. This was also the case with regard to the study and understanding of the ancient texts of the east by the European scholars. They pursued their studies without any regard to the sociological and religious setting and functional emphasis. It is true they have achieved much, but it is also not untrue that closer contacts of recent times are leading to a re-interpretation of these very texts which now appear to the west to have been studied out of context and dissociated from the living religious forces. Even so the monuments of the east have to be interpreted and studied through the sociological and religious approach of the Sinhalese if these are to convey the real meaning and purpose for which they were created for a society by a people who felt the need and urge to create them.

14. Up to now the monumental remains have presumably appeared as mere objects fashioned out of stone for the delectation of the few well-to-do or courtly classes. There is much more in these than that limited appeal. These are the inevitable blossomings of a religious and sociological movement and growth which culminated periodically even as the rolling waves which develop into a silvery crest. These are the symbols of worship. The material through which these find expression remains secondary;

# EARLY SINHALESE SCULPTURE



their style an indifferent and inevitable vestment; and their aesthetic sensibilities a mere concomitant. At least the images in Ceylon must necessarily find a religious interpretation as these invariably subserved the interests of religion and perhaps that alone.

15. Without a proper appreciation of the sociological background of Sinhalese sculpture, one may, perhaps, never be able to understand the origin and significance, purpose and function of the images. This knowledge is not easy to gain. Neither is it possible to visualise the movement without such a knowledge. But fortunately there is the continuity of a tradition which is still dynamic and living. Not only that. The elements of this tradition are recorded and preserved in the inscriptions and the literature that has survived, and there is, therefore, both the tradition and the text preserved side by side as the vital membranes of a living organism though the vigour of life itself has departed.

16. Buddhism was a living creed in ancient Ceylon even as it is to-day. The material expression was a mass movement culminating in periodic efflorescences both in art and religion. These movements belonged to the people and arose through the generation of an unlimited volume of religious energy and devotion. But the masses worked and expressed themselves in society through their accredited leaders—the wealthy, the nobles, the bhikkhus and the king.

17. In such a movement the bhikkhus acted as guides and advisers whilst the wealthy defrayed the expenses and the ordinary people laboured through faith. There was available the technical advice of the craftsman or the master of the craftsman's guild. Thus through a co-ordinated effort of these personages religious ideals found fulfilment and images found material expression. Where and when this co-ordinated effort and urge were lacking, no popular movement emerged and no objects of art came to be created.

18. Having agreed on a work of art, be it a temple, image-house or an image, the artist or craftsman had to be commissioned. It is he who determined the style. The style was characteristic of the school and tradition followed by a particular school. The style and aesthetic qualities depended on the ability and genius of the master.

19. Such schools of art were in close contact with similar movements in India and the other neighbouring lands. Their religious needs architects studied and knew. In giving shape and expression to the popular religious demands for the creation of sculptured images the artistic principles of the day came to

be applied and incorporated according to the terms of reference of the commission and the special requirements of the body that was responsible. The artists worked in any medium for any religious requirement of a period or community. They themselves were not active participants of this or that popular movement. They remained the non-denominational executives whilst the patrons remained the denominational makers of policy.

20. Each tradition or school of art conformed to a particular style or period. This was only natural and the monuments of the past that may have existed served as models and standards. But so far as the discovered material goes, no indigenous style seems to have been preserved. Whether such a style ever evolved and was preserved none can say. At least a Sinhalese style of sculpture characteristic of the Sinhalese genius can be said to exist in the Buddha images especially of the Anuradhapura period. Nevertheless, the Sinhalese artists seem to have been influenced greatly by the Indian styles. It is these Indian elements that are mostly observable.

21. For these and many other reasons it would be well worth the application of this new approach to the interpretation of Sinhalese sculpture. The sociological approach would repay the labour as it is bound to review the objects through a new and different angle. The Sinhalese images and other sculptured objects would appear in their proper context in a society which had a special place in it for each object. Their function was both social and religious. "Ceylon provides a setting particularly congenial to the study of Buddhist art because there in the great veneration accorded the ancient monuments by the people the student feels that the subject is much more part of a living tradition than in the deserted Buddhist foundations of India ....."<sup>1</sup>

22. But this is a pursuit that should be particularly followed by the Research Institutes foremost of which should be the Universities, of course, assisted by the Archaeological Department, for research alone can give the lead in this direction that is bound to open up a new sphere altogether and illumine with a fresh light the darkness that may otherwise prevail. This was the hope of the last generation. It could not have been expressed better than has been done by Lord Riddell about 27 years ago.

"Ceylon provides an extensive field for the Archaeologist and Epigraphist and a suitable training ground for the study of these subjects. It offers abundant materials within a small area for the study of the history of the art and architecture of the country."

1. A.A.I, p. 197,

"We recommend that the new University should associate itself at the outset with the distinguished work that is carried on in the Island by the Archaeological Survey by providing a course in archaeology in the Arts Faculty, with a view to the formation of a Department at a later stage ..... It is hoped that advanced research work in this field in co-operation with the Departments mentioned may help to contribute effectively to the renown of the University as a centre of learning." <sup>1</sup>

23. The need for the University to interest itself actively was felt by another Commission <sup>2</sup> when it recommended:

"A chair should be established for archaeological studies. This, too, must be considered as urgent because linguistic development is not possible without epigraphical research, which can progress on proper lines only under Archaeological Studies."

24. Unless and until such studies are instituted forthwith our monuments will remain as dead bones and fade away into the dust. "Knowledge and imagination are required to articulate and breathe life into the dry bones of culture, the remains of which are obtained from excavation". <sup>3</sup> Such knowledge cannot fall from heaven but must be wrested through the advanced scientific methods by constant and continued research by the best scholars of the Island.

25. From the year 1957 a Professor of Archaeology has been functioning. The circumstances that have led to the creation of this Chair are still not generally known, nor is the public made aware of how archaeology is being taught as a science. Since more than a year has elapsed, the country may now look forward to seeing archaeological studies established on a proper basis. What has been done so far is still unknown, but the least that can be expected is the proper teaching of archaeology for the Degree level and beyond according to a programme of studies that can compare favourably with any available in modern Universities. Without a proper discipline up to the Degree level, it is needless to hope for more scientific research at an advanced level. It is hoped that before the present holder of the Chair of Archaeology vacates, everything would have been done for furthering the cause of scientific archaeological studies in the Island.

1. Sessional Paper IV of 1929—See page 24, para. (12).

2. Sessional Paper XXII—1946, Sinhalese and Tamil as Official Languages—p. 42 (8).

3. Sayce R.U.—Primitive Arts and Crafts—p. 14.

## CHAPTER II

### SHORT HISTORY OF THE PERIOD (B.C. 543 to A.C. 1200)

The legendary history of the Island goes back to a very uncertain period about which, it is believed, a record is preserved in the Ramayana.<sup>1</sup> According to the information obtainable from this source, the political development appeared considerable while the cultural attainments did not seem greatly different from those obtaining during the subsequent periods about which more information is available.

Large cities with resplendent palaces, well laid out parks, beautiful buildings and ramparts are described with a first hand knowledge. An insight into the architectural and artistic tradition at the time can be gained. The general schemes and patterns alluded to bear testimony to an age when men were living in a kingdom which had inherited much. It was altogether an age of glorious attainment in architecture and art.

If the Ramayana story relating to Lanka, or even a mutilated version of it is to be accepted then it may not be surprising to discover in it the surviving elements of an age that has gone by. Here, perhaps, are preserved at least some of the elements that had diffused from the Indus Civilization<sup>2</sup> of 5,000 years ago. No one can deny, under the present circumstances, that that culture did have a lasting impression and a material influence on the cultures of the neighbouring areas. Who can say that Lanka was not one of the kingdoms that directly imbibed this tradition as a contemporary or as a late developer. There is a feeling amongst some scholars that Lanka did not escape this mighty force but that the substance of influence together with any material relics of the ancient past lie buried beneath the accumulated deposits of later years and may only come to light by a chance discovery or accident.

The human elements<sup>3</sup> of that kingdom can be considered as no different from those of the Indian Continent. The people had spread far and wide and may have even occupied and ruled a part of Southern India.<sup>4</sup> The people lived in large cities and practised and followed certain customs and laws. They believed

1. Ramayana—Sundara Kanda.

2. Indus Civilization—Ernest Mackay, 1935.

3. Indus Civilization—Ernest Mackay, 1935, p. 200 - 201.

4. Ramayana—Sundara Kanda—The Story of the Rape of Sita.

in kingship and observed a decent code of behaviour<sup>1</sup> both in war and in peace. The pattern seems to resemble that of the Aryan structure of a later period.

The earliest reference to India by the west comes from Babylon.<sup>2</sup> And if it is a fact that during the sixth century B.C. Indian cotton and spices had found a market in the west "it is perhaps not unreasonable to believe that, situated as Ceylon was, its inhabitants helped, some five centuries before the landing of Vijaya, in the supply of these rare commodities to adorn and astonish the capital city of Israel. It may then be not mere fancy to assert that the Tyrian penant waved on the shores of Ceylon."<sup>3</sup> This may be based on the grounds of affinity of the Sanskrit and Tamil words bear to the Hebrew words for "ivory, apes and peacocks."<sup>4</sup> If this were so, what about the gems of Ceylon that have for ages attracted traders from the West? That such a practice existed is established by the information recorded in one of the Jatakas.<sup>5</sup>

According to this version, the Island was peopled by demons who inhabited the western coast from Kelaniya to Nagadipa. The shipwrecked merchants are lured by their women to whose charms and wiles they fall an easy prey. As a result of this reference certain important points need stressing. Ceylon was on the trade route and may therefore have offered safe harbours and merchandise in much coveted gems and spices. This proves the prevalence of regular intercourse between Ceylon inhabitants and the outside world. The ports of call may have been located on the west coast of Ceylon—Ancient Mantota or Galle.

Into the legendary fabric is woven the events relating to the visit of the Tathagata<sup>6</sup> to the Island of Lanka. Though the events considered by themselves may be only of religious significance, the references that come up incidentally reveal significant information about the Island during the sixth century B.C. It is fairly certain that the Island was at that time peopled by tribes of Yakkhas, Rakkhasas and Nagas who may or may not have been interrelated tribal groups.

1. The treatment meted out to Sita in her confinement by Ravana—Cambridge History of India, Vol. I. p. 62.
2. Rawlinson—A.C.—I.I.W.W. p. 5.
3. Ranasinha, A.G.—Census of Ceylon, 1946, Vol. I, Pt. I. General Report, p. 11.
4. Ibid—p. 11.
5. Assavalahaka Jataka—Covell & Rouse Vol. II, p. 89—91.
6. Mahavamsa, Ch. I.

Their kingdoms<sup>1</sup> according to this version were located near the coast as well as in the interior. On special occasions they congregated in great force as was the case at Mahiyangana<sup>2</sup> and Nagadipa. It is fairly certain that the Naga Chiefs mentioned in the Mahavamsa were closely related by marriage as well as other cultural ties. Three such kingdoms of standing were those at Kelaniya, Nagadipa<sup>3</sup> and Kannavaddhamana.<sup>4</sup> These tribal chiefs may have undoubtedly possessed a culture similar to that obtaining in India at the time.

Synchronised with the Parinirvana of the Tathagata is the arrival<sup>5</sup> of Vijaya in the Island (543-505 B.C.) This visit seems to have been the culmination of a series of similar landings by Indian marines and need not necessarily have been an isolated event. It would not be incongruous in the context of ancient connections. This visit is of considerable significance for a variety of reasons. Ceylon, perhaps, was Aryanised by immigrants who followed the sea route from North India, as evidenced by their language, which is Indo-Aryan.<sup>6</sup>

It reveals the existence in the Island of a number of racial groups comprising the population which was arranged under the tribal names of Yakkhas<sup>7</sup> and Nagas. These differed from Vijaya's own racial stock and were deemed to have belonged to an unequal grade of society as is evidenced by Vijaya's words to Kuveni "Go then now, dear one, leaving the two children behind; men are ever in fear of superhuman beings."<sup>8</sup>

The pattern of culture obtaining at the time was not unlike that of an agricultural community. Fairly big cities are mentioned, these being Sirisavatthu and Lankapura.<sup>9</sup> Rice and other foodstuffs and goods of every kind were known.<sup>10</sup> Rice was cooked and eaten with flavoured condiments. Ornaments of all kinds, splendid beds, tents and canopies<sup>11</sup> were in use perhaps on all occasions. Spinning<sup>12</sup> and weaving were regular occupations of females.

1. Mahavamsa, Ch. I.
2. Ibid Ch. I, v. 22.
3. Ibid Ch. I, v. 47.
4. Ibid Ch. I, v. 49.
5. Ibid Ch. VII, v. 1.
6. A history of South India by Nilakantha Sastri p.75.
7. Mahavamsa, Ch. VII, v. 9.
8. Ibid Ch. VII, v. 60.
9. Ibid Ch. VII, vv. 32-33, 62.
10. Ibid Ch. VII, v. 24.
11. Ibid Ch. VII v. 27, 28.
12. Ibid Ch. VII, v. 11.

Racially Vijaya and his followers considered themselves Aryan and hence superior. Culturally they did certainly possess a higher standard of attainment, both material and social. Whether they belonged to East Bengal or West Gujerat they would have belonged to a similar stock of Aryan people,<sup>1</sup> speaking an outer band of Aryan language and professing an Aryan culture complex. Their ethnic characteristics<sup>2</sup> would be akin to those of the North and their cultural and social make up may conform to the pattern of the North. In religion they may have professed a form of popular Hinduism.

When the time for consolidating the conquest and consecrating the marriage arrived, Vijaya and his band of men sought brides from the neighbouring continent. It is only natural and there would be no doubt that the first concern would have been to get them from their native land. Failing this, the women would have been sought from the same community and caste. Madhura<sup>3</sup> referred to in the Mahavamsa must have been the southernmost part of Madhyadesa then. Could this have been in modern Mysore,<sup>4</sup> for there is in that land a pocket of Aryan folk resembling those of the East and West littoral. "Other Mathuras are known in Ceylon and near Java and they suggest the continuity of the movement from North India to the South."<sup>5</sup> The first batch of brides would have arrived from there, for in this place may have lived families of Pandus related to Vijaya and him men. These were Aryans of Pandu stock. Therefore they should not be mistaken or confused with the later population of a Dravidian stock known as Pandiyans.

Vijaya settled down at Tambapani while his followers founded townships at Anuradhapura, Upatissa, Uruvela, Ujjeni and Vijita. Kuveni, the local spouse and the two children by her were got out of the way. The Pandu King<sup>6</sup> sent her daughter as royal spouse together with other maidens and craftsmen and a thousand families belonging to the 18 guilds. These embarked at the port of Mahatittha.<sup>7</sup> The marriages were consecrated with solemn ceremony and Vijaya continued to rule as the first Aryan King.

Vijaya did not have any issue from his royal spouse. So he sent messages to have his brother Sumitta sent from India to

1. Wijesekera—People of Ceylon, p.32.

2. Chanmugam—J.S.C. Vol. IV, pt. I.

3. Mahavamsa. Ch. VII, v. 50.

4. Census of India 1931—Vol. I, Pt. III, Intro. LXII—Text—Fig. 10.

5. A History of South India by Nilakantha Sastri. p.66.

6. Mahavamsa, Ch. VII, vv, 55-57,

7. Ibid, Ch. VII, v.58.

succeed him on the throne. As Sumitta had been crowned King by this time he sent his youngest son, Prince Panduvasudeva to Ceylon.

Panduvasudeva arrived in the Island with 32 sons of ministers in the guise of mendicant monks. There arrived also a Sakyan Princess named Bhaddakaccana together with 32 maidens in the guise of nuns. Marriages were solemnized in due course according to the traditional customs of these clans. Thus they continued to live in close association in the new country of their adoption. The fact that needs to be underlined in the establishment of the new kingdom was the union of two closely related sections of the Sakyan people in a new land of their own conquest.

Such an association by marriages of the nobility of a clan is certain to have far-reaching influences persisting for a long time. It is not unlikely therefore that from this point onwards there may have ensued a special bias for Sakyan traditions, customs, practices and beliefs. Later this feeling of reverence would have developed around their greatest personality, the Buddha. It is nothing strange therefore if these people learnt to believe in him and pay him homage and reverence. The Indians of the day could not have escaped the overpowering influence of the Buddha's dynamic personality nor his religion of love. Further, these associations with the native land would have continued undiminished. As time went on the princes spread themselves throughout the Island and founded new towns at Ramagona, Anuradhapura, Uruvela, Vijitapura, Dighayu and Rohana.<sup>1</sup> Panduvasa reigned from 504 - 474 B.C.

Panduvasa was succeeded by his son Abhaya. There followed an interregnum of 17 years after him. Then his nephew became king. He made Anuradhapura his capital. This was one of the most important periods of Sinhalese history for it was at this stage that the foundations of Sinhalese society, government and culture were laid. The king reigned for a fruitful period 454-437 B.C. It is perhaps at this stage that the Hindu pattern of Government came to be fully implanted. The thoroughness of the organization helped his successors in office.

Unfortunately, the last years of the king may have been weak in the administration of Government. There appears to have been internal dissension. Bitter feuds ensued among the related claimants for the vacant Throne. This unhealthy condition may have prevailed until the obstacles were cleared by the wisdom, strategy and valour of Pandukabhaya. His courage won for him the

1. Mahavamsa, Ch. IX—vv. 9-11.

vacant Throne of Lanka. He pursued relentlessly the task of organization of the discontented forces and the establishment of peace and order. He also strengthened the administration.

Nevertheless, he did not eliminate the aboriginal kingdoms or liquidate their chieftains. On the contrary, he attempted to knit together into one unit even the Yakkhas and Nagas by appeasement and equality of treatment. The claims of the original Yakkha chiefs to the land of their birth were equitably settled<sup>1</sup> by public acknowledgement. Peace followed. The people as a whole worked for their betterment. This new concept of equality<sup>2</sup> and brotherhood of races was demonstrated annually at public festivals in the very presence of the King. "Year by year he had sacrificial offerings made to other Yakkhas but on festival days he sat with Cittaraja beside him on a seat of equal height, and having gods and men to dance before him, the king took his pleasure."<sup>3</sup> He established village boundaries<sup>4</sup> over the whole of the Island. Finally he undertook the far-sighted policy of planning<sup>5</sup> the city and suburbs of Anuradhapura on basic Hindu concepts. Perhaps it may not be out of place to remark that these may have compared favourably with those of the ancient Indus Valley and that of the modern times.

Further, King Pandukabhaya seemed to have inaugurated a great constructional programme. The Abhaya tank was one such major work. Others in this class were cemeteries, chapels, temples, buildings with drainage, hermitages for ascetics, Niganthas and heretical sects, monasteries for wandering mendicant monks, Ajivakas and Brahmins. He built a lying-in shelter and a hall<sup>6</sup> for those recovering from sickness. To the far-sighted policy and carefully executed plan of this wise administrator, the Sinhalese owe a great debt. The prosperity that followed was the first result of his labour but for which the achievements themselves could not have been possible. This eventful reign lasted from 437 - 367 B.C.

Mutasiva who succeeded his father to the throne is introduced, strangely enough, as son of Suvannapali. He may have been responsible for completing the final stages of his father's scheme. To this king is attributed the laying out of a beautiful garden

1. Mahavamsa, CH. X—v.84, 85.
2. Ibid CH. X—v.87, 88.
3. Ibid CH. X—v.87.
4. Ibid CH. X—v.103.
5. Ibid CH. X—pp. 74-75.
6. Ibid CH. X, v. 102.

known as Mahameghavana. He passed away after a reign of 60 years — 367 - 307 B.C.

The second son of Mutasiva was Devanampiya Tissa. He became king at the demise of his father. Whatever reasons may be adduced for sending a mission to introduce Buddhism into Ceylon, it is difficult to deny the prevalence, at this time, of strong bonds of cordiality and even affection as a result of kinship, recognition of overlordship or reciprocation of goodwill between Emperor Asoka of India and the Sinhalese king.

There was no reason to believe that Ceylon did not continue to maintain her associations as of old with the kingdoms of the Gangetic plain. On the other hand it is even possible that the ancient ties had by now developed into a permanent friendship. The pre-eminent position of Emperor Asoka may have helped to bring closer together those elements scattered far and wide. The distant relations and admirers in Ceylon may have acclaimed him as their Emperor. In this process of development the bonds of affection may have necessitated reciprocation and recognition. That being the position Ceylon would have been naturally recognized as deserving of a mission.

Devanampiya Tissa's reign (247-207 A.D.<sup>1</sup>) is memorable, if not for anything, at least for the unique event in the whole history of the Island. His name will remain linked with Buddhism as long as that religion lasts in the Island. This event helped to change not only the course of history and the art and architecture of the land, but it influenced in no uncertain measure the culture of the people, their way of life and thought.

Buddhism was introduced by Mahinda, son of Asoka, who led an imperial mission sent by Asoka himself. Not only did this event introduce a new faith but it did much more. It created a new epoch. It generated a fresh and powerful force which pregnant with the spirit of the new religion transformed the emotions into forms and shapes in stone that survive to this day as monumental remains of the art of the people. It is the finest products of this spirit that have captured the imagination of the visitor, fired the spirit of the native and commanded the respectful attention of the alien.

Due to a variety of predisposing factors, some known and others unknown, Buddhism spread with an amazing, almost unbelievable, rapidity. In a very short time it seems to have

1. The Chronology adopted here is that given by G. C. Mendis in *University of Ceylon Review* Vol. V, part 1, pp. 39-54 and S. Paranavithana in *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. V. 86.

traversed the whole Island bringing under it the entire population—king, prince and commoner. The king and people alike were converted to the new faith and practice.

In the propagation and maintenance of the new faith the king did much by personal example and expression. The two royal pleasure gardens, viz., Nandana and Mahamegha were dedicated to the Sangha. A vihara at Mahintale and a dagoba in the Thuparama and Mahiyangana were erected. The Sasana of monks and nuns was established. Relics were obtained and enshrined in the dagobas. The branch of the Bodhi Tree at Buddha Gaya was brought across personally by Sanghamitta, sister of Mahinda. Other religious buildings were also constructed not too distant from the living establishment of the Royal precincts at the City of Anuradhapura. Isurumuniya and Vessagiriya came to be occupied by monks. Tissawewa was also constructed. Having established the religion of the Buddha, Devanampiya Tissa died in 207 B.C.

He was succeeded in turn by his four brothers, viz., Uttiya, Maha Siva, Suratissa and Asela—207-197 B.C. But before Asela became king there appeared, for the first time, Tamil intruders from South India. They were two brothers, Sena and Guttika, who ruled the Island for ten years. However, Asela was able to drive them out. Then came Elara, the Tamil King, who ruled Rajarata for 44 years.

Elara is famous for his kingly virtues, piety and justice. He was a noble king although a Tamil who arrived here from the Chola Country.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, he was an alien who also belonged to a different race and religion, which fact, a young and dynamic race would not have long brooked. This innate antipathy for the foreigner became aggravated by racial and religious animosity. Further acts of violence and sacrilege incited the Sinhalese to concerted action culminating in war in 161 B.C.

The bubble did not burst until a leader was found. And a hero emerged. He was a Prince from Ruhuna called Gamini later dubbed Dutthagamani. In spite of his father's opposition to fight Elara a Sinhalese army marched against the intruder into his own citadel. Elara was defeated and his Tamil hosts were routed. The victorious Gamini was crowned king of all Lanka, 161 B.C.

Dutthagamani ascended the throne at a time when the social fabric had been badly shaken, the cultural pattern discoloured and the religious structure damaged both in form and in spirit

1. Mahavamsa, Ch. XXI, v. 13.

owing to the ruthless acts of spoliation. The Sinhalese looked up to him to heal the wounds. The national hero rose up to the occasion. He set about his task with a determination as steadfast as in war. He had a plan which he almost completed by the time of his death.

With the restoration of Sinhalese sovereignty the national temper was running feverishly high although the country's troubles did not come to a sudden end. Many problems naturally began to raise their ugly heads. These were social, racial and religious not to speak of economic ills. A great war creates many problems even to the victor. Demilitarization and re-employment, food and housing, restoration and revival of religion were immense post war tasks that awaited immediate attention.

One solution of immediate benefit to the community was the building programme put into operation by the king. Since the majority of buildings were associated with Buddhism the thoughts of the masses and soldiers would have been quickly directed to the completion of such undertakings. He revived the great festivals and encouraged art. He built the Mirisaveti Dagoba and erected the wonderful Lovamahapāsada. But the crowning glory of his religious piety combined with his constructional ability is the unique monument—the Ruwanwelisēya. On this stupendous undertaking he lavished all his wealth and most of his energy with the sole desire of bequeathing to posterity the genius and spirit of his race in a truly sublime and highly artistic form. These works and indeed the Maha Thupa have survived to this day as the shining symbol of the greatness that was and a living monument to the genius that may still be. These ended a cultural epoch in 137 B.C.

Generally a great historical period is followed by one that is weak and unimpressive. Disintegration of the strongly knit forces ensues. There followed, as was inevitable, the reign of the Ten Kings.<sup>1</sup> Duthagamani's brother, Saddhatissa, succeeded to the throne (137 B.C.). He in turn was followed by Thulathana (119 B.C.), Lanjitissa (119 B.C.), Khallatanaga (110 B.C.) and Vatta Gamani (103 B.C.).

During the last king's reign seven Damilas<sup>2</sup> seemed to have made a bold bid to regain the kingdom so bravely wrested from an alien. Again the attempt was partially fruitful. Vatta Gamani himself fled from the capital leaving everything to the mercy of the Tamil invaders. He remained in exile for 14 years.

1. Mahavamsa, Ch. 33.

2. Ibid Ch. 3—v. 39.

Whilst in hiding the king organized a strong force to attack the Tamils. The invaders were defeated. The booty was recalled and the Sinhalese throne was regained. The king devoted much time and interest on religious works for the welfare of the people, both monks and laity. The elaboration of the Dambulla caves is attributed to him. He also built the Abhayagiri Vihara. During his reign of 12 years the great dissension<sup>1</sup> between Mahavihara and Abhayagiri Vihara monks took place. The text of the Tri Pitaka and Atthakathas<sup>2</sup> was committed to writing.<sup>3</sup> Then a reign of mixed events ended in 77 B.C.

The period that immediately followed was not one of great success. There were no great kings. Mahaculika Mahatissa (77 B.C.), Choranaga (63 B.C.), Tissa (51 B.C.), Siva (48 B.C.), Vatuka, Dara, Bhatika Tissa and Niliya are for the present mere names<sup>4</sup> in the record. Queen Anula (45 B.C.) was notorious for her profligacy. Kutakanna Tissa (44 B.C.) has built a wall<sup>5</sup> seven cubits high at Anuradhapura. Then there followed Bhatikabhaya (22 B.C.) and Mahadathika Mahanaga (7 A.D.), Anandagamani (19 A.D.) who founded the famous Ridi Vihara<sup>6</sup> and he was followed by Kaniraja Tissa (29 A.D.), Chulabhaya (32 A.D.) and Sivali (33 A.D.). Thereupon an interregnum followed. Then came Ila Naga (33 A.D.) who built the dagoba at Tissamaharama. He was followed by Chandamukha Siva (43 A.D.) Yasalalaka Tissa (52 A.D.) and Subbha Raja (60 A.D.), and Vasabha (67 A.D.) Vasabha was a great ruler. He raised the wall of the capital and constructed a number of irrigation works. Intrigue, murder and stagnation gave place to accession of Gaja Bahu (114 A.D.) whose invasion of South India is now an epic. He was followed by Mahallaka Naga (136 A.D.). Thus came to an end the reign of the twelve kings<sup>7</sup> in 136 A.D.

There ensues a period of 142 years during which 13 kings<sup>8</sup> are recorded as having ruled in succession. But nothing outstanding seems to have been achieved in the sphere of religion or art, irrigation or building except for the construction of a few viharas and tanks. Bhatika Tissa (143 A.D.) built a tank and

1. Mahavamsa, Ch. 33, v. 97.

2. The three sections of the Buddhist doctrine and the commentaries on each of the texts under the three sections are believed to have been orally preserved up to this time.

3. Mahavamsa, Ch. 33, v. 101.

4. Codrington, S.H.C. p. 21, Mahavamsa, Ch. 34.

5. Ibid S.H.C. p. 22.

6. Ibid S.H.C.—p. 23.

7. Mahavamsa, Ch. 35, v. 123.

8. Ibid Ch. 36 Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.  
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vihara. Kanitthatissaka (167 A.D.) built the splendid Ratana-pasada in the Abhayagiri and also a pirivena, vihara and temple. He restored the temple at Nagadipa. He was also responsible for erecting many other buildings. Khujjanaga (186 A.D.) succeeded him but he was killed by Kuncanaga (188 A.D.). During this reign there was a terrible famine in the country now known as Ekanalika. The king instituted a great almsgiving.

Sirinaga (189 A.D.) succeeded him. He attended to the great Thupa, rebuilt the Lohapasada into five stories and restored the four entrances leading to the Great Bodhi Tree. His son Voharaka Tissa (209 A.D.) improved the temples, cetiyas and buildings and did much to help the religion flourish in the Island by ordering alms and suppression of heresies. Then followed three uneventful reigns, viz., that of Abhayanaga (231 A.D.), Sri Naga II (240 A.D.) and Vijaya Kumara (242 A.D.).

Three members of the Lambakanna clan—a branch of the royal family—conspired and gained the throne. Their names were Sangha Tissa (243 A.D.), Sangha Bodhi (247 A.D.) and Gothabhaya (249 A.D.). During the reign of Sanghabodhi there was a severe drought and an epidemic. Being a saintly king, he gave up the throne and kingly position in order to seek solace in meditation.

During the reign of Gothabhaya (249 A.D.) a Vaitulya heresy sprang up and a new sect called Sagaliya came to be formed. But the king managed to suppress it. His son Jettha Tissa (263 A.D.) who succeeded him, built tanks, constructed the Mulgiri-gala Vihara and restored the Mutiyangana Vihara. Mahasena succeeded to the throne in 275 A.D.

King Mahasena's reign was one of great religious upheaval to begin with. He persecuted the monks of Maha Vihara and took sides with the Dhammaruci sect of the Abhayagiri. A period of considerable destruction followed after which the king became reconciled. Nevertheless, he offended the orthodox Maha Vihara by erecting the Jetavanarama for the Sagaliya sect. The memory of king Mahasena lives as a mighty builder of irrigation tanks. With him comes to an end the old chronicle Mahavamsa and Culavamsa—the new chronicle—begins.

The reign of Meghavarna (301 A.D.) the son of Mahasena, is noteworthy on account of two events that took place. One was the arrival of Buddha's Tooth Relic<sup>1</sup> in the Island from Kalinga and the other was the contact established by him with the

1. Culavamsa Ch. XXXVII, vv. 92-96.

renowned Indian Emperor Samudra Gupta.<sup>1</sup> Jettha Tissa II (328 A.D. who succeeded him, was well known as an artist. Then came Buddhadasa (337 A.D.) whose fame as a learned man spread throughout, but whose skill as a physician and surgeon<sup>2</sup> survives to this day in tradition and record. There is no doubt that he actively contributed to the improvement of the medical and health services of the time. His eldest son Upatissa (365 A.D.) followed him. He constructed the Topawewa.

The next ruler was Mahanama (406 - 428 A.D.). It was during this reign that Buddhaghosa, the Pali Commentator, arrived in the Island. He was the last king of the Lambakarna race.

Once again the Pandyan invaders tried to give trouble and occupied a part of the Island, having established their temporary power at Anuradhapura. While this lasted the Sinhalese occupied the southern stronghold of Ruhuna<sup>3</sup> preparing for war. At last after 27 years a leader in the person of Dhatusena (455 A.D.) emerged. He drove the Pandians out of the kingdom and unified the Island. He was a great builder of tanks. He built the Kalawewa. His son Kassapa (473 A.D.) of Sigiri fame succeeded him but was later slain by his brother Moggallana (491 A.D.) After him his son Kumaradhatusena succeeded him to the throne.

Then Kittisena (516 A.D.) became king. Siva (517 A.D.) and Upatissa III (517 A.D.) followed in turn. Silakala wrested the throne by his power. But before long Dathappabhuti (530 A.D.) defeated him. He in turn was overcome by Moggallana II (531-551 A.D.). There followed a few kings of no note. Aggabodhi I (571 - 604 A.D.) alone stands prominent due to the fact that the 12 famous poets flourished during his reign. He also built tanks and even suppressed heresies. His successor was Aggabodhi II (604 - 614 A.D.) who built 14 famous tanks in all.

Now Sangha Tissa (614 A.D.) became king. He was followed by Moggallana III (614 A.D.), Silameghavanna (619-628 A.D.) and Aggabodhi III (628 A.D.). Jettha Tissa III (628 A.D.) ruled for a period and was again succeeded by Aggabodhi III. Dathopattissa I (639 - 650 A.D.) returned from India with Tamil troops and defeated Aggabodhi III. Kassapa II (650 A.D.) seized the opportunity and drove Dathopattissa back to India. The father returned to give battle once again but was defeated.

After Kassapa II there were five kings, viz., Dappula I (659 A.D.), Dathopattissa II (659 - 667 A.D.), Aggabodhi IV (667 - 683 A.D.), Datta (683 A.D.) and Hathodatha (684 A.D.). A

1. Codrington S.H.C. p. 29, Smith V. Early History of India—pp. 303-304..

2. Culavamsa, Ch. XXXVII, vv. 105 onwards.

3. Ibid Ch. XLV

very noteworthy reign was that of king Manavamma (684 - 718 A.D.) for in his reign ensued the close contact with the Pallava King Narasinhavarman. The following six kings left no useful record. They are Aggabodhi V (718 A.D.), Kassapa III (724 A.D.), Mahinda I (730 A.D.), Aggabodhi VI (733 A.D.), Aggabodhi VII 772 A.D.) and Mahinda II (777 A.D.).

During the reign of Dappula II (815 - 831 A.D.) there seems to have been considerable activity when the capital was tending to shift to Polonnaruwa. Passing on we come to Sena I (833 - 853 A.D.). Once more the Pandyan intruders began to arrive in Ceylon. Anuradhapura was sacked. A peace was patched up with the help of the local Tamil population. Sena returned to Polonnaruwa which became the capital of the Island.

Sena II (853 - 857) succeeded his uncle, invaded Madura, defeated the Pandyans and returned to rule the Island. He was followed by Udaya I (797 A.D.) and Kassapa IV and Kassapa V. The Pandyans sought his aid. Dappula V (924 A.D.) succeeded him. During this reign the Pandyan king sought sanctuary in the Island.

The supremacy of the Cholas in India threatened the security of the Island. Events moved to a bitter climax. Mahinda V (982-993 A.D.) had to face the might of the foreigners. Chola Raja I invaded the Island, defeated Mahinda V and took him captive along with his crown to India. Ceylon become a province of the Chola Empire (1017 - 1056 A.D.). Mahinda V died in India. Hindu monuments came to be erected. The city of Polonnaruwa was called Jananathapura. A new coinage was introduced and the Tamil influence prevailed throughout the country except at Ruhuna.

Kassapa or Vikramabahu managed to lead the Ruhunu elements in the independence movement. A number of chieftains<sup>1</sup> continued to lead the surviving armies. Momentum gathered at Ruhuna for launching a mighty attack to drive out the Chola invaders from Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. A young prince named Kitti emerged. He assumed the rank of sub-king and called himself Vijaya Bahu I.

Polonnaruwa was won back and Anuradhapura was recaptured. The last shreds of Tamil forces were torn to pieces and cleared out. He became crowned king of all Lanka as sovereign lord in 1056 A.D. The king restored Buddhism, renewing the priestly succession from Ramanna (Rega). He caused

1. Kitti 1049, Mahalanakitti 1049, Vikrama Pandya 1052, Jayatipala 1053, Parakrama 1057, Lokissara 1059.

his general Nuvaragal<sup>1</sup> to build a temple for the Tooth Relic. Peace reigned again.

The country grew weak once more. Jayabahu I became king but owing to his uneventful reign the country became divided between four rival claimants to the throne. Vikrama Bahu I held Polonnaruwa and handed over office to Gaja Bahu II.

Once again the chaotic conditions led to a bitter struggle and hard campaigning. Another national hero emerged victorious. Parakrama Bahu I (1156 A.D.) became king and assumed sovereignty over the whole Island.<sup>2</sup> Peace was established at home. Abroad he had to go to war with the king of Ramanna and also the Pandians. After these campaigns the new king settled down to a more constructive policy at home. He improved the irrigation works and restored amity among the warring groups of people. He unified the Sangha. Palaces, parks, viharas and temples were constructed. He constructed the rock temple at Polonnaruwa and sculptured colossal and beautiful images. In numerous ways he revived the faith and worship among his people and helped to direct their energies along peaceful, religious and cultural lines. He enlarged and fortified the city of Polonnaruwa but did not neglect the shrines at Anuradhapura as well.

Parakrama Bahu was succeeded by Vijaya Bahu II and then came Mahinda VI. The next successor to the throne was one from the pure Kalinga Dynasty, Nissanka Malla (1187-1196 A.D.), the nephew of Parakrama Bahu I. He continued the peaceful work of restoration and reconstruction commenced by his great uncle. He built dagobas and temples. His particular attention was paid to Dambulla cave temples. In the cause of Buddhism he spared no pains. He is famous for the lithic records he set up.

Such was the historical record which, with its ups and downs, has continued in unbroken succession. It is against this background of domestic intrigues, kingly factions, religious schisms and hostile invasions that the monumental remains must be examined and studied. It is doubtful if any other nation under similar circumstances could have so successfully emerged in the struggle.

The sculptural remains in stone is the main concern in this survey. The complete monuments must therefore be fitted into their proper position in the context of Sinhalese society and its culture. Why and how these came to be erected and demolished, what forces contributed to their preservation and what purpose they

1. Codrington, S.H.C. p. 57.

2. 1153 - 1186 A.D.

fulfilled can only be understood and properly appreciated and evaluated by reference to the social setting of the times. One should, therefore, learn something about the work of the Archaeological Survey which made possible their revelation and recent preservation. This will be given in a subsequent Chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### ANCIENT CAPITALS AND SITES OF THE PERIOD

The location of chief cities of the past as well as of the present cannot be considered purely accidental. It is true that in the past, more so than in the present, geographical considerations pre-determined the site of capital cities although economic and defence factors did enter the selection. In Ceylon also it can be observed that certain basic facts determined the choice of capitals.

Certain cities are mentioned as almost belonging to the ancient legendary period. If they did actually exist where they were supposed to have been, then it is certain that these were located on the banks of large rivers. For example, Mahiyangana is on the Mahaweli, Kelaniya on the Kelani, Mantota on the Malvatu Oya and Tissamaharama on the Kirindi Oya. Some of these have a frontier position as well and face the sea coast whilst the background provides the economic self-sufficiency and defence system. The chief determining factor has been easy accessibility. Of course the river helped irrigation whilst the low lying irrigable and cultivable land supplied the grain to feed the population.

Security against enemies and easy defence are possible in such a situation. A capital invariably gives rise to a concentrated population. Flat land is required to settle such a population in easy reach of the city. A river valley affords all these facilities and fulfils in great measure the basic factors determining capital cities. These capitals also had necessarily to look for external contacts. Ceylon trade in the ancient days was maintained with the west across the seas. It is likely therefore that the cities would be located to a certain extent along the coast. That is actually where they are generally found.

During the long period of nearly 1700 years, i.e., from 543 B.C. to 1200 A.D. there have been in this Island only three capital cities with the exception of Sigiriya which, of course, served an emergency. This in itself is a remarkable record in the annals of any nation. Sigiriya is, of course, an exception; it being the temporary fortress—stronghold of a fleeing monarch desperate in power. The other three are Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Ruhuna. Whilst the first two occupied the commanding frontier position the third fulfilled the need for a defensive retreat during invasion and a springboard for attack during foreign aggression. Ruhuna must be considered as the vital nerve centre of the Sinhalese and without it the nation may have had its grass

root defence elements disintegrated without serving as a storehouse of material in men and arms for consolidation of the scattered forces in grave national emergencies. A note, therefore, on each of the three cities will not be out of place.

(a) **Anuradhapura.** The royal city of Anuradhapura was built by Prince Pandukabhaya (377-307 B.C.) on an ancient site founded by the two princes Anuradha on the banks of the Kadamba river. The city seems to have been planned strictly according to Aryan (Indian) conceptions and traditions to fulfil political, defensive, aesthetic and utilitarian requirements of the time. He also bestowed on it all the civic amenities such as tanks, ponds, and parks, kingly residences, temples and abodes for popular deities, hospitals and nursing homes. It was during the reign of Devanampiyatissa (247-207 B.C.) that religious edifices on an unprecedented scale were constructed. The new religion deeply impressed the minds of the people and the king. Nobles and the common people joined together in supporting the new faith. The Mahameghavana, once the beautiful royal pleasure grove, henceforth became the centre of Buddhist activities and the abode of Buddhist monks.

The Tamils captured that city and subjugated the people. They remained in occupation until Prince Gamani from Ruhuna defeated them in battle (161 B.C.) He established himself as sovereign monarch of all Lanka—and ruled with Anuradhapura as capital. The stupendous and magnificent dagobas, viharas and palaces are mostly the result of his effort. Of all his works Ruwanweliseya (Maha Thupa) was the king's most cherished conception which, unfortunately, he did not live to see completed. It was, however, completed by his brother.

The Tamils overran the city on more than one occasion. They were defeated and driven out by Vattagamani Abhaya (29 B.C.). The subsequent history of Anuradhapura is a continuous narrative of pious successors who restored, repaired, renovated and reconstructed the religious edifices.<sup>1</sup> But from the fifth century onwards the city suffered heavily from the dynastic intrigues as well as by foreign invasions.

Sometimes the Tamils invaded the Island on their own and at other times the Sinhalese invited them for assistance during internal struggles for supremacy. In every case it was the royal city that suffered the worst. There came a time when it became no longer possible to defend the city as the Tamils infested the whole district of Anuradhapura. The capital had to

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1. Fa Hien—Buddhist Records of the Western World.

be shifted owing to the exigencies of the situation, once to Sigiriya then to Polonnaruwa and to Ruhuna. However, "in 1300 A.D. the whole of Anuradhapura district was abandoned for reasons still unknown to the historian and the country became no man's land. It relapsed into jungle, having been for nearly 1200 years the seat of Government and the unrivalled centre of Buddhist learning. But for a long time even after the transfer of the seat of Government, it was regarded as a centre of religious activity by the Buddhist devotees."<sup>1</sup>

King Pandukabhaya is believed to have constructed several buildings, including temples and palaces in the newly-founded capital at Anuradhapura. However, no remains, which could be identified as belonging to that period, have yet been discovered. The Abhaya tank alone remains out of those mentioned in the Mahavamsa as having been constructed by this king. The next builder was King Devanampiyatissa who gave a Buddhist orientation to architecture and sculpture of the day. He built the Maha Vihara for Bhikkhus and donated to them the pleasure groves, Nandana and Mahamegha. He constructed a Vihara at Mihintale. The Buddha relic, viz., the right collar bone, was enshrined in the Thuparama at Anuradhapura, which was the first dagoba to be built in Ceylon. The branch of the Bodhi tree was also brought during this period by Mahinda's sister, Theri Sangamitta. It was planted in the Mahamegha garden and other buildings of note were the Mahiyangana dagoba at Mahiyangana which enshrines the Buddha's collar bone, Isurumuniya and Vessagiriya Vihara. He constructed the Tissa-wewa for irrigation purposes. King Dutugemunu built the Mirisawetiya Dagoba, Lowamaha Prasadaya, and the Ruwanveli Dagoba. King Uttiya Gamini built the Abhayagiri Vihara and the Abhayagiri Dagoba. He also built the Lankaramaya and the Dakkhinaramaya. King Kutakanna Tissa built a wall 7 cubits high round the city of Anuradhapura.

The monuments and sculpture have since been exposed to the mercy of the invaders, plunderers and the inclemency of the tropical weather. The population deserted the ancient city in pursuit of new areas of cultivation subserving the needs of new seats of royal power. The fear of Indian invasions and attack pushed them to the hinterland in the east. Neglect was but inevitable. Nature completed the rest of the work. Where once was a capital city flourishing and illustrious desolate forests enveloped in silence the collection of civic buildings and religious edifices with all the

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1. Malalasekera G. P.—Dictionary of Pali Proper names pp. 83-84.

wealth of art lavished on them for generations, occasionally to be disturbed by the religious votaries of the Buddhist faith, Peace and tranquillity prevailed until the Government laid open by patient and persistent exertion the unrivalled splendours of an age that is gone—a splendour that was for ages the cherished pride of the whole Island of Lanka. The biggest monastery was the Maha Vihara and closely associated with it were the Lohapasada, Ruwanveliseya and the Bodhi Tree. The Thuparama Vihara and dagoba are to the East of the City. The Abhayagiri Vihara came to be the rival to Maha Vihara. The Maricivatti Vihara and the Dakkhinagiri Vihara are also worthy of mention for these have survived the ravages of man and nature. And around this many buildings came to be built. One will not be far wrong in saying that every king of note erected a religious building in the name of Buddhism. The pity of it is that both religious and secular buildings have not survived in sufficient number to reconstruct the architectural story of the past. The city also had its share of tanks.

(b) **Mihintale**<sup>1</sup>. Known as Cetiya-giri or Cetiya Pabbata, Mihintale was the place where Mahinda arrived, preached and passed his days. The hill is scattered with small dagobas where early carvings in the popular style predominate. It has many caves once lived in by hermit monks. The hill top is covered with dagobas of varying sizes. Some sculpture is also found and these may belong to a very early period. The most noteworthy remains are those of the Kantaka Cetiya and the flight of steps. Some dagobas have also yielded interesting information. The site is altogether unique from the historical angle of Buddhism and sculpture associated with the religion.

(c) **Isurumuniya**.<sup>2</sup> Issarasamanarama and Vessagiriya were two important Viharas. Their construction is attributed to Devanampiyatissa. The Viharas are situated about a mile from Anuradhapura. These two are hardly mentioned in ancient literature but the natural rock caves and inscriptions seem to suggest early occupations by the Buddhist community. It is from the point of view of sculpture that this site is famous. Several phases of religious occupation can be noticed. The earliest is the Buddhist phase; then the Gupta phase showing beautiful carvings and thirdly the Pallava phase of large sculpture of animals and humans. Perhaps the art and style of sculpture betray the religious persuasions of those who controlled this site.

1. E. W. Adikaram, E.H.B. p. 102.

2. Ibid E.H.B. p. 109.

**Sigiriya.** Kassapa who is supposed to have killed his father fled to Sigiriya hill and built his capital there. He made it an impregnable fortress. The palace and apartments were built on the summit of the rock with an inclined stair way leading to the top. The entrance was made in the shape of a lion. Kassapa reigned from here as his capital for 18 years. Many architectural features are still preserved at this site. But the most famous are the polished wall and the frescoes on a phase of the rock itself.

**Ruhuna.**<sup>1</sup> One of the three ancient divisions of Ceylon. A Royal Family had taken up residence at Ruhuna. Buddhism was introduced to this region during Mahinda's time and consolidated by Mahanaga, a younger brother of Devanampiyatissa. This was the area which provided shelter and protection to kings and to Buddhism when Ceylon was in danger of Tamil invasion and famine. Buddhism was preserved undisturbed continuously in this area. The two chief sites where monastic activity and Buddhist temples and buildings were found were Tissamaharama and Situlpavva. Both of them were founded by King Kakavanna Tissa in the second century B.C. There seems to be a stronger influence over these regions from the Kistna area than anywhere else. Little material remains have been discovered so far but undoubtedly this region is bound to yield not only sculpture of much value but also historical data of significance. Contacts with the Kistna area seem to have been frequent as seen from the few Buddha figures and the other sculptured material so far discovered.

**Tissamaharama.**<sup>2</sup> The city was founded by king Kakavanna Tissa in 200 B.C. Ilanaga in the 1st century A.D. built the great dagoba at Tissamaharama, then known as Naga Maha Vihara. This fact is supported by an inscription. The ancient city to which these ruins belonged stood on the left bank of the Magama river. The position of Tissamaharama is similar to that of Maha Vihara at Anuradhapura. The plain was fertile and supported a rich population. The area yielded plenty of food but water was lacking. The Bhikkhus assembled here for the rainy season. Buddhism flourished undisturbed by invading enemies, famines and heresies.

**Polonnaruwa.** From Anuradhapura the seat of royal power came to be established at Polonnaruwa. The date of its foundation is definitely not known. It is said that certain religious edifices have been erected during VIII-X century A.D. but no such

1. Early History of Buddhism by Adikaram p. 115.
2. Adikaram E. W.—E.H.B. p. 116.

ruins have been discovered. The city was occasionally used as a royal residence by the Anuradhapura kings. The city is not mentioned in the older portion of the Mahavamsa. First mention of the city is made in the Culavamsa and the first king to be associated with the city was Aggabodhi III (628 A.D.) Nevertheless, its importance even at times as a royal city cannot be denied. Sena I (833 - 853 A.D.) established the capital at Polonnaruwa at a time when the Cholas threatened the whole Island. At least this withdrawal afforded for a time breathing space to reorganize the Sinhalese armies for attacking the Cholas and Pandyan. Many later kings also lived here. During the time of Sena V (1007 - 17 A.D.) the Damilas once again seized the city and Polonnaruwa was completely lost to the Cholas who even took Mahinda V captive. The Cholas named the city Jananathapura, erected many fine Hindu temples, suppressed all uprisings and ruled the Island as supreme masters. (1017 - 1056 A.D.)

However, Prince Kitti (1058 - 1114 A.D.) rescued the city from the Cholas and in 1056 A.D. it was completely freed of the Cholas. He renamed the city Vijayarajapura. But it fell to the lot of Parakrama Bahu I (1153 - 1186 A.D.) to bestow on the city much of its ancient greatness. The city was replanned by him with large gateways, ponds, parks and numerous buildings both secular and religious. But the architectural grandeur of Polonnaruwa was also due to Vijaya Bahu II (1186 - 1187 A.D.) and Nissanka Malla (1187 - 96 A.D.). Parakrama patronised other works of art thus helping to embellish the city and reach the pinnacle of glory. Amongst other monuments Parakrama Bahu I is said to have erected the following viz., a round temple for the Tooth Relic, Gal Vihara, Uttararama, Thuparama, Northern Temple, the Alahana Pirivena, Lankatilaka and Potgul Vihara.<sup>7</sup> In the three suburbs he created the three Viharas named Isipatana, Kusinara and Veluvana.

The city in the jungle aroused the curiosity of travellers as early as 1820 A.D. The first season's work of exploration and clearing by the Archaeological Survey commenced at the Northern Temple in 1900 A.D. The Pallava and Dravidian influences combined to produce the masterpieces of architecture that may be assigned to King Vijaya Bahu I.

Polonnaruwa still preserves a shade of its ancient solemnity and royal splendour. But it preserves in particular some very fine sculpture both of small and large proportions. These are in a good state of preservation and this fact is of considerable interest to the student of ancient Sinhalese sculpture of the Island.

1. Culavamsa—Pt. II—Ch. 78, pp. 74, 75.

## CHAPTER IV

### STORY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

It does not seem out of place to place on record the part played by the archaeological survey in rediscovering the monuments and reviving an interest in their study. Much more remains to be done. Comparatively, very little has been excavated. But if what has been done had not been done the present generation and the outside world would have been poorer by the knowledge of art and sculpture, painting and architecture of the ancient Sinhalese. This is how it began.

Although the official inauguration of the Ceylon Archaeological Survey took place in the year 1890 it was, as a matter of fact, 19 years earlier that the idea was first conceived during the administration of Sir Hercules Robinson. In 1871 an excellent series of photographs of the principal structures of Anuradhapura was prepared with the financial aid and other assistance of the Government. In 1873 Sir William Gregory issued instructions for a complete survey, and between 1875 and 1879 a search for ancient inscriptions was instituted. The scientific analysis of the collection was published by Prof. C. Geldschmidt and E. Muller. During the same period Maha Mudaliyar L. De Zoysa was authorised to visit the chief Buddhist temples in order to examine and report on other manuscripts of historical value.

With the material thus obtained a survey of objects of antiquarian interest, modelled on similar lines to that of India as contemplated by Lord Canning, was inaugurated. This meant an accurate description, illustrated by plans, measurements and drawings or photographs and by copies of inscriptions, of such remains as were deserving of notice, together with their history as far as it was traceable and a record of the traditions retained regarding them.

During the year 1884 Mr. S. M. Burrows was entrusted with the task of supervising the work in connection with the monuments and the other antiquities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. The jungle had to be cleared. Old roads were restored. Sir Arthur Gordon, the then Governor of Ceylon, directed Mr. H. C. P. Bell to commence operations of the survey of the North Central Province. This marks the official birthday of scientific archaeology in Ceylon.

Mr. Bell began the work by dividing the area into various sections. Although the labourers already trained by Mr. Burrows were available, yet the main work remained entirely of an

exploratory nature owing to the lack of sufficient labour and rain. Excavation revealed a Buddhist railing belonging to the Abhayagiri ruins. More work was done in epigraphy while Mr. T. N. Young carried out a topographical survey of the buildings. In 1892 the work of training and clearing old roads recommenced, and new ones were opened up. Schemes for further excavations were drawn up and submitted. Exploration was encouraged by supplying information regarding archaeological sites and objects. A local museum was started to house the "curios" and preserve the sculptures and paintings that had escaped destruction from the ravages of time and the hand of the vandal. The expenses of the survey were maintained at a low level owing to the regular practice of employing convict labour.

Much had, therefore, been done by way of preliminary investigation when on July 7, 1890, serious attention was paid to the study of inscriptions. The whole of Anuradhapura, with the exception of the Atamasthana, was also surveyed.

In 1893 steady progress both in exploration and excavation was maintained, and the problem of conservation was discussed for the first time. Bell's appointment as Archaeological Commissioner was confirmed in 1894. Apart from the normal activities of the archaeological survey, the work of the topographical survey was continued. In the sphere of epigraphy a broader policy was adopted. Every effort was made to obtain the best results. An Indian trained by Dr. E. Hultzsch was got down from India for a period of three months during which time he was expected to take estampages and to teach Ceylonese the art of taking them. Up to that time the vote for archaeology stood at Rs. 28,000. In 1895 it was reduced to Rs. 23,012, one result of which was the partial restriction of operations and the postponement of excavations. It was believed that the explorations at Anuradhapura had reached completion. In this year operations commenced at Sigiriya with the clearing and excavation of the site.

The archaeological vote was raised to Rs. 35,000 in 1896. Epigraphy commanded more attention than excavation. Intensive work was, however, resumed at Sigiriya. On account of the peculiar position of the paintings combined with the uncertainty of approaching them, undue difficulty and danger were experienced in copying them. In 1897 the department suffered a definite loss of prestige when it lost the test case under the Treasure Trove Ordinance No. 3 of 1891 (later amended to No. 15 of 1900). The expenditure for the year stood at Rs. 39,620 and with this amount much excavation work was pushed through at the following sites—

Thuparama ruins, the Citadel, Puliyankulama ruins and Elara Sohona.

One of the caves at Polonnaruwa yielded paintings, while Sigiriya too proved very interesting in results. The dangerous ascent to the Rock Site of Sigiriya was made perfectly safe by the addition of iron rails, while the copying of the sixteen frescoes was also completed. In 1898 the Buddhist Railing was completely restored and the demands for a Museum at Anuradhapura were urged. This led to the appointment of a Commission to consider the entire future policy of archaeology.

According to the recommendations of the Commission additional staff was provided from 1899 and increased votes were sanctioned. A European Labour Assistant was appointed. With a view to the publication of inscriptions in a scientific journal named *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Mr. D. M. de Z. Wickremasinha and Mudaliyar B. Gunasekera, were appointed joint epigraphists in 1900, the eleventh year of archaeological operations. The sum voted was Rs. 52,641. A regular campaign of serious activity commenced at Polonnaruwa, and operations continued as before at Sigiriya and Anuradhapura. The programme of activity, suffered no serious alterations in the next year. By 1902 the major operation at Sigiriya had reached a stage of completion, so far as excavations were concerned, but restoration and conservation works seemed necessary. It was in this year that Mr. John Still was appointed Assistant Commissioner. By now the Department had advanced to such a stage as to realise and also to recognize the value and position of the Sigiriya polychrome paintings in the history of art not only of Ceylon but of India.

It was decided in 1903 to increase the vote by Rs. 5,000 in order to facilitate the systematic conservation of ancient monuments at the chief sites. In 1904 Mr. D. M. de Z. Wickremasinha brought out the first volume of *Epigraphia Zeylanica*. It was in this year also that, on instructions received from the Survey, the Public Works Department carried out restoration work at Yapahuwa. But in 1905 there was a reduction in the sum voted for archaeology, and this afforded those engaged in the work the much needed opportunity to study the field notes of the past fifteen years.

More funds were provided again in 1906. The three main sites absorbed all attention in this year. A catalogue of finds prepared by Mr. John Still was handed over to the Director of the Colombo Museum for publication. Mr. Still left the Survey in 1908, but his post remained vacant despite the fact that a

selection could have been made from among those already in the Department. In 1909 the annual vote was considerably increased, thus providing ample funds for intensive field work. But no operations were started at any new site. In this year frescoes at the Demala Mahaseya consisting of Jataka stories and events from the life of the Buddha were copied. It was about this time also that there was an agitation for conserving Kotte. In 1910-11, with a still larger vote, there began an extension of archaeological activities at Yapahuwa and Nalanda.

In 1911-12 many changes took place. The total vote, which had now reached the figure of Rs. 118,040 for the year, was split into separate heads. Work of a scientific nature was carried out in epigraphy. A decision was made to transfer all objects of interest to the Colombo Museum. The number of photographs taken so far amounted to 4,000 plates. The more characteristic ones among them were prepared to be made available to the public.

In 1912 Mr. Bell retired. In the face of great difficulties he had served the cause of archaeology in Ceylon for 23 years, during which period much useful work was done. The year was mainly devoted to the establishment of order and the preparation for handing over the work to a new Commissioner.

Mr. E. R. Ayrton then took office. The year 1913 was spent mainly in gaining acquaintance with the monuments and in the usual work of restoration, conservation and excavation of the main sites. In May 1914, Mr. Ayrton was unfortunately drowned in the Tissawewa at Tissamaharama.

Then came World War I. The years 1914-1922 will be known as the darkest period in the history of Ceylon archaeology. During this period the Government administered the affairs of the Survey through the services of the Government Agents of the North-Central Province. In 1915, clearing of jungles was the only work that was done. Pilgrims kept away from the sacred sites for fear of war. The year 1916 contains no reference to archaeology in the Administration Report of the Government Agent.

The next year records the visit of Sir John Marshall, Director of the Indian Archaeological Survey, to Anuradhapura, Mihintale and Polonnaruwa. The seated Buddha near Jetavanarama suffered damage this year. Also zealous efforts for the search for treasures in rocks and jungles ended in failure. The four years from 1918-22 remained a period of complete inactivity.

The Survey remained in this state of abeyance until Mr. A. M. Hocart took charge in 1922. An officer was appointed as epigraphical scholar and was sent to India for training. The work of conservation, collection and reservation was commenced again and continued with the regularity of pre-war days.

In 1923-24 the work of restoration and conservation suffered for want of an architectural assistant. The Archaeological Commissioner could not be expected by any means to be in the field during each campaign. The services of a permanent assistant in that branch had to be secured.

In the same year Mr. Ayrton's papers were published by the Government. There also appeared the first number of the *Journal of Science, Archaeological Section*, containing a number of unofficial publications supplied by the Department. The library kept on growing and the collection increased. Inscriptions continued to be published in the *Epigraphia Zeylanica*. The Puttalam-Mannar area including Pomparippu was selected as a sphere of archaeological research. Mr. R. L. Brohier supplied the detailed notes on the region south of Marichchikaddai.

The year 1924-25 witnessed many changes. The library received a large number of books. Photography was more seriously considered. The collections grew both in quality and quantity. Reservation and conservation were vigorously taken in hand. Research work at Anuradhapura-Mannar continued with greater effort. In 1925-26, however, owing to the absence on leave of the Commissioner, the publications decreased in volume. Mr. Hocart returned from his holiday with some valuable documents for the departmental library. For the first time the services of two trained men were made available for the Survey.

In the year 1926-27 order was established in the state of the photographic section. True research work on a large scale was resumed at Mantai of which it has been said, "This was the first stratified site. Such sites are rare owing to shallowness of soil, washaways and the habit of building on rock. Mantai proved to be exceptionally rich, interesting and useful as it contained nine feet of debris, coins and stratified strata". Why later archaeologists discontinued work at such a site cannot be understood.

In 1927-28 the only hope of substantial success faded away. Research at Mantai continued but not with the enthusiasm necessary for obtaining valuable finds specially pottery which was not critically studied. It is interesting to note that work at this site was resumed again and has already yielded signs of good results. Useful data of extreme significance to ancient times may perhaps be discovered here.

Minor staff changes took place that year. The retirement of Muhandiram Perera was a great loss, for he had done an excellent job in copying the frescoes at Sigiriya. The following note sums up the situation at the time "shortage of draughtsmen makes itself definitely felt in excavation work. There remain a great deal of 1926 pottery, all 1926 beads, and all the 1927 finds unstudied. What prospect now remains of catching up the arrears?"

Further misfortune befell in 1927-28, when another period of acting appointments commenced. The gradual neglect of the offices and quarters resulted in delay that threatened a total collapse. The operations at Mantai dragged on. A change of pottery was recorded and more beads turned up. But the work was gradually abandoned as "tiresome and difficult." Thus was lost, perhaps for all time, the unique opportunity of establishing a sequence of pottery-dating of archaeological strata and their correlation with Indian archaeological levels.

In 1928-29 departmental difficulties ensued. Nevertheless once again Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Sigiriya formed the bases of operations. Excavations at Mantai were stopped. The work at the Anuradhapura Citadel continued. The collections were transferred to the Colombo Museum, which also became the Headquarters of the Archaeological Survey.

In the year 1929-30 epigraphy made considerable progress but excavations suffered considerably. The Survey had to face new difficulties in the restoration of monuments owing to the religious needs of non-experts. An antiquities ordinance was discussed at length for the first time this year, but nothing came out of it. In 1930-31 also epigraphical research progressed and excavations suffered neglect. The library continued to improve. For the first time a Ceylonese was placed in temporary charge of the Survey. He tried his hand at advertising archaeology and popularising art but failed owing to the lack of any appreciable response. The memoir on the Temple of the Tooth was published in 1931.

The period 1932-33 showed an awakening on the part of the Buddhists who began to realise the national importance of antiquities. They agitated for the passage of a comprehensive ordinance on antiquities. A series of articles in the Ceylon Press helped them to appreciate the imminent danger of an attitude of indifference. In 1934 an attempt was made to fill the post of Commissioner but failed. It was thought that no suitable

candidate was available. Meanwhile acting arrangements continued. Nothing seemed to be done to improve the state of the office and buildings. Exploration became the policy whilst the officers kept themselves busy with routine work and visiting the main sites.

In 1935 a new Commissioner was appointed. The remainder of that year and the whole of 1936 were spent in routine work of restoration and conservation which had again become necessary through many years of neglect. Roads and drives were opened with a view to making the sites more accessible and attractive. Excavation was left severely alone. A large sum of money was voted in view of the heavy restoration and excavation contemplated by Mr. Longhurst. Mr. H. C. P. Bell and Dr. D. M. de Z. Wickremasinha passed away. A short monograph entitled "Story of the Stupa" and seven picture post cards of Sigiriya frescoes were made available this year. Intensive work was carried out at Polonnaruwa while the other reservations were cleared and roads leading thereto were improved.

The annual vote began to increase. Conservation and restoration absorbed the major portion of this amount. The Commissioner continued two more years and he was allowed to complete his programme of work. Then in the year 1939 came World War II. But the Survey found a permanent Commissioner in the person of Dr. S. Paranavitane. Owing to the exigencies of the emergency many makeshift arrangements had to be made. Consequently the smooth working of the survey was disorganized and handicapped. However, the organization has been considerably strengthened in all its aspects. The good work was continued whilst new work is being planned and undertaken in an orderly manner. The Department made an attempt in 1950 to establish order in the various sections, both in the office and in the field. The library and the photographic sections were examined and reports were prepared on them. A few guide books were printed. The construction of an Archaeological Museum at Anuradhapura was begun. Several new roads were constructed to give easy access to the archaeological reserves. Guards were posted to some of these and the monuments were labelled. Normal work relating to excavation, conservation and exploration continued with particular action at Mantai and Anuradhapura. Epigraphical work was intensified.

During 1951 the previous undertakings were continued. Special mention should be made of the discovery of frescoes in the Relic Chamber at Mihintale Dagoba. These are datable to 9th century

A.D. and the 11th century A.D. respectively. The Dagoba at Piduragala also yielded three interesting marble slabs. The Vatadage at Teriyayi was restored and the Sigiriya moat cleared along with the four causeways leading to the fortress. The royal city at Panduvasnuwara was taken up for restoration and the excavation work at Dedigama continued.

The Anuradhapura Museum was extended in 1952 and an exhibition was organized. Excavation work at the various sites progressed favourably. Much conservation work was also undertaken. Interesting sites also came to light during the exploration work. Chemical treatment with a view to preserving the antiquities was carried out at several sites.

Owing to the financial stringency, very little fresh work was taken in hand during 1953. Naturally, the activities previously undertaken had also to be curtailed. An interest in the Dutch monuments was shown. It was in 1940-45 that an Advisory Committee on the restoration of protected monuments came to be mentioned for the first time. The administration of the Antiquities Ordinance was causing considerable difficulties owing to interference by religious bodies. The work suspended during the year was resumed. Arrangements were being made to compile a register of antiquities. The year 1955 is memorable for having completed several approved projects. The Kuttampokuna was completed and the Sigiriya Graffiti (two volumes) were published. The inimical disposition towards implementing the principles of the Antiquities Ordinance continued.

During the year 1956 Dr. Paranavitane, who had served the Department for many years and functioned as Archaeological Commissioner for over 12 years, retired. The projects undertaken have had to be suspended. No new undertakings are likely to be started in view of the uncertainty in the Department. The staff strength is diminishing and progress of the survey is likely to be retarded unless strong measures are adopted for its present and future well being. The Government has appointed a Committee to inquire into the working of the Colombo Museum, the Archives and the Department of Archaeology, with a view to reorganizing them. Much good may result from this inquiry. Nevertheless, no one can be blind to the fact that during the last generation the Department has not found it possible to pay sufficient attention to several important aspects in the development of archaeological research and studies. Pre-historic archaeology has not received any reasonable measure of attention. No attempt has been made to look for prehistoric or ancient,

sites with a view to bridging the past and the present. Similarly, the excavation work has paid no heed to evolve a stratigraphical sequence for dating purposes. For the most part the Department has been pre-occupied in clearing ancient sites mentioned in the historical records and dating them by means of epigraphical data. Local art or architectural styles and characteristics have not been identified. No serious attempt has been made to discover the canons of Sinhalese art. The art objects have not been examined from the point of view of local origin and evolution. In the field of epigraphy, the Department has not been able, after nearly 60 years of existence, to produce a Corpus of inscriptions. An Epigraphist has been functioning in the Department since 1926 and it is a pity that this work, which is fundamental to progress in epigraphical research and study of Sinhala language, has not even been attempted so far. The Department has not taken pains to encourage research by other officers and to train future research officers either in the Department or outside. Knowledge and Research must go hand in hand. Research and field excavations and explorations should attract the University students, for they will be the scholars of the future. No co-ordination at that level has yet been attempted and even the attempts made by the University towards that end have been frustrated. Certain less important sites have received attention over and over again perhaps due to political or other purposes. Whatever causes may have influenced the selection of such sites, some of these seem to have been selected not entirely on the basis of research considerations. Other important sites appear to have been neglected. The Ruhuna area with Tissamaharama as the centre does not appear to have received its due share of attention at the hands of the Department, and it is a pity that such a fruitful source is being allowed to go to waste. All these shortcomings must be remedied if archaeology is to be established and the future, it is hoped, will pay greater attention to them as a matter of priority disregarding all irrelevant considerations.

This brings the story of archaeological activities up to the year 1956. The survey was in the charge of the following gentlemen, viz., Messrs. H. C. P. Bell, A. M. Hocart, A. H. Longhurst and S. Paranavitarne. The following gentlemen also served the cause of archaeology by being in charge of the affairs of the Department in the capacity of Acting Commissioners. They are, Messrs. E. R. Ayrton, B. Constantine, H. R. Freeman, F. G. Tyrrel, A. W. Seymour, G. R. R. Browning, F. Bartlet, M. Wedderburn, E. R. Sudbury, E. G. Dyson, C. F. Winzer and J. Pearson.

## CHAPTER V

### HISTORY OF DISCOVERIES

Leaving the problematic points with regard to the subject of Sinhalese sculpture to be treated and discussed under other chapters in their respective places an attempt will be made in this chapter to place on record, by way of reference and further study, all available material coming within the purview of sculpture. It should be borne in mind that the reference to remains are treated *per se*. It is also inevitable that as fresh light comes to be shed on the subject or objects, the present record may stand in need of alteration. Such changes should be welcome generally and would be particularly welcome by the research worker himself.

What the reader will find in this chapter is a narrative that should provide both an introduction to the sculptured monuments known to have existed or discovered so far, as well as an appropriate background to the rest of the chapters that follow. The material has not been arranged in chronological order in all cases as the different classes and subjects have had to be presented together.

Frequent reference has been made to certain large images discovered at Anuradhapura and now lying in splendid isolation. Considerable doubt and speculation regarding their identity and date have been prevailing both among the less informed as well as the better informed. No doubt these appear to belong to an ancient phase of sculpture, if not the earliest surviving. Their state of preservation is remarkably good when considered in the context of their supposed antiquity.

The stone material used for their execution may have contributed largely to the satisfactory condition of survival. The careful and able execution may have helped to preserve still some artistic quality. There are few such isolated specimens that for all their study elude identification still. The three oldest images of this class are of a unique nature and even the later ones are remarkably impressive as works of art.

One of the three images was discovered near Ambasthale Dagoba at Mihintale and has been popularly identified as the representation of King Devanampiyatissa. What was actually discovered were the remains of an erect statue in four pieces. These are placed together on a circular base 6' 5" in height in an attitude of devotion. The arms have been broken off at the

shoulders and unfortunately have not been recovered. The king is clothed in dhoti which extends as far as the ankles. The upper portion of the figure remains bare except for the elaborately designed conical cap or pear shaped head-dress. Earrings are worn and the neck is bejewelled. Originally the image seems to have been afforded shelter beneath a covered structure.<sup>1</sup>

The second is a colossal dolomite figure supposed to be a standing king or Bodhisatva. This has been traditionally identified with King Dutugemunu. It has been discovered on the platform of Ruanweliseya<sup>2</sup> standing on a mounted base in a dilapidated shrine in the company of three other standing Buddha figures. The image is 10 feet in height and is in a very fair state of preservation. Both arms are broken at a point close to the armpit.

The image is covered with royal attire below the waist, the lower garment being a copious dhoti with belt and sash. The upper body is bare. The head-dress is very handsome but simple. The pendulous ears carry large heavy rings. Fashioned in the style of Amaravati in a severe but grand manner with a face that is handsome but carrying an expression pleasing in the extreme and exceedingly dignified.<sup>3</sup> "The so-called Duttagamani statue is a combination of the fullness of Mathura sculpture with a certain stiffness that may be the result of inexperience in the carving of portrait statues in Ceylon."<sup>4</sup>

The third image supposed to belong to this same ancient period is also a colossus and has been found near the Ruanweliseya. This is popularly identified as King Bhatiya Tissa.<sup>5</sup> It is fashioned in dolomite and has been found broken in three pieces. But its state of preservation is poor. The image stands about 8 feet in height with clasped hands in the position of adoration.<sup>6</sup> It is depicted wearing a loosely flowing dhoti from the waist. The upper body is left bare. Around the neck is worn a jewelled collar. The distended ears bear weighty rings. The head-dress is in the shape of a pear-shaped cap depicted in a fashion similar to the other two. It has a legend in the script of the period. The image is surprisingly close to the period of the Buddha image in India and may be in the style of pre-Buddhist sculpture of Ceylon.<sup>7</sup>

1. Smither, A.R.A.—p. 147.

Smither *ibid* - p. 11.

2. Coomaraswamy H.I.I.A.—p. 161 - fig. 294.

3. A.R.A.—p. 3.

4. A.A.I. p. 202

5. 19 B.C.—A.D. 9.

6. A.R.A.—p. 35.

7. D. T. Devendra—Buddha image and Ceylon—p. 30.

Could these figures that are found in close association not be those of saints or religious teachers rather than those of kings? <sup>1</sup> If the aforementioned four figures found together are representations of the preceding Buddhas, then the fifth that is larger than the rest may be that of the Bodhisatva, the future Buddha Maitriya. <sup>2</sup> In that case the image supposed to be that of Bhatiya Tissa with hands in adoration may have been that of the royal benefactor. <sup>3</sup> This theory is most unlikely and cannot be maintained in any case without definite evidence since Maitriya Buddha idea may be a little too early to have found sculptural expression at such an early period. This is what B. Rowland says about such Buddha figures—"The Buddha figures have an awe-inspiring hieratic quality induced by their massive scale of proportions and the rather archaic rigidity of pose. It needs but a glance to see in them a Sinhalese adaptation of the type of Buddha image fashioned at Amaravati under the later Andhra dynasty. To an even greater degree than the Andhra prototypes these statues have a heaviness and grandeur immediately suggestive of the effigies made under the Kushans at Matura. The treatment of the drapery of the sanghati, with the folds repressed in a combination of incised lines and raised ridges, follows the style of the Amaravati workshops, and another characteristic trade mark of this South Eastern Indian style is the voluminous billowing fold at the bottom of the robes." <sup>4</sup>

It is surprising to note the absence of any isolated images of this type for a very long period. Whether the practice was abandoned at a subsequent period or no remains have been discovered none can say for certain. The other isolated colossus of this class is the famous image close to the bund of Topawewa at Polonnaruwa and this is believed to be that of Parakrama Bahu the Great.

This large but fine image <sup>5</sup> is hewn out of a massive boulder of rock and it stands about 100 yards below the bund of Topawewa against the rock boulder from which it is cut. It is 12 feet in height. The roll or ola book, loin cloth, appearance and pose stamp it as representing some elderly guru or religious teacher. No inscription or clue has yet been found to help to date the site or statue. <sup>6</sup> "This representation of a bearded sovereign holding a yoke as emblem of the king's burden is one of the finest pieces of sculpture

1. H.F.A.—p. 147.

2. A.R.A.—p. 3.

3. B.A.I.C.J.—pp. 84 - 85.

4. A.A.I. p. 201.

5. A.S.C.—1893—p.1

6. A.S.C.—1904—p. 4.

in Ceylon. It combines a feeling for volume and weightiness comparable to the great yakshas of the Maurya period..... It has something of the feeling of the bronzes of the Chola period."<sup>1</sup>

It may be neither the statue of King Parakrama the Great nor a Buddhist Abbot but of some Hindu Guru clad in a loin cloth. The dress, ornaments, heavy build and features as well as thick beard suggest that it is a religious teacher. It may be Kapila for whom Parakrama built a dwelling. The forearms support a book which sags realistically showing obvious skill of the sculptor in carving. This figure stands 8' 6" above the rock floor.<sup>2</sup>

The image at Potgul Vehera can hardly be that of a royal personage. It bears the aspect of the rishi in which case it may be Agastya or Kapila. In any case it is a masterpiece of artistic expression. It<sup>3</sup> may belong to an earlier age than 1200 A.C. Sometimes also the image is known as Topawewa Statue as it stands full face pointing south. Bell<sup>4</sup> thinks it is Kapila. The statue is carved out of a granite boulder to the east of Topawewa bund. In any case the identification seems doubtful. But it does not seem at all impossible that the pious King should have wished to be represented in this fashion. Paranavitarne has made out that it is the image of a king.<sup>5</sup> But Devendra does not agree with this view.<sup>6</sup>

Remarkably enough the technique of execution here is the same as in the case of the stone figures at Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa. It is by no means a frigid composition but one that breathes dignity.<sup>7</sup> Carved as it is on the large rock in high relief at a site which was completely held under the sway of South Indians, it may be an image of an old Indian sage named Agastya.<sup>8</sup>

The statue of Mahinda standing erect at Gal Vihara may comprise one single composition with the other Buddha images although separated by a cross wall into compartments to hold each group. Except for the unusual position of the arms placed across the breast and its natural life-like pose it has nothing to distinguish it from the ancient statue of the Buddha as represented in Ceylon. Yet all the other details confirm the identity of the figure with that of the Buddha. The melancholic expression.

1. A.A.I. p. 206.

2. A.S.C.—1906—p. 11.

3. B.A.I.C.J.—pp. 88 - 89.

4. H.F.A.—p. 149.

5. S. Paranavitarne—1952—*Artibus Asiae* Vol. XV, No. 3—on statue at Potgul Vehera, Polonnaruwa.

6. D.T. Devendra—"Ceylon Daily News" of 9. 10. 1956.

7. H.I.I.A.—p. 164, fig. 301.

8. J.S.C. Vol. I, pt. 3, p. 98, pl. 56.

of this standing figure is probably due to the effect of weathering. The figure is simply a standing Buddha in one of the three positions.<sup>1</sup>

The listless attitude and the sorrow stricken countenance represent the grief of a mourner. The proximity of this figure to the head of the Buddha, the wearied posture of the body itself, the disposition of the crossed arms and the inexpressible sadness of face tend to confirm that it may be Ananda weeping at the Parinirvana of the Master. Evidence from Ajanta sculpture and painting from the Demalamahaseya (Veluvanarama) also seems to confirm that it is Ananda. It is a "marvellously human statue vitalized in granite for the ages to come".<sup>2</sup> It is in fact one of the most imposing and interesting statues in Ceylon.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand it is suggested that this and the other figure of the Buddha were not intended to constitute one composite group as is evidenced by the partitioning cross wall. The absence of ushnisa and urna as well as the unusual attitude of the arms seem to indicate that it is not Buddha.<sup>4</sup> But it must not be forgotten altogether that these details may have been originally depicted in paint. The hair is arranged in ringlets as in the manner of the Buddha.<sup>5</sup> After all the designation of Ananda may be modern and popular for except perhaps in China Ananda scarcely appears in Buddhist iconography.<sup>6</sup>

The question of origin and development of the Buddha figure in Ceylon will be considered in a later chapter. Here it is only proposed to record the existing references so as to make the reader acquainted with the topic. Stone images of the Buddha may have been fashioned during Devanampiyatissa's day, for it is said that this king placed a great and beautiful image in the Thuparama.<sup>7</sup> The form<sup>8</sup> of the Buddha also finds mention in about 200 B.C. The chapter<sup>9</sup> on the Maha Thupa contains some evidence about the Buddha image. It is said that "a thousand lamps with oil and white wicks burning perpetually in 12 places adorning the Blessed (Buddha) with this offering were placed."<sup>10</sup> Also the relic chamber of Ruanveliseya is said to have contained

1. A.S.C. 1926, p. 11, A.S.C. 1893, p. 11, J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 229, for full views.
2. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1.
3. H.F.A.—p. 150, pl. 104.
4. B.A.I.C.J.—p. 88.
5. Ibid—p. 88.
6. H.I.E.A.—p. 244, Also see *Artibus Asiae - Devendra*—Vol. XIX (2)
7. Mahavamsa—Ch. 36 vv. 128. 129.
8. Ibid—Ch. 17, p. 120, v. 52.
9. Ibid—Ch. 30, p. 204, vv. 72, 73.
10. Ibid—Ch. 32, p. 223—v. 37.

a good image of the Buddha. Some doubt may be entertained about the existence of a Buddha image even during 100 B.C. in Ceylon, but it is not at all impossible that images of precious metals were made long before any in stone.<sup>1</sup>

King Vasabha (66 A.D.) made four beautiful images to be kept in the fair courtyard of the Great Bodhi Tree.<sup>2</sup> At a site called Gomalakanda, Anuradhapura, 200 A.D. was found an old slab carved with the Buddha figure engaged back to back.<sup>3</sup> King Jettha Tissa (263 A.D.) took away from the Thuparama an image and set it up in the Arama of the Pacinatissa Pabbata.<sup>4</sup> From here the king sent for the Great Stone image and set it up in the Abhayagiri. This movement of images from site to site is an indication of the practice of transporting images as necessity demanded. This requirement had to be borne in mind when making such images. To avoid such transfer certain images may have been carved out of rock *in situ*. Mahavamsa also establishes the existence of Buddha figures during the third centuries B.C. to 200 A.D.

King Mahanama 300 A.D. made two bronze images and set them up on the west side of the temple of the Great Bodhi Tree.<sup>5</sup> Then Silameghavanna, 301 A.D., honoured the stone image of the Buddha at Abhayagiri by an offering.<sup>6</sup> Also he had an image of gold made corresponding to the size of Mahinda.<sup>7</sup> The king in addition caused to be made the images of Ittiya (Uttiya, Sambala, Bhaddasala) and placed these on the same spot as where the image of Mahinda stood.<sup>8</sup> The evidence relating to Buddha image is nicely brought out by Devendra in his book "The Buddha Image in Ceylon" published in 1957.

The images of the ancient times seem to have been fashioned in parts—arms, legs, etc., being affixed to the trunk subsequently. This facilitated the transport of heavy stone images. King Buddhadasa, 337 A.D., had placed jewels on the eyes of the Buddha image in the Abhayagiri Vihara during his day and these had been stolen by the time of Dhatusena.<sup>9</sup> King Buddhadasa himself erected images.<sup>10</sup> King Upatissa II, 400 A.D., erected an image in the Patimageha situated in a northerly direction from

1. H.I.I.A. - p. 160.
2. Mahavamsa—Ch. 35, p. 252 - v. 89
3. C.A.S. 1891—p. 7.
4. Mv. Ch. 37, p. 269—v. 31.
5. Mv. Ch. 37, p. 269—v. 31.
6. Cv. Ch. 44, p. 80—v. 68.
7. Cv. Ch. 4 - v. 64—78.
8. Cv. Ch—v. 87.
9. Cv. p. 16—v. 123.
10. Cv. p. 16—v. 175.

the Mangala Chaitya.<sup>1</sup> He also built on the south-west corner of the palace a house with an image of the Buddha. Besides, the king is credited with having made an image wholly of gold and placed it in a chariot. It also confirms the regular practice of carrying images in chariots during processions.<sup>2</sup>

By the time of Dhatusena, 455 A.D., the eyes of the Buddha image made during Buddhadasa's day had been stolen and this king made a pair of costly jewels into the eyes, a gleaming diadem of rays, a shining coil of hair out of dark blue gems, a bandolier and a tuft of down (between the brows) and a golden garment. At this time there appears to have been special regard paid to this particular stone image manifestly held peculiarly sacred and often referred to under a number of different names.<sup>3</sup> This same king is also said to have imported into the Island an image of Maitreya Buddha (455 - 473 A.D.).

The various religious festivals mentioned during the early Christian period may have had numerous forms of respectful expression in material form. King Dhatusena, 455 A.D., is recorded as having made a diadem of rays for the Buddha image known as Abhiseka.<sup>4</sup> At the same time there was revived regal interest in Buddhism. Dhatusena seems to have been not only a builder of large tanks but was also a builder and restorer of temples and images.

The king also made an image of the Venerable Thera Mahinda. Then he had it brought to the spot where the Thera's body had been cremated and that is to the north side of the Thuparama.<sup>5</sup> He had a diadem of rays made for the image of the world teacher named Upasambha.<sup>6</sup>

During Kassapa's time, 473 A.D., Migara, the king's Commander-in-Chief built a house for the Victor Abhisekha and arranged a festival greater than that for the stone image of the Buddha. But this was instituted according to his desire as a dedicatory festival. However, for some reason Kassapa I did not allow this due to his desire to avoid any misunderstanding or religious conflict between two dissentient groups. Nevertheless, the incident leads one to believe the existence of two rivals vying with each other for superiority. At least here we notice two images of the

1. Cv. p. 16—v. 175.

2. Cv. p. 18—vv. 183 - 184.

3. As Sita Satthar, Sita Sambuddha, Sitamagamundra and Kalasita Satthar see Cv. Ch. 38, v. 61 ft. note. 4.

4. Cv. Ch. 38., v. 67.

5. Cv. Ch. 38, v. 58.

6. Cv. Ch. 38, v. 66.

Buddha held in esteem by two groups representing two ideologies. These were the Abhisekha Buddha and Sila Buddha. Whilst the former was the new concept of the unorthodox school the latter belonged to the orthodox school of Buddhism.

Kassapa built a Vihara and presented it to the image of the Supreme Buddha.<sup>1</sup> There also prevailed the popular practice of making offerings, arranging festivals and organizing processions for the Buddha images. There can be no doubt that two chief images of the day continued to be Victor Buddha and Saviour Buddha (Metteyya). King Mahanaga, 553 A.D. set up images of the King of Sages.<sup>2</sup>

Aggabodhi I, 571 A.D., decided to set up the image of Thera Mahinda on the dyke of the Mahindatala tank and decreed that the image should be brought there.<sup>3</sup> He also placed on the Unnavalli Vihara a stone image of the Master.<sup>4</sup> Aggabodhi II had four images built for the shrine Thuparama.<sup>5</sup>

Moggallana III, 614 A.D., made images and repaired what were in disrepair.<sup>6</sup> Silakala had images made in 617 A.D.<sup>7</sup> Dappula I, 644 A.D., built an image house for the Victor Buddha. Further, he adorned it with a tuft of hair (urna) and a bandolier of gold. He also made a statue fifteen cubits high of the Saviour Metteyya.<sup>8</sup> Also the brother of Dappula I, 652 A.D., set up a stone image of the Buddha at Rohana.<sup>9</sup>

Mahinda II, 787 A.D., made of pure gold an image of the Master at a cost of 60,000 kahapanas and also furnished it with a costly diadem of jewels. Later a magnificent dedicatory festival was also arranged in its honour.<sup>10</sup> The king also had costly images of gods fashioned to be placed in the shrines.<sup>11</sup> In the Vihara called Jeta, King Aggabodhi, 843 A.D., made a golden image of the Master and on its delivery to the Bodhi Temple he held a sacrificial festival.<sup>12</sup>

Sena I, 846 A.D., maintained the kingly tradition of making images of the Buddha and he made one of gold and caused it to be brought to the city. But unfortunately the Pandu king overcame

1. Cv Ch. 39—p. 44, v. 13.
2. Cv. Ch. 41—p. 61, v. 95.
3. Cv. Ch. 42—68, vv. 29-30.
4. Cv. Ch. 42—p. 67, v. 19.
5. Cv. Ch. 42—p. 72, v. 57.
6. Cv. Ch. 44—p. 79, v. 49.
7. Cv. Ch. 42—p. 68, v. 29.
8. Cv. Ch. 45—p. 95, vv. 61-62.
9. Cv. Ch. 45—p. 93, vv. 44-45.
10. Cv. Ch. 48—p. 123, v. 137.
11. Cv. Ch. 48—p. 124, v. 153.
12. Cv. Ch. 49—p. 135, v. 77.

Sena and took away valuable treasures.<sup>1</sup> There were taken from the Ratnapasada the golden image of the Master, and the two jewels which had been set as eyes in the stone image of the Prince of Sages ..... and the golden images here and there in the viharas. This may refer to the golden image set up by Mahinda II in the Ratnapasada which he had built in the Abhayagiri. This again shows that the Buddha images were popularly established with the Mahayana tradition.

Fortunately, Sena, II, 866 A.D., after his victory in India observed the pillage caused by the Pandu kings during his predecessor's reign. On ascending the splendid Ratnapasada he beheld the pedestal of the golden Buddha, whereon formerly the image stood empty. He had this filled again. He caused to be set up in proper places where they stood before, the golden images disturbed and displaced during recent Tamil invasions.<sup>2</sup>

Sena II even brought to the newly restored Lohapasada an image of the Buddha of closely jointed gold mosaic.<sup>3</sup> He protected the Buddha image in the Mahasena Vihara by granting a village and watchers. He built image houses. He protected the frequently mentioned stone image of the Buddha, Prince of Sages, by restoring the temple to where it was.<sup>4</sup> This king also brought the image of Ananda to the town and walked round it facing to the right.<sup>5</sup> Udaya I, 901 A.D., granted a number of villages for the maintenance of Kholaddhiya image of the Buddha as well as for the festivals connected with it.<sup>6</sup> This may be the bronze image<sup>7</sup> referred to earlier.

Kassapa IV, 912 A.D., made three stone images for the three fraternities. This indicates the existence of three sects that were treated independently. During the reign of Kassapa V, 929 A.D., Deva Sakkasenapati's mother, made for the image of the Master in the Maricivatti a diadem jewel, a net of rays, an umbrella and a garment.<sup>8</sup>

The Mahesi of Udaya II, 852 A.D., Sangha placed a dark blue jewel diadem on the stone images of the Buddha and also instituted at great cost a sacrificial festival for the Master.<sup>9</sup>

1. Cv. Ch. 50, p. 140, v. 34.

2. Cv. Ch. 51, p. 149, v. 23.

3. Cv. Ch. 51, p. 153, v. 69.

4. Cv. Ch. 51, p. 154, v. 78.

5. Cv. Ch. 51, p. 155, v. 80.

6. Cv. Ch. 49, p. 128, v. 14.

7. Cv. Ch. 49, p. 128, vv. 14-17.

8. Cv. Ch. 52, p. 168, v. 65.

9. Cv. Ch. 51, p. 156, vv. 87-88.

Mahinda IV, 975 A.D., appears to have fashioned another important stone image at the house of the Sacred Bo-Tree in Maha Vihara.<sup>1</sup> Even at this time provision had to be made to maintain the building for the images had to be sheltered in a house.<sup>2</sup> He set the eyes of the Great Statue of Mahinda with large brilliant rubies and made a network of gold for the feet.<sup>3</sup>

Udaya IV, 960 A.D., fashioned for the image of the Master in the Mahavihara a diadem of jewels which sparkled with the rays of the precious stones. One of the ladies of the harem Vidura honoured the image with a network of rays.<sup>4</sup> Also at a village called Kapirigama near Anuradhapura have been found small stone Buddhas belonging to the tenth century A.D. It is recorded that during the reign of Mahinda V, 1029 A.D., the Cholas carried away many gold images.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time similar images of the Buddha made in gold were being fashioned at Ruhuna. The great stone images of the Buddha at Anuradhapura seem to have been in disrepair and Mahinda V adorned those of them that survived intact with parasols.<sup>6</sup> Further, he is said to have repaired the great stone images of the Buddha. In the Atula-Vihara he made a golden image of the Lord of Sages of his own size. One great object of veneration at this time was the colossal stone image of the Buddha which was then known as Mangul Maha Sala Pilima.<sup>7</sup> It was housed in a special building provided with all requirements for its maintenance. He caused the eyes to be set with rubies as this was a particularly beautiful image.<sup>8</sup> The tradition of maintaining image houses and images in good repair continued down to the twelfth century at Polonnaruwa.<sup>9</sup> Queen Sunetra Maha Devi 1121 - 1142 A.D. had caves established with statues.<sup>10</sup>

King Parakrama Bahu I, 1153 A.D., had 476 images of diverse kinds made. It was the custom of great kings to restore, repair and construct images.<sup>11</sup> Then again he built 75 images and 43 images of diverse kinds. The images of the Metteyya Buddha also found favour with Parakrama Bahu I for he built three small statues.<sup>12</sup>

1. This was somewhere in 1026 - 1042 A.C.

2. E. Z. II p. 69 - 70.

3. E. Z. I, p. 227.

4. Cv. Ch. 53, p. 177, vv. 49-50.

5. Cv. Ch. 55, p. 188, vv. 20 - 21.

6. E. Z. V, p. 237.

7. E. Z. V, p. 103.

8. E. Z. I p. 228.

9. E. Z. II p. 254.

10. E. Z. II p. 189, p. 196.

11. C. V. Ch. 79, p. 117, vv. 15 - 16.

12. C. V. Ch. 79, p. 123.

The Gal Vihara or Kalugal Vihara at Polonnaruwa, 1150 A.D., is one of the most interesting archaeological sites in the Island. It is a veritable mine of both big and small sculpture in stone preserved in their pristine setting. Here is still preserved clear proof of the technique of stone carving, chiselling and fashioning. Out of the living rock have been carved the images of the Buddha in a variety of postures. These images form one composite whole and may be considered a composition in the narrative style, if the partitioning cross walls are ignored.<sup>1</sup>

The irresistible charm and sublimity of the Gal Vihara could not but appeal forcibly. The grand array of gigantic figures, calm, immovable and majestic must inevitably inspire silent awe. This vihara stands unrivalled in Ceylon.<sup>2</sup> The following have commented on this Vihara and its images :—

1820—Lieut. Fagan

1841—Major Forbes

1855—Sir Samuel Baker

1860—Sir Emerson Tennent

1868—J. W. Birch and Lieut R. N. Steward.

In 1876 J. Fergusson in the "History of Architecture" and Burrows in his "Guideto Buried Cities" refer to these. The Gal Vihara stands for all time as a fine example of colossal stone sculpture, ambitiously conceived and magnificently perfected according to oriental artistic canons. The rock face had to be cut back to a depth of nearly fifteen feet for sculpturing the three large figures.<sup>3</sup> Even the huge figures carved at Tantrimalai though almost as large fail, from not being continuous, to impress sight and mind as do these gigantic figures at Polonnaruwa.<sup>4</sup>

The details of the limbs of the four figures at Gal Vihara are recorded in tabular form, viz., sedent Buddha, standing Buddha, recumbent Buddha and Ananda.<sup>5</sup> It is recorded that King Parakrama adorned the Sermon House at Polonnaruwa with many images of the Victor made in gold. He himself placed this in the eyes of the image.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the wealth of sculptural material the Buddha figures of the twelfth century have become frigid. Colossal figures have become the fashion in both rock cut and brick built

1. C. V. Ch. 78, p. 111 vv. 74, 75 & A.S.C., A.R. 1907.

2. A.S.C. 1907, p. 7.

3. A.S.C. 1907, p. 10.

4. A.S.C. 1907, p. 10.

5. A.S.C. 1907, p. 36.

6. C.V. Ch. 73, p. 9. vv. 77-78.

plastered material. Of these the best examples are at Gal Vihara.<sup>1</sup> Smaller Buddha figures in stone are also very fine examples of chaste workmanship.<sup>2</sup> In these examples at Gal Vihara which are the best available from this period, the drapery is indicated by the typical groove method, each fold being marked by two grooves.<sup>3</sup>

King Nissanka Malla records very clearly the attention paid to Buddha images. He visited Dambulla caves and ordered the setting up of 73 standing, sitting and recumbent statues of the Buddha. He had them gilded and caused offerings to be made.<sup>4</sup> The Culavamsa confirms this fact.<sup>5</sup>

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1. J.S.C. Vol. I, pt. 3.

2. See the Vijjadhara cave with paintings at Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa.

3. J.S.C. Vol. I, pt. 3, p. 98, pl. 55.

4. E.Z. II, p. 173, 177 -

5. C.V. Ch. 80, p. 129, v. 23, see f.n. 3.

## CHAPTER VI

### STUDIES IN SCULPTURE

It is well to remember certain facts in the study of sculpture. To the cupidity of the invader and to the inclemency of the tropical weather must be attributed in great measure the blame for the destruction of much that may have been supremely beautiful. To the strange behaviour of the foreigner can also be allotted a share in the vandalism perpetrated through ignorance and arrogance. To the Sinhalese in particular and the others in general must be assigned a part of the blame for the indifference to and disregard of the history of this Island in so far as they felt a sense of shame for their own culture due perhaps to domination or loss of nerve.

Benjamin Rowland concludes his chapter on Ceylon Sculpture thus: "It is with regret that we leave the subject of art in Ceylon, an art which, over a period of more than fifteen hundred years, reveals great vigour and exquisite taste in architecture, sculpture and painting, a marvellous interpretation that can scarcely be matched anywhere in the Buddhist world. The best of the architecture and the best of the sculpture have a truly classic quality of balance and perfection and constitute final models of technical probity."<sup>1</sup>

The prime reason why every Ceylonese should be beholden to the Archaeological Survey is that due to its unremitting labours it has been possible to discover and preserve the wealth of sculptural remains that are now available on view within doors and in the field.

But compared with those of other lands, particularly India, Sinhalese monuments have escaped to a remarkable degree this cupidity and vandalism, the inclemency and disregard. This may be explained in a way as being due to the Buddhist veneration and homage paid to the monuments since all sculpture without exception served that ultimate purpose. What destruction, what mutilation or what displacement there may have been that was the inevitable result of war between races or ideologies such as war between South Indians and Sinhalese, internal conflicts of political and religious factions and animosities between self-seeking petty rivals.<sup>2</sup>

However, on the positive side there are numerous references to the art of construction, reconstruction, repair and restoration of monuments both in the Mahavamsa and the inscriptions as

1. A.A.I. p. 210.

2. B.A.I.C.J.—p. 75.

well as Sinhalese literature of a later day. "Often these descriptions are invaluable in enabling us to reconstruct the original appearance of temples almost totally destroyed or remodelled; no less important are the accounts of the methods of building and the ceremonies attending the dedication of the shrines."<sup>1</sup> The flame of Buddhism kept burning under all emergencies and the fervour of devoted worship continued undiminished. The absence of the decorated railing and the casing slabs for the dagobas explain the absence also of fine stone sculpture to a certain degree.<sup>2</sup> But on the whole there is room for satisfaction and even a little pride that specimens worthy of the nation have been preserved and restored as the heritage of the Ceylonese. This is more than deserving of careful study and appreciation by our scholars versed in the language and trained in the technique. Let no one blindly say that such men are not available.

As a record of the studies so far made is an essential prerequisite for the proper understanding of sculpture, it is proposed to note the sculptural remains arranged according to various categories as follows :—

1. Buddha images seated
2. Buddha images standing
3. Buddha images reclining
4. Bodhisatva figures
5. Moonstones
6. Guardstones
7. Naga stones
8. Balustrades with Makara
9. Sculptured scenes
10. Chapels
11. Railing and Stelae
12. Miscellaneous sculpture
  - (a) Regional figures
  - (b) Elephants
  - (c) Lions
  - (d) Dwarfs
  - (e) Capitals of pillars
  - (f) Seals
  - (g) Vase and foliage
  - (h) Terracottas
  - (i) Signs and figures engraved on stone.

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1. A.A.I.—p. 198.

2. A.S.C. 1890—p. 5.

Throughout the course of Sinhalese sculpture there have been three well recognized types of Buddha figure known and distinguished as such by the sculptor and the people. These are the seated Buddha (ඔත් පිළිම) the standing Buddha (පිටි පිළිම) and the reclining Buddha (සෙත් පිළිම). One cannot say with absolute certainty what particular type was specially popular and was preferred during any period. But from the type of specimens so far come to light it may be presumed that the seated figure was popular during the early period whilst the standing and reclining figures were common during the later times, particularly the twelfth century A.D.

### **Buddha (Seated)**

The earliest reference to a seated figure of the Buddha comes from the Culavamsa<sup>1</sup> and it says that on a throne to the East of the Bodhi Tree he (Gemunu) placed a shining golden Buddha image in a seated posture. The trunk and other limbs of the image were made only of beautifully shining jewels of different colours.

But the finest image so far discovered at Anuradhapura was a seated Stone Buddha which faced South. This was in an Image House at Toluvila. It is 5' 9" high and 5' 9" across the knees and is seated in an attitude of meditation (dyhana mudra). It is the least damaged of all the colossal Seated Buddha images, yet discovered.<sup>2</sup> It is however smaller than the Seated Buddha along the Outer Circular Road. In all other respects it can be considered as surpassing all those statues of the Jetavanarama ruins.<sup>3</sup> This is now to be seen in the Colombo Museum.<sup>4</sup> This is a perfect example of a Stone Buddha in dhyana mudra carved in granitic stone. "Although some Seated Buddhas from Anuradhapura are related to later Andhra models, the Indian prototype for this statue is to be sought in such Kushan images as the Buddha from Katra."<sup>5</sup>

A very noble figure in a serene and grand style has been found at Anuradhapura Circular Road. It resembles the Amaravati image and it is historically a very important sculptured image.<sup>6</sup> It measures 7' 6" in height and 7' 0" across the knees. It comes from the Abhayagiri area and is different from the standing figure at Ruvanveli Dagoba. It is hidden away in the parkland of Anuradhapura. The material is dark granite. It depicts the Buddha

1. Mv. Ch. 30, p. 204, vv. 72-73.

2. A.S.C. 1904 p. 2.

3. A.S.C. 1890 p. 3.

4. A.S.C. 1894, p. 4.

5. A.A.I. p. 202.

6. H.I.I.A. p. 161.

in meditation with folded legs and the hands resting on the lap. It is a most graceful work of art in which mental tranquillity is admirably expressed<sup>1</sup> and has been assigned to the fourth century A.D.

The seated Buddha from Pankuliya 600 A.D. is another very interesting image. This was discovered in a state of disrepair, being broken in two at the waist and bereft of arms. But the upper portions of the body remained intact. The broken parts have been fitted and the image carefully restored. It now measures from hair to left instep 6' 9" and across the knees 6' 6". This image differs from most other images portrayed in dhyana mudra with folded arms and meditative stare. The classic features, simple expression and life like attitude as represented in the act of blessing "asirvada mudra" render this a variation from the ubiquitous "dhyana mudra." It rests on a chastely carved asana<sup>2</sup> of the common type and is an excellent piece of workmanship datable to the 10th century A.D.

A number of sedent Buddha images have been discovered at the Vijayarama Temple (800-900 A.D.) at Anuradhapura with attendant Buddhas or Arahant figures.<sup>3</sup> Of particular interest are the images found at Ratanapasada with an attendant statue on either side. These exemplify the prevalence of Mahayana sculpture<sup>4</sup> during 8th to 9th century A.D. The Buddha photographed at Pul-Eliya is seated against a slab. In shape it is like the guardstone of the period VII - IX century A.D. in the early moulded and decorated period. As the image is considerably wasted nothing can be known of its shape and details.<sup>5</sup>

Within the circle of pillars at Medirigiriya is a Buddha in stone seated on an asana. It is probably one of the four cardinally placed images.<sup>6</sup> There were nine Buddhas of different sizes around the small dagoba at Medirigiriya in rather a bad state of preservation.<sup>7</sup> Belonging to about the tenth century A.D. is another sedent Buddha image from Anuradhapura rock cut temple at Tambalagallewa.<sup>8</sup> At Kuda-Ambagaswewa is a stone Buddha seated within a 'pilimage' at the entrance to which is also a peculiar moonstone with a band of eight elephants.<sup>9</sup> This probably belongs to the 10th century A.D. Another such Buddha

1. B.A.I.C.J. p. 85.

2. A.S.C. 1891, p. 6.

3. A.S.C. 1891, p. 5.

4. A.S.C. 1912. - 13, p. 4.

5. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 97, pl. 49b.

6. A.S.C. 1897, p. 7, H.F.A. p. 145.

7. A.S.C. 1907, p. 32.

8. A.S.C. 1891, p. 32.

9. I bid, p. 9.

image was found at Moragoda with half the face split up<sup>1</sup> also assigned to the same date. At Mahapotane was a perfect sedent Buddha enshrined within a vihara of 24 pillars.<sup>2</sup>

At Komarikawela was found a colossal seated Buddha looking strangely weird. Although the head and body were weather worn the rest of the figures appeared well proportioned. It measured 7 ft. from head to foot and 6' 10" between the knees.<sup>3</sup> At Konwewa near the tank sluice is a fine sedent Buddha overshadowed by the Mucalinda Nagaraja.<sup>4</sup> Finally sculptured statues of the Buddha and Bodhisatvas have been found at Konketiya five miles south of Buttala.<sup>5</sup> A beautiful Bodhisatva head and a statue of a Buddha were found at Seruwavila.<sup>6</sup>

Also belonging to an early period is the headless Buddha figure in the Colombo Museum (No. 34). There is just that faint trace of freedom in treatment of drapery which would point to a period earlier than the vast mass of Ceylon Buddhas. The folds are indicated by convex ridges.<sup>7</sup> The Gal Vihara at Kurulpettagala is crowded with images, one of which is a sedent Buddha in stone.<sup>8</sup> An ancient bas-relief image of the Buddha in a sitting posture carved on the natural rock is at Isurumuniya. It probably dates from Chola times. The ('ot' pilima) seated image is well carved from the rock matrix by 11' 5" in height by 9' 3" in breadth by 6' 0" in depth. The figure is sculptured in three quarter round, seated well back on the throne. All iconographic details are observed and preserved.<sup>9</sup> There is another sedent Buddha cut in high sunk relief from the steep side of the rock undulation. The figure is 8 feet high seated under a 'Makara torana.' The execution falls short of the 'ot' pilima at Gal Vihara in excellence.<sup>10</sup> Beyond the caves at Maravidiya, Dimbulagala are two images of seated Buddhas in a much damaged condition.<sup>11</sup>

A sedent Buddha carved in granite has been found at the Vatadage, Polonnaruwa, at the north entrance. Although found in pieces these have been re-fitted.<sup>12</sup> Two more of the four large

1. A.S.C. 1891, p. 10.

2. A.S.C. 1891, p. 8.

3. A.S.C. 1891, p. 8.

4. Ibid, p. 8; H.I.A.I. p. 165.

5. A.S.C. 1926, 27, p. 7.

6. A.S.C. 1928, 29, p. 4, pl. 1 & 2.

7. J.S.C. Vol. I, pt. 3, pl. 52A.

8. A.S.C. 1896, p. 5.

9. A.S.C. 1907, p. 33.

10. A.S.C. 1896, p. 8.

11. A.S.C. 1897, p. 9.

12. A.S.C. 1904, p. 5.

Buddhas in grey granite have been restored.<sup>1</sup> These have been assembled and set up on their asanas.<sup>2</sup> The four Buddhas have been erected facing the four entrance stairways. The Vatadage may have been erected probably by Parakrama I as a "round temple of the Tooth Relic" and Nissanka Malla may have restored it.<sup>3</sup> From a Vihara No. 2 at Polonnaruwa an excellent and very uncommon small seated image<sup>4</sup> has been found belonging to the twelfth century A.D.

### **Buddha (Standing)**

The images of the standing Buddha do not seem to have been so commonly fashioned during the early period. At least many have not been discovered. It may also be that these were easily damaged owing to their standing position and consequently came to be broken down. Perhaps another reason could be that they were not popular owing to their unwieldy nature regarding accommodation. Two colossal dolomite figures<sup>5</sup> were found on the platform at Ruanweliseya. These are in grand style comparable to those of Amaravati, belonging to the second century A.D. One has been identified as Dutugemunu and the other as Bhatiya Tissa.

Three standing Buddha figures of more than life size have been found with broken arms. Presumably the right arm was raised in abhaya mudra (protection) whilst the left hand apparently held a monastic robe. In general appearance and style, in treatment of drapery with schematic folds, these images exhibit a close relationship to the Buddha type at Amaravati<sup>6</sup> of 200 A.D. The standing Buddha image made of marble in the round is in Amaravati style of 2nd century A.D. It stands 6 feet and it is the only one of its kind discovered so far. It came from Maha Iluppalama<sup>7</sup> and is now in the Archaeological Museum at Anuradhapura.

A mutilated seated image of the Buddha is to be seen in the jungle 400 yards to the west of the northern dagoba. It is larger than life size. The limbs have been separately carved and affixed. The eye sockets were bare leaving room for crystal or semi-precious stone.<sup>8</sup>

1. A.S.C. p. 6.

2. A.S.C. 1906, p. 23.

3. H.I.I.A. p. 165.

4. H.F.A. p. 150. pl. 103B.

5. H.I.I.A. p. 161—fig. 293, 200.

6. B.A.I.C.J.—p. 84.

7. A.S.C. 1952, p. 24.

8. A.S.C. 1936—p. 16.

A statue of the Buddha had been placed at the back of the sanctum at Kirivattehera Pilimage at Anuradhapura. Probably it stood 12 feet above the ground, but now only 9 feet of footless trunk remain cracked and disintegrated. The head and face are undamaged. The massive figure must have been deliberately overthrown by treasure seekers.<sup>1</sup> A standing image of the Buddha carved in stone was also found in a shrine along the Anuradhapura-Kurunegala Road. This has since been removed to the precincts of the Bodhi Tree.<sup>2</sup>

One may also observe the headless trunk of a standing Buddha near the cave, No. 12 at Sigiriya.<sup>3</sup> At Maligawela to the south-east of Badulla in Uva is a colossal image of the Buddha standing originally about 40 feet but now mutilated. It is carved out of one solid block of rock. It is equal to the Awkana Buddha image. Fashioned completely in the round, it has been transported to the site and set up on a pedestal 20 feet in diameter.<sup>4</sup> However, the most remarkable sculpture belonging to the Mahayana School is found near Wellawaya. Here is a group of colossal figures carved in rock. The Buddha image resembles the Buddhas found at Awkana and Sasseruwa. The figures are in high relief but some of the finer details have been completed in stucco and painted originally. These appear anterior to Polonnaruwa and are dated to about 9th century A.D.<sup>5</sup> A headless limestone Buddha standing 6 feet was discovered at Kuchchaveli superbly modelled in Amaravati style probably of 2nd century A.D. The unique feature is the presence of two rosettes below the robe between the ankles.<sup>6</sup>

Then there is also the famous colossal Buddha image at Awkana standing 46 feet in height which is the same as the image at Sasseruwa. It measures 38' 10" from head to foot; head, 6' 6" and length of foot is 6' 10".<sup>7</sup> The image is cut almost in full round out of one of the square boulders of about the same height and remains well preserved. The statue is slightly jointed to the original rock behind it by a narrow strip at the waist. It faces due east and must have been visible from the Kalawewa at which the image looks on.<sup>8</sup> The Kala Oya flows quite near by and the Kalawewa is within one and a half miles. The temple

1. A.S.C. 1893—p. 4.

2. A.S.C. 1895—p. 2.

3. A.S.C. 1895—p. 6-7.

4. A.S.C. 1934—p. 21.

5. J.S.C. Vol 2, pt. 3, p. 50, pl. 34.

6. A.S.C. 1955, p. 10, pl. la.

7. B.I.C. p. 82.

8. A.S.C. 1895, p. 6-7. Burrows' Buried Cities of Ceylon p. 75.

extends along and below the east side of a line of boulder rocks closely connected.<sup>1</sup>

Awkana Buddha is the largest and most impressive statue in the Island. Tradition attributes the work to the reign of Parakrama I<sup>2</sup>—i.e., about 1200 A.D. But another tradition says that King Dhatusena whilst living at this temple called Sinhagiri Vihara caused this Buddha image to be cut.<sup>3</sup> Paranavitarne suggests 8th century A.D. on the ground that a slab of stone used on a part of the image house is inscribed with the name of the donor in a script datable to between 5th and 8th century A.D.<sup>4</sup>

Another large but less effective image is carved merely in high sunk relief at the Sasseruwa Temple<sup>5</sup> situated in the North-Western Province. Sasseruwa hill comprises two mounds.<sup>6</sup> It is inferior in execution and has been dated to 1200 A.D. There are also at this same site a number of images in Vihara No. 2. One of these standing Buddhas is in two mudras.<sup>7</sup> The colossus stands on an unfinished low pedestal and measures 39' 3". Altogether it is least impressive.<sup>8</sup> The cliff dwarfs the statue which has been weathered badly in places.<sup>9</sup>

At the Jetavanarama, Polonnaruwa, there is a brick built standing figure of the Buddha that is heavily plastered. It is in asirvada Mudra. Undamaged the statue exclusive of Siraspota should have reached 41 feet and with pedestal 44'10". It is therefore the tallest statue yet known to have been constructed in Ceylon.

The colossal 'hiti' pilima wholly made of brick and mortar and plastered at Tivankage, Polonnaruwa, is badly preserved. It stands on a Padmasana.<sup>11</sup> It is in the Tivanka or Tribhanga posture. The hands are not conspicuous because the figure is damaged. It is the only tribhanga image found at Polonnaruwa. The row of figures and architectural features recorded in the Mahavamsa are still discernible. This image is different from that at Lankatilaka.<sup>12</sup> It contained an elixir for the eye.<sup>13</sup> The

1. A.S.C. 1895.—p. 6.

2. H.F.A. p. 150, pl. 103-c.

3. A.S.C. 1895—p. 5.

4. A.S.C. 1952—p. 33. Also A.S.C. 1955 p. 24 and B.I.C. plate . 11

5. Hatalispaha Korale, Wannī Hatpattu, just across the boundary from Nagampaha Korale.

6. A.S.C. 1895—p. 12.

7. A.S.C. 1895—p. 12.

8. A.S.C. 1895 - p. 12-13.

9. A.S.C. 1895—p. 6.

10. A.S.C. 1910 - p. 36, also J.S.C. Vol. 2, pl. 2, pt. 2, p. 171, pl. 90.

11. A.S.C. 1909 - p. 15.

12. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 3, p. 171, pl. 92.

13. CV. II, p. 105 - v. 39, also H.I.I.A. p. 164.

colossal standing figures of the Buddha are in abhaya mudra, the principal variation being the arrangement of folds, and shortening of under-garment. These remind one of the Bamian Giants and Jines.<sup>1</sup>

The third image erected by Parakrama I is that of the standing Buddha in the Lankatilaka Temple at Polonnaruwa. This image was also known by the name of Lankatilaka and was of the size of the living Buddha<sup>2</sup> according to the legendary tradition. Bell says that the statue was 41 feet when intact.<sup>3</sup>

It projects from the back wall of the sanctum and faces the rising sun.<sup>4</sup> At the Heta-da-ge, Polonnaruwa, are also three fairly large standing Buddha images. These are at the northern end of the inner shrine facing the entrance.<sup>5</sup>

In the Dowa Temple near Bandarawela is a colossal statue of the standing Buddha carved in low relief on the face of a rocky boulder.<sup>6</sup> This figure is unfinished and probably for this reason is called 'kumbal pilima' in Sinhalese. Although it is supposed to be later than 12th century A.D. it is mentioned to show that the tradition continued into later times.

#### **Buddha (Reclining).**

The recumbent Buddha image does not appear to have been popular in early times. At least no remains of it belonging to the early period of Sinhalese art have so far come to light. It is possible that these have suffered complete destruction. It may be remembered that after the ninth century the recumbent Buddha image begins to manifest itself. A recumbent colossal figure of the Buddha made in clay has been found at Piduragala, Sigiriya.<sup>7</sup>

At Ataragallewa near Elahera in the Matale District there is a colossal Buddha image in the attitude of Parinirvana carved on the side of a rock. The image appears to have been inside a shrine at one time. It is apparently different from the Gal Vihara figure at Polonnaruwa and may belong to the 9th or 10th century A.D.<sup>8</sup>

The Parinirvana of the Buddha is also sculptured in the canonical posture at Gal Vihara at Polonnaruwa. It measures 46' 4". The depression of the bolster is clearly delineated. Anatomical

1. B.I.C. - Devendra - p. 74.

2. C.V. Ch. 78—p. 108, v. 54.

3. A.S.C. 1909.

4. B.A.I.C.J.—p. 87.

5. A.S.C. 1900—p. 7.

6. A.S.C. 1926—27, p. 7.

7. A.S.C. 1899—p. 9.

8. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 3, p. 155, pl. 82.

lines of the figure are disconnected. The figure is not so well executed as that of Ananda nearby.<sup>1</sup> Each fold is marked by three grooves. This feature becomes accentuated as time goes on. It could, therefore, be considered later than the other three images at Gal Vihara.<sup>2</sup> It is cut out of the rock and stands to the proper left of the Ananda image.<sup>3</sup> It is impressive because of its enormous size but is also devoid of pathos and can hardly be called a thing of beauty.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the colossal size combined with the picturesque setting makes this unique monument somewhat impressive.<sup>5</sup>

From Tantrimalai comes another recumbent image of the Buddha. Tantrimalai is in the largest division of Nuwara-Kalaviya in Valachchiya Korale, N.C.P.<sup>6</sup> The image is cut on the side of a rock and measures 36 feet from head to foot.<sup>7</sup> The state of preservation is bad, perhaps due to the very dry atmosphere. The right arm and nose are broken. It could very well belong to the same period as the image at Polonnaruwa.<sup>8</sup> There seems little doubt that it is a copy of the Gal Vihara recumbent Buddha. It lies much in the same manner and direction on its right side, the head resting on a bolster.<sup>9</sup> It is rather interesting to observe that the Parinirvana figures are rare in India, but there is one in the modern cave at Ajanta (No 26). That is of course only 23'-3" long. There are also others in the latest caves at Nasik and Salsette. Strangely enough none of these figures ever attained such dimensions as this.<sup>10</sup>

### **Bodhisattvas**

There are a number of Bodhisattva heads clearly discernible as such. A limestone head of a Bodhisattva was unearthed near the south gate of Ruanveliseya. The sculpture is in the round. It is a little larger than life size and appears ancient. It may undoubtedly be a portrait head of a royal personage.<sup>11</sup> A Bodhisattva head from Thuparama, Anuradhapura, belongs to the early period. The rounded softness of this image contrasts with the somewhat dry production of the later stages.<sup>12</sup>

1. A.S.C. 1907, p. 14.

2. A.S.C. ch. 72, vv. 76, also J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 98.

3. H.I.I.A.—p. 163.

4. B.A.I.C.J.—p. 87-88.

5. A.S.C. 1938—p. 11.

6. A.S.C. 1896—p. 4.

7. A.S.C. 1907—p. 34.

8. A.S.C. 1896—p. 8.

9. A.S.C. 1911-12—p. 68.

10. H.I.E.A. p. 245.

11. A.S.C. 1937—p. 7.

12. See Vol. V, pt. 3, p. 95, pl 46 & Colombo Museum No. 50.

At Situlpavva 16 miles N.E. of Tissamaharama in Magam Pattu have been found two Bodhisattva statues. One of them is headless, whilst the other is fairly satisfactorily preserved. This is one of the most remarkable pieces of sculpture so far found in the Island. At the same site have been found pieces of other sculpture. The torso of a Buddha carved in marble is suggestive of Amaravati School of Sculpture.<sup>1</sup>

King Jettha Tissa made a beautiful image representative of Bodhisattva as beautiful as if done by miraculous power.<sup>2</sup> The Bodhisattva maitreya heads belonging to 400 A.D. at Anuradhapura resemble those of the severe grand style of Amaravati.<sup>3</sup> It is recorded that Dhatusena erected a Bodhisattva image in the Bahumangala chetiya.<sup>4</sup> He also had the complete equipment of a king prepared for the Bodhisattva maitreya.<sup>5</sup> Later it is said that Mahinda II, also had a splendid Bodhisattva made and placed it in the Silamegha home for Bhikkunis. Probably this refers to Metteyya.<sup>6</sup> Then it is recorded that Sena II, brought figures of Bodhisattvas into Manimekha Pasada.<sup>7</sup>

From the Vijayarama temple at Anuradhapura comes the representation of a four armed deity attended by a female figure. It may have been in disrepair and hence no details are preserved. The deity holds down one of the arms in a bestowing attitude and below is the crouching figure of a "preta" which bears an upturned face and an uplifted head to receive ambrosia. This is a characteristic representation of Bodhisattva Avalokita and the female is Tara, his consort.<sup>8</sup>

The colossal statue of Natha Bodhisattva Avalokaitesvara popularly known as Kustaraja in Sinhalese has been preserved at Weligama 12 miles west of Matara. It is a standing figure in kingly attire, probably of god Natha.<sup>9</sup> About half a mile east of Maligawila, Uva, at Dambegoda Vihara is a site containing the colossal image of a Bodhisattva. This figure is badly mutilated and lies prone. It is gigantic in size and may have been twenty feet when erect.<sup>10</sup> At a site called Moragoda, in Padawiya

1. A.S.C. 1934—p. 20.

2. C.V. Ch. 37, p. 9, v. 102.

3. H.I.I.A.—p. 161, fig. 289, fig. 290.

4. C.V. Ch. 38, p. 35, v. 65.

5. Ibid, v. 68.

6. C.V. Ch. 48, p. 123, v. 139, f. n. 5.

7. C.V. Ch. 51, p. 154, v. 77.

8. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 49—pl. 32 (a & b) and 6th Progress Report by Bell 1891 July-Sept.

9. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1—p. 49, pl. 33.

10. A.S.C. 1934 - p. 22.

itself, was also discovered a figure of "Padmapani,"<sup>1</sup> (more probably Surya) belonging to about tenth century A.D. It has since been removed to the museum at Anuradhapura. Mahinda IV gilded the statue of the Bodhisattva,<sup>2</sup> in the 'nil-paha.' (නිල පෙහ පරිපමිද).

At the Vijjadhara cave at Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa, stands as an attendant, a Bodhisattva to either side of the Buddha. Girt in a waist cloth, brahmin janvi cord, elaborate tapering Makula and profusely ornamented, the image carries a fly whisk.<sup>3</sup>

Another Bodhisattva head similar to that found at the south Gate of Ruanweli was found near Siva Devale No. 2 at Polonnaruwa. It is life size and executed in coarse-grained limestone. The style of hair-dressing, the head and ear ornaments seem to indicate that it is the head of some royal lady. Could this have been a consort of one of the earliest kings of Polonnaruwa? It is decayed and mutilated. Nevertheless, the image has been well executed.<sup>4</sup>

The Moonstone (irihandagala or Sandakadapahana in Sinhalese, Padmasilam or arohacandra (half-moon in Sanskrit) is an architectural feature incorporated into the unit of the Porch for purposes of embellishment. It does not enter into the constructional elements of a building nor does it fulfil any architectural function. Nevertheless, it has entered into the scheme of the entrance porch to any worthy building.

The moonstone may have existed earlier as an element in temple architecture in India. It is found in South Indian temples at the foot of the steps leading to the entrance of a building or shrine. These were also seen at the outer doorways and are known as lotus slabs, the general pattern resembling the lotus flower. But the fact that it has assumed a distinct individuality as a beautiful work of art in Ceylon cannot be denied. There is nothing comparable to this in India.

Perhaps the moral idea has been worked on the original Indian basis leading to the creation of a unique form that is distinctly beautiful in Sinhalese sculpture. The moonstones vary in size both at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa although the main arrangement in the composition and design remain alike with regard to the chief elements. The basic order of animals used is elephant, horse, lion and bull at the penultimate row. Almost for 1500 years these animals and patterns seem to have been

1. A.S.C. 1891—p. 10.

2. E.Z.I. p. 228, also Mv. Ch. 42, v. 39.

3. A.S.C. 1907—p. 12.

4. A.S.C. 1937—p. 7, See fig. 7.

selected for decorative purposes. It is not strange that these same elements should have been embodied in the design.<sup>1</sup>

The moonstone, a semi-circular slab placed at the root of a flight of steps and carved elaborately in relief, is a particular characteristic feature of Ceylon art. Its design is based on the open half lotus flower. There is a standard arrangement of motifs. Some of these specimens are very ancient.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the moonstone in its evolution and development may be considered unique since in no other tradition anywhere in the world are these found in this shape and style. The only representation of the same idea found in South India is a poor thing without the characteristic animal symbolism which is its Sinhalese feature.<sup>3</sup>

The four animals in the outerband of this type of moonstone are the same four as those from whose head water issues from Lake Anotatta to the four quarters. These are the same four animals that are found on the Asoka Pillars.<sup>4</sup> At Vijayarama Temple, at Anuradhapura, were found the figures of the same four animals buried at the four cardinal points thus: East—elephant; South—horse; West—bullock and North—lion. "Although these carvings are presumably no earlier than the third or fourth century A.D., the style is strangely reminiscent of the Mauryan originals."<sup>5</sup>

The flight of stone steps marking the entrance to most of the sacred buildings are works of rare beauty. The moonstone is the most conspicuous. This semi-circular slab forms as it were the doorstep to most entrances. The procession of animal forms is always the same set arranged in a somewhat similar order. Of particular significance is the marked similarity these bear to the elephants, horse, lion and bullock found carved on the abacus of the lion capital at Sarnath.<sup>6</sup> Of the four animals one would generally feel that the elephants are excellently executed. They are full of fire and life and differing from one another in detail. The bulls are rather tolerable. The horses are not good and the lions are grotesque.<sup>7</sup>

The outside edge of the block at extreme points is left uncut showing thereby that the moonstone was hewn from solid rock. Small individual divergences can be seen in almost all cases, but these particular differences can be discounted. However, one

1. H.I.E.A. p. 241.
2. H.F.A. p. 149 A.R.A. pl. 57.
3. L.C.C. p. 70.
4. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 13.
5. A.A.I. p. 204.
6. A.A.I.C.J. p. 83.
7. L.C.C. p. 71.

curious feature is that at Anuradhapura all the moonstones of this kind yet discovered, with only one exception, have the presence of mixed animals always arranged in the same order. The exception is the one stone at the Bo-Tree where lions are omitted.

Of the examples so far discovered the finest moonstone at Anuradhapura is that at the so-called Queen's Pavilion which is three feet more in diameter than any other.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking the moonstones of Anuradhapura are better than those found at Polonnaruwa. The arrangement of the motifs is also different. At Anuradhapura the order starting from the base is the arrangement of geese in the second row and the elephant, bullock, lion and horse in one row. On the other hand at Polonnaruwa the horse is in the 2nd row, elephant in the 3rd, lion in the 4th and geese in the 5th. Sometimes the bullock and lion are left out.

Of particular admiration is the type of moonstone at the Queen's Pavilion at Anuradhapura.<sup>2</sup> The material used is of a very hard type of stone. Care and precision have been exercised in the execution so as to instil both delicacy and vitality to the sculpture. Here the elephants were better understood and carved than other animals. These are hard to surpass. Even the least real of them have much artistic merit. Other moonstones from the Thuparama Temple and in the area between Ruanweliseya and Basawakkulama show the same treatment and higher standard and are far better than those from Polonnaruwa. The examples from Polonnaruwa are cramped and unreal. They lack a sense of linear flow and rhythm.<sup>3</sup>

The Mahawamsa<sup>4</sup> refers to a "stone slab at the foot of the steps" of the Maha Thupa. This would refer to the moonstone at the end of stairways of the buildings.<sup>5</sup> It must not be presumed that a moonstone is ornamentally carved in all cases. Plain specimens in semi-circular shape have been found near Ruanweliseya.<sup>6</sup> There was also found a moonstone that was merely a narrow elongated step rounded at the ends near the Thuparama-Ruanweli ruins at monastery E. A plain moonstone was found at monastery F.<sup>7</sup> The moonstone at Vihara No. 3 Puli-yankulama has no ornamentation whatsoever.<sup>8</sup> At the foot

1. L.C.C. p. 72.

2. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, pl. 52.

3. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 97, pl. 53.

4. Mv. p. 214, v. 61.

5. Simithar A.R.A. p. 58, pl. LVII fig. 3.

6. A.S.C. 1899—p. 2.

7. A.S.C. 1899—p. 2 & 3.

8. A.S.C. 1896—p. 3.

of the stairs near the Thuparama an ornamented moonstone closely rivalling that at the "Dalada Maligawa" has been found. Its details are as follows :—

At the central base is an open lotus flower. The next row has a band of eleven geese moving to the right with heads turning back and all except the first and last holding in their beaks lotus buds. The next row has arabesque scrolls. Outside this again is a third band displaying a semi-circular procession of the four animals moving to left across the field. Finally the fringing circlet of curling ornamentation styled 'cobra leaf' gives the suggestion of the hooded snake in profile.<sup>1</sup> The building between Mahapali and Gedige has a moonstone of polished white limestone with the usual band of four animals.<sup>2</sup>

At a vihara belonging to the monastery of Ruanweliseya is a moonstone resembling the one at the "Dalada Maligawa." The carving is in sunk relief. At the centre is an expanded lotus. Next is a row of hansas; then a creeper and leaf pattern. The next band has four beasts in the regular order, there being nine in all. The outer band has a 'cobra leaf' pattern,<sup>3</sup> as well. Here are plain moonstones<sup>4</sup> as well.

At the Abhayagiri Dagoba at the Monastery B is a Vihara with a moonstone unique in conception. The lotus on the semi-circular stone, otherwise plain, is raised in very high relief to serve as subsidiary step.<sup>5</sup> The other moonstones at Monastery C & I are also plain with a single expanded lotus in the centre of a plain hemisphere.<sup>6</sup>

At a Vihara near the Jetawanarama (300 A.D.) is another moonstone in which the animals are moving vigorously in distinct contrast to the stately procession usually presented. The sculptor's cleverness is shown by a clever touch in the curling tail and trunk of the elephants which begin and end the row. But in actual size of the slab and the spirit infused into the beasts this specimen excels all others.<sup>7</sup>

At the entrance to the stairs of the Dalada Maligawa at Anuradhapura is one of the finest moonstones, 400 A.D., with concentric bands of varied ornamentation cut in deep sunk relief around a central full blown lotus. The innermost band contains 16 hansas overlapping the second having floriated scroll

1. A.S.C. 1897—p. 2.
2. M.A.S.C. III—p. 4.
3. A.S.C. 1900—p. 2.
4. A.S.C. 1901—p. 3.
5. A.S.C. 1892—p. 3.
6. A.S.C. 1892—p. 4, 1893, p. 2.
7. A.S.C. 1911—12, p. 30.

work. On the third row are nine of the four common animals passing like ducks from left to right. The final outermost band consists of 'cobra leaf' design.<sup>1</sup>

At the Daladage at Anuradhapura is a fragment of a moonstone carved out of limestone. Unlike others this contains a single row of horses alone. They are anatomically inaccurate; nevertheless, they are spirited and full of action.<sup>2</sup>

From Oggomuwa Vihara in the Laggala, Pallesiya Pattu. Matale District, comes a moonstone that is not found elsewhere. It is semi-circular in form and has three concentric bands, the outer band containing twelve elephants. The details are not clear but the elephants are well done. It appears to be earlier in date than Anuradhapura well known<sup>3</sup> examples assigned to 400 A.D.

The moonstone at Vessagiriya, 600-700 A.D., is quite plain except for 4 or 5 concentric circles. It does not flare out at the base and is very crudely executed in granite.<sup>4</sup>

From Vijitapura at Anuradhapura comes two of the biggest moonstones made from gneiss. These belong to 600-700 A.D. Both are rather roughly cut and the crudeness is inexplicable.<sup>5</sup> The gneiss moonstone from Nochchikulam resembles the one at Vessagiri. It is flattened, measures 54' x 22 1/4' and belongs to the period 600-700 A.D.<sup>6</sup> Also at the foot of the entrance stairs to the south and west porches to the Vajirarama Monastery 700-900 A.D. at Anuradhapura are some circular moonstones.

At the foot of the steps at Pankuliya is another moonstone made of gneiss belonging to the 9th or 10th century A.D.<sup>7</sup> At the granite stairs at Sela Chaitya Dagoba, Anuradhapura, 10th century A.D., are found plain moonstones<sup>8</sup> on the east and south only. In the Mayura Pirivena at Anuradhapura is a fine limestone moonstone. It is quite plain save for a central lotus flower carved in relief. Its simplicity endows it with a distinct chasteness.<sup>9</sup>

At Puliyankadawala, Anuradhapura, was found a moonstone of a unique design.<sup>10</sup> The moonstone at Pankuliya, 10th

1. A.S.C. 1895—p. 3.
2. M.A.S.C. III p. 20, pl. 17 (b).
3. J.S.C. Vol. II p. 155.
4. J.S.C. p. 12, Vol. 2, pt. 1.
5. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 12, pl. 22.
6. Ibid.
7. A.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 13, pl. 21.
8. A.S.C. 1895, p. 2.
9. A.S.C. 1894, p. 5.
10. I.A.S. 1891, p. 8.

century A.D., is embellished with a band of elephants, horses and leaf ornamentation.<sup>1</sup> The moonstone from Kuda Ambagamuwa, 10th century A.D., Anuradhapura, contains a band of eight elephants, meeting at the middle. It resembles the one at Beligal Vihara, Kegalla District.<sup>2</sup>

The moonstones from Polonnaruwa are almost invariably decorated with a row of elephants and then a row of horses.<sup>3</sup> At the four entrances to the four cardinal points of the Vatadage are flights of steps which are more elaborate than any discovered so far. These have highly carved moonstones.<sup>4</sup> But the moonstone degenerates and becomes elongated and highly conventional in ornamentation.<sup>5</sup>

The ruins of an oblong building on the promontory disclosed a much worn out large ornamental moonstone in limestone. This is not dissimilar to the semi-circular steps seen at Anuradhapura. On the other concentric band is a row of 16 animals of the four classes. At Anuradhapura an elephant heads and closes the procession but here a lion heads and an elephant brings up the rear.<sup>6</sup>

It is generally believed that the moonstone so often found at the entrance to religious buildings and other auspicious places from the earliest times onwards is a feature peculiar to Sinhalese stone carving. It may be that in the more developed and ornate form it can be so considered, but it should be remembered that a similar feature is found in South India, in front of the entrance to shrines and temples often at the outer doorways and are known as 'lotus stones.' The name is derived from the similarity this bears in the general pattern to an open lotus flower at the centre. In this respect the moonstones of Ceylon are unique as in no other country in the world are they found in this shape and in this ornate style of carving. There is an added feature which makes these moonstones characteristically Sinhalese in contrast to the Indian examples which do not possess the peculiar animal symbolism so common to the Sinhalese. All these moonstones are beautifully carved in an accepted regular order and may be considered as works of rare beauty. The animal symbolism portrayed on the stones is also found on the abacus, and on the lion capital of the Asoka Pillar at Saranath.

1. A.S.C. 1891, p. 6.

2. A.S.C. 1891, p. 9.

3. L.C.C. p. 72.

4. H.I.F.A. p. 247.

5. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 9.

6. A.S.C. 1901, p. 10.

The outside edge of the bullock at extreme points is left uncut to show that it is hewn out of solid rock. The artist seems to have commenced his work from left to right and did not space figures correctly, e.g., the geese are large in the middle but become very small to the right and hardly find space to exist. Small individual divergences can also be seen in almost all the cases. The design is based on the open lotus flower, the pattern being arranged in concentric semi-circles as follows.

The order of sequence in the circles is as follows :—

Outermost circle has cobra pattern resembling accanthus leaf. Next is a procession of quadrupeds moving in a fixed order from left to right; these being horses, elephants, humped bull and lion. Next is a pattern of foliage and leaf and thereafter a row of geese. The central semi-circles show the lotus bud with leaf and flower. The carving is elaborately done in low relief in conformity with Sinhalese art generally. It is also to be remembered that at Anuradhapura all the stones of this kind, so far discovered, with one exception, have the procession of mixed animals almost in the identical order.

The presence of the four animals exceptionally well executed full of fire and life and differing from each other in detail reminds one of the continuity of the old tradition borrowed from the Asokan pillar decoration. A feature of the carving is that the geese are well done, the bullocks are not bad, the horses are poor whilst the lions are almost grotesque. It is also noteworthy that the lion should figure so prominently in this Sinhalese tradition when the living animal is in no way associated with this country. These four animals that are portrayed are the same as those from whose head water issues from lake Anotatta to the four quarters. An interesting custom associated with the 4 animals is that these figures were associated with the foundation deposits at the four cardinal points at least during the ninth century A.D. at Vijayarama temple.

At the Raja Maligawa, Polonnaruwa, is a fine moonstone (6' 10" x 4' 0") of the elaborate order as found at the Vatadage. The lion usually omitted at Polonnaruwa is present as at the Vatadage. There are in all 30 lions and 14 elephants. A band of 40 hansas encircles the beasts.<sup>1</sup> Yet another moonstone 4' 6" lying at the base closely resembles the larger one above it. There are 13 horses, 13 elephants and 25 ducks. But the lion is excluded as he rigidly is from the moonstone at the Vatadage.<sup>2</sup>

1. A.S.C. 1905 p. 4.

2. A.S.C. 1905 p. 4.

A moonstone found at Vihara No. 1, Sasseruwa, is unique. It is carved with a band of six animals, viz., elephant, dog, horse, lion, ram, and bull. It has been dated to 12th century A.D.

### Guardstones

A very interesting architectural feature of ancient buildings, particularly abodes of divinity and Buddha (temples), is the entrance that leads to it. Not only does this architectural member provide ample scope for decorative embellishments but also it has developed a few elements that are unique. At least three such elements may be mentioned. These are the stone step or moonstone, guardstone or dvarapalas and balustrade terminating in makaras.

The flight of steps that leads to the building may be in different elevations rising as they approach the main building. The stone steps themselves are carved with designs particularly the lotus. There are various reasons for the introduction of so much decorative design around these members. The reasons may be many and varied.

For, one thing it is at this point that the evil eye, scent, mouth, or mind has to be avoided and averted. It is from here the devotee's mind has to be prepared. It is here that the robber and thief have to be warned and the wrong doer reminded and frightened and the believer inspired. This may be the significance of the porches at the four entrances and the embellishments at the four cardinal points of buildings. Sometimes, only one entrance on the south or east is observable. The naga stones or guardstones carved with human figures having snake hoods are erected in front of the volutes of the balustrade.

### Naga Stones

The so-called stone slabs carved with beautiful princely figures with snake hoods are commonly found scattered in many places. The Naga and Nagini figures finely carved at the Vahalkada pillars at the Jetavanarama Dagoba (300 A.D.) are reminiscent of Sanchi.<sup>1</sup> A seven hooded cobra apparently belonging to the inside of a shrine was also found at the Jetavanarama Dagoba. The roof contained three Chaitya windows which did not possess the fanciful forms of Gupta art. This probably belongs to an early phase.<sup>2</sup> A nine hooded cobra flanked by a goddess on either hand is uncommon but is sometimes found.

The five headed cobra figures at Polonnaruwa indicate a clear decadence. This is also noticeable in the lotus stalk-pillars.<sup>3</sup>

1. H.I.I.A. p. 162.

2. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 96, pl. 47.

3. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 98, pl. 57 (a).

In early Buddhist art in India Nagas are frequently portrayed as attendants or guardians of the Buddha. This may explain why they usually appear as the guardians of the Buddhist monuments of Ceylon.<sup>1</sup> On the Anuradhapura guardstones faces are large and the conventional janitors are overshadowed by nine headed cobras.<sup>2</sup> Two 'dwarf' guardstones at Anuradhapura evidently mark steps.<sup>3</sup>

Side by side with the human Nagas distinguishable from the hood of the cobra one notices the polycephalous serpent represented theriomorphically. Evidently both types have been derived from Buddhist art in India.<sup>4</sup>

On the embankment of many tanks there are slabs carved with five or seven headed serpents. Also there are found at the point of every important flight of steps two dvarapalas. Attached to each of the chapels of Abhayagiri dagoba are figures of a great Naga. These may be regarded as evidence of the early prevalence of serpent<sup>5</sup> worship in the Island. The Naga stone at the Sanghamitta Thupa (200 A.D.) Anuradhapura is at the flight of steps to the south. There is only one and not a pair; it is also stilted in design.

A full description of these Naga guardians in human form is found. Their dress, ornament, headdress etc., betray their princely status. Only few stones have been found carved solely with a many headed Naga coiled on a pedestal. The faces are often left plain.<sup>6</sup> These come from the Thuparama. Not only at the ground level but also at the bottom of each flight of steps is a pair of round headed sculptured stones in sunk relief. In Tamankaduwa at Morakana is a cave spring called 'Naipena Ulpota' named after the cobra hood carved in the round out of the limestone.<sup>7</sup> The Naga Gala at Sigiriya derives its name from the fine cobra carved stones.<sup>8</sup>

In the Thuparama (200 B.C.) at Anuradhapura the figures are of men very handsomely apparelled, profusely adorned with elaborate ornaments and holding in one arm a lotus stem and with the other a vase filled with lotus flowers. This is a very common conception particularly for the guardstone at the first flight of steps. Each figure has the appendage of Naga hoods canopying the head and sometimes attended by two dwarfs as supports. The

1. A.S.C. 1936—p. 18.

2. A.S.C. 1890—p. 5.

3. A.S.C. 1890—p. 2.

4. B.A.I.C.J. p. 82.

5. H.I.E.A. p. 227.

6. A.S.C. p. 10.

7. A.S.C. 1897 p. 6.

8. A.S.C. 1896 p. 9.

stones connected with the upper flight have five headed Nagas and these have only one dwarf.<sup>1</sup>

The large guardstones found at Thuparama Pirivena (200 B.C.) are exceedingly well executed. They represent Naga doratupalas, seven hooded and in the stereotyped attitude, with a pair of ganas (dwarfs) in the corner of the south panel.<sup>2</sup> Also at the Thuparama dagoba are guardstones at the East and West of the building. These are elaborately carved with human figures having cobra heads, bearing vessels containing these lotus flowers.<sup>3</sup>

The heads of Nagas vary up to nine. Seven is rather a popular number. Some of the Nagas on the guardstones at Anuradhapura have nine or eleven heads.<sup>4</sup> From the Ruanweliseya (2nd century B.C.) have been obtained a boldly sculptured seven headed naga coiled with a chatra<sup>5</sup> above. The guardstones found at Thuparama—Ruanweli ruins (2nd century B.C.) bear on their outer face vases containing lotus flowers standing up and carved in low relief.<sup>6</sup>

The guardstones at the Mirisavetiya ruins (2nd century B.C.) are ordinary and of the reversed shield type, plain of face but standing on a moulded base.<sup>7</sup> The large guardstone found at the Pirivena, in the ruins of Mirisavetiya are round topped. The one to the right has the figure of a Naga janitor blocked out on it. The other is plain faced but the surface has evidently been made ready for the chisel.<sup>8</sup>

At monastery 'L' near Abhayagiri the naga guardstones are of the most elaborate class.<sup>9</sup> Also near the Abhayagiri ruins was found a Naga stone with seven headed cobra measuring 3' 10" in height. The minute carving brings out even the actual scales. The Naga's throat is encircled with a jewelled collar.<sup>10</sup> The 'Naga Gal' flank the screens on either side of the beautifully carved stelae at each cardinal point of Abhayagiri.<sup>11</sup>

But the guardstones at Abhayagiri Monastery 'K' bear on their face cut mezzo-relievo nine headed nagas. These are gracefully posed supporting on their palms lotus-filled vases and

1. A.R.A. p. 30.
2. A.S.C. 1896 p. 2.
3. A.S.C. 1896 p. 2.
4. B.A.I.C.J. p. 83.
5. A.R.A. p. 30.
6. A.S.C. 1898 p. 1.
7. A.S.C. 1902 p. 6.
8. A.S.C. 1902 p. 6.
9. A.S.C. 1893 p. 3.
10. L.C.C. p. 102.
11. A.S.C. 1894—p. 2.

grasping with the other hand lotus stalks. Below each figure is a gana in a comical posture.<sup>1</sup>

At the Dalada Maligawa, Anuradhapura, are carved Naga figures nine-hooded in the usual pose grasping the lotus stalk with one hand and supporting a lotus filled vase in the other. At their feet are a couple of dwarfs.<sup>2</sup>

At Vessagiriya is a displaced guardstone. The Naga is nine hooded and unique in having replaced the usual dwarf attendant from the incised panel.<sup>3</sup> At Cave No. 2 the pair of guardstones, surface carved, with Naga doratupalas in sunk relief are distinctly archaic<sup>4</sup> say 600 A.D. A half buried guardstone of the Magul Maha Vihara, Pottuvil, belongs to the early Gupta period. There are no other guardstones of that shape<sup>5</sup> belonging to 4th-5th century A.D.

There is an imperfect lotus petal type of guardstone at Kaludiya pokuna near Sigiriya. This is made of gneiss 700 A.D. and is inferior to the better example. There is no trace of chiselling.<sup>6</sup>

There must originally have been two guardstones at the main entrance of the upper building, but only one of these was found. It is a unique work in richness of its sculpture and is not like other guardstones at Anuradhapura. It resembles rather some of the 12th century Polonnaruwa ones though probably some centuries earlier in date.<sup>7</sup>

This was found to the South of the steps at Ratnapasada, 800 A.D. Anuradhapura. It is cut out of one large block of granite and contains the most richly carved janitor. The figure is the usual Nagaraja, heavily jewelled and holding a flower filled vase in left hand and a flowering creeper in the right. A gana is standing by the left foot. In appearance it seems more ornate than 12th century Polonnaruwa ones but may belong to an original stone work by Mahinda II.<sup>8</sup>

Mitton<sup>9</sup> thought that it was the most wonderful dvarapala 5 feet high standing besides the steps at the Ratanapasada at Anuradhapura. This is capped by a carved torana—a most wonderful feature. On the other side is a small elephant. The central figure is most perfectly designed. The 'guard' is similar to others in outline. But the symbolism is not known. The flesh is represented with a reality unseen elsewhere.

1. A.S.C. 1895—p. 2.

2. A.S.C. 1895—p. 3.

3. A.S.C. 1910—p. 5, also C.J.Sc. Vol. 2, p. 76 for date.

4. A.S.C. 1907—p. 7.

5. A.S.C. 1926—27, p. 8.

6. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 74—pl. 37a.

7. M.A.S.C.I. p. 2. Vide pl. 72, No. 210.

8. M.A.S.C.I. p. 4.

9. L.C.C. p. 96.

It is likely that this has been reset. Originally this stood on the south side. It is a type unique at Anuradhapura in as much as the torana over the Nagaraja is carved with figures of gods and animals. The guardstone with the Naga kings described here is dated by the Puliyankulama inscriptions and may belong to 900 A.D. whilst the Polonnaruwa example at Lankatilaka<sup>1</sup> shows that it is extended to 1200 A.D.

During the Polonnaruwa period the characteristic form of the guardstone has assumed a shape of a very blunt gothic window. There was the hooded cobra king.<sup>2</sup> At the entrance to the Demalamahaseya, Polonnaruwa, the naga door-keepers are overshadowed with seven hooded cobras each with a posturing dwarf.<sup>3</sup>

The guardian on the stone at the Rajamahagama is the naga king facing full front. He wears a high makuta, heavy earrings and holds a staff across his body diagonally between both hands.<sup>4</sup>

The guardstone flanking the stone staircase at Lankatilaka, Polonnaruwa, portrays naga figures similar to those at Anuradhapura.<sup>5</sup> Also at the Vatadage, Polonnaruwa, at each of the four entrance stairways were naga doorkeepers of the usual Sinhalese type.<sup>6</sup>

### **Balustrade with Makara**

This is the 3rd member of the extra architectural feature pertaining to ancient buildings. This too has incorporated in it Indian elements and the makara motif but still there is present a characteristic element of Sinhalese art in it. At the Thuparama are striking balustrades well preserved and these are some of the finest order of wing slabs with the Makara. From the mouth of the saurians issue ornamented scrolls curling downwards into volutes. On the outer face is cut a bas-relief of a lion passant and on the inner a posturing dwarf.<sup>7</sup>

In a vihara across the inner circular road at Anuradhapura was found another scroll balustrade. It issues from the mouth of a Makara—a kind of fabulous beast half-dragon half crocodile. The sharpness of the crocodile claws can be noted.<sup>8</sup> This decorative device in Sinhalese art is also found in the so-called makara torana. These are obviously derived from the art of the Indian continent like nagas.<sup>9</sup>

1. J.S.C. Vol. 2 pt. 1 p. 14 pl., 23

2. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 9. fig. 8.

3. A.S.C. 1909—p. 14 pl. 10.

4. A.S.C. 1905 p. 4.

5. A.S.R. 1936 p. 11.

6. H.I.I.A.—p. 165.

7. A.S.C. 1897 p. 2.

8. L.C.C. p. 74.

9. B.A.I.C.J. p. 82 - Also see H.F.A. - Smith under Makara.

### Sculptured Scenes

The Mahawamsa<sup>1</sup> records a long list of sculptured scenes depicting the events connected with the life of the Buddha from the point of attainment of Buddhahood up to the Parinirvana and distribution of bodily relics. How many of these scenes were traditionally copied and reproduced in Ceylon during this period none can be certain of until these are discovered. Then again Mahawamsa<sup>2</sup> says that Jataka tales were employed as a motif for decorative scenes at Lohapāsada. At the Maha Thupa were also sculptured figures of kings, gods and Yakkhas.<sup>3</sup>

At Anuradhapura is a spirited representation of a fight between a cobra and mongoose while a monkey clasping its baby to its breast looks down from a large-leaved tree.<sup>4</sup> The date is not certain. In a chapel at Abhayagiri were 3 slabs carved with many objects and scenes in high relief. Among them were Jatakas<sup>5</sup>

Scenes relating to the life of the Buddha are found on two slabs found in a ruined building south of the Trinco-Anuradhapura road and are seen in the Colombo Museum. One of these is supposed to be the Great miracle of Sravasti.<sup>6</sup> This differs in style from the annunciation to be described later in very high relief and shows a more developed technique, yet it is somewhat faulty in the execution of the legs. It seems that the artist did not know how to work them out on the inner sides. Dr. Vogel suggests that it may be the Great miracle.<sup>7</sup> This is a bas-relief in Amaravati marble of a figure in the attitude of adoration.<sup>8</sup> Three marble slabs were discovered from the dagoba at Pidura-gāla. One contained 3 Buddha figures in low relief, the second two Bodhisattvas and the third plaque contains an unidentified scene from the life of the Buddha. These are dated to 4th or 5th century A.D. on iconographical grounds characteristic of Ceylon. The marble is probably imported from Andhra.<sup>9</sup>

A fragment of a square pillar from the Northern Tope at Anuradhapura 400 A.D. has a scene identified as the birth.

On the two sides of a pillar from the Northern dagoba at Anuradhapura are found carvings in a style resembling that at Amaravati. The slim and vivacious figures are carved out of

1. Mv. p. 206-207 vv. 78-89.

2. Ibid p. 185 v. 34.

3. Mv. Ch. 30, p. 207, v. 89 et. seq.

4. L.C.C. p. 74—See plate—

5. A.S.C. 1894 p. 2.

6. C.J.S. Vol. 1 pl. 46B.

7. J.S.C. Vol. 1, p. 95, pl. 43-46a.

8. A.S.C. 1954 p. 5.

9. A.S.C. 1951 p. 26, pl. vii (a & b).

local crystalline limestone.<sup>1</sup> Another slab of the same material is from the Eastern dagoba at Anuradhapura. It is in a style similar to Amaravati and shows the Bodhisattva preaching and may have been copied from an earlier style.<sup>2</sup>

The bas-relief<sup>3</sup> from Girihanda Vihara in Ambalantota is in limestone or marble not found in Ceylon. This may have been imported from the Kistna area. It may be the annunciation. There is a certain flatness as if the sculptor had attempted a drawing. It is a peculiarity of the period and is seen not only in relief figures but even in those in the round.<sup>4</sup>

From Isurumuniya was discovered a scene showing a couple of lovers in early Gupta style. It is a pleasing bas-relief of a man and woman. It shows more mastery and freedom than the previous examples<sup>5</sup>—500 A.D. It is an amatory couple, the female being rendered with great charm. The composition does not betray any resemblance to Buddhist scenes.<sup>6</sup>

The Isurumuniya site has been treated very much like Gangavatarana Tirtha at Mamallapura. The granite boulders are divided by a fissure having before them a semi-artificial lake. The seated figure of the man is in relief accompanied by a horse in pure Pallava style.<sup>7</sup> The man and horse are carved on the proper right of the cleft in a niche. This is one of the finest sculptures in Ceylon. It is a remarkable figure of an ascetic in a difficult pose and has been variantly identified as Kapila sage and Agni parjanya<sup>8</sup> and dated to 700-800 A.D.<sup>9</sup> The man is in Maharaja lila. His left hand is on the seat and right on the raised knee. He is holding the halter of a horse.<sup>10</sup>

In a Pokuna A at Isurumuniya are the Tisawewa ruins. The rock slope has been carved into a bas-relief with wonderful realism. The scene is one of elephants in a lotus pond. The three elephants are shown lazily disporting themselves undisturbed amidst lotuses and fish. Some alarm has aroused the elephants. One seems to be scenting danger and the other two are in flight. This is an absolutely unique piece of carving most spirited and life-like seen anywhere at Anuradhapura.<sup>11</sup>

1. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, pl. XLIV, p. 95.

2. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, pl. XLIV, p. 95.

3. C.J.S. Vol. II, pl. 50.

4. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2 p. 78.

5. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3 p. 96 pl. 48.

6. B.A.I.C.J. p. 84.

7. H.I.I.A. p. 162.

8. *Artibus asiae* Vol. 16 (3) p. 176 by Paranavitane.

9. A.S.C. 1936 p. 18, 19 pl. 18. Also J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3 p. 96 pl. 49.

10. H.F.A. 148.

11. A.S.C. 1901 p. 6.

The elephant scene is impressive by the great dignity of the elephants. Its simplicity does not belong to the latest phase of Anuradhapura. The elephant enters the scheme of decoration in the Hatthipakara at Ruanweliseya, Pacinatissapabbata Vihara and in the Lankarama at Anuradhapura. This is the oldest specimen of the architectural feature known in Ceylon.<sup>1</sup> The elephants on the other side may be by another artist working in a flatter and more lively style. This is Pallava<sup>2</sup> art of 700-800 A.D. The elephants are among lotuses. The effect is to increase the apparent dimensions of the pond.<sup>3</sup> The bull, cow and calf stand at the waters' edge on one side. An outlined figure of an elephant with raised trunk is on the other side. These are unfinished sculptures dated 700-800 A.D. in Pallava style.<sup>4</sup>

At Velana Damana is a ruined site where a unique slab containing sculpture in two panels was found. The upper has a seated king and lower a battle between a giant and four foes.<sup>5</sup> Could this represent the prowess of Nandimitta?<sup>6</sup>

Situated in the midst of the forest four miles south west of Wellawaya in Uva, is Buduruvegala containing a group of carved colossal images in high relief. The Buddha here is 42.8" feet high.<sup>7</sup> The group consists of the Buddha flanked by Bodhisattvas. This is earlier than Kustaraja figure at Weligama<sup>8</sup> 800-900 A.D. These are Mahayana sculptures carved in rock. Two Bodhisattvas stand to right and left. It is earlier than Polonnaruwa and may be dated<sup>9</sup> to 900 A.D.

### Chapels

At each cardinal point there were richly carved oblong projections from the terraced basement which men, doubtless, called chapels or thrones for the Dhyani Buddhas—A similar arrangement is seen at Sanchi and in the Kalinga stupa.<sup>10</sup> The facade consists of,

1. a plain base and above this
2. a row of kneeling elephants
3. string courses

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1. B.I.C.—Devendra p. 33; A.S.C. 1940-45 p. 22.
  2. J.C.S. Vol. 1 pt. 3 p. 96 pl. 48 (2).
  3. H.I.I.A. p. 162.
  4. A.S.C. 1936—p. 18.
  5. A.S.C. 1896—p. 7.
  6. Mv. Ch. XXV p. 172 v. 26.
  7. A.S.C. 1934—p. 8 also see for accurate measurements Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register Vol. I. p. 280.
  8. A.S.C. 1926—27 pp. 7-8.
  9. J.S.C. Vol. 2 pt. 3 p. 50 pl. 34. 35.
  10. H.I.E.A. p. 230.

4. frieze of animals<sup>1</sup> and
5. a band like the rail

At the Abhayagiri chapel the main part of the shrine consists of a series of stone panels surmounted by a frieze of projecting elephants' heads, alternating with lotuses. An upper frieze contains the Buddhist pattern.

### Railing and Stelae

The stone railing never attained in Ceylon the elaborate development which in India made it the vehicle for a great deal of the highest art manifestations of the country pertaining to the folk art. So it is found at Anuradhapura well designed, perfectly plain as at Sanchi except for guardstones at the entrance. It is of uncertain date.<sup>2</sup> The general absence of Rail Thorana (Archways) denied a great opportunity for sculptural decoration. But this unique member so far not discovered in Ceylon architecture might have once existed but perished under the ruthless hand of the South Indian invaders.<sup>4</sup>

At Jctavana or Eastern Dagoba the Rail is quite ornamented except at the four entrances. Instead of the well-carved Thorana arches there are the guardstones. These rise above the coping. The surface ornament is a tall lotus plant in a bowl shaped vase, the stalk throwing off leaves on either side and issuing in a full blown flower or bud.<sup>5</sup>

### Stelae

The stelae at Kantaka cetiya flank the Vahalkadas. The front and side faces of these are sculptured with floral motives, figures of men, beasts and birds. The sculptures are archaic 300 A.D. and these are very important for a study of the plastic arts. The stelae were surmounted by the figures of beasts thus: elephants at the Eastern Vahalkada, bulls at the southern, horses at the western and lions at the northern.<sup>6</sup> The human figures on these stelae have a general resemblance to those of Sanchi but these are more advanced in style. The dwarf is in the atlas pose. The seven headed cobra is also a common feature, the heads varying up to nine.<sup>7</sup> The stelae from Abhayagiri 200 A.D. differ from those at Polonnaruwa. The device springing from vases recall examples of Indian art.

1. H.I.E.A. p. 232.

2. H.F.A. p. 143 pl. 96A.

3. B.A.I.C.J.—p. 82.

4. A.S.C. 1890 p. 7.

5. A.S.C. p. 7.

6. A.S.C. 1935 p. 6.

7. H.F.A. p. 146 pl. 99.

The stelae have no doubt, attracted much attention on account of their sculptural decoration present on the stone slabs facing them. The high stela is found on both sides of the altar and this is surmounted at Mirisavetiya by a lion figure carved in the round. The front surface of the stela is carved with a floral vase with leaves, human and animal figures in pairs. On the side face is a naga figure.<sup>1</sup> At Abhayagiri the inner stela is adorned with a design very similar to the one on the pillar of the western gateway at Sanchi. Buddhist emblems are also found (e.g.) Shield, Swastika, Triatna, etc.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Pattini Image.**

The figure is traditionally identified as that of goddess Pattini. Coomaraswamy mentions certain relationship to the Parakrama image. This is said to have come from the North Eastern Part of the Island.<sup>3</sup> "The great beauty of the modelling of the nude torso and the clinging drapery of the dhoti is reminiscent of Gupta workmanship ..... but actually the closest stylistic comparison for the figure is in the apsaras of Sigiriya frescoes ..... It seems justifiable to assign the image to the sixth to eighth centuries<sup>4</sup> A.D.

#### **Metal Work**

Considerable amount of metal work, particularly miniature images of persons, animals, and objects, has been discovered during archaeological excavations. These belong to a period anterior to the early Polonnaruwa bronzes. That they belonged to local cults some of which might have existed prior to the introduction of Buddhism itself is suggested by some. These also represent minor deities of the Hindu pantheon. It is very likely that some of these bronze images may have also belonged to the Mahayana form of Buddhism. Apart from objects of a non-Buddhist nature one comes across images of the Buddha as well. The so-called Badulla Buddha is a fine example belonging to the 7th century A.D. Another excellent example is the image of goddess Pattini. The examples of bronze images viz Nataraja and Saiva saints belonging to the Chola period are the best bronze images discovered at Polonnaruwa. It is still doubtful whether they were imported from South India or were made locally. In all probability these classic specimens may have been cast in India by Indian craftsmen. But what needs special mention is the fact that the Sinhalese

1. B.A.I.C.J. p. 81.

2. H.I.E.A. p. 232.

3. H.I.I.A. p. 167.

4. Art and Architecture of India p. 209—B. Rowland.

during an earlier period produced metal images of an order that was as high as those cast in India. The subject is indeed worth further study by itself.

### Miscellaneous Sculpture—Four Regional Figures

There has been a customary practice in Ceylon to bury diverse kinds of treasures, images, gems, etc., at the foundations of buildings, dams and other edifices. The buried objects were found at corners of buildings or at cardinal points of the building. The treasure or object buried varied in value according to the status and wealth of the author of the undertaking. Thus came to be established the tradition where in certain buildings of some significance a foundation treasure was buried. The presence of such treasures has been discovered during the excavation of some of the buildings at Anuradhapura.

At Vijayarama monastery 800 A.D. below the floor of each of the four porches was found a brick built cella containing a bronze figure of a double faced god, an animal and three clay lamps. The porch to the east holds an elephant, to the south a horse, to the west a bull and to the north a lion.<sup>1</sup> These may have been the guardian deities of the four quarters who were represented by their vehicles (vahanas) or for some reason identified with these animals. It is worth remembering that these same animals were used by Asoka on the stone pillars. Their presence can never be a coincidence but must be the ancient popular practice which Asoka followed in India and the Sinhalese copied in Ceylon.<sup>2</sup>

Sinhalese artists and sculptors of the past, not having seen a lion, regarded it more as a mythical monster than a living animal and never by any chance did they represent the claws correctly. They appear to have thought that the lions' claws are contractible as a double line around the base of each claw denoting the sheath. But the claws themselves are portrayed long and pointed resembling the talons of a bird of prey rather than those of a lion.<sup>3</sup>

The elephant is the one animal that has always been correctly presented in Sinhalese art of ancient times. The Ceylon sculptor had seen the animal and had observed it closely and therefore he was in a better position to appreciate his form. A common motif of the ancient period at Anuradhapura was a frieze or band or broad dado (4' 6") of fronting elephants, only heads and feet being shown.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes as in the Jetavana rail the elephant alternates with lotuses.<sup>5</sup>

1. A.S.C. 1891 p. 4, footnote 6.

2. A.S.C. 1891—p.4. f.n. 47.

3. A.S.C. 1937—p.8.

4. A.S.C. 1893 p. 4. & 5.

5. A.S.C. 1892 p. 2.

The elephant revetment at Ruanweli is a unique decorative feature by itself. There are in all some 400 elephants modelled in terracotta placed on the platform.<sup>1</sup> The heads and foreparts of kneeling elephants at Ruanveliseya present a variety of treatment, no two heads being similar. This is an ornamental feature.<sup>2</sup> On this point it is well worth remembering that the asymmetrical concept runs through the whole course of Sinhalese art.

Also in the group of ruins between the Lankarama and the outer circular road on either side of the steps above the moulded basement of a building rose a wall from which stood out heads and forelegs of eight elephants, resembling those at Ruanveliseya. It is undoubtedly an adaptation. The elephants project from the wall, their feet resting on the basement like at Ruanveliseya. These were fashioned of suitable bricks covered with a thick coating of plaster.<sup>3</sup>

More remarkable on account of its extraordinary realism is the elephant carved in full round from a boulder on the left bank of the Mahaveliganga stream at Katupilana N.C.P. This could be mistaken for a real elephant.<sup>4</sup> A broad frieze of elephant caryatides alternating with plain pilasters was found at Panuliya.<sup>5</sup> At Katupilana on the left bank of the Mahaveliganga is a carved elephant. This piece of sculpture is unique in Ceylon. Cut in the full round, life size are the head and shoulders of the elephant whose feet the river washes when low. The elephant stands in the water looking slightly up-stream as though hesitating to cross. It is the *tour-de-force* of a skilful sculptor<sup>6</sup>—supposed to be in Vedirata.

Fa Hien mentions having heard of a temple in South India decorated with "elephant figures, lion shapes, horse shapes, ox shapes and dove shapes." He adds that in the temple of Halebid there were animal friezes in this order, viz., "elephants, lions, horses, oxen and birds." Sometimes in modern Hindu temples only two or three animal friezes are found but the succession is always the same.<sup>7</sup>

Mahavamsa records that the pillars of the Lohapasada, 2nd century B.C., contained figures of lions.<sup>8</sup> On the Vahalkada

1. B.A.I.C.J. p. 79.

2. A.R.A. p. 27.

3. A.S.C. 1890 p. 7.

4. H.I.I.A. p. 162, also see illustration facing p. 96 in Samuel de Lanerolle's "Vana Nadiya" and p. 129.

5. A.S.C. 1891 p. 6.

6. A.S.C. 1897 p. 11.

7. L.C.C. p. 73.

8. Mv. Ch. 27, p. 184, v. 30.

of Mirisavetiya 2nd century B.C. are horned figures, horses, bulls, lions, horned lions and elephants similar to those on the Sanchi toranas.<sup>1</sup> A limestone sculptured figure of a seated lion found near a park at the Daladage Anuradhapura is in a bad state of preservation but it shows good modelling. It is much more artistic than most of the lion figures sculptured in Ceylon.<sup>2</sup> On the outer phases of the balustrades at several sites at Anuradhapura are heraldic lions with upraised paw. The teeth of the lion and the claws are very sharply delineated.<sup>3</sup>

The lion at Sigiriya rock is a gigantic animal conventionalised in brick and plaster with huge claws even to the dew claws. The monstrous lion may have been an awe-inspiring sight.<sup>4</sup> Vessagiriya inscription<sup>5</sup> 200 A.D. mentions that Sri Sangabo assumed his lion throne which was like unto a rock of safety.

One of the most remarkable bas-reliefs found at Anuradhapura was at one of the Tisawewa baths at the ancient Magul Uyana. It depicts vividly elephants bathing and then charging away when scared. The relief is very low and also eludes the photographer. It is in two sections and may be considered to be one of the unique pieces of carving and also the most spirited and life like. It is dated to the time of Parakrama Bahu.<sup>6</sup>

At Polonnaruwa, Rajamaligava, the elephants are carved with a stiffness strangely at variance with their life like representation on moonstones.<sup>7</sup>

Rajavesya-bhujanga at Polonnaruwa contains forty-one elephants in low relief at the lowest pediment and ten more. No two are identical. The animals are with trunks lowered. Fifteen differ markedly.

### Dwarfs

The peculiarly lively character so beautifully moulded in a variety of beautiful postures in the Indian art manifestations of Bharhut and Sanchi and Buddha Gaya finds expression in the early sculpture of Ceylon as well. The beautiful nature spirits relating to fertility, plenty and luxuriance of vegetable growth do not exist as such. But a few remains of figures discovered at Kantaka Chetiya, Mihintale, can certainly be considered as be-

1. H.I.I.A. p. 161.
2. M.A.S.C. III p. 20 pl. XVIIa.
3. L.C.C. p. 74.
4. A.S.C. 1898 p. 9.
5. E.Z.I. p. 27.
6. H.F.A. p. 150.
7. A.S.C. 1905 p. 4.

longing to that class. Here again only the heads have been preserved and these do present in sufficient detail and faithfulness the artistic tradition of the age. The plastic arts of the day were based, if not directly copied, on the Sanchi prototypes.

However, from very early times, this class of sculpture has been in use. Generally these dwarf figures can be observed at these positions, viz., mouldings at base of buildings, pillars and recesses, and steps of stairs. These do not include the moulded figures found in a variety of positions and places. Here the survey is concerned with the sculptured figures in low or high relief. The terra-cotta heads will be treated separately.

Who is a gana (dwarf)? What does he symbolise or represent? Many beliefs have been held and different views expressed on the subject. It is believed that they represent the genii reduced to this position through years of art symbolism. That they are the guardians of the earth's treasures and temples is another view. Could they not represent the idea of happy little beings who bear the joys and sorrows of the world with a frolicsome spirit of eternal joy? Ganas may also be considered the children of Ganesh.<sup>1</sup>

The dwarfs are not deemed slaves. The profusion of ornaments, bangles and anklets which cover the arms and legs indicate that they are not slaves by any means. They have curled wigs and are girded with cords and adorned. They carry in their hands flowers and stalks of plants.<sup>2</sup>

Stone slabs at the Vahalkada at Kantaka Chetiya were ornamented with a frieze of dwarfs who are portrayed in lively attitudes, some playing musical instruments.<sup>3</sup> A Vihara near Thuparama (200 B.C.) has a unique carving showing specimens of genii occupying the vertical outside. Ordinarily this space is occupied by a lion figure. Here are jungle men and women, monkeys, peacocks; mongoose, cobra and other wild animals.<sup>4</sup> Could they be reminiscent of Bharhut animal sculpture? If so here we have relics of ancient popular art of the time. Of particular interest would be the bas-relief of a dwarf trampling a snake.<sup>5</sup>

Ugly dwarfs were regarded as effective janitors. The specimen at Ruanveli and Jetavanarama dagobas 200-400 A.D., are typical. These figures may be compared with those of the western gateway

1. L.C.C. p. 73.

2. L.C.C. p. 103.

3. A.S.C. 1935 p. 5.

4. A.S.C. 1897 p. 2.

5. A.S.C. 1897 p. 2.

at Sanchi. Some of these figures are used decoratively and are very like the Badami figures.<sup>1</sup>

At the porch of monastery A at Abhayagiri (100 A.D.) are pedestals on which are carved in relief dwarfs on three sides.<sup>2</sup> In the pilimage the square columns are also carved capitals with hands of dwarfs. These ganas are in various attitudes.<sup>3</sup>

At the Dalada Maligawa, 400 A.D., Anuradhapura, triple water leaf ornament adorns the risers. At the feet of the naga guardian there are a couple of posturing dwarfs.<sup>4</sup>

At Vajirarama Hall, 700 A.D., Anuradhapura on the basement block are relief cut facets with a figure of a single figure nearly all ganas in a variety<sup>5</sup> of postures. At the Vatadage, Polonnaruwa, are 32 dwarfs in varied attitudes of lively action.<sup>6</sup> At the Rajamaligawa, Polonnaruwa, are ganas gesticulating in a row. These jovial little ganas lend great interest to the circular stylobate.<sup>7</sup>

### Seals

A cornelian seal found near the Yatthala Dagoba—Tissamaharama (200 B.C.) represents a seated king.<sup>8</sup>

A flat piece of crystal 5/8 inches in length with edges bevelled containing a female figure carved *intaglio* has been found at Mahapali Anuradhapura<sup>9</sup> datable to 4th or 5th century A.D. It is probably a seal set in a ring. The female figure stands gracefully in tribhanga pose, nude above waist, breasts well developed, with flowing folds of drapery, headdress, flattened coiffure and three projecting hoods. The figure resembles strongly the females painted at Sigiriya rock.<sup>10</sup> "The figure may be that of an Indian dancing girl holding a flower in left hand". Marshal writes "It appears a very decadent imitation of Graeco-Roman or Graeco-Persian seals."<sup>11</sup>

A cornelian seal found near Nakavehera at Anuradhapura represents a woman holding a flower. See (Plate 76). This corresponds to one side of the Sinhalese coins.<sup>12</sup> A similar seal found by Parker corresponds to the other side.<sup>13</sup> (See plate 77).

1. H.F.A. fig. 101 A & B p. 147.
2. A.S.C. 1892 p. 2.
3. A.S.C. 1893 p. 3.
4. A.S.C. 1895 p. 3.
5. A.S.C. 1891 p. 5.
6. A.S.C. 1904 p. 6.
7. A.S.C. 1905 p. 3, 4.
8. H.I.I.A. p. 195, vide fig.—133.
9. A.S.C. 1933 p. 8, pl. 3.
10. M.A.S.C. II p. 30 - 31—pl. 23a & b.
11. A.S.C. 1933 p. 8, pl. 3.
12. J.S.C. Vol. 2 pt. 2 p. 92 pl. 71.
13. A.C. p. 495.

### Vase and Foliage

At Thuparama Anuradhapura was found a stone urn containing an opening bud of a lotus resting upon a fully expanding lotus flower with three rows of petals cut in low relief. This is a very common device. A pair may have stood on pedestals at the head of the lower flight of steps.<sup>1</sup>

At the Vihara and ruins No. 1 of Ruanveli ruins are found lotus filled vases carved (in relief) on the terminal stones.<sup>2</sup> At the Mahapali ruins (East) of Ruanveli are terminals carved with well rounded flower vases not exactly alike.<sup>3</sup>

At the bottom of stele at the Mirisaveti Dagoba is a sitting dwarf sustaining above the head a large urn ornamented with lotus leaves. A tall stem issues from the urn. The central object sustained by the stem is the Chakra.<sup>4</sup>

### Capitals

At the Thuparama Dagoba are four rows of octagonal pillars with capitals. The capitals of the first two rows are ornamented along their upper edges with grotesque squatting figures with arms raised as though supporting a weight on their heads. These human figures, sixteen in a row, with both elbows on the knees support with their heads and hands the abacus.<sup>5</sup> "The capitals of the first two rings of pillars nearest the dagoba bear figures of horned lions squatting full front with forelegs raised; of the third ring, conventionalized buds; of the fourth, dwarfs".<sup>6</sup>

The tradition of carving animals on pillars may have been maintained from 6th to 12th century A.D. The idea might have been borrowed from the Asokan Pillars and the four animals may have been repeated. A lion pillar is attached to the west frontispiece of Mirisavetiya and there is a lion now on the ground besides the southern frontispiece.<sup>7</sup>

The pillars at Medirigiriya are arranged in a concentric row—sixty-eight of them in all resembling those of Thuparama and Lankarama and later Vatadage, Polonnaruwa. The inner second row bears single lions. The outermost bears ganas—thirty-two in all.<sup>8</sup>

The capitals at Gal Vihara are the spreading type seen in the better class of Buddhist shrines at Anuradhapura and Polon-

1. A.R.A. p. 4.

2. A.S.C. 1901 p. 2.

3. A.S.C. 1902 p. 2.

4. A.R.A. p. 21.

5. A.R.A. p. 5.

6. A.S.C. 1896 p. 2. footnote 4.

7. J.S.C. Vol. 2 pt. 1 p. 13.

8. A.S.C. 1907 p. 30 - 32.

naruwa.<sup>1</sup> The capitals and shafts are in one piece at Polonnaruwa. All are carved with seated lion.<sup>2</sup>

### Terracottas

The terracotta heads found at Kantaka Cetiya, Mihintale (100 B.C.) are very interesting specimens that have been cleverly executed. It is clear from the technique employed that the artists were possessed of an advanced knowledge on the subject. The expressions convey what was intended. The details are fairly clear, hair and headgear being beautifully delineated.<sup>3</sup>

The elephant figures at the Ruanveliseya platform are built up of brick.<sup>4</sup>

Sinhalese pottery having no resemblance to Indian art in style has been found at Talagaswewa (See plate 000). The site is three miles north of the 31st mile on Puttalam Road. Well modelled figures in 'Lilasana' remain headless. Several heads are wearing a diadem with *usnisa*. These are probably meant for Bodhisatvas. The female bust is certainly Indian. These are works by Sinhalese potters. Similar pottery is found near Arippu. These are early from the point of view of dress.<sup>5</sup>

Terracotta heads from Vessagiriya Anuradhapura (800 - A.D.) have also been found. These resemble in technique the terracottas from Mihintale. These are like puppets—but these bear a dwarfish childlike appearance. The figures are stylised. The locks have turned into streaks. Two terracotta figures from Katugampolagama are also worthy of note.<sup>6</sup>

A third group of terracotta heads has been discovered at Talagaswewa in N.C.P. and Hettipola in Demala Hatpattuwa, N.W.P. This collection consists of human forms, bears and other animals. These may be pottery dumps or clay toy shops. A large number of female forms are found.

Tabbowa elephant figures belong to the last phase of this industry made of clay. These are also stylised.

### Chronology

It is deemed useful to record in the following pages the chronology that is commonly applied in respect of the monuments. This is based generally on style as compared with similar monu-

1. A.S.C. 1907 p. 11.
2. H.I.E.A. p. 236.
3. A.S.C. 1936 p. 15, pl. VII.
4. B.A.I.C.J. p. 79.
5. J.S.C. Vol. 1. pt. 1. p. 10 pl. iv.
6. J.S.C. Vol. II 3t. 2. pl. LXVII.

ments found in the Indian continent. A possible dating would be discussed at a later stage of this volume. For the present the reader should be acquainted with what is generally accepted. This is given below :

Pre-Buddhistic Sinhalese 500 B.C.-247 B.C. (so far not found)

Early Buddhist 246 B.C.-100 A.D.—Maurya & Sunga—  
Sanchi, Bharhut, Buddha Gaya.

No remains belonging to these two periods have been definitely identified so far. Earliest works are made of limestone which is friable and easily disintegrating.<sup>1</sup>

Brick and limestone—100 B.C. - 325 A.D.—Archaic

Gandhara, Mathura, Amaravati, Saranath, Patna—325 -  
544 A.D.—Gupta Art.

Gneiss—600 - 700 A.D. Early gneiss or Pallava

Classical—800 - 900 or 1200 A.D. Brahmic cave period—

Archaistic - 1100 - 1300—Polonnaruwa<sup>2</sup> Chola.

Ceylon reacted to the Indian efflorescence during the Gupta period in all cultural activities and one can still discern the influence in the principal additions to Sinhalese art in Mahayana images, Fresco painting and change in stone sculpture.<sup>3</sup> Two or three sculptured slabs at Isurumuniya and both in gneiss are characterised as being in Gupta style.<sup>4</sup>

There might have been also a branch of the Amaravati School in Ceylon. It is not known whether the artists came from India or were indigenous. The vivacity and slimness of figure that is so characteristic of Amaravati art is seen in the sculpture at times at early Anuradhapura at the Eastern dagoba (400 A.D.) and Northern dagoba.<sup>5</sup> Coomaraswamy has also recognised the existence of this style in two bas-reliefs and the sculpture at Girihanda Vihara slab at Ambalantota.<sup>6</sup>

During 500 A.D. the Gupta influence is noticeable in the stone railing that came to be carved, and rosettes at the intersection that became more ornate. The balustrades have comparatively finer carving. The figures are more floriated. The evolution tended to be towards greater elaboration. These changes may be epitomised as an inclination from accurate straight line to the flowing curve. New patterns came to be introduced in the midst of Asokan traditions.<sup>7</sup>

1. B.I.C. p. 30.

2. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 78.

3. I.I.A. p. 148.

4. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2 p. 77.

5. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 95.

6. A.B.I.A. Vol. II 1936,—p. 15.

7. I.I.A. p. 149.

Certain monuments found at Anuradhapura and Isurumuniya have been dated to 600 A.D. on grounds of early Pallava style.<sup>1</sup> Then there are several other monuments found at Anuradhapura and elsewhere which are unmistakably Pallava in origin and style.<sup>2</sup>

### Signs and figures carved on rock and pillars

It is interesting to note the presence of certain signs and figures inscribed on the rocks and pillars along with the texts relating to various inscriptions. No doubt these have been very crudely executed without any regard to artistic expression by the professional scribes of the period presumably under instruction from the central authority of the Court. These artisans of ancient days appear to have formed a separate class of craftsmen who might not have been held in any high regard nor do they appear to have possessed any artistic or sculptural ability. However, this art originally had been allied to sculpture and may have later branched off as a separate craft altogether. It is well known that during the ancient times carving had been a developed art and even kings indulged in it as a pastime. It is on record that king Jettha Tissa was a clever ivory carver.<sup>3</sup> The tradition may have been considerably old although in later times the technique and art had been restricted to a humble class of artisans. However, it is not unconnected with sculpture altogether and should not therefore be dissociated from any study relating to sculpture.

From a cave at Weweltenna have been discovered the earliest manifestations of carving on stone. The examples are curvilinear swastika, chaitya, chakra, trident or footprint. The trident is very peculiar and resembles the glorified 'Ma' representing the initial letter of 'mangala.' All these signs are considered sacred objects of earlier Ceylon and are datable to the first century B.C.<sup>4</sup>

The next object to be inscribed in order of antiquity is the divided square found on the rock at Mekiccewa engraved between certain letters of the inscription. It also resembles the railed enclosure of the Bodhi Tree. Could it be a modification without the tree itself or is it a variation of the symbol meaning "to go"? Mr. Bell suggests it to be the standard of the weight of the coin which had half and quarter *pada*. It is datable to about the second century A.D.<sup>5</sup> The curvilinear swastika occurs

1. J.S.C. Vol. 2 pt. 2, p. 77.

2. A.S.C. 1936 p. 19.

3. Mv. Ch. 37, v. 101.

4. E.Z.I. pl. 19, fig. 5, p. 149 - Also E.P. Ind. Vol. 7, p. 119.

5. E.Z. II, pl. 27, p. 209.

in the third century A.D. on Jetavanaramaya inscription. This is used as an auspicious symbol and a mark of punctuation.<sup>1</sup> Several Buddhist emblems consisting of the sun, moon and curvilinear swastika with arms turned to the right have been found. On the pillar inscriptions at Kivulakada during the time of Sena I, ninth century A.D.<sup>2</sup> A few unidentifiable signs are also found belonging to this period. A crude representation of a crow and dog are found on the Gerandiagala rock inscription belonging to the ninth century A.D.<sup>3</sup> Other crude figures of a man and dog and crow are seen on the Vatadage pillar inscription in Polonnaruwa datable to the ninth century A.D.<sup>4</sup> It is to be observed that the crude representation of the dog and crow are very commonly found during this period and several inscriptions bear this on a side.

Very little variation is to be seen in the symbols and signs adopted in these inscriptions. During the early tenth century the fan and sickle came to be inscribed sometimes not separately but in association with the dog and crow. At Mahagama and Kataragama are to be seen the fan, sickle, dog and crow on a pillar inscription belonging to the 10th century A.D.<sup>5</sup> A little later than these we get concentric circles having the inner circle divided into quadrants with straight lines all at right angles to one another, a semi-circle and a fan.<sup>6</sup> The crow and dog are seen again and again on pillar inscriptions during tenth century A.D.<sup>7</sup>

During the late tenth century the sun, moon and crow gained prominence and were depicted in clearer form and larger sizes.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the field is practically restricted to these objects and the dog is also very commonly found.<sup>9</sup> These animals and signs are inscribed sometimes singly and sometimes in groups from about the early tenth century A.D. almost up to its close.

Belonging to the very early eleventh century A.D. there is an interesting pillar inscription from Polonnaruwa where the chakra, moon, fan, sickle, crow and dog are all seen together.<sup>10</sup> During this period are to be observed the circle and segments

1. E.Z. I., pl. 30.
2. E.Z. III, pl. 34, fig. 2, p. 289.
3. E.Z. III, pl. 16.
4. E.Z. III, p. 34.
5. E.Z. III, pl. 24, fig. 4, p. 219 and E.Z. IV, pl. 19, p. 180.
6. E.Z. IV, pl. 20.
7. E.Z. II, pl. 1, p. 1.
8. E.Z. II, pl. 7, p. 34.
9. E. Z. II, pl. 5, p. 20.
10. E.Z. IV, pl. 7, p. 61.

for the first time.<sup>1</sup> The sun, moon and crow are continued without variation of any sort up to the twelfth century A.D.

But during the time of Nissanka Malla, late twelfth century, one very interesting inscribed composition is seen at Galpota slab where a double band of geese, 200 in all, are seen moving from left to right. At the middle of each is a seated figure of Lakshmi holding flowers upon which a pair of elephants pour water from pots.<sup>2</sup> Once again a beautiful band of geese and a band of leafy vignettes are seen at Polonnaruwa.<sup>3</sup>

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1. E.Z. I., pl. 28.

2. E.Z. II, pl. 20, p. 99.

3. E.Z. II, pl. 16, p. 91 and A.S.C. 1903 pl. 12.

## CHAPTER VII

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SINHALESE— FOREIGN RELATIONS

#### Problematical

Ceylon,<sup>1</sup> the pearl of the Orient, the gem in the Indian Ocean, has been known to the ancient people of both East and West. Beautiful legendary tales woven around, perhaps historical reminiscences, are current with the Sinhalese of the present day. Some of these stories of a religious or historical nature have been also recorded in the literary and historical works on ancient Ceylon and have been preserved to this day. Some of these are not without deep interest and historical value.

The historical period of the Island begins with the arrival of Prince Vijaya. From thence onwards Indian contacts grew. The records improved and the history became truer and more reliable. These contacts were of a multifarious nature, both pleasant and unpleasant, and were induced by social, cultural, religious, and commercial or hostile motives on either or both sides.

An old chronicle<sup>2</sup> has recorded that "from very early times this Lanka was colonised by people from Jambudvipa." The next legendary figure we come across is Ravana who was defeated in Lanka by Rama, the hero of the Ramayana. The kingdom was handed over by the victor to king Vibhisana of Kelaniya. The Ramayana<sup>3</sup> seems to portray most of the geographical outlines of the Island approximately. The *Dipavamsa*<sup>4</sup> has also preserved such traditional lore. Then Yakkhas and such primitive tribes like Nagas were, for certain, living along a belt of country extending from Kelaniya as far as Nagadipa<sup>5</sup> near Mannar. The early tribal names such as lion, hyena, lambakarna, bali-bhojaka, moriya and kulinga mentioned in the Mahavamsa may be some of the totemistic clans coming from ancient times.<sup>6</sup> These

1. This list gives some of the names which have been applied to Ceylon from time to time. Tambapani, Sihladipa, Lanka, Ilam, Hsia-lan-shan, Palasimundu, Sarandib, Taprobane, etc.
2. Law B.C. - Buddhist studies, p. 455.
3. Sundarakanda.
4. DV. gives the length of the Island as 32 yojanas which is nearly correct.
5. It is natural for early travellers to describe peoples of new areas as barbarous and subhuman. See Assavalaka Jataka, ed Cowell & Rouse, Vol. II, pp. 89 - 91.
6. G.C. Mendis—Early History of Ceylon 4th ed. p. 6. also the Vedda Clan Names (Varuges) may be reminiscent of such a social organisation.

people<sup>1</sup> must have migrated from India long before the Vijayan invasion. The language of the Yakkhas and Rakkhasas was said to have been Andhra.

The Buddha<sup>2</sup> legend is woven into the ancient legendary fabric without any discrepant threads manifesting in the original pattern. The Yakkhas, Rakkhasas and Nagas constitute the aboriginal population still. The Buddha is said to have visited Ceylon on three occasions.<sup>3</sup> Further, scattered throughout the Buddhist legends may be found a hint about the coming events of the future. Synchronised with the Parinirvana of the Tathagata is the event of the arrival of Vijaya.<sup>4</sup> Being banished by his father, Sinhabahu of Sinhapura in Lada of the Vanga country, for acts of lawlessness, Vijaya accompanied by 700 followers, landed at Tambapanni in Ceylon, having touched at Supparaka on the voyage.

He was an adventurous Kastriya Prince who overpowered the Island population and subjected the inhabitants with the help of an intriguing woman named Kuveni.<sup>5</sup> Later he banished her and made arrangements to invite an Aryan princess from India. Messengers were sent with a letter to woo the daughter of the king of Pandu for himself and other maidens for the rest of his company. The company arrived at Madhura<sup>6</sup> by ship with the king's daughter and other maidens. Craftsmen and a thousand families of the 18 guilds accompanied the party to Mahatittha in ships. Since this event Vijaya continued to send to his wife's father annually a shell pearl worth 200,000 pieces of gold.

Anthropological data so far available help to establish the early occupation of Ceylon by peoples of rude cultures as represented today by some of their still surviving descendants. It is certain that during ancient times the whole Island could not have been peopled by them, but that only the north-west and south-east areas formed their settlements. Just as people arrived from

1. The modern jungle tribes of Ceylon—The Veddas—bear a close resemblance to the primitive tribes of South India—see Census of India, 1931, Vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 444.
2. Mv. Ch. 1, vv. 21-32.
3. Mahavamsa, Ch. 1.
4. Two views are prevalent about the original home of Vijaya. Though early mariners may have come from the west littoral of India, the writer is inclined to believe that Vijaya and his band came from the east of India.
5. She was a Yakkha maiden probably the daughter of a powerful chief. Kuveni won over the Island to Vijaya by betraying her own people. A son and daughter were born to her from Vijaya.
6. Mv. Ch. VII - vv. 49 - 74. This city has not been identified.

the west, even so early settlers may have arrived in the Island from the east.

This least suspected source of racial infiltration from the east may be looked for in Malaya or in the far away Indonesian<sup>1</sup> group of islands. The people may have entered the north-east coast also in a series of waves.<sup>2</sup> Little racial but more cultural evidence is available about such people, although both elements may be considered by some to be negligible. The racial elements may be a trace of Mongolian features that has often been suspected among the Sinhalese. The cultural elements were presumably the technique of tool making,<sup>3</sup> outrigger canoe,<sup>4</sup> coconut, masks,<sup>5</sup> mode of wearing the lower garment<sup>6</sup> and crocodile cult.<sup>7</sup> All of these may be detected by a careful observation even today. When these people came to Ceylon is not known. How they came may be inferred as the outrigger which is found in Ceylon, and west coast of South India,<sup>8</sup> as far as Madagascar, can be attributed to them. Such a racial strain and a similar culture may be found along the Malabar coast.

Each area had access to the coastal belt with a sea port<sup>9</sup> of its own. The Vijaya legend refers to the inhabitants of Ceylon during the fifth century B.C. as Yakkhas and Rakkhasas.<sup>10</sup> There were also Nagas.<sup>11</sup> The early descriptions agree in essentials with the characteristics of the primitive tribes as are found now. The State of society obtaining at the time was not by any means a static one. It was probably nomadic, but with an element of seasonal permanence. There were coastal fishermen, hunters and agriculturalists owning cattle and dogs. Rice and gruel formed

1. The Polynesians were famous sea-farers and they had large boats that could undertake distant voyages. The Indonesians may have belonged to this stock and possessed the same culture.
2. Probably the area extended from Tissamaharama as far as Mahiyangana.
3. The stone implements found in the south east area bear a resemblance in shape, material and technique to those of Malaya.
4. The outrigger canoe is found in Ceylon, Malabar Coast and Madagascar along with the coconut. It is not used in the east coast of India. This distribution of the coconut lies also within the same area. Compare the Polynesian word 'Oru-u' with the modern Sinhalese oruva, both meaning a boat.
5. Sinhalese demonological masks show an affinity to those of Indonesian area.
6. The Sinhalese women also sometimes wear the single piece of cloth above the breasts. The men sometimes tuck up the cloth in the fashion of the Polynesians.
7. A spoon made of a crocodile tooth is used at the ceremonial feeding of a child. Love for the crocodile is expressed in folk-lore.
8. Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, pt. 1, p. 444.
9. Mv. Ch. 6. see details of the landing of Vijaya. It is possible that another important port was in use near Tissamaharama.
10. Mv. Ch. I, v. 20—see also Valihassa Jataka.
11. Mv. Ch I, 7-84.

their food. They drank ferments made from the juice of the palm tree. The women carried their children on their hips and knew the art of enticing men.<sup>1</sup>

The details of the legends and the authenticity of historical references can be best left to the historian to be proved or disproved. Even with the facts so far established by historical research, it is difficult to deny the arrival in the Island of one wave or series of waves of people belonging to a higher culture than that then obtaining in this Island. These groups of immigrants arrived in bands and in all probability belonged to the Aryan stock. As time progressed they invited more and more settlers, married women from their homeland and established a society which contained various elements, and professed diverse arts and crafts.

### Political

The first reference made to South India in the Sinhalese historical records is to two Damilas—Sena and Guttika,<sup>2</sup> (207 - 197 B.C.) sons of a freighter who brought horses<sup>3</sup> to Ceylon. They invaded the land with a large army, defeated king Sura Tissa and reigned for twenty-two years until finally expelled by Asela. The next powerful intruder from South India was a Damila named Elara,<sup>4</sup> (205 - 161 B.C.) from the Chola country, who seized the northern kingdom and ruled for 44 years. He was a just and virtuous king who managed to live on friendly terms with the Bhikkhus as well. Strangely enough "of all these incidents as well as those of Sena and Guttika Pulattha<sup>5</sup> and others and the infamous career of Anula Devi<sup>6</sup> (c. 48 B.C.) who had a succession of Tamil paramours, no trace is found in Tamil literature except the legends of a prince and calf placed in the reign of Manu."<sup>7</sup>

Dutthagamani (161 - 137 B.C.) the Sinhalese national hero of the *Mahavamsa* epic fought Elara,<sup>8</sup> not merely to bring about political unity and expel the invaders but most decidedly to re-establish the Doctrine of the Buddha. He gained complete success and fulfilled his mission. He erected many fine monuments, some of which remain to this day and even preserved on them ancient

1. Valahassa Jataka pp. 89 - 91.

2. Mv. Ch. 21—v. 10.

3. Sindhu horses formed the best breed. Mention is made of horses being brought to the Island from time to time. It is also said that the horses of the kings were duty free. See F.N.S.I. pp. 89-91.

4. Mv. Ch. 21—vv. 13-14, also vv. 18 - 19.

5. Mv. Ch. 33, v. 56.

6. Ibid, Ch. 34, v. 19 onwards.

7. Sastri Nilakanta, Cholas pp. 34 - 35.

8. Mv. Ch. 25, v. 17.

artistic manifestations worthy of the best Indian tradition. The South Indians started trouble again. This time seven Damilas<sup>1</sup> landed with troops at Mahatittha in about 103 B.C. The king of Ceylon who was Vattagamani Abhaya fled with his queen leaving the capital at the mercy of the invaders, apparently Pandyns. Five of them remained and each ruled in turn until the last of them was expelled by the exiled king who staged a comeback to resume the reigns of government. When Ila-Naga<sup>2</sup> (33-43 A.D.) was dethroned by the Lambakannas he fled to India. On his return with an army three years later he won back the throne.

During the reign of Vankanasika Tissa (111-114 A.D.) a Chola king named Karikal invaded Ceylon, spoiled the country and took away 12,000 prisoners.<sup>3</sup> Great irrigation schemes of the Kaveri river may have also enticed a large number of the Sinhalese to the Indian Continent. It is very likely that a stream of people kept on going up and down between the Kaveri ports and Ceylon. The lure of wealth may have attracted them as these cities were rich and flourishing then.

*Rajavaliya* records a tradition of the daring counter-invasion undertaken by King Gaja Bahu, son of the former king. He threatened the Chola king and brought back with him not only 12,000 Sinhalese prisoners but also double this number of Chola captives. A Tamil epic<sup>4</sup> of the Sangam period mentions the presence of King Gaja Bahu on the occasion of the celebrations of the temples built for the goddess Pattini in the Chera capital. The *Mahavamsa* makes no mention at all of this interesting episode which clearly establishes the borrowing of cultural traits by the Sinhalese. It also establishes the close contacts of the two areas. It appears that a Pandyan<sup>5</sup> invasion established foreign rule at Anuradhapura for 26 years (429-455 A.D.) The Sinhalese fled to Ruhuna. Dhatusena (455-473 A.D.) succeeded in forcing the Tamils out of the Island.

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1. Ibid, Ch. 33, v. 39.

2. *Rajavaliya*—p. 43.

3. *Rajavaliya*—p. 45.

4. Silappadikaram, canto 27 II 127 pp. for the Kannuki legend and the association with Gaja Bahu. The king is referred to by name as being invited for the ceremony. See also Krishnaswamy Ayyangar Manimekalai p. 40. To the same king is attributed the bringing of the jewelled anklets of Pattini, a popular cult now in Ceylon, and also the insignia of the gods of the four Devalas. He also brought back with him the bowl relic of the Buddha which had been removed by the Damilas during the reign of Vattagamani Abhaya.

5. S.H.C.—p. 29, See Cv. Ch. 38 vv. 11-12.

Two embassies to China are also mentioned. One took place during the reign of Mahanama<sup>1</sup> in 427 A.D. and the other in the reign of Kassapa I<sup>2</sup> in 473 A.D. Moggallana I betook himself to Jambudvipa in 473 A.D. to find troops and returned in the 18th regnal year of Kasyapa.<sup>3</sup>

In the sixth century Kalinga revives the ancient memories when its king<sup>4</sup> sought sanctuary in Ceylon and became a monk. This happened in the time of Aggabodhi II<sup>5</sup> (604-614 A.D.). Then Aggabodhi II (628 A.D.) betook himself to India deserting everything. Later with the help of Damilas he recovered the kingdom again.

A confused account of the conquest or invasion of Ceylon by the Pallavas<sup>6</sup> finds mention in certain records. But so far as the Sinhalese tradition goes only a prince, Manavamma<sup>7</sup> (684-718 A.D.) is referred to as having fled to India with his queen where he took service with the Pallavas. Later he returned with Pallava help to recover the throne but was again compelled to leave the Island. It is also said that he came in boats and defeated Hatthadatha II (684 A.D.) and ruled as king. This contact with the Pallavas seems to be almost certain whatever the accounts may say. This is a very important fact since here again one may notice the contact with the south-east area of India. However, such a contact with the Pallavas was possible during the Mamalla period (625-650 A.D.) since the artistic manifestations of this period seem to have been indelibly impressed on the stone sculpture at Isurumuniya,<sup>8</sup> Anuradhapura.

Another embassy to China was despatched during the time of Aggabodhi VI<sup>9</sup> (733-722 A.D.). This event has not found confirmation by external evidence. During the first empire and in the reign of Sri Mara Sri Vallabha<sup>10</sup> (815-862 A.D.) the power

1. E.Z. Vol. III, p. 12, *Journal Asiatique* 1900—pp. 412-20 Sylvan Levi - J.R.A.S. (C.B.), Vol. 24, No. 68, p. 107.
2. Geiger, W.—Introduction to Mahavamsa Transl. p. xi, p. 35.
3. Cv. Ch. 38, v. 87.
4. Cv. Ch. 42, vv. 44-45—also see S.H.C. p. 35.
5. Cv. Ch. 44, vv. 94, 105, 126.
6. S.H.C.—p. 36—Sinha Vishnu (570-600 A.D.) claims victory over the Sinhalese among others. His grandson, Narasinhavarman says that he enabled Manavamma a Sinhalese prince to conquer Lanka (625-45 A.D.) See E.H.I. pp. 494 - 495.
7. Cv. Ch. 47.
8. H.I.I.A.—p. 158. Note the site and style at Isurumuniya and Tissawewa in N.C.P. where the extraordinary carving of elephants so similar to the Pallava style may be seen.
9. Levi Sylvan - *Journal Asiatique* 1900—pp. 412 - 21.
10. Sastri Nilakanta—The Pandyan Kingdom, pp. 68 - 72 ; S.H.C.p. 37.

was extended even to Ceylon, having defeated the Sinhalese king.<sup>1</sup> Mahavamsa puts this down to the reign of Sena I (833 - 853 A.D.) But this counter-invasion staged by Sena II<sup>2</sup> (853-857 A.D.) against the same king finds no confirmation in the Indian Copper Plates.

Thereafter, the Pandys maintained friendly relations with Ceylon, united in the common purpose of checking the expanding power of the Cholas. Sinhalese help was solicited during the reign of Kassapa V<sup>3</sup> and a well equipped army was despatched to check Parantaka I, the Chola king (c. 910 A.D.). But the once vanquished Pandyan king Rajasinha II, who now attempted to give battle with the allied forces was completely routed at Velur (c. 920 A.D.) The king fled to Ceylon during the reign of Udaya III.<sup>4</sup> However, finding his mission unsuccessful, Rajasinha left for Kerala leaving his Crown, jewels and other regalia with the king of Ceylon. Pandys and the Sinhalese continued to maintain friendly relations, having both undergone a common degradation under the Cholas.<sup>5</sup>

Now the Cholas began to dream of oversea imperial possession. Parantaka I<sup>6</sup> (907 - 953 A.D.) invaded Ceylon without success. He attempted a second time but failed again in the reign of Udaya IV<sup>7</sup> (946 - 954 A.D.). During the reign of Sundara Chola, another expeditionary force<sup>8</sup> landed in Ceylon (959 A.D.) and failed. Finally, Sena V<sup>9</sup> handed over the country to the Damilas and left (972 A.D.). Then Polonnaruwa was made the capital of Lanka.

Rajaraja I<sup>10</sup> (982 - 1013 A.D.) invaded Ceylon during the reign of Mahinda V who ruled at Anuradhapura. The king

1. The Pandyan king took away all the king's treasures, plundered the vihara and spoiled the jewels. Later a peace was arranged. See Cv. Ch. 50, vv. 12-37.
2. Cv. Ch. 51, vv. 32-42. The Senapati invited the Pandyan king. Entered Madura, pillaged the city and collected all the treasures removed from Ceylon. Spoiled the palace and defeated the king. Having set the king's son on the throne, he returned.
3. Cv. Ch. 52, vv. 70 - 78. For inscriptional evidence see Hultzsch, J.R.A.S. (C.B.) 1913, p. 526.
4. Cv. Ch. 53, vv. 5-10.
5. Sastri Nilakanta—The Pandyan Kingdom, pp. 129-33.
6. Sastri Nilakanta—Cholas, p. 143.
7. Ibid, p. 148. Udaya IV refused to return the regalia but when the country was invaded he fled with it. Later a Sinhalese army entered the borderland of the Chola country and by threats obtained the booty taken from Ceylon. Also see Cv. Ch. 53, vv. 40-43.
8. Cv. Ch. 54, v. 12, apparently this was Parantaka II.
9. Cv. Ch. 54, vv. 64, 66.
10. Sastri Nilakanta—Cholas, pp. 205-206, 231. There seems to be a certain confusion in the Culavamsa about this king and his successor.

left the city which was sacked. Cholas made Polonnaruwa their capital. The conquest was completed by his son, Rajendra I (1017-18 A.D.). The Cholas not only removed the Sinhalese crown but even the king<sup>1</sup> and queen. They erected many temples and devalas at Polonnaruwa and renamed the city as Jananathapura. Ceylon became a division of the Chola empire.

Prince Kitti unified the scattered forces and made a bold bid to win back independence from the Cholas<sup>2</sup> but failed (c. 1040 A.D.). With the accession of Kullottunga I, there followed civil war in the Chola Empire. Kitti, now entitled Vijaya Bahu I attacked again and won complete victory (1055 A.D.). The next great monarch was Parakrama Bahu I (1150-86 A.D.). He restored complete unity and eliminated external and internal cares. Nevertheless, his alliance with the Pandians necessitated the sending of a large force under a general to fight against the Cholas.<sup>3</sup> A series of battles ensued with varying successes. Finally the Sinhalese withdrew with much booty. Parakrama Bahu I was forced to send a naval expedition to Burma<sup>4</sup> in order to avenge an insult to his emissaries. The king of Burma was defeated and friendly relations resumed as before. The king settled down to a plan of reconstruction and a period of peace and prosperity prevailed.

### Religions

Almost for a century and a half after the arrival of Vijaya, there is no recorded evidence of any intercourse between India and Ceylon. It is difficult to believe that Buddhism of a sort did not find a place in ancient Ceylon. Both Adikaram<sup>5</sup> and Devendra<sup>6</sup> suggest that Buddhism was known along with other Indian religious systems of the times. There were adherents as well. Mahavamsa also mentions Ajivakas,<sup>7</sup> etc. We must assume that nothing remarkable took place except the prevalence of normal friendly contacts. During the reign of Devanampiyatissa good political relations and friendly associations prevailed between the Sinhalese king and the Indian Emperor,

1. Cv. Ch. 55. This whole chapter is devoted to the pillage of Lanka. But the Chola inscriptions remain silent on this point. Cholas p. 239.
2. Sastri Nilakanta—Cholas, p. 303.
3. Cholas pp. 129-133. This is not corroborated by the Tamil evidence. It is doubtful if the success was so complete as the Sinhalese version has it. Cv. Ch. 76. vv. 76-85, 86-101, also Ch. 77.
4. Cv. Ch. 75, v. 10, also E.Z. Vol. III, p. 325.
5. Adikaram, E. W.—Early History of Buddhism p. 48.
6. Devendra, D. T.—Buddha Image and Ceylon, p. 22.
7. Mv. Ch. X, p. 75, v. 102.

even without seeing each other.<sup>1</sup> The king of Ceylon sent four persons as envoys with large presents. This journey lasted 14 days, from Jambukola<sup>2</sup> to Pataliputta, 7 days on sea and 7 days by land. Emperor Asoka bestowed gifts and honours and sent back the envoys.<sup>3</sup> If Tambapanni<sup>4</sup> can be taken to mean Ceylon, then Asoka himself mentions Ceylon twice in his inscriptions. Later, the Emperor Asoka exhorted the Sinhalese king Devanampiyatissa to embrace the doctrine of the Buddha.<sup>5</sup>

For this purpose Thera Mahinda<sup>6</sup> was sent on a mission to Ceylon in the company of Sumana, Bhanduka and four others. They met the king near the Missaka mountain and converted him. Mahinda was aware of the possibility of communicating with his father,<sup>7</sup> the Emperor Asoka. He, therefore, despatched messengers as and when required. On one occasion he sent Sumana to bring relics to be enshrined in the proposed dagoda.<sup>8</sup> Many religious buildings were erected by Devanampiyatissa in the cause of Buddhism. Thus the new religion became firmly established in the Island.

Later, the king on instructions from Mahinda sent his nephew Arittha to Asoka in order to bring a sacred branch of the Bodhi tree as well as to accompany Theri Sanghamitta<sup>9</sup> to Ceylon. The journey was undertaken by ship and the ports mentioned are Jambukola and Tamalitti.<sup>10</sup> The company consisting of a large number of followers belonging to various clans and professing diverse crafts arrived in the Island.<sup>11</sup> The Thera and her company were delighted at the royal welcome. Having fulfilled their life's greatest and noblest mission, Mahinda and Sanghamitta passed away during the reign of Uttiya (207 - 197 B.C.).

It is mentioned that at the beginning of operations of the Ruanveli dagoba, vast numbers of monks from the Buddhist kingdom of Northern India<sup>12</sup> came to Ceylon with gifts to the king. We

1. Mv. Ch. II, v. 18.
2. Jambukola was a port in North Ceylon.
3. Mv. Ch. II, v. 36.
4. Rock Edict XIII amongst the countries to which Asoka has sent missionaries. Rock Edict II mentions those lands for which he had provided for the distribution of medicine.
5. Mv. Ch. II, vv. 34-35.
6. Mv. Ch. 12, v. 7.
7. Ibid, Ch. 15, v. 23.
8. Ibid, Ch. 17, v. 10.
9. Mv. Ch. 18, vv. 6-8. She was the sister of Mahinda and they are supposed to have been Asoka's own children.
10. Jambukola probably by this time had become a royal port. In India Tamalitti continued to be a port of embarkation to Ceylon.
11. Mv Ch. 18, v. 25.
12. Mv Ch. 29 (vv. 29-43). The kingdoms mentioned are Magadha, Rajagaha, Vesali, Ujjeni, Kosambi, Puppapura, Kasmira, Vindhya.

have a very interesting record belonging almost to the same period of a pious Sinhalese Buddhist who visited Buddha-Gaya and recorded a donation in the following terms:—“Bodhi rakhita ta (m) bapa (m) Nakasa danam.”<sup>1</sup> Both Bhikkhus and laymen are mentioned as going on religious pilgrimages to Gaya to worship at the Bodhi Tree.<sup>2</sup> There follows a period of activity at home. At least no religious contacts are mentioned, whereas in other spheres much intercourse resulted.

During the second and third centuries A.D. religious intercourse between Ceylon and the most flourishing Kistna area commenced on a large scale. It may be that such relations existed long before but the flourishing commerce may have intensified the contacts in all spheres. Buddhist pilgrims, missionaries and monks went up and down, each imbibing and imparting new ways and means of establishing Buddhism. Art played a prominent part in such propaganda. Undoubtedly what prevailed in the Andhra kingdom of Kistna valley having Amaravati as the cultural centre may have been introduced at this time. Unmistakable proof of Sinhalese religious intercourse is furnished by a Prakrit inscription discovered at the Buddhist site of Nagarjunikonda.<sup>3</sup>

This record throws considerable light on this period of Sinhalese Buddhist history specially in so far as its associations with the mainland are concerned. This gives information about the history of art as well.

The second apsidal shrine at Nagarjunikonda was raised by a single female devotee, Bodhisri by name. She did not belong to the royal house of Ikshvaksus.<sup>4</sup> The shrine is further stated to have been dedicated to the fraternities of Ceylonese monks who had converted certain kingdoms.<sup>5</sup> Two religious foundations are mentioned, one of which was a Sinhala Vihara.<sup>6</sup> It must have

1. Coomaraswamy—H.I.I.A. p. 158.
2. Law—Buddhistic studies, p. 427. Rasawahini mentions a number of stories of pilgrims going to Buddhagaya.
3. Vogel, J. Ph. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XX, No. 1, pp. 1-37. Inscription F. pp. 8. - 10 datable to II - III A.D.
4. Ikshvakus were descendants of an ancient race in the Telegu country. Certain Sinhalese kings are also said to have belonged to this dynasty.
5. Kasmira, Gandhara, China, Chilatha (Kirata), Vanga, Vanavasi, Yawana, Damali, Lura, and the isle of Tambapanni. See *Mv. Ch. 12*, p. 82, for some of the countries converted to Buddhism and *Cv. Ch. 8*, *Milinda Panha* Ed. Trenkner pp. 327. 31, also refers to some of these places.
6. This is a Ceylonese convent and appears to have contained a shrine with a Bodhi tree, and also cetiyagara dedicated to the fraternity of Tambapanni. This establishes the close relationship between the Buddhist community of Damakataka and their co-religionists in the Island of Ceylon.

been a convent founded by a Sinhalese or more probably meant for the accommodation of Sinhalese monks. Also there is another dedication to two sects, viz., Aparamahavinaseliya and Puraseliyas.<sup>1</sup> It can be that the two Ceylon sects Pubbaselikas and Aparaselikas originated from the two Indian convents or vice versa.

The tradition of founding monasteries at important religious centres for the convenience of monks seemed to have persisted into later times. King Sri Meghavanna (301 - 328 A.D.) sent two monks (one being his own brother) to Buddhagaya to visit the monastery built by Asoka and to pay homage to the Diamond Throne of the Buddha. The envoys were badly treated. Thereupon the king, with the approval of Emperor Samudragupta, erected a splendid three storeyed convent near the Holy site. This fact is recorded in a copper plate in India,<sup>2</sup> (c. 360 A.D.). Another event is recorded in this reign. Guhasiva, king of Kalinga, despatched to Ceylon the Tooth Relic of the Buddha in the custody of his own daughter, the beautiful princess Hemamali. Around this grew many glamorous festivals. Special temples were built for housing it. A unique significance began to develop around it.

For a period of almost three centuries (III - VI A.D.), Ceylon may have enjoyed a deal of political quiet and freedom. Religion began to engage the attention of the islanders. We also learn of the visits of scholars and religious missionaries but the new movement was not to the liking of the Buddhists altogether as the Mahayana form of the doctrine began to be introduced. An opposition continued throughout championed by the orthodox Mahavihara monks. It was not completely a new thing. For as early as 100 B.C. Mahayana influenced Ceylon for the dissension of the Mahavihara and the Abhayagiri may have been caused by it. And the disciples of Acarya Dhammaruci<sup>3</sup> found a home in Ceylon. It may have come here from South India.<sup>4</sup>

During the reign of Voharaka Tissa (209 - 231 A.D.) the Vaitulyavadins entered Ceylon but their doctrine was suppressed by the monks of Mahavihara.<sup>5</sup> Later a Chola monk named

1. Nagarjunikonda inscription No. 5; C.I. line 10 and E. line 2.
2. Smith—E.H.I. p. 393. The embassy from Ceylon took place during the reign of Samudragupta during which period the Sinhalese king may have ruled.
3. Codrington, S.H.C. p. 22. This teacher belonged to the Vajjiputta. Nikaya of Pullarane in South India.
4. In Ceylon Mahayana was known by other names chiefly as Vaitulya. Mahayana form of Buddhism was very popular in South India from early first century A.D. Nagarajuna of the Andhra kingdom gave the doctrine an authoritative form in II A.D.
5. Mv. Ch. 36. v. 41.

Sanghamitta led a band of Vaitulyavadins and started trouble when Gotaka Abhaya<sup>1</sup> (249 - 265 A.D.) was king. When Jettha Tissa (330-339 A.D.) became king Sanghamitta left but returned in the reign of Mahasena (275-301 A.D.). At the time of king Dhatusena<sup>2</sup> (455-473 A.D.) Mahayana flourished and the Dhammarucikas were in possession of Mahavihara as well. Prince Silakala<sup>3</sup> (518 - 531 A.D.) who was educated at Buddhagaya brought to Ceylon the hair relic of the Buddha during the reign of Moggallana I (491 - 508 A.D.) and himself encouraged Mahayana when he was king. From Kasi came merchants named Punna bringing the Dhammadhatu.<sup>4</sup> Again we learn of Jotipala<sup>5</sup> refuting the new doctrine. At the time of Sena I (833-853 A.D.) a doctrine known as Vajiriyavada<sup>6</sup> was introduced. The expounders of the Nilapata Darsana<sup>7</sup> appear during the rule of Sena II (853-887 A.D.). From now onwards no mention is made of Mahayana influences.

Religious intercourse with Burma find mention in the reign of Vijaya Bahu I. He sent to the king in the Ramanna<sup>8</sup> country costly treasure. With the help of monks from the Araman country the king effected the purification of Buddhism under the three Nikayas.<sup>9</sup> Pegu in Lower Burma also had maintained friendly relations from early times. Exchange of presents and visits were kept up with one break that too was later adjusted.

### Social and Cultural

Vijaya's party is believed to have contained no women and it is most likely that the newcomers mixed freely with the society existing in Ceylon. Such a drawback was made good by inviting women from among their own kinsfolk in India. Communications between the two lands existed and made possible social and cultural contacts. Vijaya's nephew arrived from India to succeed him on the throne. A year later Bhadda-Kaccana, daughter of Sakkha Pandu<sup>10</sup> came as his royal bride. Her party<sup>11</sup> consisting

1. Ibid, Ch. 37, v. 92.

2. Ibid, Ch. 38, vv. 75-77.

3. Cv. Ch. 39, vv. 46, 49-50.

4. Nikayasangraha—He was a Sinhalese merchant who went to Kasi, see Cv. Ch. 41, v. 37.

5. Cv. Ch. 42.

6. Nikayasangraha.

7. Ibid.

8. Burma was also known as Aramana and Ramanna, Cv. Ch. 58, v. 8, Cv. Ch. 76, v. 10, Ch. 80, v. 7.

9. Pujavaliya, Rajavaliya and Nikayasangraha, also E.Z. Vol. II, p. 235—For further details see Cv. Ch. 60, vv. 5-8.

10. Sakyans were very prosperous and formed one of the most advanced communities in Magadha.

11. Mv. Ch. 8, v. 23.

of her six brothers and 32 maidens came in boats. At this time rivers in this Island formed important highways. From an early time two clans of Aryans are believed to have established themselves on the land.

The local population also played an active role. Borrowing on the part of both peoples now living in the Island necessarily took place but the two communities existed in a large measure as two distinct racial groups. Powerful chiefs of the aboriginal tribes remained independent until they in turn were also absorbed gradually into the common stock. The Aryan rule spread under new chiefs. However, a certain animosity also prevailed between the Aryans themselves. This led to dynastic disputes from time to time as was clearly evidenced from the legends relating to the life of Pandukabhaya.<sup>1</sup>

During the time of Pandukabhaya the country had advanced considerably. Mahavamsa<sup>2</sup> has preserved to us glimpses of the life of the times. It speaks of an organised society, an advanced culture, aesthetic refinement and political sagacity. The administration was based on democratic principles. There was religious tolerance. The achievements of this age (400 B.C.) seem remarkable even when measured by modern standards.

The social and cultural conditions obtaining in Ceylon immediately preceding the introduction of Buddhism may have been sufficiently advanced as to make it possible for the new religion to be favourably accepted by the society. All knowledge was in the hands of the Brahmins. Writing was known as is also testified to by the ancient Brahmi inscriptions. Arts and crafts naturally flourished for many families belonging to such professions arrived in the Island from time to time. People were educated to some extent and would have professed some understanding of the religions prevailing in India.

New ideals, be they religious, cultural or artistic, find a ready reception among people living in a period enjoying leisure and freedom. Buddhism was introduced into Ceylon exactly at such an opportune moment when the predisposing factors necessary for the success of a new religious movement were most favourable. The social and religious susceptibilities of the islanders were yearning for consummation.

The devotion to the new faith of royalty as well as the combined laity helped the erection of a series of monuments. Master builders carried out the constructional undertakings.

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1. Mv. Ch. 10, vv. 64, 73.

2. Ibid.

There were many types of buildings. The architectural presentation was north Indian as were also their embellishments. The new scheme of things would have called for a great drive in cultivating as well as popularising art and architecture which at this time may have been wholly inspired by North Indian models not altogether uninfluenced by the popular traditions as well. The new doctrines helped to level down the social distinctions and shape a common pattern of society. Trade, learning, cultivation, arts and crafts were the professions of the period.

The practical aspects of the religious life, worship and belief paved the way for the foundation of vast endowments required for the construction of public buildings, religious institutions and monastic abodes. Although some monks preferred a deeply religious life in forest retreats and lonely caves there were monks and nuns living in city establishments who were supported and maintained by the laity. The ever-growing prosperity of the commercial community was directly responsible for the prosperity of many charitable institutions from the very early times. Gifts were bestowed by monks as well as merchants<sup>1</sup> who also helped to found viharas.<sup>2</sup> The commercial sector comprised an organized community and it is likely that the most influential personalities counted among their numbers. Such a guild<sup>3</sup> of merchants with whom fixed deposits were made in cash and kind with the interest to be spent finds mention as early as 2nd century A.D. The temple moneys were invested with the merchants on whose punctuality of paying interest depended their maintenance.<sup>4</sup>

The traditions and practices of the ancient culture of the land fused with the new, having satisfied the eye and mind of the laity by their picturesque setting and appealing nature. Ceremonies and rituals associated with the dagobas, Bo-Tree and Tooth Relic formed occasions for annual festivities.<sup>5</sup> The king, nobles, and people enjoyed such occasions. Such public occasions<sup>6</sup> beset with grandeur and elaborate ceremonial pleased the mind of the

1. An inscription belonging to X.A.D. bears this out; E.Z. Vol. III, p. 192.
2. Teriyai Inscription states that the Girikandi Caitya was founded by the companies of merchants in VII A.D.; E.Z. IV, pp. 154, 159. Queen Lilavati caused the platform to be built by traders of diverse countries in XII A.D. E.Z. Vol. I, p. 181. A.S.C. 1930—an inscription from Ganekanda Vihara in Hiriyala Hatpattu.
3. E.Z. Vol. III, No. 17, Tonigala Inscription datable to 362 A.D.
4. E.Z. III No. 17, see C.J. Sc. Sec. G. Vol. II, p. 177 for further examples of such endowments. See Warnasuriya in Ceylon University Review, Vol. II, 1944 p. 93.
5. Law, B.C.—B.S. p. 529-46, various religious festivals are historically treated. Fa Hien describes one such in detail.
6. Nilakanta Sastri quoting Fa Hien. See F.N.S.I. pp. 71-73.

people. The land was rich, probably the result of profitable trade and the people spent lavishly. Intercourse with the rest of the world was easy and frequent.

Religious missions passed to and fro and many new doctrines also reached Ceylon. Closest contact was maintained with the flourishing centres of Andhra kingdom. Certain aspects of the Mahayana form of Buddhism appealed strongly as it created the necessary atmosphere for the growth of popular festivals and worship of images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. New cults such as those pertaining to fertility had a real interest for the people. One such was the Pattini cult.

Literary activity also flourished. Buddhist scholarship and literature earned a name and reputation that even attracted foreign scholars. The spirit and culture of Buddhism supplied a new awakening. Scholars and poets held a position and favour even with the court.<sup>1</sup> Special mention is made of 12 poets living during the time of Aggabodhi I, 625 A.D. A description<sup>2</sup> of a merchant's wife parading in her balcony is strongly reminiscent of ladies of the court. The passage runs thus<sup>3</sup>—"The wife of the merchant stood in the beautified terrace of the mansion gazing at the festival, showing half her body leaning against the body of an attendant. She wore ornaments such as necklaces, bracelets, armlets and anklets."

The peace was broken by rival claimants to the throne from within and South Indian aggressors from without. The Pandyans and Cholas left their impress on the Sinhalese society in many ways. Some invaders may have even settled down at times, married local women and got absorbed into the Sinhalese society. The experts among them may have found work in assisting the Buddhist community in their new undertakings. It was probably the case with the Pallavas,<sup>4</sup> Kalingas<sup>5</sup> and later Pandyans and Cholas. The kings at times were in the habit of distributing gifts among foreigners.<sup>6</sup>

Out of this stress and storm engendered by wars and destructive forces within, the Sinhalese society emerged successfully to enjoy a period of leisure. It is true that the culture suffered loss. The

1. King Buddhadasa wrote a Sanskrit work, was master of medicine and established in each village a hospital. Kumara Dhatusena, if not a poet himself, had close friends who were poets.

2. Cv. Ch. 42, v. 13, see f.n. 2.

3. Rasavahini—p. 139, Nandiraniya Katha.

4. Longhurst—A.S.C. 1936—p. 16.

5. Cv. Ch. 54, v. 9.

6. E.Z. II, Vol. II, p. 125.

monuments were desecrated. And all that was dear to the people disappeared. The country found a great leader in the person of King Parakrama Bahu I. The people found contentment and happiness once more. Art and architecture found expression. Literature developed. Buddhism flourished and the king and noble alike extended their patronage to the worthy undertakings of the people.

### Trade and Travel

"Buddhist literature<sup>1</sup> abounds in allusions to sea voyages and traders visiting Babylon, India, Ceylon and the Golden Chersonese (Suvannabhumi) during 600 B.C." The only visitors to the Island of Lanka at that time were traders and shipwrecked mariners.<sup>2</sup> The ships of those days were able to hold three, five and even seven hundred persons,<sup>3</sup> carrying a maximum load of 200 tons. Even the Indian mariner with his shore sighting birds<sup>4</sup> sailed probably never more than fifty miles away from land. The voyages were coasting voyages. A few of the earliest ports<sup>5</sup> in India and Ceylon are mentioned. These were located on the western coast of India and Ceylon. The trade was a form of barter in which a coinage<sup>6</sup> also may have been used as a medium of exchange. The traders sought the safe harbours as well as obtained ivory, pearls, mineral and precious stones from Ceylon. No annoyance was caused to the Islanders and friendly relations prevailed in those early times of commercial travelling.

From the third century B.C. there are Greek accounts about Ceylon. The earliest is written by a Greek named Kalisthenes.<sup>7</sup> Onesikritus<sup>8</sup> writes but his account seems fabulous. Megasthenes<sup>9</sup> refers to the pearls and gold, wild beasts and elephants in 300 B.C. Eratosthenes,<sup>10</sup> 200 B.C. also mentions about Ceylon.

1. Vijaya's company and the mariners in the Valahassa Jataka were such persons.
2. Rawlinson A. C. I.I.W.W. p. 5, also Mookerji—History of Indian shipping and maritime activity, Ch. III—Mahajanaka and Sankha Jatakas.
3. Ibid.
4. Digha Nikaya—Kevadda Sutta.
5. Bharukachcha, Suppara, Kalyani, Nagadipa, Sirisavatthu or Sirivatthupura are some. Dv. p. 161, Nagadipa and Mahilaratta have not been identified. Mv. also mentions them.
6. Ceylon coins known as 'puranas' (eldlings) are not unlike those found in India and the modern view is that these are very old, at least 500 B.C. Codrington in C.C.C. p. 16.
7. He was a member of Alexander's party that came from India. He adds that the account was given to him by a Theban scholar who had been to Taprobane. See McCrindle's Ancient India, p. 179.
8. A pilot of Alexander, see I. I. W.W. p. 52.
9. Sastri Nilakanta—F.H.S.I. p. 42.
10. The President of the library of Alexandria during Ptolemy period.

The version of Strabo<sup>1</sup> appears imaginary whilst that of Pliny<sup>2</sup> supplies no new information. Nevertheless, Greek traders, travellers and scholars knew Ceylon, her position and her goods.

Further references to merchandise from overseas<sup>3</sup> and ships abandoned<sup>4</sup> and laden with manifold gems<sup>5</sup> or wrecked near the shore<sup>6</sup> are found in the Mahavamsa and later Sinhalese literature. There is the story of a Roman Revenue Collector shipwrecked on the coast<sup>7</sup> of Ceylon. It is believed that Java at one time may have been peopled by men from the Gujerat coast.<sup>8</sup> Above all an embassy<sup>9</sup> from Ceylon is said to have arrived in Rome during the rule of Emperor Claudius.

The shores of the Tamil countries on the Eastern side of India flourished during the early Christian era. The men responsible for the prosperous trade belonged to the Andhra, Pallava and Chola kingdoms. They were clever navigators. The following ancient ports are mentioned as the best known ones. They are Kola Pattana,<sup>10</sup> Puhar,<sup>11</sup> Kaveri Pattanam.<sup>12</sup> Vogel<sup>13</sup> attributes the success and prosperity of the Kistna area as well as the flourishing position of Buddhism to the munificent lay devotees of the commercial community.

The other race of clever seafarers were the Pallavas<sup>14</sup> (300-700 A.D.). As a great maritime power they are too well known by their ancient colonial empire in Java and Sumatra. They also may have sent expeditions to Ceylon. It was such wealth earned from commercial enterprise that helped them and the royal masters to raise magnificent monuments. It is impossible to imagine that Ceylon completely escaped their mighty influence. The regular connection between Bengal and Ceylon was maintained through the harbour at Tamralipti. Magadha was also thus associated. This continued<sup>15</sup> down to XIII century A.D.

1. See F.M.S.I. p. 47.

2. F.M.S.I. pp. 49-51.

3. Mv. Ch. v. 24. Many stories in the Rasavahini refer to merchants. See E.Z. Vol. III, p. 192.

4. Mv. Ch. 22, v. 49.

5. Ibid, vv. 60, 64.

6. Mv. Ch. 11, v. 9.

7. A freed man by name Ammius Placamus is said to have landed at Hipporos (Kudramalai).

8. Mookherji—History of Indian shipping pp. 150-151.

9. Rawlinson A. C. I.I.W.W. p. 109—The leader's name was Rachi (Raja).

10. Milinda Panha—S.B.E.I. p. XLIV and II p. 269. See Cholas pp. 32-33. This may have been Kaveri Pattanam.

11. Cholas pp. 32-33.

12. Ibid, pp 32-33. Sinhalese literature mentions the greatest irrigation schemes at this time.

13. E.I. Vol. XX No. 1, p. 10, also see p. 9.

14. A.S.C. 1936, p. 16.

15. O.D.B.L. pp. 72-73.

The ships engaged in sea borne trade acted as a regular, transport service for all kinds of other persons such as scholars, missionaries, monks, artisans and travellers. This fact needs great emphasis as this alone made possible cultural diffusion and exchange of new ideas between China on the one hand and Greece and Rome on the other linking together with one powerful network east and west of India. Ceylon stood in the midway though influenced mostly from the West.

One of these travellers was the celebrated Chinese Fa-Hien who arrived at Anuradhapura in about 410 A.D. A useful account<sup>1</sup> of the Island, its condition, religious practices, existing festivals has been left by him. He refers to art as well. A few years later came the erudite Pali commentator, the monk Buddhaghosa,<sup>2</sup> from North India. Then followed from the south Bhikkhu Dhammapala. A less known visitor was Gunavarnam,<sup>3</sup> who after some time left for China via Java. Cosmas,<sup>4</sup> a sixth century writer, has left a record of the Island and its trade. According to him the trade route<sup>5</sup> was such that ships must touch at Ceylon which thereby became a distributing centre because of its strategic position.

Roman coins<sup>6</sup> have been found at almost every port in Ceylon. The growth and circulation of metallic currency was rapid. This fact confirms the wide distribution as well as the extent of this commercial intercourse carried out by the Romans in the Island. This currency seems to have gone out of use after 700 A.D. But it is likely that Roman agents resided in Ceylon. One unique find spot was Sigiriya.<sup>7</sup> It was really during and after 400 A.D. that Ceylon came in for a great deal of importance. While the Tamils handled the carrying trade, the Sinhalese acted as intermediaries.

After 700 A.D. the Western trade fell into the hands of the Arabs whilst the Tamils and the Chinese kept on in the east. There

1. Record of the Buddhistic kingdom and record of Western World. See F.M.S.I. pp. 67 - 73.
2. Cv. Ch. 37, vv. 215-46. He arrived in the reign of Mahanama.
3. F.M.S.I. pp. 77, 81. He came somewhere between 367-431 A.D.
4. Indicopleustes—Topographia Christiana written about 545 A.D. See F.M.S.I. pp. 88-91.
5. Sindhus, Orrhotha (Sorath Surashtra Gujerat) Kalliane Sibor (Chanl), male which has five marks, viz., Parti, mangaronth (Mangalore), Salopatana, Nalopatana. Then out in the ocean for five days and five nights lies Silediba. Then again farther away on the mainland lies Marallo. Then Kabir Kaveri pattanam. Next close country, Next China.
6. Codrington C.C.C. Ch. IV, p. 31, et seq. For list of sites see pp. 32-35. Also see John Still. Roman coins in J.R.A.S. (C.B.) Vol. 19, No. 58-1907.
7. Out of a total find of 1687 coins, 1675 happened to be Roman.

was a trade route between India and Java<sup>1</sup> via Ceylon. Before the end of 700 A.D. a colony of Muslims<sup>2</sup> had already established themselves in Ceylon. A succession<sup>3</sup> of Chinese and Arab travellers coming via India entered the Island after 700 A.D.

The foregoing historical survey reveals three possible sources of contact with early Ceylon, viz., North India, South West India and South East India. Of these the earliest influences entered the Island from the East of India and lasted until about a century before the Christian era. Its form was purely cultural and social, and the traits of such contacts we see in the racial make up and Buddhist art in ancient Ceylon. The next source exerted its influence along the coastal belt and travelled direct. This, however, was during early times. But later elements from the same second sphere came across the land. On its way to the south the elements became absorbed in the more powerful elements of the south-east sphere, which helped to tone down most of the special features.

The third, which to judge from all records, remains the most active lasted from early Christian to late times and influenced the Island considerably. Not only was this drive helped by traders but the people themselves saw to it that the art and society conformed to what was obtainable in the original sphere of influences. The early phase of this culture belonged to the Andhra kingdom and the results of the cultural impact are to be traced in the early sculpture of Ceylon. But the early traits of this Andhra culture have escaped notice and their features in art specially painting elude observation. In all likelihood such elements exist and should be looked for in any examination of the ancient culture of the Sinhalese.

The later phase of the influence from the same sphere manifests in the artistic tradition as well as the social features. This was simply the Gupta tradition which remains as clear in Ceylon as in India. Nevertheless, it travelled to Ceylon through the agents of the last sphere. It is again this same sphere that continued to influence till very late times so much so that the society began to be moulded according to the South Indian standards, having less consideration for the north. Such a feature dominates the culture and society of later times and is most marked during the 12th century Ceylon.

1. F.M.S.I. p. 136, Sailing from Sumatra one knows that one is nearing Si-Lan by the prevalence of continuous flashes of lightning.
2. F.M.S.I. p. 2.
3. Yang-Chvang (c. 619 A.D.) F.M.S.I. p. 104, It-tsing (645 A.D.), *ibid* p. 112, Kien-tchen see *ibid* p. 118. and Chan-ju-kna. See *ibid* p. 136 (1225 A.D. for both). The Arabs were Ibn-Khuradheh (844-48 A.D.). See F.M.S.I. p. 119, two unknown writers (851 A.D.). *ibid*, pp. 122-125 and Alberuni (1030 A.D.), *ibid* 131-32.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF SINHALESE SCULPTURE

#### Sociological Background of Sculpture

At a developed stage of art the artist attempts to portray through the medium of material form abstract conceptions or a fusion of ideas contributing to an ideal or ideals. How far and in what degree such ideal forms reflect the shape of physical forms immediately known to him and within his knowable and unknown circle—its men and women, vegetable and animal life—remains a debatable point. It is true that there is no escape for him from his environment. His ideals must be evolved, developed and modelled in response to the shapes and forms around him. These must be the best, the highest and the most perfect conceivable in mundane life. He cannot escape his environment however much he may attempt to escape from its limitations and soar towards the ideals. He must necessarily, therefore, portray his ideals in physical form from the world around him.<sup>1</sup>

If this be the case then the sculptures may be deemed to have preserved details of the life prevailing during his time within the sphere of contact and influence. On the other hand whether the figures are mere ideals previously drawn from classical literary works, which later became stereotyped into standards of art perpetuated in pupillary succession, remain another problem.<sup>2</sup> Assuming then that the artist consciously or unconsciously presented as his concepts and models the best types belonging to the time and period of his own existence from the environment around him we may then look for hitherto unknown information that may be embodied and has to be gained by their study, more so since the many obvious differences of detail strike forcibly as not ideal but real. Even to the most superficial observer, much more to the trained specialist, a difference is readily noticeable between one figure and another. Such a difference is not due solely to the external embellishments of dress and ornaments, of finish and function. It is also an intrinsic quality apparent in the innate human characteristic of form and shape, look and feature that emanate as a combined concept which may be summed under the term style.

1. But in environment must be included the influences direct and indirect, both physical and mental.
2. It is seldom that the average artist has sufficient force of personality to break through traditionally accepted canons of art. It is the unconventional renegade or the genius that takes the risk and succeeds.

As a matter of fact many writers on sculpture have made passing reference to the Gandhara, Mathura, Andhra, Gupta and Pallava types discernible in sculpture. There is also an attempt at identification with types such as Aryan, Dravidian and Mongolian though not one has attempted the detailed examination of studying their stylistic and racial elements if ever there were any. It then behoves us to examine the sculpture also in greater detail from the local canonistic angle. Had the types been drawn actually from the living forms of the society and if there are those racial characteristics how can their presence be explained. These types must have then been easy to distinguish. Were the persons court personalities or did they belong to any other class or grade; were the models merely Indian artistic prototypes introduced into this Island from time to time? How can these types, if any be explained.

To those who have studied the racial types of the Island it becomes obvious that the figures in sculpture represent personal resemblances of those belonging to a high level of society.

Let us review the early times again. The numerous contacts already referred to occurred between North, West and South-East India and Ceylon. In all these early references the people from the Gangetic plains arrived here in smaller and at times larger numbers. The people of the Sakya kingdom were of the Aryan stock and belonged to that race. It seems to have been in this case a very light coloured ethnic type. On various occasions batches of men and women reached Ceylon and settled down. These families came by invitation or as immigrants to intermarry with their erstwhile relatives in order to found new homes. The cultural connection helped greatly in the racial admixture since the people coming from the north found no strangers but their own kinsmen. This may be the type frequently portrayed in the art of the day.

There is the aristocratic type which has persisted into modern times and may be called the fair brachycephalic Sinhalese. The sculpture may portray this type with round head, long face, light eye, straight nose, delicate features. The stature was medium to tall, and body athletic. Greater racial purity was possible in the early days as the differences between north and south kept the two races apart. Further, political conflicts bred an aversion which the religious antipathies helped to foster. The Aryan communities considered themselves to be exclusive units. They intermarried and associated only with their own class. Fresh blood was introduced from time to time whenever the old stocks

were getting depleted. Strong racial prejudices prevailed against the dark coloured Dravidian races of the south. But the cultural and religious associations, royal and commercial activities continually kept the stream of Aryan blood supplied with fresh influxes from time to time. At this time the original type may yet have suffered change but the main Aryan blood stream continued maintaining its identity amidst changing phases of political and social life to regenerate persons who bore similar physical traits. The sculpture for some strange reason inclines to perpetuate this type more than any other.

In spite of such strong conservative ideas of racial purity, there was a parallel movement of migrations from South India into Ceylon. This was the perennial stream of Dravidian racial elements that flowed into the main racial streams of the Island from ancient times. The continuity of this stream was maintained thus in unbroken succession. The process of inflow and amalgamation tended to be easier even amidst psychological prejudices in this case owing to the propinquity to the mainland. The political conquest helped to eliminate the early aversion. Domicile engendered community of feeling. Closer contacts bred dearer friendships. Necessity led to understanding. Art styles born and developed in this part of India may have incorporated in a high degree physical elements in the human representations.

The kings and even nobles intermarried with the Dravidian element since South Indian princes at times ruled the Island. Therefore, such an element also may be expected to constitute a component part of the Island population. The Dravidian type may be distinguished by a largeness of frame, straight pointed nose thick lips, medium stature, dark eyes and pointed chin and a rugged appearance. Another more robust, round faced, fine featured type may also be attributed to South India. Such types may be detected in the present day population of the Island.

The type described also as lily-coloured or olive coloured attendants in the paintings and commonly portrayed as persons of lesser importance in sculpture such as guardians, Nagas, Yakkhas, Ganas and Bhairvas may be an ancient element persisting in the Sinhalese population. It is primitive in appearance, of small structure, with short nose and thick lips. Could this represent a type belonging to the aboriginal stock?

The Mongolian element in the Sinhalese population cannot be so easily accounted for. At no time in the ancient history was there any reference to any Mongoloid element entering the Island. The South Indian population has been completely free from a

Mongoloid racial complex. It is asserted that a Mongoloid element<sup>1</sup> prevails along the sub-Himalayan territories. The search should be for indirect sources or secondary racial thrusts. Whatever it may be one can observe in the Sinhalese population a slight Mongoloid feature. Whether this is a physical condition induced by a pathological state cannot be vouched for. But this type has a dreamy look, sleepy eyes with heavy eye lids and a general feeling of Mongolian looks about the figure.

The sources for this element may be looked for in the earlier suspected Indonesian migration which could have bestowed a Mongolian strain.<sup>2</sup> To what extent this new element would have affected the local population,<sup>3</sup> the evidence at our disposal will not permit us to know. An equally possible but more likely source is the distant mainland itself. North Indian contacts, mostly the Sakyan or Chinese influences and the Bengal immigrations, cannot be left out. More certain origins ought to be Bengal and the Sakyan<sup>4</sup> kingdoms from where the hosts of early colonists arrived in the Island. The Sakyans are reputed to possess a certain Mongoloid feature and even some of the Bengalis of today are not altogether free from Mongolian looks. Very probably the small Mongolian feature discernible in the Sinhalese race was introduced from the eastern kingdom of North India through the early Aryans inhabiting the sub-Himalayan plains. This may have persisted into later times and was noticeable during the Sigiriya period. It is also seen in the sculpture particularly of the earlier period at Anuradhapura.

Ceylon was on the trade route to Burma, Java and China in the Far East. Ships sailed to and from these lands regularly. Royal missions went up and down. Gifts of Chinese painted vases could have been received by the Sinhalese kings. One has only these sources to look for in seeking an explanation for suspecting the presence of the Mongolian racial traits in some of the sculptured figures.

Arguing from the known information to the unknown it may be possible to infer the period during which a vigorous movement of sculpture could have been possible. Sculpture matures at

1. Census of India 1931, Vol. 1, pt. 3, Ethnographical Introduction p. IX, iii.
2. Census of India, Vol. 1, pt. 1, Report p. 444.
3. The Sinhalese can scarcely be described as Mongoloid, yet there is visible an undoubted Mongoloid strain among the Sinhalese. This is absent among the Tamils whose admixture has helped to reduce this feature as they are not Mongoloid. See Hocart in C.J.Sc. Vol. 1, pt. 8, 1925, pp. 82-83.
4. At one time in North India a powerful Mongoloid element which has partly been swamped by the dark aborigines, partly pushed back into the Himalayas and into the east by the constant annihilation of the Sakyans. It was but one episode in their decline. See C.J. Sc. Sec (G) Vol. I pt. 2, 1925, pp. 82-83.

east a century after literature does, and necessarily follows a development in other arts and sciences especially a great literature. The literary efflorescence remains the foremost requisite for the background of sculpture. If such a prosperous period in Sinhalese literary historical record could be postulated the rise in the school of sculpture may be posited. A survey of the historical past brings into relief a few such periods. One of them was 300 A.D. and the others in VI, IX and XII hundred A.D. But this should not omit from the picture the continuation of the popular tradition which continues, being influenced and influencing any revivals of art. Such an artistic substratum stretches through the whole course of Sinhalese art and may from time to time have supplied the germs and bases for the growth and revival of fresh movements.

A high standard<sup>1</sup> of sculpture among the Sinhalese was undoubtedly attained in the sixth, third and twelfth centuries. This period witnessed also an epoch of building activity, tank construction and monastic establishments. The existence of poets has been recorded.<sup>2</sup> Ceylon was well known for her fecundity of Buddhist literature which drew scholars from India and China. The author of the Mahavamsa may have lived at this time. Some of the early graffiti at Sigiriya also belong to the same period. The literary movement was so advanced as to even induce Kassapa to have books copied. It was a remarkable era of literary activity—the sixth century.

The second period dawned after a series of victorious campaigns against hostile invaders and cruel usurpers from South India. Strife and struggle, civil wars and invasion ended the ushering in of the light of arts. Great patrons of art and learning sat on the royal throne. The patronage came from the king himself. It was again a flourishing epoch when art and architecture, drama and literature flourished. This was the XIIth century Ceylon.

The art flourished from an early Christian era and had the patronage of the king, his entourage as well as that of exceedingly powerful, influential and rich personalities. All constructive undertakings initiated with the monarch who spent lavishly in the cause of Buddhism. It is obvious that sculpture formed a part of the architecture as without it the religious edifices seemed incomplete. Buddhism acted as the motive force of this urge for the erection of monuments resplendent with sculptured accompaniments for the worship of the relics and the image of the Buddha.

1. The noblest expressions in stone sculpture like the Toluva Buddha figure and other stone work belongs to Anuradhapura of 600 A. D.
2. Cv. Ch. 42, v. 13, f. n. 2.

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Buddhist art established in Ceylon that tradition which was maintained in the land. The new religion inspired nobler expression and attracted more persons. The king did not remain a mere figurehead but he actively encouraged and directly participated in the promotion of art by the construction of images and the erection of dagobas, temples, and monasteries. Almost every king from the time of Devanampiyatissa up to Nissanka Malla subscribed to the cause of art, either by erecting, repairing, renovating or restoring such works, thereby promoting both art and religion.

This alliance between art and religion continued throughout the whole course of its history. Actually, therefore, the furtherance of sculpture, could not have been of such absorbing interest but for this inseparable alliance between architecture, religion, and the commanding position of the king. Every image that has survived to this day had been found at a site that was also once associated with royalty. But how many objects of art of even greater beauty have been destroyed, only the memory of the past can remember. The king bestowed wealth, honour, position and rank on those whose duty it was to care for these beautiful monuments. He stimulated the populace and gave an impetus in the proper direction not only by order but also by example.

The impressive record of the Mahavamsa bears testimony to the proud achievement of the Sinhalese kings whose contribution to artistic work remains unrivalled by any other performance from the ancient world. It seems obvious that the king was more than a patron. He was an active participant whose example compelled the rest to emulate. In this sense the king was supremely responsible for all sculpture and was indirectly its author.

There were also queens who sat on the throne. They fulfilled the expectations of the people in a way similar to that of the male successors of the line of kings. By position and rank the queen also became the patron of art. That patronage she extended with no less success befitting that office than her male counterparts. Or as even the consort of the ruler the queen's influence in the sphere of art was considerable. Not only indirectly but also directly she participated inducing her royal husband as well. One hears of queen Sundara Mahadevi who instigated the presentation of a temple to the monks at Dimbulagala. The renovations effected at the same site by queen Sundari are also on record. These are but a few examples of the benefits received by art through the good offices of queens. Others remain unknown.

The example set by the king and queen shaped the course of action of the courtiers as well. They too may have become patrons in their turn. The shining examples set by the court affected other men and women. The active interest of the kings enthused the ministers and men. No one in fact could have remained inactive and complacent. Such co-ordinated effort stood in good stead for the unfailing success of the art movement. Instances have been recorded where certain temples became specially endowed by ministers of State. As a matter of fact, they were also responsible for carrying out the orders of the king. This intelligent and influential band of courtiers, men and women, with their dependents constituted the learned circle in which prevailed an atmosphere conducive to art, of course, as also a means to religious ends. These men possessed the power of accepting or rejecting new movements. Never has art in its new waves of influence overstepped the shores of patronage. The patrons keenly awaited fresh movements worthy of introduction or emulation. To men at court, art, therefore owed a debt incalculable and unrepayable by the present inheritors of that tradition.

Another class of patrons were the monks whose share of patronage was no less important for the cause of art. The cave temples, dagobas, and monastic establishments remained under their charge. The new movements depended also on their predispositions. The Sinhalese Buddhist monk appreciated art and sculpture as much as any other lay enthusiast. This fact needs emphasis as it is difficult to believe the preservation of art unless their active participation is admitted. The monks acted as patrons providing also opportunities and material for artistic expression.

When it is considered that almost all the sculpture is related to Buddhism, it must be conceded that but for the generous attitude of Bhikkhus and their liberal views sculpture could not have attained such progress in the Island. The incumbent monks showed no disfavour nor did they evince a lukewarm interest. But as evidenced by the relics of sculptured surfaces the monks also expressed no disinclination to have the entrances to the dagobas, caves and insides of temples ornamented with sculptured objects representing Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, diverse images and religious scenes. Perhaps it may have been to their advantage to advertise the temples by attracting hosts of visitors and devotees. Naturally men came from all parts of the Island to gaze and worship the marvellous objects of devotion. The visitor brought with him precious offerings. There was also a regular income accruing to the temple by this means. In another way great images

enhanced the reputation since nothing impressed the devotee more than a visual observation of the images of the Master about whom he had heard. The monks, one may even add, exploited the psychological weakness of the votaries that gathered to pay him homage.

So obviously the monks fostered art and sculpture and obtained the services of the cleverest sculptors to portray Buddha images, religious subjects in or at the viharas for the sake of religion. These beautiful sites formed regular spots at which great festivals were organized. Many came to see them and large numbers from far and near congregated to participate in the merit. During all such occasions specially sculptured images may have been exhibited and the occasions themselves would have created opportunities for artists to display exceptional ability.

It is quite clear that the patrons of art were many. Widely scattered were the residences of the majority of them. Perhaps, all of them had no opportunity to meet and direct the art movement. Naturally certain temples undertook sculpture on their own initiative within the general framework of Sinhalese art. The residents living closest to the vihara shouldered the actual responsibility whilst the rich and wealthy from both far and near, subscribed towards the enterprise. This least suspected source of patronage from among the members of the commercial community was the most profitable. As already remarked the flourishing state of religious development in the Kistna plan was due entirely to the generosity of rich merchants. In Ceylon too such a possibility can be expected since the commercial wealth of the Island equalled any of the other kingdoms. Trade flourished up to 600 A.D. when the Roman trade was prospering. The position of Sinhalese merchants did not alter with the fall of the Roman trade. In fact it improved. Mention is made of fixed deposits with merchants in 400 A.D. and of endowments to temples in 1000 A.D. Trade relations with Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Java and China brought in added wealth. Indian merchants came as before even in XI and XII century A.D. The prosperous merchants who amassed wealth by trade lived in palatial mansions in large cities where special quarters were allocated to them.

We have said earlier that fixed depositors in cash and kind for the use of temples were made with merchants from the 2nd century A.D. and that even temple moneys were invested with the merchants who regularly paid interest on them. On the proper payment of interest depended the repairs and maintenance of temples. This practice was not unlike that prevailing in South

India. If that be the case, in Ceylon liberal donations from merchants can be expected without doubt; since such a course would have helped their business, won them fame and publicity and also merit in the other world.

In the merchant quarter lived men from Greece, Italy, Egypt, Persia, India, Burma and China. They were always on the move. When they met discussion on art probably ensued. The then famous Egyptian, Italian and Indian sculpture could not have escaped discussion at such meetings. The Chinese sculptured objects and copies of paintings may have been exhibited in such circles. The method and technique of one country would have been compared with that of another. The Sinhalese may have benefited immensely through such an exchange of views. Therefore it is not unlikely that the Sinhalese were aware of the special techniques and methods and material used by the Chinese, Egyptian, Italian and Indian sculptors. If we are to believe numismatic and ceramic evidence Ceylon was one of the foremost trading outposts of the Roman Agents.

Naturally the merchants knew the views and saw the best in all lands where they travelled and lived. These merchants helped Sinhalese sculpture and even may have promoted their creation. Personal help came in the way of the Sinhalese sculptors when such facilities of shipping prevailed between India and Ceylon. Indian sculpture of both east and west was not beyond easy reach since ports were connected with the chief sites. Furthermore, the great influence big merchants wielded in India would have been used to great advantage for contacting Sinhalese sculptors with those of East and West and specially from India.

Undoubtedly the sculptured objects particularly images attracted a wide circle of admirers among whom the pre-eminent place goes to the king, his consorts and his court. Then followed the courtiers and ministers. Being Buddhists every official had a dual purpose to fulfil i.e., public duty on the one hand and religious devotion on the other. Personal delectation interested some who may have appreciated the development of artistic trends for the sake of art. The Sinhalese king and his court being fully conversant with the literature and possessing more than an ordinary understanding of art in the various temples possessed the required ability to appreciate good art. There were connoisseurs whose standard of judgment was apparently of a high order as evidenced by the sculptured objects at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. Not all of them viewed the images from merely a religious point of view. Aesthetic sensibility and considerations of beauty determined some of the sculptures at least. Such a

combination of tempered appreciation rendered possible the evolution of mature schools of both religious and secular sculpture.

The king visited the centres of art and temples to pay homage. Seldom did he go alone. Attended by his courtiers, accompanied by the ladies of court and in the company of his consorts the king visited the viharas and thus set the fashion for the rest of the citizens to follow.

The monks who were the guardians of temples and patrons of art were themselves admirers. Being daily observers of the images around them they must naturally be expected to cultivate an attitude of appreciation since the very building in which they lived and worked had the wall surfaces covered with manifestations of artistic expression in sculpture. Possibly the monks also studied the sculptures in detail as they at times were expected to explain certain points which eluded understanding of the lay visitor. An added factor contributed to their admiration. The spiritual outlook dominated the mind and religious devotion enhanced the appeal. The sculptures were for the most part religious objects representing the Buddha and illustrating the incidents associated with the life of the Buddha. The necessity arose for veneration and religious devotion which earned for the sculpture further respect in their own estimation. The protection and preservation was thus doubly ensured as they were not only beautiful to look at but too sacred to profane and neglect.

The merchants and the rich commercial classes were no less admirers and devotees than patrons and benefactors. The general interest evinced by the richer classes combined with the deep spiritual outlook compelled admiration immeasurably. The women folk of the rich, as they were naturally more religiously inclined, persuaded even the disinclined men to accompany them on their pilgrimages. The men also found great pleasure in these religious tours which helped to acquire merit and relaxation from work. They also would have desired to see the works of art about which so much had been heard from the previous visitors.

From the time of the Buddha up to the present day both in India and Ceylon the rich merchants have befriended the religion of the Buddha whether as patrons, admirers or as enlightened devotees. The tradition could not have been different in the period under review. Perhaps art gave them peace of mind and pleasure from worries of business. Hence the merchants admired the sculpture *per se* more than many others of different professions. Above all, the rich commercial classes had the means of travel and the wealth to spend. Being masters of their

affairs they had the freedom and the leisure to undertake journeys lasting many days.

The foreign population engaged in business, state affairs and other missions consisting of a variety of nationals from the then flourishing kingdoms constituted an intelligent class of individual naturally interested in art, sculpture and paintings. Any large foreign element is a great influencing factor in a society. Though not necessarily Buddhists, they are favourably disposed towards the religion of the land. Buddhism also, being such a tolerant faith, precluded none from embracing it or entering the sacred temples for viewing the Buddha figures and painted walls. Some foreigners came as devotees, others as sightseers and may-be others as students of art and religion. Artists may have come in turn. These men and women took back with them their impressions of the art thereby acting as advertising agents.

There came to these sculptured sites and painted temples containing images another class, the great mass of the Sinhalese, Buddhist population. They came daily, periodically and annually. Any festival was an occasion for their visits. Crowds flocked at the inauguration of new movements and completion of new works. One special ceremony connected with the completion of images was the 'eye portraying festival'. The solemnity of the occasion from its magical aspect surpassed the religious importance as well. That was to the sculptor. To the lay Buddhist the ceremony was immensely interesting and highly colourful. The changing phases of the moon marked the occasion of a festival, the full moon being the optimum one. Other special religious events signified other ceremonies. Whatever was the subject the object of the devotee was spiritual.

To the Buddhist, therefore, the images had more than an ordinary interest. He had a different appeal from that of the connoisseur and otherwise admirer. To him the actual merit of sculpture as a piece of art did not matter. The technique or the draughtsmanship was of little concern. He was primarily concerned with the subject. Any Buddha figure, however portrayed and in whatever medium, was to him the same Buddha. Any scene or incident from the life of the Master was as dramatic as any other. Any Jataka, whatever its artistic merit may be was a Buddhist birth story moving in its appeal and didactic in its theme. Hence was maintained the popular tradition of art in direct response to the needs of the people. Once it arose it was bound to survive. This art appealed to them more than the other since it was in the language of their own and was easily intelligible to them.

The popular mind looked at art from the abstract point of view. He was after the ideal and this he easily saw conjured before his mind's eye by the mere suggestion given by the strokes of the chisel in stone conveying an outline of formal resemblance. No art achieved this better than the people's art. Images, particularly of the Buddhas and scenes connected with his life here and in the past served the ordinary people in the inculcation of religious tenets, the visualisation of the Buddha's life in an easily intelligible form and in a manner unrivalled by any other branch of art; since resemblance of the image and the story telling effect of the scenes is more impressive and the immensity of size more fascinating to his imagination.

There was yet another class who saw in the images other points of interest different from the purely religious. That has not been too well known. Fortunately, as regards one aspect of art, viz., painting, the graffito at Sigiriya record for our information the inward thoughts of such a class of visitor who came to see objects of art. These looked at the paintings from the abstract as well as the concrete. Here the outlook was secular. It was beauty and emotion which entranced them. There came to some sites—Sigiriya was such an one—romantists and lovers, poets and scholars, princes and princesses, men and women. Others may have visited other sites containing sculptured objects. At least all of them did not come to worship. Whatever motives may have inspired visits to other sites and these were many, at least those from entire Lanka that came to religious sites went not to admire the beauty of the form but to pay homage and worship at the feet of the Master.

## CHAPTER IX

### EVOLUTION OF SINHALESE SCULPTURE

True art is the consummation of the deepest feelings, experiences, joys and sorrows of man expressed through his genius in a medium best known to him and intelligible to other fellowmen. These expressions are inspired by the interplay of elements of the common culture of man inherited through the ages and transmitted from generation to generation of succeeding members of his society. In this cultural heritage is sustained the lifeblood of the people transformed into elements which perpetuate the kinship of one generation with another and link thereby one culture with another. Thus by a series of interconnected bonds, apparently indissoluble but seemingly dissociated the past survives and lives with the present. The cultural heritage of a people has been infused with both known and unknown elements that have helped to contribute, modify, and change thereby enriching the beauty of the pattern of art.

What any one observes today as the specific culture of a particular society belonging to a particular age should not in such a context be considered as standing aloof even from the remotest period of its unknown history. What one observes at a specific period is indeed closely and inseparably linked both with the age immediately preceding and that immediately succeeding it without any break whatsoever. The process of the evolution of art continues systematically and as a living organism without there being any disharmony or unbalance in its movement through the ages. Like the gentle movement of a rippling stream the art trends flow ceaselessly. There is nothing static or violently dynamic. There may be, during periods of great stress in the social organization, political administration or literary reorientation, movements of unparallel forces, unmeasurable rhythms almost of spontaneous generation that inevitably leave indelible impressions even as the gentle wind or the mighty storm produces in a stream a beauty in ripples and waves that break in silvery crests which themselves after dissipation fade out leaving a view on the surface unchanged except in composition and colour. Even so, Sinhalese art has had to encounter social, political, martial and religious storms and these have changed tremendously the pattern and medium of that art. Nevertheless, these sporadic outbursts of uncontrolled dynamism have helped to give that essential stimulus and upsurge to art without which the movement itself would have appeared uneventful and drab.

Art has a history which is as ancient as society itself to which that relates. The elements that each generation contributed evolved out of the society that was then obtaining. It is not possible at any later distant date to evaluate the separate factors that contributed to the enrichment and enhancement of the beauty of art of ages gone by. Some of these factors, some of these elements and some of these trends may be known and detected but there may be others that have escaped and will escape recognition and also association with any age or land or people. The unknown factor may yet be flowing as vigorously as the known and may colour the central life stream of art. It may even be that the unknown potential may be the determinant of its continuation and survival.

Sinhalese art may be more ancient than one would imagine today. The determinants of that art may go back to diverse sources and distant ages. It may be only a small facet of a resplendent gem beautifying the wide and far-flung land stretching from Egypt to Indonesia brought into existence by one common human endeavour. The brilliance and lustre of the precious gem have illumined the various parts of the entire region from time to time, now shining in one land, now in another, until these lands were finally enveloped in darkness. Its final lustre illumined India and Ceylon when in the end it failed to shine any more even in these lands.

What is true of art generally is equally true of sculpture and with these preliminary observations the evolution of Sinhalese sculpture may be considered in all its wide aspects as far as the existing information will permit. A far western influence<sup>1</sup> is inescapable whether this originated in the Mediterranean centre with the Minoan civilization or in Egypt with the Egyptian civilization. There is no evidence to judge the truth of such a statement except by a further examination of material remains that may be discovered from time to time. The snake (Naga) cult may have come from either of these two spheres. If the Naga cult in Ceylon is a survival of any one or both of them it may have come direct or through the Indian agency. That a direct contact by sea was also possible should not be lost sight of although the greater probability would be the indirect contact across the Indian continent.

The decorative patterns<sup>2</sup> comprising winged lions and eagles may form yet another class of useful information. Certain

1. J.D.S. Pendlebury—A Handbook to the Palace of Minos Knossos, p. 39; *Mv. Ch.* 1 pp. 6, 7 & 8, vv. 46, 47, 71; Indian Census Report Vol. I, pt. I, p. 393. Also see Ernest Mackay—*Indus Civilization* p. 83, 145. See the several sculptured objects portraying the animal as man and snake.
2. Anuradhapura Sculpture.

other symbols and signs<sup>1</sup> might also be explained as the result of such contact. Megalithic monuments,<sup>2</sup> not necessarily the dagoba, but such structures as the Cist, Cairn and Dolmen may have had their origin in Egypt, as is testified to by scholars like Perry.<sup>3</sup> The funeral rites associated with royalty may after all owe their origin to an Egyptian source.<sup>4</sup> The art of mummification<sup>5</sup> is not practised as such but there seems to have existed certain ideas with regard to the preservation of human bodies.

Did these and similar ideas and crafts reach the Island directly across the ocean or did these diffuse from the Babylonian civilization or a central Asian source over land. Here again the greater probability is that these elements infiltrated through India along with the other traits of their material culture. But the western influences did not cease thereafter. The western trends lost their all pervading influence and appeared to have subsided for a time only to reappear in another sphere. This time the epicentre of diffusion was located in Western India and this is generally known under the generic name of Indus civilization.

About the Indus civilization<sup>6</sup> itself a great deal is known from actual surviving remains of its material culture in India. This helps considerably the assessment of influences in east and west. That this civilization did leave a lasting influence on the society, art and crafts and the people of India cannot be denied. It certainly influenced Indian sculpture considerably at its early phase of development or revival after centuries of degeneration. These signs are visible in the animal and human figures<sup>7</sup> belonging to the Mauryan period of a later day. "The images and figures of India's more remote past have no known verbal equivalents. The tradition, however, remains unbroken for the themes and forms of the art of the Indus Valley during the third millenia B.C. are continued in Indian art when it emerges in the 3rd century B.C."<sup>8</sup>

The important question as far as this study is concerned is the extent and the potency of influences of the Indus civilization on Ceylon during ancient times. Two of the finest cultures belonging to this civilization are located in Harappa and Mohanjodaro.

1. Anuradhapura Sculpture (Kantaka Cetiya)
2. People of Ceylon—Wijesekera N. D. p. 26, 42.
3. The Growth of Civilization—Perry W.J.—Pelican Series p. 77 onwards.
4. Ancient Kandyan custom of carrying the dead king across a river. ....
5. Sri Rahula's body is believed to have been embalmed by means of certain medicinal oils.
6. Mackay Ernest—Indus Civilization.
7. Mauryan & Sunga Art—N. R. Ray—p. 43, 44. Indian Sculpture—Stella Kramrisch pp. 3 - 8.
8. The art of India through the ages p. 10—Stella Kramrisch.

The best art relics come from these cities and any affinity must be judged with these as the bases. It is difficult to believe that Ceylon escaped altogether the powerful influences of this far-flung civilization.<sup>1</sup> It is not certain whether this art tradition of the celebrated Indus civilization crossed the shores of India to be adopted and cultivated in ancient Lanka.<sup>2</sup> For the present, however, it may be assumed that it did. Such an assumption may tend to rouse a fruitful suspicion of the existence in ancient Lanka of some form of developed culture not very dissimilar to that of a chalcolithic age in India. It is true that one is still unable to adduce positive evidence to establish a cultural penetration from the Indus civilization into the ancient Ceylon society but the absence of evidence alone is not sufficient reason to ignore altogether such a probability and even possibility. It is not likely that a civilization that came very near to the modern standards of western civilization at least in certain aspects would have existed in a local form without making some attempt to influence the people and the society in the neighbourhood. That it diffused in India is certainly well established. If that is true would it be too much to believe that at least certain elements did travel as far as Ceylon. For the present one has to be contented with the uncertain position that certain signs<sup>3</sup> and symbols found in ancient caves and punched mark coins<sup>4</sup> and pottery as possible relics of that ancient civilization. There are also certain ideas<sup>5</sup> suggesting the high probability of such an occurrence. All the same the material available is hardly sufficient to state a case for the prevalence of such material traits in the Island. More information must be awaited. As regards the ideas one is inclined to suggest a certain affinity between the subterranean drainage<sup>6</sup> system found in ancient Anuradhapura and that water borne subterranean sewerage system then obtaining in Mohenjodaro. The time lapse is very great indeed but the idea is very similar. One interesting feature about this is that such a system of underground piping does not appear to have been so far discovered in any ancient city in India of a later day.

1. The writing of Easter Island resembles the undeciphered signs of Mohenjodaro.
2. Unidentified signs and symbols in Ceylon may be writing of a bygone age. That these resemble certain signs found in Mohenjodaro cannot be accidental.
3. Fr. Heras—J.R.A.S. 1937 Vol. 34 p. 44 Ancient Script; Henry Parker's Ancient Ceylon, p. 507.
4. Codrington H. W.—Ceylon Coins & Currency p. 18, plates I & II, Nos. 1 - 25.
5. Survival of Siva Worship—Indus Civilization by Earnest Mackay, 1935 pp. 70 - 72, 77, pl. M. 9.
6. Indus Civilization—Ernest Mackay p. 46, pl. C. (b).

What art influences penetrated Ceylon from the eastern, direction of the Island, particularly from Cambodia and Indonesia during a period contemporary with Egypt, Babylonia, Mesopotamia and Mohenjodaro there is not the slightest indication found so far even to hazard a guess. But, that there have been racial and cultural impacts with sporadic infiltrations into the south eastern sector of Ceylon from the further east there is very little doubt now, for in the beliefs and practices of the Sinhalese and their racial make up, there are extant, even today, tangible signs<sup>1</sup> of relics of the dim past. Such infiltration may have taken place at least during a period anterior to the Indus civilization.

The foreign influences from both east and west in a direct route as well as through the indirect agency of India may have continued until the fifteenth century B.C. At this stage it is important to remember that another factor of increasing importance was the conquest of India by the Aryan invaders from across the western or north-western frontier. This invasion would have produced a physical and psychical influence leading to a complete reorientation of the future art trends. Although it is believed that the Aryans had a cultural and social organization of a different pattern, nevertheless, it is impossible to deny them a material culture which had attained a certain stage of development as to be sufficient to over-run the society living in the Indian continent. Out of this conflict and contact there may have evolved a new culture known as the Indian. This may have been a fusion of western, north-western and south-eastern cultural and art patterns which may have taken years to assume a homogeneous form in India itself. The influences exercised by India itself after 1500 B.C. will be the result of such a creation synthesised out of diverse cultural patterns that reached India from diverse sources. But unfortunately nothing tangible has been preserved or known of this period.

But there is a period immediately before the coming of Vijaya into Ceylon about which some more tangible evidence may be forthcoming and these relate to the Babylonian or Persian influences ending with the sixth century B.C. One hears of the trade with Babylonia and India. One reads of the special references to ports in Ceylon of the ancient day. In some of the records are mentioned certain places which may be identified with a tolerable degree of acceptance. There are also allusions to material such as cotton, rice and spices, "ivory, apes and peacocks" which may have found their way from India or Ceylon into these western

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1. Wijesekera N.D.—People of Ceylon, pp. 45-46. Wickremasinha Martin—Sinhala Lakuna - 1947 - p. 59-62.

lands. Gems are also mentioned amongst the merchandise that was transported from these shores. All this would lead one to imagine that constant contact between the west and east prevailed at least through commercial enterprise, if not, through personal contacts with travellers who arrived in these ports out of a natural curiosity to know what was beyond. As to the people who conducted such negotiations we cannot fail to mention the Phoenicians, Arabs and Greeks about whom later references of a definite nature are to be found. These same people might have been the forerunners of the later commercial travellers who established themselves as trade agencies to and from the eastern lands.

The indirect information derived by a study of the aforementioned circumstances comes to a close and brings us to the period immediately preceding the date of the arrival of Vijaya and his followers in the Island of Lanka. It cannot be reasonably assumed that this invasion was a disconnected and single isolated incident. The more reasonable view would be that such an invasion may have been the culmination of a series of mighty adventures undertaken from time to time by daring leaders who braved the unchartered Indian seas. The arrival of Vijaya should be considered the final successful event when the leader came to stay and not merely to visit and return. On the basis of such a presumption one may pose the pertinent question as to who his predecessors were, who may have set foot on the shores of this Island, either as adventurers, traders or travellers. Undoubtedly they may have been the men from the Indian continent as well as from the Persian, Egyptian and Greek shores. Such visits from people of foreign lands would have given the local inhabitants not only an opportunity for interchange of ideas and views but also exchange of material objects of daily use as well as objects of art.

The men who may have come to Lanka before Vijaya would have possessed a material culture and a knowledge of art and crafts of a sufficiently high standard than was obtaining in Lanka, but fundamentally similar in their basic concepts. Lanka too would not have been ignorant therefore of the art and sculpture of the Indian continent and the middle eastern areas. The two parallel movements developing in India and Lanka would have evolved independently according to the indigenous trends of each tradition and environmental characteristics of its own but infused from time to time with fresh vigour and vitality mostly from overseas. Nevertheless, the mutual influences on each other cannot be considered as unilateral although the Indian influence may have had a predominantly compelling nature.

\* It is well known that no material remains definitely assignable to this era have been discovered so far. But there are certain undatable finds which savour of greater antiquity as to lead one to attribute these to such a period of the Island's history. Among these remains are the punch marked coins<sup>1</sup> discovered in several places in the Island. Some of these still preserve clear and artistic impressions of undecipherable signs<sup>2</sup> and symbols which today appear still meaningless but may convey a definite meaning either by symbol or letter if these can be interpreted. There is also another class of signs and symbols which still defy identification and interpretation and these are preserved among the crude drawings and paintings in sheltered caves of the Island. Some even consider these signs and symbols to be the remains of the script<sup>3</sup> used by people of Mohenjodaro culture. In any case no one has yet been able to give these impressions any meaning or decipher them as an alphabet. Nevertheless, one fact is clear and that is they do betray a basic knowledge of sculpture and carving.

Much information may also be inferred from ancient legends and stories both as regards contacts as well as possible influences in either direction. For example the Jataka<sup>4</sup> stories have allusions to Lanka in the tales relating to travellers of the sea, trade and commercial undertakings. If the prosperity referred to in those stories was actually obtainable at that time it is likely that the art of carving and sculpture would not have failed to constitute a component factor of that material advancement. What nation valued gems without understanding their function as objects of adornment and beauty. The objects that were beautified may have been jewellery, crowns, wrought gold or silver objects. To fashion these the craftsmen require a knowledge of art and art technique. The large sailing boats of the country craft type when judged by their modern survivals do not appear to have been fashioned complete with the essential decorative symbols without a knowledge of wood carving. The ancient mariners of Lanka may have appreciated and practised the art of carving without any doubt whatsoever. Similarly, elephants were used as draught animals as well as during stately processions when these lordly beasts were fully caparisoned. What people would parade such animals in procession with adornment if they had not known art for its sake. Here too it is suggested that a knowledge of

1. Codrington H. W.—Ceylon coins and currency, p. 18, Plates I & II, Nos. 1-25.
2. Parker Henry—Ancient Ceylon, p. 507, also Fr. Heras—J.R.A.S. 1937. Vol. 34, p. 44.
3. Heras Father—J.R.A.S. *ibid.*, Nayagam Rev. Thani—Tamil Culture.
4. Assavalahaka Jataka.

embroidery, painting and carving were known and deemed essential for such occasions. These arts may also have been practised during that period in Lanka.

From the Buddha legend as recorded in the Mahavamsa one may piece together fragments of information relating to the art propensities of the people of Lanka who were called Yakkhas and Nagas. Implements of war were known to these people who at that time had established seats of Government at various local centres. The regal splendour attached to the courts of these people may have been of an advanced pattern. The swords and shields used in war, implements and armour appear to have been fashioned with steel and ornamented with carvings and gems. These objects could not have been fashioned without a true understanding of gem cutting and setting, metal casting, carving and engraving both in practice and theory. In like manner the gem set throne of the Nagas and their war chariots testify to the material advancement of the age in the art of war. Further, reference to princely palaces, canopies, jewellery set with gems and precious stones, ponds and parks give an idea of the attainments of the day. At least one aspect of art was in vogue and that was the craftsmanship of goldsmiths and silversmiths. For during Buddha's day we know of the artistic attainments of India as preserved in the records of Jatakas and the discourses in the Pali canon. The descriptions are undoubtedly made in respect of a very advanced society ruled over by king with justice and equality. This same advancement might have been attained and would have obtained in Lanka of a contemporary period. If such a presumption can be accepted then Lanka at that time might have possessed a knowledge of art and sculpture of a fairly advanced level at least comparable with India.

The Ravana legend itself is interesting and useful in evaluating art concepts of the period for the art manifestations so vividly described in the Ravana legend could not have obtained only in the mind of Valmiki, but must have necessarily provoked the author on his beholding the sights he found in the society of the day. The cultural and material make up of the ancient society of Lanka would therefore have possessed at least reproductions in less expensive material than in gold of that which is mentioned in the legend. But unfortunately to this day no tangible proof of the reality of such material has been revealed except in the writings of the Ramayana. Hence the golden palaces, glittering turrets, exquisite ornaments, gems, decorative designs, and figures inducing the highest aesthetic sensibilities, and artificially created parks and ponds appear as mere fictions of the

poetic imagination. One still wonders if the court of Ravana could have ever existed at all. If it did, then sculpture and architecture would certainly have existed. Not only would these have existed, but they would have attained a stage of development sufficient to produce elaborate and beautiful objects of art. Such a stage of development in the tradition of art in Lanka would not be a sporadic outburst but a logical growth along a definite indigenous line of development.

The continuation of the indigenous stream of art is confirmed by the incidents of the Vijaya legend which refers to the Yakkha cults and alludes in a way to their cultural levels.

Music<sup>1</sup> and dancing formed at least a part of that cultural make up. Beautiful canopies hung over tents formed a part of the ceremonial adornment of the camp prepared for Vijaya. These too constitute indispensable elements of an art tradition that would have known sculpture. Kuveni herself is versed in the art of weaving,<sup>2</sup> confirming thereby the existence of a decorative handicraft practised even by ladies of high position and princely rank. Rice<sup>3</sup> was served at the banquet to the visitors assembled in a beautifully covered pavilion. Couches were got ready for the night. Music and singing were heard with all the revelry that accompanies the wedding between persons of two chief clans. Indian religions<sup>4</sup> may also have penetrated into the Island and got formally established by this time. Friendly contacts so established with Vijayan followers would have released fresh ideas and new skills which, when grafted to the local stem, would have helped to produce a synthesis in course of time.

The daily growing influences of the ruling power would have given an impetus to engraving and art that may have, by adopting Indian techniques and patterns, assumed in course of time a very much greater similarity to Indian forms and shapes. Sculpture of a sort perhaps as evidenced by carving, casting of ornaments and religious effigies may have been known and practised. But the important point to remember is that the North Indian pattern would have superseded everything else in converting the local forms and shapes into a copy of the Indian. Nevertheless, the indigenous trends would have entered into this admixture while the indigenous art itself would have continued in its pristine purity amongst certain families and in less favoured circles.

1. Mv. Ch. VII, p. 57, v. 30.

2. Mv. Ch. VII p. 56, v. 11.

3. Mv. Ch. VII, p. 57, v. 24.

4. Mv. Ch. X p. 75, v. 102.

Adikaram E. W.—Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon, pp. 44-45, 48.

The story of Vijaya and Kuveni as recorded in the Mahavamsa confirms most of the earlier references to the State of Lanka in legend and story. Such inferences may be challenged as being somewhat speculative. That there was a kingdom girt by the North West sea coast of Lanka where powerful chieftains ruled is confirmed by this legend. That this kingdom was overrun by Vijaya and his followers and that the inland chieftaincies were conquered with the aid of the foreign power through the agency of Kuveni may also be established. Such a psychological disposition to receive aid from a third party who is a stranger is not unnatural to this Island people and is confirmed by events in subsequent history. There were also mendicants living in the Island. It is not unlikely that one or more forms of Hindu beliefs and worship prevailed along with the ritual practices peculiar to them. Such was the state of Lanka when Vijaya arrived and settled down.

But what did Vijaya introduce by way of art and culture? What followed after his settlement? These are more important questions since it is really from this point of time that a written record of some sort is preserved to this day. More than the material itself is the actual influence, his settlement would have effected throughout the Island in all spheres of activity. Here for the first time appeared in Lanka a band of men presumably from the north of India who were accustomed to a pattern of culture which by all standards can be considered high. These newcomers began to live with their kinsfolk who also had come with them and also who came subsequently from abroad and therefore were not altogether cut off from their motherland. Naturally they would have made every attempt to convert the new kingdom to a little bit of the Indian homeland in every way and in everything as far as was permissible. The earliest local elements to lose ground in this conflict must have been those of art and culture, architecture and religion. It could therefore be imagined that the fifth century B.C. Ceylon was typically North Indian in every way. All aspects of the court and its entourage would have conformed to this new pattern and the people would have vied with each other for recognition by this superior society. The task of reconciling the indigenous to the foreign may have continued. The new society may have all the time attempted to follow these new ideas and ideals whilst the bulk of the population for a long time more would have cherished the indigenous form of culture in all their domestic, artistic, architectural ornamentation and religious ceremonial. But on state and national occasions the court orders might have enforced the standard of the new comers. There was no conflict however between the two

cultural patterns as such. That the more powerful would have been held in high regard is certain. But nonetheless the indigenous was equally recognised and the two streams of culture would have continued to exist side by side until during the time of Pandukabhaya they would have coalesced to produce a harmonious cultural pattern which was recognised as the national culture.

What Vijaya and his associates and immediate successors introduced from North India into the new colony of Lanka took firm root in the new soil owing to a variety of reasons. These elements began to be received almost continuously and in unbroken succession. Further nourishment from the constant contacts that began to be established during this period helped to sustain a genuine interest and promote fertile growth. Such contacts had continued for nearly two centuries when Pandukabhaya assumed the reins of Government. It could be imagined how during this course the local patterns could have yielded place to the new. All these influences radiated from that portion of India within the Gangetic basin where by this time the culture was fully aryanised. To a large extent the elements came to be introduced by the kinsfolk of Vijaya himself as represented by the Sakyan elements. But in course of time the influences would have come generally from the northern culture and North Indian patterns might have supplanted everything else in Lanka. This applies to art and architecture, sculpture and painting as well. That these arts developed very rapidly along lines similar to those in North India cannot be denied. As a result of intense activity during two centuries along a steady course that was undisturbed such elements were bound to mature and bear fruit. Although there is no concrete evidence or material remains today to bear testimony to such maturity and fructification there is no reason to think otherwise when the attainments of the period are taken into account.

At least during Pandukabhaya's day such elements appear to have reached a state of development which cannot be accounted for except on the assumption that the process was continuous and coherent. The faithful record about the period preserved in the Mahavamsa<sup>1</sup> can be considered as certain testimony to the attainments of the fourth century B.C. That these attainments were comparable in composition and quality with the Indian according to the descriptions preserved in the Jataka stories and the later sculptural remains must be taken for granted if the development had been as presumed along lines similar to the Indian. The prosperity described in the ancient Buddhist literature and the

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1. Mv. Ch. X.

Jataka tales was of a very high standard. At least the reconstruction of the architecture of this period indicates a state of society that was well versed in arts and crafts. If architecture could have attained such development then sculpture could not have remained unknown and lagging behind. But what constituted the sculptural constituents of the art of the day can only be fully visualized by discovering the material remains. Unfortunately such remains have not come to light so far.

It would be interesting and pertinent at this stage to examine some of the cultural elements of the society of Pandukabhaya's time. It is almost certain that the city<sup>1</sup> established by him was based on the model accepted and approved by the Indian standards of the day. This presupposed an advanced knowledge of town planning which appears to have been well understood at this time in Lanka. The building construction and lay out constituted a special feature of this knowledge of town planning. The buildings referred to in the Mahavamsa would seem to indicate that various types of building were in vogue. The political organisation and the social set up too would have been based on the Indian political system and social organisation. An important feature about this society was that its economy was based on rice cultivation. The system of cultivation could not have been introduced from India by Vijaya but would have been known from very ancient times nor can it be flatly denied that it did not come from the North Indian since the people of Bengal are great rice eaters today and from the dim past the Gangetic plain would have grown rice as a staple food. Whether the art of rice cultivation was introduced at a very early date from India or not the art may have been known from at least the sixth century B.C. With this knowledge is closely linked the construction of tanks and irrigation channels. At least rice cultivation and irrigation systems must be considered inseparably associated. However, it is certain that small and large tanks came to be constructed during Pandukabhaya's time. Here too such construction indicated a knowledge of stone work and with this improved system of agriculture has been associated the art of stone carving without which the irrigation system could not have functioned.

Some of the highlights of the period may be gleaned from the Mahavamsa itself. The city of Anuradhapura was well planned and beautiful. It was laid out and constructed according to the concepts of an advanced urban civilization. Ponds were built. The town was divided into several quarters, each quarter being assigned to a class of resident for a specific function. Religious

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1. Mv. Ch. X pp. 74-75, vv. 84-104.

worship was tolerated and sacrificial performances were permitted for all alike. An interesting feature of this religious tolerance was the prevalence of a variety of beliefs and a number of religious sects. Closely associated with these was the practice of demon worship.<sup>1</sup> Is it not possible that such beliefs and practices could have continued without some form of objects of worship such as representations, images, figures, signs or symbols. If the construction of chapels and hermitages,<sup>2</sup> temples and sacrificial grounds for the various devotees can be accepted as accomplished facts then the existence of representations of the Gods, Goddesses, demons, signs and symbols of worship either in carving, modelling or sculpture cannot be doubted altogether. Therefore, it may be presumed that during 320 B.C. i.e., during Pandukabhaya's day sculpture and carving would have been known and images would have been carved in relief or modelled in clay. As to what these were no one can say since none is yet in existence. But these might have been figures of animals such as bear, leopard, elephant or snake or birds like eagles, hawk or devils like the figures preserved in devil dancing masks.<sup>3</sup> If the Indian standard can be accepted as the model then it is highly probable that there was in vogue both the court and the popular form of sculpture, for the Mauryan Court would have perpetuated both though the massive style came to be established by Court as Imperial art. From this time the movement progressed inspired by the Indian influence of the Mauryan Court until the time of Devanampiyatissa. What obtained at the court of this king was the Mauryan style and form of art which included both the Court and the popular style. The evolution of sculpture up to this date was purely along Indian lines. Contact was maintained across the sea with Patna, Gaya, Saranath, etc. The South Indian elements do not appear to have entered into this early evolution.

What was the Mauryan tradition?<sup>4</sup> What were the main elements of art during the Mauryan period immediately preceding the introduction of Buddhism to Lanka? If one gets an idea of that art then it is easy to understand what contribution the first Buddhist mission under Mahinda would have made in affecting the art movement of the Island which up to that time appears to have maintained the Indian tradition. These facts are definitely known and understood. The tradition was twofold, one was the Imperial Court tradition and the other the people's

1. Mv. Ch. X, p. 74, v. 84; Adikaram E. W., E.H.B. p. 44.

2. Mv. Ch. X, p. 74, vv. 89-90.

3. Early History of Ceylon—G. C. Mendis 4th Ed. p. 6. These are mentioned in the Mahavamsa.

4. M.S.A.—N. R. Ray.

tradition. The earlier was represented by massive works of outstanding size whilst the latter was represented by decorative patterns of excellent craftsmanship and smaller representations in narrative style.

In the first category may be placed court art which included the larger works such as massive buildings, palaces and assembly halls consisting of carved pillars. Another class of great importance was the monolithic, free standing columns having bell-shaped capitals surmounted with beautifully sculptured animal figures. In addition the capitals contained flowing linear patterns of chaste workmanship. There was another class of massive animal carving on rocky boulders. The characteristics of the period were the massiveness and naturalness of the figures. Distinguishing features of the Mauryan technique were the special polish applied to limestone, feeling and foreign influences. Nevertheless, there was present at the same time the art tradition of the people which of course found no place or gained no recognition in monumental works of the Court except as means of adornment or as a subsidiary feature. The rows of geese, the inter-twining of creepers and the floral designs are there most beautifully composed. There are also scenes, figures and narratives carved on stone pillars, railings, medallions and archways. Generally speaking the people's art is found on the archways forming the entrance to buildings. In all these art works of the Court may be discernible the influence of Greeks which may have been introduced at an earlier date. But here one is certainly not concerned about origins. The concern here is only about what actually existed and the style and form which it assumed. One other important class of carving is the representation of popular nature deities—gods and goddesses, animals and birds and vegetation—so naturally and artistically expressed in stone. It is now averred that the animal figures such as the bull, the lion, and the elephant betray inherent elements belonging to the Mohenjodaran art. It is only to be expected that that tradition would have been copied by and continued with the people. That the art of this day embodied the ancient traits fully Indianised by this time is the most likely probability.

Thus two categories—the court and the peoples' art comprise the sculpture of the Mauryan time. These are two independent traditions which at this time seems to have found favour and sprung up in response to the special needs. Both traditions, sometimes, are found at one and the same site. But undoubtedly their execution might have been carried out by sculptors of different schools each having a different style of its own, both in

technique and expression. The court style is evident from the monumental works of Asoka. The popular style is clear from the remains—mainly from the toranas still preserved at some of the famous sites, viz., Bharhut, Sanchi, Buddhagaya and Patna. The material used in this art was chiefly stone. This special kind of stone was obtained from quarries at distant locations. The artists used other material as well. These were wood and ivory. The characteristics of the art used were bold designs, common symbols and motives in place of the Buddha figure.

The intercourse between Lanka and India during this period of Asoka was very close indeed. However, this stream of sculpture of Asoka's day was apparently of a uniform quality amidst a multiplicity of diverse elements. Not only was it built around the central indigenous core with emotions and art techniques and styles but it bore within its own organism predisposing factors inherited from generations of forbears and instincts and skills with remote ancestors throughout the long period in which the sculptural factors were being evolved. The two major factors that conditioned that sculptural growth and development amidst many changes introduced from time to time were political and religious innovations and strong foreign influences. In India there was the blend of the Indian and Greek tradition as modified and added to from time to time. In Ceylon there was the Sinhalese tradition modified directly by the Indian and Greek blend. When the two streams met under very auspicious circumstances of binding amity the two already related streams became synthesised very quickly but with a remarkable balance and harmony leaving no room for the generation of freaks and ugly misfits.

A brief resume of the progressive evolution up to this stage will be pertinent here in order to understand the position at the time of the introduction of Buddhism into Lanka. The stream of influences from a central Asian source proceeded in about 3500 B.C. gradually overland across the Persian continent. From there it entered the Indus basin where it flourished in about 2500 B.C. Thus it continued until it appears to have moved further south or overseas and degenerated, subsided or diffused within the Indian continent or spread overseas. Nothing is known for many centuries until the entry in about 1500 B.C. of Aryans into India. Due to political changes and ideological conflicts sculpture underwent a radical change and may have assumed a different style and form as it progressed. It evolved through many phases of influence again and again after leaving the Persian and Egyptian sources. In the sixth century B.C. Persian influences became very active. The religious atmosphere of 6th century B.C. India and the philosophical thought of 5th century B.C.

Greece changed the course of Indian sculpture considerably. The Indian contribution was also prolific and active. Then came the overwhelming influence under the Greek Satrapies and the Mauryan empire in 300 B.C. During this period through the Alexandrian and later Greek embassies and consequent exchange of ideas and gifts sculpture would have undergone much change. But the greatest change was effected during Asoka's reign by a change of religious ideology. Sculpture, which up to this time served the Imperial Brahmanical court, changed completely and began to serve the Buddhist imperial court and Buddhism became the chief purpose for which sculpture and art were employed. Everything was done for its sake and the Emperor saw to it that sculpture was employed as the handmaid of religious propaganda and missionary activity.

On the other hand the other independent stream of art entered Lanka across the land and perhaps overseas from the self-same central Asian sphere. It may have undergone Egyptian, Persian, Indus, Aryan, and Greek influences, along its course either directly or indirectly through Indian agency. The two tributaries which branched off from the same source as early as 3500 B.C. met again in about the sixth century B.C. in Ceylon under Vijaya. From that time it began to flow again as a distributary of the Indian tributary. By about the third century B.C. the distributary flowing in Lanka resembled closely, if not identically, the Indian tributary. Naturally, the two remained essentially similar although separated by sea and land through a series of changing phases during several ages until it reached the reign of Devanampiyatissa. It was at this period which was contemporary with the reign of Asoka that a bond of lasting friendship and close influence was being maintained between Asoka, Emperor of India, and Devanampiyatissa, King of Lanka. There was reason to believe that this close association and intimate friendship were the culmination of a traditional and ancient friendship. Nevertheless, the imperial power of Asoka created the opportunity for a closer link-up with India and a natural tendency to follow the Indian model may have ensued. The Mahavamsa bears this out in its record. There were exchanges of emissaries and regular missions went to and fro. Gifts were also given and taken. Not only did these associations pave the way for the exchange of ideas and ideologies but also objects and craftsmen seemed to have moved up and down. But the culminating act that revolutionized the whole course of history and the style and content of art was the supreme power of the Buddha Dhamma that was introduced to Lanka through a mission headed by Maha Thera Mahinda, the son

of Asoka himself. The mission came from Ujjain and Bhilsa via Bharhut, Patna, Buddhagaya along the Ganges basin through Tamluk (Tamalitti). By this time all these sites would have been connected to places of Buddhist worship and would have contained the architectural and art elements that were being employed in the course of Buddhism. Mahinda's mission not only introduced the Dhamma in its pure Theravada form but also the adjuncts of Buddhist cultural and social institutions that went with the monuments which were raised specifically through a zeal for propagating the doctrine of the Buddha. The Sinhalese king as an act of the highest consideration would have demanded and pressed for the acquisition of such elements and objects of worship and veneration and the men in the mission would have advised him of these and wherever possible attempted to provide them. Therefore the importance of Sanchi as the original source of art forms and styles diffusing to Lanka both by introduction at the preliminary stage as well as continuous acquisition subsequently cannot be sufficiently emphasised. To say the least it must have been the most predominating factor in the revolutionary movement that followed the introduction of Buddhism to Lanka.

The elements that could have been introduced as far as is known would have been very likely drawn from such spheres as dagobas, images large and small, railings, monuments, toranas, chapels and pillar capitals, pillar with vase, guardian deities, Nagas, heads of deities, animal carving, makaras and genii (ganas). There were two other classes of sculptured objects that are most noteworthy. One is the Buddha image and the other the signs and symbols used to represent the presence of the Buddha, viz., the wheel, bo-tree, empty seat, begging bowl, dagoba, ladder, feet, etc. There is general agreement that the Buddha image as such was not found in India at this time and therefore the difficulty was overcome by the use of symbols representing the Buddha for such was the traditional custom followed in Buddhagaya. There are two possibilities. There may have been the ability to make the Buddha image and it was known but due to strong reluctance to make it the image as such was not obtainable during the 2nd century B.C. Or the artists of the day did not know how the Buddha should be represented in art, sculpture, carving or painting. Hence they resorted to the only way out of the difficulty. Therefore, the Buddhist mission should have introduced one or both forms of representing the Buddha. At least it could not have been the symbolic method since no early sign of this tradition has so far been revealed in any of the discovered stone slabs, paintings or carvings nor is there any literary reference. The few instances of such representation so far discovered appear to be

later, datable to sixth century A.D. and these too may have been imported from Amaravati. If the symbolic representation was not introduced, then the probability is that the art of making the image itself was introduced from India for during the Kushan period, second century A.D., the Buddha and Bodhisattva figures were portrayed at Mathura. If not it may have been made for the first time in Lanka at the expressed request by the latest royal convert king Devanampiyatissa. Mahavamsa<sup>1</sup> says that such a desire to see the likeness of the Master was made and it is likely that this was fulfilled. Thereafter, there was no need or desire to introduce the symbolic method. As is to be expected this is not to be seen.

From the moment of the introduction of Buddhism into Ceylon the new religion seems to have made a deep impression on the people of the Island and the new movement spread throughout the length and breadth of the Island in a very short period of time. There were many causes which enabled such a rapid growth and spread of early Buddhism in the Island. Whatever the other reasons may be one fact remains in bold relief and that is the close relationship that prevailed between Asoka and Devanampiyatissa. That the new religion did flourish with amazing rapidity in the new Buddhist State is evidenced, at least, by the monumental remains preserved in the Island. The pattern and the model for these early monuments have been provided from the very area from which Buddhism came to be introduced. One observes in Ceylon therefore all elements that go to make up the Buddhist symbols of worship and veneration as found at the original source. Such elements as the dagoba, railing, chapel, pillar, guardstone, archway legendary beings such as Makaras, snakes, ganas and decorative motifs such as the vase and foliage, leaves and flowers cannot fail to impress any one that the source of this symbolism, inspiration and technique has been Sanchi. The new religious inspiration helped to rouse the highest creative instincts of the people and to produce the best that the genius of the nation could have created. This dynamic spirit continued so long as the state remained Buddhist uncontrolled as it were until further influenced by later styles and arrested temporarily by national calamities such as famine, invasion and internal conflict.

Fortunately, Ceylon alone of all known countries possess a series of Buddhistic monuments extending from the time of Asoka to the present day.<sup>2</sup> Side by side with the human Nagas recognizable as such from the cobra hoods one finds polyce-

1. Mv. Ch. XVII, p. 116, v. 2, 3.

2. L.C.C. p. 49, also H.I.E.A.

phalous serpents in therio-morphic shape. Evidently both types of Nagas have been derived from Buddhist areas of the Indian continent.<sup>1</sup> These Nagas<sup>2</sup> appear as guardians of the Buddha. The four animals so constantly found on the Asokan pillar Capitals are also found in Ceylon from very ancient times though not in similar circumstances.<sup>3</sup> The first Buddhist mission did undoubtedly influence all stone sculpture throughout the Island with strong Asokan characteristics as represented at Sanchi. Hence there pervade in all Sinhalese stone sculpture of the early period common features such as monolithic character, precision of outline, accuracy of surface, treatment and finished execution.<sup>4</sup> These influences continued to produce enduring effects in the evolution of Sinhalese sculpture by the creation, maintenance and development of a tradition almost parallel to the Indian. In the early period one observes the effects of Mauryan, Sunga, Andhra and Gupta influences.<sup>5</sup> The authors of these movements must have certainly been inspired by India.<sup>6</sup> It must be admitted that the ability to sculpture, construct and paint was possessed by the society of the day.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, a new movement and the new religion needed delicate and careful handling, proper direction and supervision at the commencement and this fact also may have led to the importation of sculptors, from the Indian continent, and they would have come most certainly from Sanchi, Barhut, Buddha Gaya and Patna.

However, in about the first century B.C. the court art of Asoka began gradually to decline. But people took up the art movement and maintained the same enthusiasm and religious fervour as at first because the whole country, the Court and the king had dedicated themselves to the cause of Buddhism. The popular art which had temporarily yielded to the imperial art of Asoka's Court began to rear its head once again and popular art of the Sungas as represented at Barhut and Sanchi by the characteristic quality of flowing linear rhythm began to supersede everything. This appealed to the people always and they accepted it as their own. It is a tradition very similar to that which is preserved in early sculpture at the Kantaka Cetiya.<sup>8</sup> The Vahalkadas are flanked by statues which were sculptured with a floral mixture, the figures of some beasts and birds. The sculptures are of the archaic type

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1. B.A.I.C.J. p. 82

2. A.S.C. 1936, p. 18.

3. J.S.C. Vol. II, pt. I, p. 13.

4. I.I.A. p. 146.

5. I.I.A. p. 147.

6. I.I.A. p. 146.

7. Mv. p. 116, v. 5.

8. A.S.C. 1935 - p. 6.

closely resembling those of Sanchi and Bharhut. The statues were also surrounded with figures of elephants, lions, horses and bulls as in the case of Sanchi.<sup>1</sup> This position can certainly be expected to obtain since Vedisagiri, the home of Mahinda was situated so near to Sanchi. And naturally the companions and artists who accompanied the first Buddhist missions would have known all about the sculpture of the day obtaining at such centres as Barhut and Sanchi and these would have introduced their own tradition in preference to anything else.<sup>2</sup>

Amidst the wealth of material evidence that can be presented in support of borrowing from the Sanchi tradition a few points may be noted. The Kantaka Cetiya is similar in every way to the dagoba found at Sanchi and it has preserved numerous elements of the Sanchi tradition.<sup>3</sup> The specimen of dwarfs, genii, emblems, decorative motifs and the whole scheme of construction are so reminiscent of Sanchi as to betray direct and wholesale borrowing from that source. The actual dwarfs at Ruanveli and Jetavanarama dagobas may be compared with similar figures on the capitals of the western gateways at Sanchi.<sup>4</sup> The chapels projecting from the terraced basement are other features similar to those at Sanchi.<sup>5</sup> The inner stelae are adorned with a design so similar to the one on the pillar of the western gateway at Sanchi. Also one sees preserved thereon Buddhist emblems such as shields, swastikas and triratnas.<sup>6</sup> The railing which is such a characteristic feature of Sanchi, Barhut and Buddha Gaya, and which formed the background for decorative designs, is found at Anuradhapura.<sup>7</sup> But this same railing at Anuradhapura does not provide any carving whatsoever and in this respect it resembles closely the plain railing also found at Sanchi which is free from any carving and which is supposed to have been erected by Mahinda's mother. The human figures in panels at Abhayagiri have a general resemblance to those at Sanchi<sup>8</sup> but the absence of sculpture on the railing at Anuradhapura suggests slight affinity,<sup>9</sup> but of a later date. The procession of animals—horses, bulls, lions, horned lions, and elephants on the Vahalkada at Mirisawetiya are similar to the Sanchi gateways.<sup>10</sup>

1. A.S.C. 1925 p. 6.

2. Mv. Ch. I, p. 88, v. 67.

3. A.S.C. 1936 pp. 14-15.

4. H.F.A. p. 147.

5. H.I.E.A. p. 230.

6. H.I.E.A. p. 232.

7. H.F.A. p. 143.

8. H.F.A. p. 146.

9. C.A.S. 189, p. 5.

10. H.I.A. p. 161.

Further decorative motifs such as nagas and naginis carved on pillars at the Vahalkada of the Jetavanarama are also reminiscent of the Sanchi monuments of a later day,<sup>1</sup> in the more developed form of an elaborate makara torana, not unlike the Barhut gateway, is seen behind the sedent Buddha at Galvihara, Polonnaruwa.<sup>2</sup> It is likely that the early phase if such sculpture has not been discovered so far or it may have existed and may have disappeared during the early times.

Up to this time the influence was mainly from the Gangetic plane, the Asokan and Sunga tradition supplying the basic elements of an art that was wholly Buddhist in spirit and conception. This art had been the natural development of the popular and literary tradition not fusing into one whole but functioning in close co-operation to serve the same purpose. But from about the early second century A.D. a new spirit began to pervade and influence society. The idea of Buddhahood which up to now was the predominant theme in Buddhism began to be modified into a new concept in the ideal of Bodhisatva as introduced by the Mahayana school of Buddhism. The influence and force of this movement definitely impressed the society of this period. It is likely that in the struggle and conflict of religious ideologies Mahayana was periodically successful and Hinayana gradually declined. This change of outlook in Buddhism brought about a dynamic change in the arts and literature relating to Buddhism. This new spirit supplied the necessary urge for the generation of a vigorous art movement. This centred round the worship of the Buddha, the creation and adoration of images and observations of rites and ceremonies for the glorification of the Bodhisatva.

Also the sources of influence shifted from Northern India to Southern India. Ceylon must have received a part at least of this influence from the southern area from Amaravati centre though not exclusively from there. The reaction to this new ideal in the religion of the Buddha ended in a conflict regarding ideologies in Ceylon between the Mahavihara and Abhayagiri. But as regards the external manifestations of the new religious ideal many festivals and processions connected with Buddhism developed in Ceylon as well. This new movement of homage to the memory of the Buddha as preserved in respect of the objects reminiscent of him reached its height in about fourth century A.D. and has been testified to by Fa-Hien in his travels to Ceylon.<sup>3</sup>

1. H.I.I.A. p. 162.

2. A.S.C. 1907 p. 11.

3. Fa-Hien—Buddhist Record of the Western World.

It is not unlikely that from the time of the introduction of Buddhism there originated annual festivals in honour of the Buddha. It is also likely that scrolls having images of the Buddha and even actual images in the round mounted on chariots were carried in procession through the city streets of Anuradhapura.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly any changes of a doctrinal or ritual nature were greatly resisted by the orthodox school of Buddhism in Ceylon as laid down by the Mahavihara Chapter. Nevertheless, the great appeal of Mahayana and the ceremonial connected with it to the intellectual curiosity produced a renaissance in Buddhist sculpture and art. Worship of images began to occupy a central position in the ritual observances connected with Buddhism. The images multiplied, new themes and new styles began to be introduced. Even the kings organized offerings, festivals and processions. This was not only in honour of the Buddha but also in honour of the objects associated with the practice of Buddhism. In all these rituals images formed the central element for the worship of which the clergy and the laity participated.<sup>2</sup>

This growing popularity of the Buddha image developed with the Mahayana worship, the sculptured objects changing in style and symbolism in consonance with the doctrinal changes. The movement culminated in the creation of colossal images of the Buddha during the 6th century A.D. The Bodhisattva ideal continued as a parallel movement in many parts of the Island and its form of worship appealed to the popular mind. The Maitreya Bodhisattva concept was also developed and some of the famous images including the image popularly called Dutthagamini is said to be that of the Maitreya Bodhisattva who was regularly worshipped by the people. It is likely that a few of the very early unidentified images may represent the Bodhisattva, e.g., the image popularly known as that of king Gemunu may be that of Maitreya-Bodhisattva himself.<sup>3</sup> King Dhatusena is also said to have imported an image of the Maitreya Buddha,<sup>4</sup> and the king had complete equipment of a sovereign prepared for the Maitreya Bodhisattva.<sup>5</sup>

The Mahayana school continued to find popular support at least during certain periods in certain areas. At the Ratnapasada at Anuradhapura is an image of the Buddha with an attendant shown on each side.<sup>6</sup> On the plinth of the Vijayarama

1. *Mv. Ch.* 33, v. 68.

2. *Cv.* p. 80, vv. 68-69.

3. *B.A.I.C.J.* p. 84-85.

4. *I.I.A.* p. 148.

5. *Cv.* p. 36, v. 68.

6. *A.S.C.* 1912-1913, p. 4.

monastery at Anuradhapura is a four-armed deity attended by a female figure. This is Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and the female is his consort Tara.<sup>1</sup> At Buduruvegala is another group of rock hewn and plastered images belonging to the Mahayana school.<sup>2</sup> The Buddha figure in the group resembles the standing images at Awkana and Sasseruwa.<sup>3</sup> The figure of "Padmapani" more correctly Surya has been found at Moragoda.<sup>4</sup> The Weligama sculpture has also been indentified as that of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.<sup>5</sup> Another slab of stone with the figure of the Buddha attended by Avalokiteswara and Maitreya was found at Kandy.<sup>6</sup> At the Rankot Vihara, Polonnaruwa, can be seen seats for the Dhyana Buddha.<sup>7</sup> Finally, at Polonnaruwa Gal Vihara are to be seen clear characteristics of Mahayana Buddhism although artists seem to have avoided Mahayana iconolatry. The Bodhisattva Padmapani and Manjusri are introduced in the veiled form of attendant Chamara holders.<sup>8</sup>

Parakrama Bahu I is said to have constructed at Polonnaruwa three statues of Buddha Maitreya.<sup>9</sup> In a Bengal manuscript there are miniature paintings of Mahayana images and the inscription thereon mentions Buddha Dipankara of Ceylon and God Jambala.<sup>10</sup> Of course the new ideology continued throughout the whole course of Buddhism in Ceylon in spite of considerable opposition and extensive attempts to eliminate it completely from the Island. Hence we see sporadic outbursts of this form of religion finding expression in the Island through these monuments in the style and iconography appropriate to it. There are one or two clear periods during which Mahayana assumed a position of importance and probably found worshipful acceptance with at least sections of the people.

With the spread of new ideas from the Andhradesa in the early 4th century A.D. there came to be introduced other elements as well as all sculptural forms known and practised throughout that area with such remarkable success. The Amaravati school as it is called began to spread its influence actually from about the 2nd century A.D. with the spread of Andhra power in India.

1. J.S.C. Vol. II, pt. 1, p. 49, pl. 32, a-b.
2. A.S.C. p. 9, 1926-27, p. 6 to 7.
3. J.S.C. Vo. 2, pt. 3, p. 5d.
4. A.S.C. 1891 - p. 10.
5. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 49, also C.A.R. 1934. p. 7.
6. J.S.C. Vol. II, pl. 1, p. 51.
7. H.I.E.A. p. 245.
8. A.S.C. 1907 and 1937, p. 16.
9. C.V. 2, p. 125, v. 75-76.
10. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 57.

This was a period of great activity during which considerable commercial intercourse was maintained between India, Ceylon and Malayan Archipelago. During this period the Amaravati school may have established a branch in Ceylon and the artists may have come from India. The monumental remains belonging to this period are rare but certain well recognized specimens have been discovered. Four specimens of sculpture have been found at Anuradhapura, some at Ambalantota, Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa and elsewhere scattered throughout the Island. All their sculpture is marked by a peculiar style of its own. It is the slimness and disproportionate length, so characteristic of Amaravati, that help to identify the sculpture, belonging to that school. It is more likely that these small objects may have been carried by devout Buddhist pilgrims from India to Ceylon and the Sinhalese themselves who went to India on pilgrimage may have also brought specimens of this art to Ceylon.<sup>1</sup> The Amaravati school in India flourished for two hundred years or more that is from the 2nd to 4th centuries A.D. There are at least two clearly defined styles—the earlier and the later. During the earlier period the Buddha figures were well portrayed. The figures were works of art and the treatment and rendering of foliage and flowers were exquisite. During the later stages the stone cutting is not in bold relief but is extremely accurate, the quality of draughtsmanship being excellent. There were single scenes and much ornamentation in stone. Flowers and foliage were renewed excellently. There was a dynamic rendering of design. This art was brought into being as a result of Buddhism.<sup>2</sup>

Jatakas or other legendary tales relating to the Bodhisattva carved in stone are rare in Ceylon but a probable case of a Jataka representation is seen on a balustrade at Anuradhapura.<sup>3</sup> Other sculptural slabs were found at Anuradhapura, Sigiriya and Ambalantota, one of which is believed to be the annunciation and another the miracle of Sravasti.<sup>4</sup> These are very early works in limestone. A few other instances of sculptured objects belonging to the early Amaravati period have so far been detected among the remains. Larger objects including images of the Buddha have been discovered. The colossal dolomite figure of the standing king or Bodhisattva also popularly said to be king Dutugemunu discovered at Ruanveliseya resembles closely the Amaravati images belonging to the grand style.<sup>5</sup> The seated Buddha at the Circular

1. A.B.I.A. Vol. II, 1935-36, p. 15, A.R.C. 1910-11, p. 69

2. M.I.S.—Codrington, p. 14 & 15.

3. B.A.I.C.J. p. 83.

4. J.S.C. Vol. I, pt. 3, p. 95.

5. H.I.I.A. p. 161.

Road, Anuradhapura, is also in a similar style and can be attributed to the Amaravati school.<sup>1</sup> Two other colossal dolomite figures found on the platform of the Ruanveliseya also resemble Amaravati images,<sup>2</sup> belonging to the early Christian era is the head of a limestone Buddha from Vilgam Vehera, Magampattu and the headless figure of the Buddha in Amaravati style from Mawala Vehera near Bundala.<sup>3</sup> At Situlpavva, Magampattu, were found two Bodhisattva statues. One is headless and the other in a style similar to Amaravati is the most remarkable piece of sculpture so far discovered. These and other pieces of sculptured objects found in the Island are reminiscent of Amaravati.<sup>4</sup>

From Anuradhapura comes another standing figure of the Buddha in Abhayamudra. In style and treatment of drapery with schematic folds these bear a very marked relationship to the Buddha images found at Amaravati.<sup>5</sup> The Bodhisattva head and Maitreya head from Anuradhapura are also in Amaravati style.<sup>6</sup> One more piece comes from the eastern tope, eastern chapel and another from northern chapel at Anuradhapura.<sup>7</sup>

Belonging to a period later than the Gupta were the few Buddha figures including heads of Buddha from Girihandu Vihara, at Ambalantota in the Southern Province. These are carved in fine sand stone, in grand style and in large size, nevertheless they are clearly the products of the Amaravati school. Another square slab depicting the renunciation of the Buddha with a flatness peculiar to the period of the 6th century A.D. is similar to carved scenes from Amaravati.<sup>8</sup> It may also be remarked that the vast majority of guardstones at Anuradhapura have carved on them flower vases inherited from the Amaravati school. These come from remains at Anuradhapura and Toluvila.<sup>9</sup>

The Gupta influences began to enter Ceylon from the eastern coast of India as well as through the other agencies from central India. The Mahayana change would have been enforced in the early Amaravati period through Andhradesa and the developed stage of that movement may have coincided with the Gupta cycle and the Gupta renaissance which spread to all spheres of cultural activity. The period when Gupta art flourished in Ceylon may be the fourth century A.D. to the sixth century A.D. Ceylon

1. H.I.I.A. p. 161.
2. H.I.I.A. p. 161.
3. A.S.C. 1933—p. 16.
4. A.S.C. 1934—p. 20.
5. B.A.I.C.J. p. 48.
6. H.I.I.A. p. 16, figs. 289-290.
7. J.S.C. Vol. I, pt. 3, p. 95.
8. J.S.C. Vol. II, p. 78.
9. J.S.C. Vol. I, pt. 3, p. 97, 50, A-B.

reacted to the new Indian impulses in all cultural activities, the chief of these being the acceptance of Mahayana iconography, change to stone as the medium of sculpture and adoption of fresco painting.<sup>1</sup> The most pleasing example of early Gupta style is the stone bas-relief of a man and woman from Isurumuniya. The scene is explained as that of a loving couple—a warrior with sword and shield, seated by his charming beloved—in an attitude of romantic association.<sup>2</sup> Originally, for stone sculpture, gneiss was used where strength and durability were essential. But from Mahasena's time gneiss begins to be used for ornamental purposes rather than otherwise.<sup>3</sup> This new art movement so well recognized as Gupta art spread very vigorously into every sphere of art in the Island until practically all sculpture came under its influence. The new religious emotion generated by the Mahayana religious ideas had to be satisfied and the society of the day gave every encouragement to the creation of images of the Buddha in a variety of ways. These found a place in every temple and place of worship.

Strangely enough very little has been said and written about the sculpture belonging to the Gupta period at Anuradhapura and elsewhere in Ceylon. It must be emphasised that in the sculptural tradition of the Island there are no sharp breaks as to facilitate recognition of one style as ending at such a definite period of time and another commencing at a specific period. It is to be observed that although new ideas have entered into the stream of sculpture from time to time the continuity is maintained in spite of such a multiplicity of differing elements of sculpture entering at various stages from various sources. It is also clear that during the Gupta period at Anuradhapura at least one observes the past trends in the creative effort on the part of the sculptors as some of these are still preserved. Two clear styles<sup>4</sup> appear to be co-existent. One of these is undoubtedly the continuation of the best elements of Amaravati, representing in turn the elements of the sculptural tradition of Mathura, Bharut, Sanchi, etc. The main characteristics of this tradition are recognized by the poses, gestures, the arrangement of drapery and the treatment of features and hands. The new influences are visible in the sense of movement and spirit. There is present in this art tradition the elements of the popular and realistic styles displaying the wealth of material in the open air where considerable play of light and shade was available as to afford the objects a seemingly popular movement.

1. I.I.A. p. 148.

2. B.A.I.C.J. p. 84.

3. J.S.C. Vol. II, pt. 1, p. 6.

4. M.I.S.—Codrington, K. de B. pp. 15, 16.

On the other hand the style which is generally called the grand style<sup>1</sup> (classical style) of large scale cult images cut in the round, possess a refinement and clear definition of the qualities stressed by the sculptors. This was also a period of efflorescence in sculpture; the literary tradition and art tradition combining to produce a grand result. As such this art has crystallised and preserved the hieratic conceptions of the wealth of the past. The sculpture is definitely intended for use in temples and buildings where there is darkness and not much room for play of light and shade. However, one fact must be underlined and that is the work of the future derives not from the grand style (classical style) of sculpture, but from the small scale work<sup>2</sup> preserved in low relief.

One may observe therefore during the early Gupta period some chaste works of art which were inspired by the best elements at Amaravati, Mathura and Sarnath.<sup>3</sup> The amorous scene from Isurumuniya betrays elements of Mathura art not only in the composition and theme, but also in feeling. The Buddha in concentration may have derived its peculiar expression and the enigmatic smile on his face from the Sarnath conceptions. Apart from these two clear specimens the rest may well be considered as belonging to the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. There is undoubtedly a stylistic difference of the Anuradhapura specimens from those Gupta examples preserved in India. This can easily be explained as the result of intermixture between the earlier Anuradhapura tradition with the new ideals and the fusion of the two into a harmonious composition is indelibly impressed as to distinguish it as such from the Indian. The recognition of such a difference can be possible only after one is well aware of the best elements in both traditions. This difference amidst seemingly identical qualities existed more in the appeal and the feeling rather than in any describable characteristics. A few other examples of this period may be cited. These are the guardstones, moonstones, the seated Buddha figures, Bodhisattvas, the gay genii, pillar capitals, makara balustrades, elephants and lotus flowers. The two styles are also to be observed independently, each being restricted to the environment and atmosphere suitable for it. The grand style is generally employed in the creation of Buddha and Bodhisattva images as well as in this protecting figures as guardstones, but the lesser style is almost exclusively employed for purposes of decoration in which it finds the highest scope for expression. The flowing linear rhythm, chaste composition, fineness

1. Ibid.

2. M.I.S—Codrington, p. 16.

3. B.A.I.C.J. p. 83.

and quality of soaring, heavenwards, harmony and balance are worked out with a peculiar charm of its own. The deeply religious emotions and a feeling of contemplation where the whole universe is in tune with the objects themselves is brought out with remarkable impressiveness, clarity and unmistakable understanding. For at least two centuries the movement was maintained and continued. The grand style was bound to lose itself thereafter only to reappear periodically when the necessary background was available. The full vigour of this movement had dissipated itself by about the end of the 6th century A.D. and was later to reappear in about the 9th century under the Brahminical reactions. But whilst this grand style lapsed into inactivity periodically the lesser style continued its unbroken tradition communicating with the people in the language of sculpture best known and understood by them. Whilst this process was being precipitated there developed in South India a new movement under the Pallavas. No doubt this had its repercussions in the field of Sinhalese sculpture.

The Amaravati phase of sculpture though not strongly present in the prerepresentative sites seems to have found occasional representation throughout the Island as was mentioned earlier. It is likely that no great builder or king accepted this medium and style of expression as a suitable vehicle for conveying the religious imagery in the propagation of Buddhism. This may have been due to the difficulty of finding marble or limestone of the quality required for obtaining the grand finish as was the case at Amaravati or the sculptors in the Island did not consider the material as lasting enough. Whatever the reasons may have been the few sculptured finds will help in the study of the evolutionary process of Sinhalese sculpture. It must be noted that this phase of art never caught the imagination of the people and hence its random occurrence but it was a precursor to another very important period of art that certainly spread through the whole Island and produced works of great beauty. The reasons for the introduction and popularity of this new style were many. It was the culmination of a movement extending to all spheres of art and necessarily followed the literary movement.

The Gupta style, as it is called, entered the Island directly as well as indirectly. During this period there were many contacts and trade flourished. There was also constant and close intercourse between the court at Anuradhapura and at Pataliputra in India. The Amaravati school was still continuing in India when the Gupta renaissance in art attained the peak of development and may have been responsible for causing the passing away of the Amaravati School.

And again during the seventh century one sees a change, and a new style of stone sculpture seems to have entered the Island. This naturally followed a period of conflict and a settlement of a group of craftsmen in isolated parts in and around the capital of Anuradhapura. Nevertheless, the tradition is clear and a well established style has been implanted in the Island at the famous site by the Tisawewa known as Isurumuniya. It is easy to trace this style to its original source in India. This is the Pallava style.<sup>1</sup> An early trace of this style is to be observed in an unfinished figure in a cave at Andiyagala and can be identified by the high Pallava crown. This represents a man in the same attitude as the man and horse at Isurumuniya.<sup>2</sup> Other bas-reliefs may be found elsewhere but one of the most remarkable is that which comes from a pond at Anuradhapura. It depicts a scene of bathing elephants and then the elephants charging away with fury.<sup>3</sup> Pallava in style and similar to that found at Isurumuniya is the group of elephants amongst lotus and fish carved on the rock near Tissa wewa. Finally one comes to the well preserved carvings at Isurumuniya rock which site has been treated like Gangavatarana tirtha at Mamallapuram. One famous piece of Pallava sculpture in Ceylon is that of a seated figure accompanied by a horse.<sup>4</sup> This is identified as sage<sup>5</sup> Kapila. The composition is serene and simple in style and highly reminiscent of Pallava art. The theme does not betray any Buddhist lore<sup>6</sup> The other scene is that of elephants in a lotus covered tank.<sup>7</sup> In a flatter and more lively style is an elephant on the other side of the cleft at the same site.<sup>8</sup> This appears to be a piece of unfinished sculpture.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, these few specimens provide a clear indication as to the existence in the Island of a school of Pallava art that produced works of high artistic merit in a style closely akin to, if not identical with, the Pallava art of South India.

Sculptural influences from the areas east of Ceylon, viz:—Burma, Siam, China and Indonesia have been connected with some of the sculpture and architecture that have so far come to light. It is also likely that there was no such movement of sculptural elements in a westerly direction since the influences were predominantly west to east. Therefore one fails to see how any

1. A.S.C. 1936, p. 19.

2. J.S.C. Vol. II, Pt. 2, p. 77, pl 47 (b).

3. H.F.A. p. 150.

4. H.I.I.A. p. 162.

5. H.I.I.A. p. 162.

6. A.S.C. 1936, p. 18-19.

7. B.A.I.C.J. p. 84.

8. J.S.C. Vol. I, pt. 3, p. 96.

9. A.S.C. 1936, p. 18.

such material elements could prevail unless those of the late 12th century A.D.

The Pallava tradition which appears to have been mainly established in and around Anuradhapura may have gradually faded away by about the 9th century A.D. leaving an outpost like Nalanda Gedige although elements of sculpture introduced by that school may have been imbibed and continued to be appreciated by the local craftsmen themselves. It is to be noted that the sculptors and craftsmen who arrived with the Pallava immigrants from India may have intermarried and settled down in Ceylon. Nevertheless, due to lack of political influence they may have grown weaker. Consequently during the 9th century very little positive influence came to be introduced into the evolutionary stream of Sinhalese art and sculpture. Apart from negative influences by way of national uprisings in defence against South Indian aggression the only serious action taken appears to be a continuous attempt at preserving the national monuments and the traditions and ceremonials connected with them.

But before long the Anuradhapura sculptural tradition which of course had continued due to its long established superiority may have raised its head and gained supremacy once again. The older customs, festivals and ceremonials continued to be followed and revived in the course of art. Buddha images were being made chiefly in the attitude of meditation and these were deposited in temples and under the Bodhi tree.<sup>1</sup> This movement seems to have been maintained during the reign of Aggabodhi I and Sena I (850 A.D.). This tradition, had of course developed on the North Indian basis but strongly affected by the Amaravati and Gupta styles. Some of the Buddha figures specially those discovered at Polonnaruwa and elsewhere betray strong influences of the Amaravati school of sculpture. The material used was stone and this was continued to be utilised only till about the 9th century A.D.

It was during the 9th century that the Pandyan in South India achieved considerable success in their wars with the neighbouring states and began to spread their influence throughout South India. The Pandyan caused ruin and destruction throughout Anuradhapura. They destroyed images, looted precious gems and broke down buildings and set fire to them. They were responsible also for the destruction of the images at Ratnapasada in the Abhayagiri and Mirisaveti Viharas.<sup>2</sup> The evolution of sculptural styles suffered a complete set-back. The movement remained static bereft of the fire and impulsiveness of an earlier

1. Cv. p. 135, v. 77.

2. Cv. p. 140.

age. In course of time this power spread across the shores of Ceylon as well. It was during this time that the capital shifted from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa, after the failure by Sinhalese kings to overcome their armed attacks and invasions. Sena II in various ways attempted to suppress the heretical risings during this little known period in the Island's history. At this time the new-comers had ample opportunities of introducing religious ideas and sculptural styles. Perhaps both elements constituted different phases of the same movement. Undoubtedly, Mahayana Buddhism appears to have held pride of place and quite successfully prevailed in spite of several attempts by the orthodox schools to suppress the novel religious beliefs and practices as those belonging to heretical sects which had appeared in the Island during this time.

Before long Sena II repaired the images and restored the temples and other buildings associated with Buddhism. The displaced Buddha images were restored to their former positions. In spite of opposition of a very serious nature Mahayana Buddhism appears to have won the day. And flourishing under Sena II<sup>1</sup> the sculpture belonging to this period became predominantly infused with the style and spirit of Mahayana Buddhism both in outward expression and inward feeling. This was the distinctive contribution of the 9th century and it may have been the result of very close intercourse with South India immediately after the defeat of the Pandians. From the few finds discovered at Anuradhapura one may surmise that Mahayana worship, practices and beliefs found favour with the people and material signs of conditions prevailing at that time can be discovered from the ruins discovered at Vijayarama Temple and Indikatu-Seyā Dagoba near Anuradhapura and the Gedige at Nalanda.

There are a few specimens of sculpture belonging to this period that seemed to preserve certain uncommon elements. The guardstone at the Elephant Stable at Anuradhapura is a wonderful work of art and this is crowned with a carved thorana, the symbolism here being not yet known.<sup>2</sup> The guardstone at the Ratnapasada has a unique top stone as large as a thorana over the Nagaraja and this is carved with figures of gods and animals.<sup>3</sup> The moonstone at the Ratnapasada is of the simple type with half open lotus at the base.<sup>4</sup> At the Vijayarama monastery before the floor of the 4 porches was found a brick built collar containing

1. Cv. vv. 34 to 80.

2. L.C.C. p. 96.

3. A.S.C. 1912—13 p. 4.

4. M.A.S.I. p. 4.

a bronze of a double faced god and animal and 3 clay lamps.<sup>1</sup> The figures of ganas and nagas and the other usual themes adopted in sculptural embellishment find illustrated expression in the symbolism of the age. Many uncommon images of gods and goddesses discovered during excavations at these sites and dated to the 9th century may perhaps be the symbols of worship of the new movement. Certainly there are fragmentary inscriptions carved on copper slabs which betray knowledge and existence of Mahayana religious texts.

It was also during this period in India that the South Indian influence penetrated towards north India and finally helped to build some of the famous temples there. This was a period when Hinduism came to be revived and Sanskrit literature attained popularity once again. Naturally Hindu mythology dominated the sculptural themes of the time. The best specimens of the age are found at Ellora where masses of dynamic figures are cut out of the living rock with a force of expression and a power of representation that has never been surpassed in India since. Undoubtedly the South Indian Pandiyans would have introduced some of these stylistic features and expressive details into the sculptural tradition evolving then at Anuradhapura. This was also an age when sculptors revelled in carving massive works in stone. Such images are portrayed in stone with a facility of modelling in clay. This style may have been at Vijayarama in an image of Avalokitesvara<sup>2</sup> and is also present in the paintings of the period of which very little is preserved in Ceylon. However, the figures at Nalanda Gedige, Medirigiriya; Buduruegala and the standing figure at Avukana, and the trace of paintings at Hinda-gala may be the best representative examples belonging to this age. These out of the way spots are the likely places to which the artists may have escaped for security and peace in times of stress and storm, and it is at these very sites that the elements of the 9th century sculpture are preserved. At Moragoda was found a figure of 'Padmapani' more correctly Surya belonging to X century A.D.<sup>3</sup>

The sculpture at Medirigiriya preserves the sculptural tradition of Anuradhapura with a faithfulness that is remarkable. But the 9th century influence had already found a place in this tradition which came to be established at this isolated site. Some of the finest seated Buddha figures of varying sizes carved in stone have been preserved here. The animal symbolism has also found a place in works of sculpture.<sup>4</sup>

1. A.S.C. 1891, p. 4, f.n. 7.

2. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 49.

3. A.S.C. 1891, p. 14.

4. A.S.C. 1897, p. 7; C.A.R. 1907, p. 30, 32; H.F.A. p. 144 to 145.

The Buddha at Awkana has been ascribed to the 6th century,<sup>1</sup> and may be the earliest expression of a colossal standing Buddha figure in Ceylon. It provided the inspiration for all later works of this class. As a matter of fact the Buduruvegala figures showing no doubt a Mahayana composition, may have been inspired by this unique example. But of course the images at Buduruvegala are Mahayanic in spirit, arrangement, subject matter, and iconographic details. It is very likely therefore that the suppression of Mahayana Buddhism at the capital city as a dangerous form of heretical beliefs resulted in the production of a series of important art elements in remote isolated places where the form and worship may have found a pre-eminent position in the religious beliefs and ceremonial of the people.

The South Indian supremacy over Ceylon did not last long. Before the invaders who dominated Anuradhapura had time to settle down and consolidate their gains in art and sculpture and building construction they were forced to retreat. The Cholas in South India gained supremacy over all the neighbouring kingdoms. The Chola power spread to Ceylon as well. The new invaders overpowering the Island established the Chola Empire in Ceylon with Polonnaruwa as its capital. These people had imbibed the Pallava tradition in art, sculpture and painting. Having consolidated their gains they may have turned to more peaceful preoccupations, but there was hardly time for such consolidation when they in turn were defeated and driven out.

The Elahera Buddha image differs from the one at Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa, the arrangement of drapery being in a style altogether different from that prevailing at Polonnaruwa. The Elahera figure does not at all depict the folds of the robe and may be in the direct line of evolution from Anuradhapura of 10th century and the first of this type of recumbent Buddhas to be found belonging to a later date.<sup>2</sup>

The 10th century is as uncertain and barren of sculpture as any conceivable in Sinhalese history. This is the natural result of the social and political difficulties. A few sites have yielded some sculpture particularly a few moonstones and Buddha images. These have been found at Pankuliya and the environs of Anuradhapura. One does not expect anything worthy of Sinhalese sculpture during the 11th century. It was the period of the greatest trial for the Sinhalese who fought a life and death struggle with the Cholas of South India. Naturally there followed a period of peace and tranquillity after the great victory of Vijayabahu I in 1078 A.D.

1. A.S.C. 1955, p. 23.

2. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 3, p. 155.

No evolutionary changes or movements can be expected from the earlier period but one may look to it as one of preparation for the achievements to follow. There was much repair, restoration and reconstruction to be done during the latter part of the 11th century. The ancient stone images of the Buddha at Abhayagiri and Jetavanarama and Mihintale came to be honoured. Some activity is also to be expected from the Ruhunu kingdom there are signs of a prevalence of art activity there as well.

It was during the 11th century A.D. that there evolved the practice of placing boards of gold with rays and umbrellas over the standing images of the Buddha.<sup>1</sup> The images of the Buddha were also repaired in the same style and restored to their original sites. Further ornamentation such as diadems, jewels, a net of rays, an umbrella and a garment came to be added to the Buddha images in about 928 A.D.<sup>2</sup> This continued until the time of Vijaya IV.<sup>3</sup>

The 12th century saw once again the re-establishment of Sinhalese power. The movement of consolidation gained strength and once again peace prevailed throughout the Island. Once more it was a time of great prosperity and under king Parakrama Bahu I the Sinhalese were afforded ample opportunities and began to give time and thought to peaceful and artistic preoccupations. Religion began to be re-established, art and architecture, sculpture and painting were revived. But undoubtedly all works of this period show unmistakable influence of Chola art. It was during this period that once again Mahayana Buddhism found a place among the religious beliefs of the people. The Sanskrit tradition became popular and learning began to flourish. Literature and art were considered matters of importance. Construction of cave temples and other buildings for the cause of Buddhism commanded considerable attention. Although there is undeniable Chola influence in the sculpture of the period particularly at Polonnaruwa, there is a natural native purity that runs through all works of art during this period. The best of the Gupta tradition can be clearly seen in the stability in the Buddha figures of which there are very many fine examples. The colossal figures of the Buddha find particular similarity with those of Avukana. They seem to be of the same style and may have been considerably influenced by the 9th century figures. The material used is brick and mortar and limestone. The carving of many images has been executed in stone and some of these are preserved to this day.

1. Cv. p. 162, v. 12.

2. Cv. p. 168, v. 65.

3. 960 A.D., Cv. p. 177, v. 49.

During the 12th century one may observe at Polonnaruwa certain developments in the technique in contra-distinction to those at Anuradhapura. At Anuradhapura the sole Buddha image is close to the back wall exactly opposite the entrance whilst at Polonnaruwa three images are ranged in line, the Buddha being placed between two smaller figures. They are smaller in size though similarly robed.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha figures are well modelled in brick and built in brick and mortar, and some of these attain gigantic heights at Polonnaruwa.<sup>2</sup> The only Tivanka image at Polonnaruwa is in the temple once named Veluvana-rama (Demalamahaseya).<sup>3</sup> These are in the city. There are a number of beautifully carved stone figures of the Buddha as well as some colossal stone figures, all of them standing. The flight of steps at the four cardinal points are more elaborate at Polonnaruwa than anywhere else in Ceylon.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to these specimens there are usual traditional figures, viz., hooded cobras, row of elephants, horses, lions, dwarfs, geese, kinnaras, makaras and foliated designs. There are signs of decadence in the lotus stalk pillars.<sup>5</sup> The guard-stones of the Polonnaruwa period are shaped like a very blunt gothic window.<sup>6</sup> Over elaborate ornamentation and detailed floral decoration are also some indications of the signs of exhaustion in sculptural art of the 12th century. Some of the smaller seated Buddhas are excellent,<sup>7</sup> particularly these four figures from the cardinal points at the Vatadage. The typical method of depicting drapery at Galvihara is by the groove method which is a direct evolution of the 8th century examples.<sup>8</sup> The recumbent Buddha figures in parinibbana attitude are seen in the latest caves at Ajanta, Nasik and Salsette, but they never attained such colossal dimensions as in the examples in Ceylon.<sup>9</sup> Note the 3 grooves in the folds found in the images at the Galvihara, at Polonnaruwa, as compared to the two at other sites in Gal Vihara. This should be considered a more developed stage in the sculptural evolution.<sup>10</sup> The Buddha at Galvihara flanked by two attendant Bodhisattvas is Mahayanic<sup>11</sup> and there may have been this element continuously

1. A.S.C. 1901, p. 12.
2. A.S.C. 1909, p. 15.
3. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 3, p. 171.
4. H.I.E.A. p. 247.
5. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 98.
6. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 9.
7. H.F.A. p. 150.
8. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 2.
9. H.I.E.A. p. 245.
10. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3.
11. A.S.C. 1907, p. 12.

influencing sculpture and art during this period. The outpost at Dimbulagala also preserves a few seated Buddha images not of a very high quality.<sup>1</sup> There is also a new isolated element in the Satmahal Pasada seen for the first time in Ceylon at Polonnaruwa and this bears a remarkable similarity to the architectural style which prevailed in early India, China and Cambodia. Whether this was a school of art one cannot be certain. At least the so-called Parakrama image is not in direct line of Sinhalese sculpture and does betray more stylistic features of this foreign element and these are the moustache, beard, makuta dress and the very easy attitude with right leg bent. The technique is the same but the spirit and style are different. Certainly one building and that is the Satmahal Prasada is also in this style.

At Tantrimalai, we see the beginning of the decadence, if not the decadence itself, since the images here are nothing but manifest copies of those portrayed at Galvihara, Polonnaruwa.<sup>2</sup> Some of these are identical replicas, for example, the parinirvana Buddha. The execution of the images falls short of the finish and magnitude of those at Polonnaruwa.<sup>3</sup> The image of the standing Buddha, other images and moonstones and seated Buddhas at Sasseruva belong to the period of decadence and are much later even than those at Tantrimalai. Thus "in the period of more than twelve hundred years, from the time of Duttha Gamani until the final renaissance of the thirteenth century, the inspiration of both sculpture and architecture came from India; especially as we shall see, from the later Andhra civilization of the eastern coast."<sup>4</sup>

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1. A.S.C. 1907 p. 9.

2. A.S.C. 1911-12, p. 68

3. J.S.C. 1896, p. 8.

4. A.A.I. p. 197.

## CHAPTER X

### A—SUBJECT MATTER AND ICONOGRAPHY

#### Subjects

The following is a list of subjects that have been dealt with by the ancient sculptors :—

1. Kings
2. Gods—(Devas)
3. Jatakas
4. Bodhisattvas
5. Buddha—(seated, standing, reclining)
6. Ananda and Teachers
7. Mahinda
8. Buddhist emblems
9. Nagas
10. Makaras
11. Dwarfs
12. Five animals—(lion, horse, bull, elephant, geese)
13. Elephant
14. Vase and foliage
15. Humans

Unlike painting, Sinhalese sculpture embraces a wide range of subjects varying from very simple decoration, worldly subjects, to kings and gods. The supreme subject is that of the Buddha in the three chief postures - sitting, standing and reclining. An enumeration of all the subjects would be out of question and even out of place. One can only vouch for what is recovered and discovered. What remains unknown and undiscovered may be equally important and fascinating. It is, therefore, proposed to deal with what is known.

What were the earliest sculptured objects, other than those known to date, it is not possible to say. What subjects other than those known up to date engaged the attention of early sculptors, we do not know. It may be safe to assume that there were votive objects connected with irrigation works and religious abodes. The images of demons and gods in therio-morphic or anthropomorphic form would have been fashioned from very early times. As regards civilized forms and shapes it may be fair to reckon the Pandukabhaya age as the most fruitful source of culture emanation.

This age not only transformed and crystallised into civilized form the ancient crude representations but also established a very high standard. It also developed an art that was inspiring. We

find it difficult to deny to this era an achievement in art that is now not only unmeasurable but also difficult to visualise. This age has been truly wonderful for its purity of form in all aspects of art. It really attained its excellence in architecture about which the Mahavamsa preserves some evidences. This architectural attainment would not have been without its proportionate share of sculptural expression.

In such a picture of ancient sculpture the subject of kingship would have stood pre-eminent and it is not unlikely therefore that the objective representation should have preceded all other forms in the scheme of sculpture. We have the king represented on a seal in the attitude of being seated. This is about 300 B.C. old and comes from Tissamaharama.<sup>1</sup>

There are other images identified popularly as representations of ancient Sinhalese kings. Whether these are actually so can never be proved or disproved unless and until an inscription throws fresh light on the subject. But the point to be noted is that such a tradition did actually prevail among the population of Buddhist devotees. This is difficult to reject. Mahavamsa does not seem to mention any image of an ancient king. It is strange that that should be so since there were so many pious kings in the long line of Sinhalese royalty. Whatever the specific identification may be the fact that they are kings may be accepted. It is immaterial whether one is identified as Devanampiya Tissa or Dutugemunu though of course that itself is not without considerable interest. The kings mentioned so far are Devanampiya Tissa, Dutugemunu, Bhatiya Tissa, Mahasena and Parakrama the Great. There is wide difference of opinion about the last. Some identify it as Agastya or Sage Kapila. Others even think it is Vijaya Bahu I who was a patron of learning and a teacher at the Pirivena.

Mahavamsa has a vivid description of the sculptured figures to be seen at the Ruanveliseya. At the four quarters stood the figures of the four great kings and 33 gods. Above these stood devas, dancing devatas, devatas playing instruments, devas with mirrors in hand and a host of other devas.<sup>2</sup> There are also scattered references and objects representing gods but who these are it has not been possible to ascertain. In fact very little difference in iconographical details exists between the image of a king and a god. Even these finds are rare. It is likely that very little attention was paid to such images which were really secondary and held a position inferior to the Buddha.

1. H.I.I.A. p. 159.

2. Mv. p. 207, vv. 89-92.

The images of early gods may have been gradually destroyed in course of time. A stone image of Vishnu has been found at Kantalai and may belong to XI century A.D. In the image houses were deposited images of gods. Some of these were figures of gods and Brahmas.<sup>1</sup>

The Jataka stories have been profusely illustrated in stone in a number of places in India. It is even preserved in the paintings of Ajanta.<sup>2</sup> All the popular Jataka stories of the day, important events leading to Buddhahood and after have been faithfully recovered and preserved in India. There is no reason to believe that the same tradition did not obtain in the Island from the time of the introduction of Buddhism. Unfortunately what is now preserved is so little that one is led to doubt if this tradition was followed.

According to one writer "sculptures illustrating the Buddha legend or the jatakas appear to be almost unknown in Ceylonese art. There is only one possible case of a jataka on the balustrade at Anuradhapura."

Again when one looks at the Mahavamsa one finds sufficient recorded evidence to establish the existence of a tradition during 200 B.C. A long list of the events connected with the life of the Buddha from the 7 weeks to the time of distribution of the bodily relics is given as having been depicted in the relic chamber here and there.<sup>3</sup> It is customary to deposit in the relic chamber images, carved scenes and precious material. These may have been sculptured objects as well. Further it is said that in the Lokapasada Jataka tales were employed as a motive for decorative scenes.<sup>4</sup> Here we came upon the practice that obtained at Bharhut and Sanchi where jatakas and other incidents connected with the life of the Buddha were carved on the Toranas. Similarly, the stone slabs at and around the Dagobas may have contained carved scenes. The Chapel at Abhayagiri was flanked at either extremity by three carved monolithic slabs. These contained beautiful carvings in high relief and 7 headed cobras.....jatakas, flower scrolls.<sup>5</sup>

There we came upon an actual flat limestone slab showing presumably the birth of the Buddha carved upon it. This is not quite certain. Nevertheless, it may be the annunciation.<sup>6</sup> This comes from a ruined site to the south of Anuradhapura. But another square slab of limestone has been preserved in Girihandu

1. Cv. II, p. 107, v. 52.

2. Buddhist India—Rhys Davids p. 189.

3. Mv. p. 206-207, vv. 78-89.

4. Mv. p. 185, v. 34.

5. A.S.C. 1894, p. 2.

6. J.S.C. Vol. I, pt. 3, p. 95, pl. 42, No. 46B.

vihara. At Ambalantota 600 A.D. It may be the renunciation.<sup>1</sup> Yet another slab shows the Sravasti Scene. There are other marble slabs carved with images of the Buddha and others unidentified which fall into this category. These are from Piduragala. The Jatakas and other scenes that have been painted at Polonnaruwa could not be the continuation of this ancient tradition in stone sculpture.

### **Buddha and Disciples.**

The Buddha image has constituted the paramount theme for the sculptor's art throughout the long course of Sinhalese art. These multiplied as time went and assumed forms and attained heights never reached before or after. Some of them formed the chief object of worship and veneration within a specially constructed image house, some stood at the entrance to dagobas and shrines inspiring the devotees whilst others occupied commanding sites.

The images of the Master constantly set up in sacred shrines are not intended to be worshipped, but merely to remind devotees of the sage yet, undoubtedly, as is the case with all uneducated people, the tangible material object in some sense seems to instil and emanate the power and holiness of the person represented.<sup>2</sup>

When speaking of the Buddha image as a subject we must necessarily mention the pedestal on which it is erected and the parasol over its head. There may be other minor accessories which sometimes form an integral part of the composition. With a golden parasol like the orb of the sun he adorned the head of the image,<sup>3</sup> (of the lord of sages), "on a throne to the east of the Bodhi tree he placed a shining golden Buddha."<sup>4</sup> There were elaborately carved objects on which the ancient sculptors lavished the highest attention. He made a gleaming diadem of rays a shining coil of hair.<sup>5</sup>

There is also another fact which should be remembered. The ancients sculptured the preceding Buddhas as well. Probably the four figures of Buddhas at Ruanveli may be representations of Kakusanda, Konagama, Kassapa and Gotama.<sup>6</sup>

The Buddha figure was sculptured in three chief traditional ways. This seems to have been the practice and each generation followed this faithfully. At times one type was more popular than another whilst some erected all three types. Kirti Nissanka

1. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 78. Also see B.A.I.C.J. p. 83.

2. L.C.C. p. 17.

3. E.Z.I. p. 227.

4. Cv. p. 204, v. 72-73.

5. Cv. p. 35, v. 61.

6. A.R.A. p. 34.

Malla erected the reclining, sitting, and standing statues of the Buddha in the Dambulla cave.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the ancient times there are to be found the standing image erected on a lotus pedestal (Padmasana). The sizes vary from below life size to the colossal images at Awkana and Sasseruwa. The seated figures are equally noble and interesting. These are generally believed to have been housed in image houses. In the case of some examples (particularly Mahayana) there may be an attendant on either side of the Buddha<sup>2</sup> whilst the Buddha was seated on a base. Strangely enough the reclining images of the Buddha are always of colossal size. Very seldom does one come across a life size Buddha image in this posture. Could this have been a later development from about the 9th century?

### **Bodhisattvas.**

A number of Bodhisattva heads have been discovered. Some of these cannot be identified. Some elude identification owing to their close similarity to images of kings. The figures of Bodhisattva images may have become as popular or even more popular than the Buddhas after the introduction of the festivals connected with them. With the spread of Mahayana beliefs, these images multiplied and it is as a result of this that the number of Bodhisattvas, chief of whom is maitreya, appear.

Bodhisattva heads have been found at Anuradhapura, Thuparama and Situlpavva and Seruvavila. Could these belong to the early period? Presumably these are the images of the Bodhisattva. Some of these figures are remarkably good. The one from Situlpavva is exquisitely beautiful. There were Bodhisattva temples.<sup>3</sup>

At Buduruvegala are a group of Bodhisattvas probably of the Mahayana school. At Polonnaruwa a number of Bodhisattva figures have been found and these are well done. The one at Gal Vihara is extremely fine.

The most popular Bodhisattva is Maitreya whose image begins to appear after 400 A.D. He was treated as a king.<sup>4</sup> Dhatusena held it in great esteem<sup>5</sup> for he had the complete equipment of a king prepared for this image. This may be due to the fact that "probably the Bodhisattva Maitreya was the only future Buddha whom the southern school mentions by name."<sup>6</sup> This

1. E.Z. II, p. 177.

2. A.S.C. 1912-13, p. 4.

3. Cv. p. 36, v. 65.

4. Cv. p. 36, v. 68.

5. I.I.A. p. 148.

6. Cv. p. 123, v. 139, f.n. 5.

popularity continued up to the time of Parakrama Bahu I, for he had a statue made of Metteyya.<sup>1</sup>

Another Bodhisattva that may have been popular with the Mahayanist and is found at Vijayarama is that of Avalokitesvara. Not many of these have been identified. The standing statue at Weligama is supposed to represent Natha or Avalokitesvara,<sup>2</sup> though popularly known as Kustaraja. The other Bodhisattvas represented are Padmapani and Manjusri. This is particularly seen at Polonnaruwa.<sup>3</sup>

### **Ananda**

There was also the practice in Ceylon to depict Ananda the favourite disciple of the Buddha and other teachers of the period. An image of the world teacher named Upasumbha is mentioned<sup>4</sup> No mention is made of Ananda until Sena II is supposed to have brought his image to town.<sup>5</sup> At Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa, the standing figure is identified as that of Mahinda although no certainty can be vouched. Some say it may be the Buddha.<sup>6</sup> It is very seldom that Ananda is represented in Ceylon. No other image of his has so far been found. "This is a modern local designation. Except perhaps in China, Ananda scarcely appears in Buddhist iconography."<sup>7</sup>

### **Mahinda.**

From the time of Sirimeghavanna the image of Mahinda is mentioned. "He caused the images of Itthiya (Uttiya Sambala and Bhaddasala) made."<sup>8</sup> A life size image was also made by Dhatusena. It was during this period that the memory of Mahinda was revived and his image carried in procession.<sup>9</sup> He also celebrated a great festival.<sup>10</sup> This image was placed on dykes and came to be honoured and constructed in the same way as Buddha figures.<sup>11</sup>

### **Buddhist emblems.**

There are a number of signs and symbols which have come to be accepted as Buddhist. Whatever their origin, and previous antecedents and associations may be, these are generally connected with Buddhist ritual and belief. Some of these are carved

1. Cv. 11, p. 123, v. 75-76.
2. J.S.C. Vol. 2, p. 49, pt. 1.
3. A.S.C. 1907, p. 16.
4. Cv. p. 36, v. 66.
5. Cv. p. 155, v. 80.
6. A.S.C. 1907, p. 13, 14.
7. H.I.E.A. p. 244.
8. Cv. p. 7, v. 87.
9. Cv. p. 4, vv. 68, 78.
10. Cv. 34, v. 158.
11. E.Z.I., p. 227.

on stone slabs whilst others are fashioned in the round. The purpose of their presence is twofold. One is to add decoration to the designs, the other is to afford protection by their auspicious presence. Not many of these have been separately depicted. Often these form part of a composition on a rail, panel or pillar at the entrance to a sacred place, temple or dagobas.

At the Abhayagiri the inner stelae are adorned with familiar designs. Buddhist emblems such as shield, swastika and triratna are found.<sup>1</sup> At the Mahapali the flower altar contained a representation of Buddha's feet—Sri Patula.<sup>2</sup> The other auspicious signs are as follows :—

Chatta<sup>3</sup>

Chaitya windows<sup>4</sup>

Lotus filled<sup>5</sup> vases

Chatta above Naga<sup>6</sup>

Golden parasol over the head<sup>7</sup> of the Buddha

These have not been utilized to symbolize the presence of the Buddha as has been done in India. Instead some of these forms are found buried at the feet of the Buddha images thereby confirming the acknowledgement of the supremacy of the Buddha.<sup>8</sup>

### Nagas

The subject of Nagas is itself extremely fascinating. The worship, beliefs and art connected with them throw light on a chapter of human society at a crucial stage of development. The cult is very ancient and has had a diffusion from the Mediterranean towards East. It attained a very important position in India and the art of Ancient India is well represented with tradition. From here Ceylon may have borrowed the subject.

In Sinhalese sculpture the Naga cult may have been an accepted form of belief and worship at the time of the Aryan invasion. Side by side with the theriomorphic Nagas we have the anthropomorphic representations where the human figure is superimposed with Naga hoods. "Evidently both types of Nagas have been derived from the Buddhist art of the Indian continent."<sup>9</sup> This is a clear indication of the absorption of the cult into the religion

1. H.I.E.A. p. 232.

2. A.S.C. 1902, p. 2.

3. A.R.A. p. 30.

4. J.S.C. Vol. 1, p. 3, p. 96.

5. A.S.C. 1893, p. 2 and A.S.C. 1896, p. 2.

6. A.R.A. p. 30.

7. E.Z. I., p. 227.

8. A.S.C. 1940-45 p. 32.

9. B.A.I.C.J. p. 82.

and beliefs of the new comers. The cult was not completely found but owing to its power continued sometimes independently and at other times in combination. "These figures of great Nagas may be regarded as evidence of the early prevalence of serpent worship in the Island<sup>1</sup>" Their svelte and elegant proportions again recall the work at Amaravati. The elaborate jewelled accessories and conical head-dress are close to Gupta representations of Bodhisattvas."<sup>2</sup>

These Naga slabs are found on the embankment of many tanks and at the entrance to Chapels at the dagobas.<sup>3</sup> "In early Buddhist art Nagas are frequently portrayed as attendants or guardians of the Buddha which explains why they usually appear on the guardstones of the Buddhist monuments of Ceylon.<sup>4</sup> The doratupalas with Cobra heads also carry in one hand a lotus stem and in the other a vase containing a lotus flower.<sup>5</sup> The figures are very handsome and heavily adorned. They are Naga princes. The seven headed Cobras are extremely common, though five, nine, and even eleven hooded cobras are found.<sup>6</sup> There are also carved figures of Naginis.<sup>7</sup>

That the tradition is very old, there seems to be no doubt. It can be seen from the earliest Anuradhapura period at most of the ancient ruined sites. Today it is found at Sigiriya, Vessagiriya and extends to Polonnaruwa as illustrated at Lankatilaka.

### Makaras

The other decorative device of Sinhalese art, comprises Makara in toranas and balustrades. These like the Nagas<sup>8</sup> are also derived from the art of the Indian continent. There is only one type of Makara used in Ceylon although in India it took a variety of forms.<sup>9</sup> From the mouth of the Saurians issue ornamented scrolls curling downwards into volutes.<sup>10</sup> It is a kind of fabulous beast, half dragon, half crocodile. The sharpness of the crocodile claws is clearly noticeable.<sup>11</sup> The Makara torana is itself another manifestation of the same idea. Here, instead of the Makara animals being placed at the foot of the entrance to a building they have them placed over head at the entrance in the form of an arch over

1. H.I.E.A. p. 227.

2. A.A.I. p. 204.

3. H.I.E.A. p. 227.

4. A.S.C. 1936, p. 18.

5. A.R.A. p. 3.

6. H.F.A. p. 147.

7. H.I.I.A. p. 162.

8. B.A.J.C.J. p. 82.

9. H.F.A.

10. A.S.C. 1897, p. 2.

11. L.C.C. p. 74.

the doorway where the animals meet face to face in the form of an arch. A very rare elaborate Makara torana of a design rarely met within Ceylon is seen at Gal Vihara Polonnaruwa.<sup>1</sup>

### Dwarfs

Another subject that is of great interest that appears throughout the whole period is the grotesque figure of a dwarf referred to as Atlas. These are the local ganas, children of Ganesh or Bhairavas or guardians of the earth's treasures. These may be compared to similar figures on the capitals of the western gateways at Sanchi. They are found on the Ruanveli, Jetavanarama, Abhayagiri dagobas; on risers of stairs at Medirigiriya and on capital and basements at Vatadage Polonnaruwa. They were regarded as effective janitors. These are used decoratively though ugly.<sup>2</sup> The ganas on all the Vahalkadas are interesting; these are portrayed in lively attitudes playing musical instruments, sporting with a cobra or standing on head.<sup>3</sup> Some are animal headed. One has the head of a horse, another of a bear, and another of a monkey.<sup>4</sup> These are found in panels or bands. Some are with arms raised as though supporting a weight on their heads.<sup>5</sup> The dwarf seems to have been the enemy of nagas and as a matter of fact one bas-relief shows a dwarf trampling a snake.<sup>6</sup>

The dwarfs occupy the Atlas posture suggesting the bearing of weight with enormous effort. They have curled wigs and are girded with cords and adorned. That they were not slaves is shown by the profusion of ornaments, bangles and anklets which cover arms and legs. Each one grasps in one hand what looks like a stalk of a plant. The dwarf guardian is said to represent bhairava deity who is the defender of temples and treasures.<sup>7</sup> Most of them show lively action.

### Animals

Undoubtedly the combination of elephants, lions, horses, bulls and geese may have been a derived decorative manifestation brought over from the continent. Its presence generally dates at least from the time of Asoka. On the unique monolithic columns are displayed these animals so realistically and so cleverly as to suggest the continuity of the tradition from Indian times because of the close similarity. However, the form the animals are subjected to in Ceylon may be characteristic of the Island's

1. A.S.C. 1907, p. 11.

2. H.F.A. p. 147.

3. A.R.I.A. Vol. 9, 1934.

4. A.S.C. 1935, p. 5.

5. A.S.C. 1896, p. 2.

6. A.S.C. 1897, p. 2.

7. L.C.C. p. 103.

art in a peculiar direction at animal patterning. It cannot be denied that the various animals did constitute decorative elements in South Indian temples but nowhere either in the north or south Indian tradition does one come across the specific expression in the form of the moonstone or cardinal representation.

The order of arrangement and the direction of movement of the animals are invariably the same in Anuradhapura, there being exceptions and individual divergences.<sup>1</sup> At Kantaka Cetiya the stelae were surmounted by the figures of these four beasts in the usual order.<sup>2</sup> The procession of animals can be observed on the Vahalkada at Mirisavetiya.<sup>3</sup>

Of the four animals the elephants are excellently executed, full of fire and life, and differing from each other in detail. The bullocks are not bad. The geese are poor. Lions are almost grotesque. It is odd that the lion should figure so prominently in Sinhalese art tradition and carving when the living animal is in no way native to the country.<sup>4</sup>

Another curious use to which these animals were put was to bury these at the four cardinal points thus: To the east the elephant, to the south the horse, to the west the bullock and to the north the lion.<sup>5</sup> This is actually the position in which they were discovered at Vijayarama temple. Could this refer to a time in India when the origins of these animals were so known and indicated thus, keeping in mind the Madhyadesa as the focal point,

By about the 10th century the orientation was becoming uncertain. Not only that the representation also became weak. Some animals came to be superseded, by others, whilst some were emphasised. In Polonnaruwa the bullock was found everywhere and may account for its absence from the moonstones.<sup>6</sup> It must always be remembered that two of the four animals came to be regularly used separately in Sinhalese art more than the others. These were the elephant and the lion. But it must also not be forgotten that invariably the elephant came to be excellently portrayed whilst the lion was a mere caricature. This is natural. Whereas the elephant is native to Ceylon and has been tamed for domestic services and ostentation the lion was never seen. Hence there were misconceptions about its form and anatomical detail. But all the same it came to be delineated

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1. L.C.C. p. 72.

2. A.S.C. 1935—p. 6.

3. H.I.I.A. p. 161.

4. L.C.C. p. 71.

5. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 15.

6. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 13.

in a grotesque shape from very early times in the sculpture of the Sinhalese both at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa.

The elephant has also been utilised to very good advantage and with considerable effect singly and in groups. In its single application the most interesting are these found as a common motif at the entrance to Chapels, basements of dagobas where the elephants are kneeling in a continuous row in a frontal position in a variety of poses; no two of which are alike. Some are modelled in terra cotta and others stone cut. Groups of elephants have also been beautifully and cleverly sculptured along the rocky bank of Tissawewa and the tank at Isurumuniya. These are extremely fascinating studies where the realism is truly amazing. It is these that show to the best advantage the anatomical appreciation and understanding of the elephant by the artists in Ceylon. The tradition continues up to the Polonnaruwa period in almost the same undiminished excellence of presentation.

### **Vase and foliage**

The vase and foliage or the pot and foliage is an ancient and popular subject of pillar decoration in India. This same tradition seems to have been continued in Ceylon from ancient times. Actually it is mostly during the early period that this subject of decoration has been used to advantage. At Anuradhapura one seeks this form of design carved on stone slabs at the entrance to dagobas on either side.

The urn contains an opening bud of a lotus resting upon a fully expanding lotus flower with three rows of petals cut in low relief. The vases are well rounded, all of them being not exactly alike. Sometimes the urn is sustained by a sitting dwarf. The lotus leaves are also shown. The urn is bulb shaped, the stalk throws off leaves on either side and issues in a full blown flower or bud.

### **Human Groups**

Sinhalese sculpture has preserved very few instances of groups of humans. It may be presumed that this subject was not common although in the painting it seems to have been popular. That narrative style in sculptured stone may have been replaced by painting on the walls. Nevertheless, the subject is not completely absent. There are a few specimens particularly at Isurumuniya which are standard examples of the subject.

The so-called amatory couple where a woman-like male figure sits at ease in the company of a seated female, does not betray any relationship to Buddhist lore. It is a pleasing subject rendered with consummate skill.

The scene of a man and horse is an equally clever composition at the same site. The man is in a kingly pose holding the halter of a horse. It is a very remarkable composition that has eluded identification still. It may be the sage Kapila. This too does not betray any Buddhist lore. Some seem to observe in the man an ascetic with matted locks. "Isolated in a kind of a niche is a relief of Parjanya and Agni, personifications of the rain cloud and the warmth that brings seeds to blossom".<sup>1</sup>

Another unique slab with a carving on two panels comes from Velana Damana, Anuradhapura. The subject is that of a king seated cross-legged with left hand on lap, the right resting against the knee on either side are female chamara bearers. The other deals with a spirited battle between a giant and four foes, identified as Nandimitta showing his prowess.<sup>2</sup>

Another interesting scene is also a fight between a cobra and mongoose where a monkey clasping its baby to its breast looks down from a large leaved tree.

### Miscellaneous

It is not possible nor is it even deemed necessary to mention every single subject of Sinhalese sculpture. The important and relevant subjects have been dealt with. There are a few scattered subjects that may be of more than ordinary interest. One of these is the dancing woman represented on a cornelian seal. This bears a certain affinity to numismatic figures and the two arts may have been similar. This fine figure resembles a Sigiriya lady and has been found near Mahapali.

### B—Iconography

It is rather remarkable that the oldest sculptured figures of Ancient India and Ceylon should be considered as representations of royal personages. Whilst those of India belong to Yakkhas or Nagas those from Ceylon seem to be kings. It is also fortunate that some of this class of images should have been preserved to be discovered as otherwise this important class of sculpture may have not entered into the various subjects that have found expression.

"The free standing Yakksha figures are almost unanimously described as Yakksha figures." But numerous references to images of kings and great men are to be found in Indian literature. These royal images were in all probability housed in structures of a funerary character and regarded by their living relations and subjects with great veneration.

1. Paranavitane, S. *Artibus Asiae* Vol. XVI (3) 1953 p. 167.

2. A.S.C. 1896, p. 7.

It is now proposed to record what iconographic standards, if any, were adopted and followed by the Sinhalese sculpture in representing kings. There is the king seated.<sup>1</sup> Of course, this is a common posture and may portray the *raja lila* of kingly ease. Apart from this no other seated image of a king has so far come to light.

The standing attitude is the commonest and this may be confused with that of sages and teachers. Thus considerable difficulty prevails in identifying the standing stone images other than those of Buddha. The difficulty is increased in the case of Bodhisattva images since these are almost identical with those of kings.

However, images which appear to be those of kings have been portrayed standing in a devotional attitude, clothed in dhoti loosely flowing up to ankles in regal attire. These images are portrayed showing full front view in an easy attitude with right leg slightly bent. The hands are in an act of adoration.

The upper part of the body is uncovered except for the thread in the case of those who may be sages or kings or teachers. One hand carried an "Ola Book." He wears a long beard and has an elaborate head dress resembling a conical cap, earrings and heavy neck. A moustache and beard adorn some images which may be those of seers or kingly sages.

At least one carries an object—probably an ola manuscript—in his hands. All these images are sited in prominent positions and may have been under a roof of some sort.

### Gods and Devatas

Hinduism had always a place in Ceylon along with Buddhism and as a religion it was recognized by the reigning princes. Hindu influences were powerful and may have influenced both religion and art. Most of the gods and deities of the Hindu pantheon came to be respected and even believed in. Their images were also worshipped. The gods and goddesses of Buddhist heavens were also the same as those of Hindus in another name or a different guise. But these came to be distinguished in Buddhist art and mythology. Very little sculptured information has been found for us to ascertain what the iconographical details were but the following may be noted.

The Vishnu image from Kantalai stands on a lotus. The god wears a tall makuta. The back right hand holds the Sankha and the left the Chakra. The front right hand is holding a lotus flower and the left rests on a club. On the breast is the Srivastu mark.<sup>2</sup>

1. H.I.I.A. p. 159

2. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 3, p. 158, pl. 83.

The many references to gods and Brahmas in the image houses particularly of XII century A.D. may be the painted scenes.<sup>1</sup> The object considered as auspicious were eight in number, viz., lion, bull, elephant, water pitcher, fan, standard, conch and lamp. These may be a Buddhist symbolism evolved in Ceylon.<sup>2</sup>

### **Bodhisattva**

It is at Polonnaruwa and specially at Gal Vihara that the characteristics of northern Buddhism are clearly seen. The former artists and sculptors had avoided Mahayana iconolatry such as is to be seen at the later caves of Ajanta, Elora and Aurangabad. The Bodhisattva Padmapani and Manjusri are introduced in the vested form of attendant Chamara holders.<sup>3</sup> At Anuradhapura particularly at Vijayarama Temple Mahayana iconographic details may have been used. There are other scattered finds portrayed in that medium. The Buduruegala sculpture is typical of that school. But these too may have been so tampered as to eliminate the classical elements. The following Bodhisattvas may be noted, viz., Padmapani, Manjusri, Maitreya and Avalokitesvara (Natha). The Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva has the dhyanī Amitabha on the head dress. But the iconographical representation of this form of avalokita differs from the Kustaraja. This may be god Natha.

The Bodhisattvas of the southern school were portrayed during the early period. These are very seldom distinguishable from the portraits of royal personages. These are extremely pleasing and very beautiful to look at. They were splendid figures.

A method of carving two Buddhas engaged back to back prevailed. There was also the practice of making life size images. The Buddha figures have the usual coronal protuberance, short curly locks, pendulous ears and are clad in robes with right arm bare. The folds are shown by means of fluting. The eyes are deep sunk and show no pupils. These may have been heavily adorned.

### **Sedent Buddhas**

The backs of such images remain united to the rock matrix in some cases. An asana is always provided and legs are crossed right above left. The robe falls gracefully from left shoulder. The features are sometimes stern and unpleasing. The image has a nimbus and is in dhyanamudra. In style these are severe and grand. This dhyanamudra meditation attitude is the commonest type. Abhaya mudra is also evident at Anuradhapura, one in

1. Cv. II, p. 105, v. 35, *ibid*, p. 107, v. 52.

2. Mv. p. 185, v. 34.

3. A.S.C. 1907, p. 16.

the Buddha at Pankuliya and the other at Abhayagiri. Whilst Indian examples are portrayed in all the mudras the symbolism is confined to these two. The bhumisparsha, varada and vitarka are not present in early Ceylon, although 3 examples of bhumisparsha of later times are found.<sup>1</sup> There is generally shown a standing figure on either side. The legs are folded and the hands rest on the lap in the case of Buddha figures seated in meditation with meditative stare and folded hands. Sometimes there is a low couch against the background. The seat is sometimes very elaborate and is in the form of a throne with lions (Sinha-sanage) carved on front.

In some cases seated Buddhas are protected by a Naga hood. The hands are shown with open palms. The robe droops from left shoulder hiding the left arm but exposing the right breast and arm. Images with both shoulders covered are not known in Ceylon. The drapery is very thin and clings to the body without folds generally.<sup>2</sup> A siraspota crowns the ushnisha. There is a halo. At the back is sometimes a makara torana with rampant lions and above a couple of chamara bearers. Sometimes the throne is of exceeding richness.

Asirvada mudra or the act of blessing appears to be a variation from the dhyana mudra. Pankuliya image is in this posture. It is seated on an asana. Here the features are classical and the expression is simple.

Asirvada-mudra is the attitude of blessing and many of the standing Buddha images are so portrayed. The Avukana image is one of them. These images have a nimbus (siraspota) and stand on a round pedestal of suitable proportions. The expression of the face and pose of the figure combine to give an idea of majesty and repose.

The standing Buddhas at Seruvavila are in two mudras.

The standing figure at Lankatilaka (Polonnaruwa) is in asirvada mudra. Here the right arm and hand are in an attitude of blessing and the left supports the robe. Sometimes the pedestal is a padmasana.

As a rule the body was not shown in movement particularly during the early period, all examples of seating, standing and reclining Buddhas being straight. The classic exception is the three-flexioned (tivanka) example at the Northern Temple. In definite movement is the Buddha painted on the Sankissa ladder at the same site.<sup>3</sup> The only Tivanka (tribhanga) pose is to be

1. B.I.C. Devendra p. 71.

2. B.I.C. p. 63.

3. B.I.C. p. 73.

found at Polonnaruwa in the case of the Buddha image in the Northern Temple. This was popular in the Andhra country.

### **Recumbent Buddhas**

This Buddha figure in the Parinirvana mudra lies much in the same direction on its right side with head resting on a bolster. This is the canonical posture. Sometimes the robe is treated in schematic folds sometimes no folds are depicted. The figure is in full length and often in colossal size.

### **Ananda and Teachers**

There seem to be hardly any essential differences between the so-called Ananda image and that of the standing Buddha. Iconographically the two have been similarly conceived and depicted in colossal dimensions at Polonnaruwa. The erect figure except for the unusual position of the arms which are placed across the breast and its natural pose has nothing to distinguish it from ancient Buddha statues. Yet the expression on its face is seriously mournful. The hair is arranged in ringlets.

The images of Mahinda and the famous teachers were fashioned in the same manner as those of monks in general appearance.

### **Nagas**

There are two categories of nagas in Sinhalese sculpture. The first and undoubtedly the earlier is the Naga in theriomorphic form and the other is the Naga in anthropomorphic form. The two categories are distinctly designated and delineated. But the two parallel trends would have continued separately each observing its traditional iconographic elements until at some uncertain early age the conceptions fused both in iconographic norms and material expression. Some of the theriomorphic elements were introduced and incorporated into the Naga sculpture in human form.

These polycephalous serpents are represented with 5, 7, 9 or 11 heads. The highest of these is not more than 3 feet. The scales of the animals are shown clearly. Sometimes the Naga throat is encircled by a jewelled collar.<sup>1</sup> At times only the cobra hood alone is carved without the body.

The naga is anthropomorphic and is a finely conceived work of art meant to function as a janitor, guardian, or protector. These are usually in pairs assuming the form of a prince and hence portrayed as a king. The identifying feature of the Naga class is displayed by the hoods placed over the head of the human form.

1. C.C.C. p. 102.

These vary from 5, 7, 9 to 11. Some of the figures are Nagarajas and form the central figure.

These are heavily jewelled and hold a flower vase by left hand and a flowering creeper in right. The male-female (Naga and Nagani) of this class are both represented.

It is interesting to note the presence of one or two dwarfs to right and left of the naga figures posturing at the stairs. Above the heads the torana is generally plain but sometimes is carved with figures of gods and animals. The serpent head is always represented.

### **Makaras**

This subject has also been borrowed from India and the same iconographic details may have been adapted at the commencement though later certain local influence may have changed the original. The Makara is shown as a huge fabulous beast half dragon and half crocodile. The crocodile claws are shown clearly.

### **Dwarfs**

The grotesque figures of dwarfs are used decoratively. These are portrayed in various attitudes such as playing, standing and squatting. Some of these are animal headed representing horse, boar, monkey and elephant. Some are in rows squatting with both elbows on the knees supporting with their heads and hands the pillars. Others have the arms raised as though supporting a weight on their heads. These are also placed at the feet of janitors. There are dwarfs in capering attitudes. Such positions are assumed when these are shown in rows in panels.

The atlas position is assumed by a number of them. These have curled wigs and are girded with cords and adorned with a profusion of ornaments, bangles, and anklets covering arms and legs. Each grasps in one hand the stalk of a lotus plant.

### **Animals**

The portrayal of animals is in realistic detail which, in actual delineation, has failed to represent them as they are. This is no doubt due to the unfamiliarity of the artists with the anatomy of some animals. A list of animals has been mentioned elsewhere. It will be seen that out of the animals that are to be found in Ceylon the elephant has been excellently portrayed in true reality. The others are poor and unreal. Some are even grotesque.

### **Other figures**

There are a few figures of men and women which have eluded identification. These figures are represented with great charm. It does not appear that these belong to Buddhist lore. If this

is so then we see in them Hindu conceptions of the form of human beings. What has been aimed at is more strength and durability than ornamentation. The male figures have enough dignity equal to royal majesty. The poses are rather unusual but nevertheless well done, e.g. the raja lila, and kneeling attitude.

## CHAPTER XI

### MATERIAL AND TECHNIQUE

If local tradition still preserved among the devil dancers (Bali<sup>1</sup>-eduras) is any indication of survivals from the past then there is no doubt that they do perpetuate a tradition as old as Sinhalese Society itself. At least this knowledge of making images out of clay and painting them with vegetable and mineral dyes goes back to the period of Pandukabhaya during whose reign there were festivals connected with Yakkhas. It is also obvious therefore that clay of a special composition naturally obtained or composed by mixing other clayish elements may have been used in fashioning images during devil dances arranged for entertainment as well as for cure of maladies by propitiating evil spirits. We can only surmise as to the constituents of the actual clay composition. But we can indicate how and with what the images are made to-day. Here the concern is with the material only.

Long before stone images came to be made objects and images of a small size were made of clay and these burnt for durability and hardness. These were the terracottas and some terracottas which date to an ancient period have been found. Whether terracotta images were in use it is not easy to say but it is almost certain that beautiful objects were made in terracotta.

The other likely material for carving or making images is wood and ivory. Wood would come in as a very natural element in the art of making images. Although very ancient images in wood are not found yet the wasted wooden images discovered do indicate the practice of using wood for making images either as a complete work of art or as a core or base for moulding a clay image.

Ceylon has been famous in history and legend for trade in ivory and precious stones. Ivory carving and wood carving may have been very ancient crafts. It is unlikely that any such carving would have survived to this day but it must nevertheless be remembered that considerable activity and interest in these crafts prevailed. It is this art that came to be expressed in stone at a later stage. Then many other kinds of material such as precious stone, brick and lime plaster were used in fashioning images. Particularly when large images came to be required the use of such materials became inevitable.

Wood seems to have been used in ancient times for making images of the Buddha as well as of other saints and personages.

1. Those traditional devil dancers who mould images of demons and propitiate the evil spirits by offerings of flesh and food.

What species of wood came to be utilised is not known but probably rare species like Sandalwood may have been used at least for the images of Buddha. But where the wooden core was used any durable wood may have been used. These were rough hewn and carved cores used as a base to be later fashioned with clay.<sup>1</sup> Some have been found at Anuradhapura. Two cores of wooden images were found near Galge at Anuradhapura.<sup>2</sup>

The most popular of all materials used was stone not because it was readily available but because a tradition of stone utilization was in vogue and the durability of the material commended itself. The stone buildings from basement up to the roof offered ample suitable space for the art of the sculptor.<sup>3</sup> "..... the style of the figures of the Buddha in yoga pose has been to a large extent conditioned by the nature of the granitic stone, which does not permit any special refinements of carving."<sup>4</sup>

The local tradition in the use of this material for irrigation tanks and buildings found further encouragement at the hands of the Indian visitors. The first Buddhist mission under Mahinda must have recommended the use of stone naturally that being the material profusely used in India at the time. Such an influence may have helped to popularise the material in Ceylon. This is also responsible for the preservation of the Asokan character of the early stone monuments.<sup>5</sup>

Several varieties of stone have been used. All these were species of limestone or granite. These are found locally and unlike in India where the stone had to be transported from specific sites in Ceylon the stone was often available at site. The stone used universally in the structures at Thuparama, Anuradhapura, is a hard fine grained granite. A highly crystalline variety of magnesium limestone (i.e.) dolomite, occurs in much exposed parts of buildings. But this material is chiefly used for statues, those of the Buddha being specially carved out of it.<sup>6</sup>

Limestone has been used to face the frontispieces of the four great dagobas at Anuradhapura. The slabs are all similar and may have followed one original pattern.<sup>7</sup> At the South gateway of Ruanveli dagoba a limestone head of Bodhisattva was unearthed.<sup>8</sup> Many other heads and figures of the Buddha in

1. A.S.C. 1893, p. 8.

2. A.S.C. 1896, p. 6.

3. H.F.A. p. 143, 4.

4. A.A.I. p. 202.

5. I.I.A. p. 145.

6. A.R.A. p. 4.

7. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 4.

8. A.S.C. 1937—p. 7.

limestone have been found scattered. These are in Amaravati style indicating the use of this material during the early period.

Some of the white limestones are polished particularly those used for the moonstones at Anuradhapura.<sup>1</sup> The Ruanveliseya has a plinth of limestone. All archaic specimens are cut in lime stone. The technique is reminiscent of the Asoka period when polishing was its special characteristic. A very interesting sedent Buddha at Pankuliya in white limestone has been discovered.<sup>2</sup>

The statues set up on the dam at Minneriya are in limestone.<sup>3</sup> In fact the archaic period has been so called from the nature of the material used. The limestone was also used in brick structures more for luxury and ornament than as a necessity.

Limestone was also used for the Nalanda Gedige 7th century A.D. Later on the use of limestone was revived during the Polonnaruwa period. The capitals of the Vatadage are made out of this local limestone.<sup>4</sup> Limestone was used during the archaic and archaistic period for no guardstones in limestone are found except during these periods.<sup>5</sup>

A slab of limestone similar to Amaravati marble was found at Ambalantota 600 A.D.<sup>6</sup> Limestone is very local and is generally of coarser grain. But the piece of limestone slab from Ruanveli is of rather finer grain than most of the Ceylon dolomite limestone though it does not differ in essential features.<sup>7</sup> Dutthagamini did import stone at least for the relic chamber.<sup>8</sup>

### Marble

Two bas-reliefs from Anuradhapura and a slab from Giri-handu Vihara, Ambalantota may have been made out of marble (limestone) not found in Ceylon.<sup>9</sup> These resemble Amaravati marble. A coarser and similar variety of limestone does occur in Ceylon and has been utilized.<sup>10</sup>

### Dolomite

The colossal Buddha figures found at the Ruanveli dagoba platform were made in dolomite.<sup>11</sup> Also the other large figures supposed to be those of kings or saints have been carved out of

1. M.A.S.C. II—p.4.
2. A.S.C. 1891—p. 3.
3. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, pl.8c.—14 (8-14).
4. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1.
5. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 75.
6. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 78.
7. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p.4.
8. Mv. Ch. 30—58.
9. A.B.I.A. Vol. II p. 15.
10. A.S.C. 1910-11 p. 69—pl. 40-44.
11. H.I.I.A. p. 161.

dolomite.<sup>1</sup> The hardness of the fine grained dolomite used for fashioning these images may account for the fair state of preservation. It may be presumed that the more important images came to be made out of this material. These are also weather worn but then considering their exposure to the inclemency of the tropical sun and rain during a continuous long period their preservation seems most remarkable.

### Granite

A guardstone is cut out of one large block of granite and it is the most richly carved janitor stone. A colossal Buddha image at Anuradhapura hidden in the jungle is made of very dark granite.<sup>2</sup> During the tenth century Anuradhapura images were cut out of rocks of the cave temples.<sup>3</sup> This became very elaborate and developed into a special art of cave temple rock cutting. During the Polonnaruwa period we observe an attempt in this direction. At Tantrimalai Gal Vihara, cave construction has been attempted.

### Gneiss

From very early times, 200 B.C., stone images of the Buddha and others were known. Reference to Silarupa are found in the Mahavamsa. Slabs of gneiss were used to pave the entire ground at the Ambasthala Mihintale. The inner circle is paved with gneiss bordered with limestone. Two or three slabs at Isurumuniya are cut in gneiss, 400 A.D.<sup>4</sup>

At Vijitapura one of the longest moonstones is roughly cut in gneiss. The crudeness cannot be explained other than by the fact that the material may have been unsuitable and unpolishable. This was about the 6th or 7th century A.D.<sup>5</sup> Like the one at Vessagiriya the moonstone from Nochchakulama is also cut out of gneiss, IV-VII century A.D.<sup>6</sup> Gneiss is also used for the steps at Kaludiya Pokuna 7th century A.D.<sup>7</sup> which is off Sigiriya.

It is remarkable that gneiss was not utilised from very ancient times for sculpture. The earliest known sculpture in gneiss is that of the man and woman from Isurumuniya—Early Gupta. In this so-called Archaic period gneiss was occasionally used only when strength and durability were essential and no ornament was needed. Hence gneiss may have been used for pavements,

1. H.I.I.A. p. 161.

2. M.A.I.S. p. 85.

3. A.S.C. 1891—p.7.

4. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 77.

5. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 12, pl. 22.

6. J.S.C. p. 12, Vol. 2, pt. 1.

7. J.S.C. Vol. 2. pt. 2, p. 74, pl. 37a.

pillars, bases of pillars and inscriptions. This practice may have continued up to the time of Mahasena in 3rd century A.D.

This fine grained and durable plutonic rock was preferred to coarse local limestone as the foreign limestone was expensive. Its hardness was the one great obstacle. But the Sinhalese overcame this difficulty by improving their tools and technique and attained success in mastering this material.<sup>1</sup> Although he did not possess the best steel chisels as the Indian craftsmen, yet his long tradition and immense patience may have helped.<sup>2</sup> But the problem that has to be answered is why this sudden vogue and ultimate profusion of gneiss. One possible explanation is the introduction of new ideas during the Gupta period. Along with these a new outlook may have been developed. New implements and craftsmen may also have arrived to teach and work.<sup>3</sup>

Then came the Pallavas whose mastery over gneiss is unquestioned. To them the material resembled marble. They were great workers in gneiss and with them may have developed the use of this material. For the Isurumuniya stone sculpture is alone sufficient evidence of this popularity and mastery over gneiss. Soon after the reign of Mahasena gneiss begins to be employed for ornamental purposes as well. The new religious movement may have better appreciated its possibilities. Consequently its maximum popularity was attained during the period 900-1000 - A.D.<sup>4</sup> This corresponds to the vigorous movement of stone sculpture found in India during the same period.

### Crystal

This is another material that was used. It is very seldom one finds actual images made out of crystal. One finds small dagobas and other objects so fashioned. Crystal was used for the eyes of images. Crystal eyes with pupils stained blue or black were used for the large stone images of the Buddha.<sup>5</sup> At Abhaya-giri rock crystal or other semi-precious stone was used for the eyes as the deeply cut eye sockets will indicate. The crystal-eyes may be seen in the Colombo Museum.<sup>6</sup> Flat piece of crystal with eyes levelled and carved with a figure of a female in intaglia

1. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 6.

2. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, 18, 30, 48, 50, 51, 52.

3. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1.

4. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 6.

5. J.S.C. 1892, p. 3, f.n.

6. A.S.C. 1936—p. 16.

may have been used as a seal. It was found at Mahapali (400-500 A.D.) Anuradhapura.<sup>1</sup>

### Precious Stones

It is recorded in the Mahavamsa that precious stones and metals were used for carving and sculpture.<sup>2</sup> The art of gem polishing and ivory work may be included here. It is said that the figures shown at the four quarters in the Ruanveliseya were wrought of massive gold. These may have been the result of casting, nevertheless the metals may have been used for sculpture as well. It is not impossible that images of precious metals were made long before any in stone.<sup>3</sup>

The golden image of Mahinda was made and taken in procession during the reign of Sri Meghavanna.<sup>4</sup> Gold was also used for making vases by moulding it with the hand.<sup>5</sup> The body and limbs of the Buddha image at the Ruanveliseya were only made of jewels of different colours beautifully shining.<sup>6</sup> Dhatu-sena made sixteen bath maidens of bronze.<sup>7</sup> Mahasena made two bronze images and set these up on the west side of the temple of the Great Bodhi Tree,<sup>8</sup> 300 A.D.

King Buddhadasa placed the jewel as an eye in the stone image of the Buddha.<sup>9</sup> Dhatu-sena made a pair of costly jewels into eyes.<sup>10</sup> Images were also made wholly of gold. It is said that Upatissa II fashioned such an image of the Buddha in gold. This is clear proof of the practice of using gold for images of the Master, 400 A.D.<sup>11</sup> diadems and other parts of the images were made of jewels. Sena II placed at the Lohapasada an image of the Buddha of closely jointed mosaic.<sup>12</sup> This reference to the mosaic technique in making metal images is indeed interesting.<sup>13</sup>

A cornelian seal was found near Nakavehera at Anuradhapura.<sup>14</sup> The practice of making golden images was well known. "She was even as a woman made of gold fair of form."<sup>15</sup> (See Kusajataka V. 172). Mahinda II, 787 A.D., made a Bodhisattva

1. M.A.S.C. III, p. 30-31.
2. Mv. p. 185, v. 34.
3. H.I.I.A. p. 160.
4. Cv. p. 4, v. 68, 78.
5. Mv. p. 124, v. 24-26.
6. Mv. p. 204, v. 72, 73.
7. Cv. p. 34, v. 54.
8. Mv. p. 289, v. 31.
9. Cv. p. 11, v. 123.
10. Cv. p. 35, v. 61.
11. Cv. p. 19, v. 192, f.n. 2.
12. Cv. p. 123, v. 137.
13. Cv. p. 153, v. 69.
14. J.S.C. Vol. 12, pt. 2, p. 92, pl. 71.
15. Mv. p. 63, v. 20, f.n. 4.

figure probably that of Metteyya in silver.<sup>1</sup> A dark blue jewel diadem was placed on the stone image of the Buddha by the Mahesi of Udaya II<sup>2</sup> —940 A.D. Precious stones were also used on the diadem. Mnetion is made of rubies being set for the eyes of the Buddha.<sup>3</sup>

Mahinda IV (1026-1042 A.D.) set the eyes of the great stone statue of Mahinda with large brilliant rubies and a network of gold for the feet<sup>4</sup> Also he carved the eye of the statue at Abhayagiri Vihara, probably that of Mahinda. Thereto he set eyes with brilliant sapphires of excellent quality.<sup>5</sup>

### **Terra-cotta**

Burnt clay of a reddish colour is generally known as terracottas. There are a number of very interesting specimens preserved in this material as it is able to stand the test of time. Mihintale heads from Kantaka Cetiya are particularly noteworthy.

Near the dagoba at Katugampola was found a slab of terracotta having the symbol of the wheel with thirty spokes shown in low relief and two clay figures.<sup>6</sup> Modelled figures of clay were made for offerings about 100 A.D.<sup>7</sup>

### **Brick and Mortar**

Brick and mortar may have also been used from very ancient times. Very few specimens are preserved. But the few heads that have been discovered testify to the state and development of that art. Of course, later when large houses came to be erected in brick the images also were fashioned out of the same material. The elephants at the basement wall of Abhayagiri ruins were fashioned in bricks covered with a thick coating of plaster like the large elephants at Ruanveli.<sup>8</sup> Stucco was used to get the finer details of certain larger figures like those of Tivanka Buddha and Bodhisattvas.<sup>9</sup>

### **Stucco**

A composition of lime and cement used for plastering wall surfaces or mouldings for architectural decorations was generally coated stucco. The balustrades are sometimes adorned with

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1. Cv. p. 123, v. 139.

2. Cv. p. 157, v. 87-88.

3. E.Z.I. p. 228.

4. E.Z.I. p. 227.

5. E.Z.II, p. 68.

6. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 3, p. 152, p. 77.

7. Mv. p. 242, v. 57.

8. A.S.C. 1890, p. 7.

9. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 49.

relief figures in stucco.<sup>1</sup> This same material is used for moulding heads and other images. Realistic images portrayed in stucco may have been very much developed during the early period. The elephant made of stucco at the Temple of the Tooth Relic Anuradhapura is referred to in the Mahavamsa.<sup>2</sup>

### **Collyrium and Paint**

It is a well known fact that some of the images were painted in a variety of colours. Traces of these colours such as blue, black, red are still preserved. Collyrium is applied on the eyes either annually or at the commencement. At the annual eye giving ceremony new paint is put on the eyes and collyrium is applied to them,<sup>3</sup> 300 A.D.

### **Technique**

The information now available does not permit one to undertake a detailed study into the history of the technique of making images. Although different materials would naturally demand a technique suitable for the particular material in the matter of manipulating it to obtain the desired effect there must inevitably exist generally accepted principles to guide the craftsmen and the artist. The artist aims at producing an object acceptable to and accepted by the general public whatever the medium and language of expression may be. In the sphere of painting he deliberately creates in his mind's eye the picture he desires. With that as his model he proceeds (Coomaraswamy—Mediaeval Sinhalese Art). For this mental image becomes the artist's model. In the same manner the sculptor may have inherited a tradition in schools or classes or castes or families. And to this tradition came to be added from time to time new concepts and principles for the guidance of artists and craftsmen. This body of concepts constituted the predisposing elements essential for the artist in developing mental images to serve as models for his future compositions. This knowledge was preserved in families, the father handing down his knowledge to his son. Later some of the elements came to be recorded in writing and preserved as handbooks. It is these that are found today.

Undoubtedly the technique varied according to the material used but the same elements came to be adapted. Therefore, the process employed differs with differing material. At least there was modelling, carving, casting, assembling and cutting, lime plastering and painting techniques in the sculpture under examination.

1. F.F.A. p. 143-4, fig. 96e.

2. Cv. p. 28, v. 8.

3. E.Z.II, pt. 254.

It would be most surprising if a nation that was capable of undertaking such feats of engineering skill as construction of immense irrigation works did not possess an inherited ability in working with stone. King Pandukabhaya's mighty scheme of town planning and city construction referred to in the Mahavamsa would not have been possible if the people at that distant age did not possess a well established and highly developed technique of stone carving. The references to painting and dancing during Pandukabhaya's day must necessarily presuppose a knowledge in modelling demonological figures in clay and painting them in colours. Sufficient justification, though devoid of material evidence, exists for the acceptance of a technical knowledge in fashioning images out of clay and stone.

A knowledge of stone cutting and clay modelling existed. This would have included painting as well as other crafts in wood, ivory and gems. We know that the materials used were wood, clay, terracotta, gold, silver, alloys, gems, mosaic, stone, marble, brick and lime plaster and colours both mineral and vegetable.

The actual technique of modelling with clay has to be reconstructed from the extent remains of stucco heads, terracotta figures plastered surfaces and recovered material. In process of piecing together the living art of making *bali* images can be most advantageously used to fill the gaps and understand the practical difficulties for it can never be denied that the tradition lived and has survived through the ages in the special families of craftsmen who professed it. Despite many handicrafts modelling may be employed for burning and for stucco work.

The simplest form is ordinary modelling for short duration. Here the clay of the proper consistency must be used as that is the best. Certain ingredients like sand have to be added to the composition in order to give it the necessary adhesiveness and durability. This is done by adding gums and sand, etc. Some of the finest specimens of early modelling came from Kantaka Chetiya.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes stones may be added. The details are also worked with the clay itself, the finer points being obtained by means of an instrument or piece of stick. This may then be burnt in a special fire with or without a slip. The beautiful terra cottas from Kantaka Chetiya which are well modelled bear this out.<sup>2</sup> Figures made of clay were also used for offerings.<sup>3</sup> Later terra cottas from Talagaswewa, etc., follow the same technique. Generally speaking, these must necessarily be small objects easily

1. A.S.C. 1936, p. 15.

2. A.S.C. 1936, p. 15.

3. Mv. p. 242, v. 57.

obtained and cheaply made. The purpose, of votive offerings, children's play things and pilgrims' souvenirs, was satisfied by these terracottas some of which are beautiful objects of art as well.

### Stucco work

Little stucco work of an earlier day has been preserved. There are a few heads beautifully modelled and finished in stucco. Six images are of wood not mere rough hewn cores for after-fashioning with clay.<sup>1</sup> The core may have been developed in clay, stone and other hard material. On this base was applied the fine material which on exposure became a very hard cement and got absorbed to form one layer. The finer details were worked out in this material with the result that the artists were able to produce some remarkably expressive faces. Besides the soft surface yielded a good medium to apply paint. Perhaps the technique employed was that of tempera which may have helped the preservation of the paint owing to it being absorbed into the lime. As a still further step both for preservation and prevention of cracks oils were applied and the surface was lacquered. A fine powder may have been used for plastering the face and the fingers were employed in obtaining the desired details.

It may be observed that the stone buildings provided an unlimited field for the exercise of sculptor's art. Of course the dagobas provided a surface for the application of plaster and this practice continued.<sup>2</sup> The Mahavamsa says that the Cetiya was adorned with a new coating of stucco. The wall surfaces and basements are sometimes adorned with relief figures in stucco of some merit.<sup>3</sup> Sufficient material exists for a detailed study of this subject. At the Abhayagiri chapel the frieze of projecting elephant heads alternating with lotuses have been worked in stucco and still bear traces of colour.<sup>4</sup> Like the larger elephants at Ruanveli eight elephants standing on the moulded basement at Abhayagiri-Lankaramaya ruins have been fashioned of suitable bricks covered with a thick coating of plaster.<sup>5</sup> At the Vijayarama the details of Avalokitesvara may have been in stucco.<sup>6</sup> Then the figures at the Buduruvegala contain some details completed in stucco.<sup>7</sup>

1. A.S.C. 1893, p. 8.

2. Mv. p. 95, v. 61-62.

3. H.F.A. p. 143-44, fig. 96c.

4. A.S.C. 1894, p. 2.

5. A.S.C. 1890, p. 7.

6. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 49, pl. 32 (a & b).

7. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 3, p. 50, pl. 34, 35.

### Wood Carvings

It is generally accepted that wood carving preceded stone carving. One cannot expect to find the wooden sculpture preserved to this day. Actually one finds preserved wooden cores of images roughly hewn used for modelling plaster images. A number of these have been discovered at Anuradhapura.<sup>1</sup> Some details are delineated though all are not. That is natural in an object that is later to be covered up. The chisel marks are seen in some cases; in the others the surface has been smoothed. These preserved specimens are all in the round with greater attention paid to the frontal aspect leaving the back almost unworked. Still carpenters are referred to in the Jetavanarama rock inscription<sup>2</sup> of the tenth century A.D. and carvers in tablet of Mahinda V.<sup>3</sup>

### Stone

It is not easy nor is there any evidence to establish the period during which stone carving developed as an art. The art must have been as old as the period of tank construction and goes back at least to the period of 400 B.C. The technique of wood and stone carving may have existed as parallel arts at the same time. Nevertheless, finer works may have been undertaken in wood whilst monumental work may have been in stone. The technique may have been the same although the tools employed would differ.

Hence it was easy to develop the art of stone carving. A further impetus was given with the arrival of Buddhist missionaries, stone would have become necessary for the monuments. The new comers had themselves changed over from wood and ivory to stone almost at this same time. It was natural that the Sinhalese should adopt this technique and material for the same religious purposes as at Sanchi in India.

The various species of stone used have been enumerated. All these would have been worked in the same technique. Relief carving was either low or high. Having selected the proper size and kind of stone, the subject of relief may have been drawn in a mineral and then carefully cut out. In low relief the objects were cut into the rock. This is also called bas-relief. The other method was to bring out the object by raising out of the flat surface by removing the material around. This is also known as alto-relievo. A third method was to carve the object almost in the round leaving a portion of the stone matrix still attached. Here much attention is not paid to the back of the object as it was mostly a frontal

1. A.S.C. 1893, p. 8.

2. E.Z. I., p. 8.

3. E.Z. I, p. 111-112.

aspect that was desired. The fourth method is to carve out the object in full completely. Here it would appear as in reality.

When once the general form had been obtained by chiselling out the stone by blows in the desired direction the rough surface had to be made regular and later polished. The smooth surface may have been obtained by rubbing with water and certain rough leaves. The polishing technique remains a secret. This may have been introduced by the artists who came with Mahinda and who at that time may have possessed a special knowledge of polishing stone. This polish is still preserved on certain moonstones at Anuradhapura at the building near Mahapali-Gedige<sup>1</sup> and Sigiriya wall. However, the polishing helped considerably in preserving the stone objects by keeping off the rain and heat.

Generally the sculpturing began by breaking down the rock not far from the site where the object is required to be made or chiselling the boulder itself at the very site. In the latter case the site of the proposed shrine is determined by the location of the rock itself. Then every kind of skilled workmanship is brought into action by the employment of expert craftsmen.<sup>2</sup>

The technique employed by the Sinhalese was also determined to some extent by the species of stone used and the style desired as a medium of expression. They relied on grace and delicacy.<sup>3</sup> The chiselling had to be exercised to obtain correct proportions and accuracy of surface contours. Hence the extraordinary delicacy and precision. This leads to another question of the authorship which will be dealt with elsewhere. Were the artisans and tools brought from India and later developed here? <sup>4</sup> Were there branch schools established here? <sup>5</sup> These questions also need answers.

Although crystalline limestone did not allow sharpness of detail the hard gneiss did give a good surface when polished. The smooth surfaces achieved in gneiss as early as 100 A.D. both as pillars and elsewhere indicate the possibility of assigning particular periods according to chiselling.<sup>6</sup> "Granulitic stone did not permit any special refinements of carving. The resultant abstraction of form and surface and the largeness of conception bestows upon these figures a particularly moving dignity and serenity."<sup>7</sup>

1. M.A.S.C. III, p. 4.

2. Cv. II, p. 111 v. 74.

3. L.C.C. p. 104.

4. I.I.A. p. 146.

5. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 95.

6. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 75.

7. A.A.I. p. 202.

Certain pieces of incompleted stone sculpture afford more information in the understanding of ancient technique than the complete ones as these expose the different stages of progress. The naga janitor is blocked out on a guardstone at Mirisavetiya, and the other is plain faced. But the surface has evidently been got ready for the chisel.<sup>1</sup> Some specimens leave no trace of chiselling.

The technique has also to be modified and adopted to produce the desired object in a particular style. Since the stone as material continued to be utilised certain changes were introduced to obtain the new style. These changes of technique may be observed and these supply useful dating points.

The need to produce rosettes, fine carving, more floriated figures and to evolve towards greater elaboration arose when the Gupta influences reached the Island. The Asokan tradition was somewhat different. It required a different style and employed a different technique. A new stone technique developed during 400 A.D. which required the flowing curve in place of the accurate straight line.<sup>2</sup>

One particular development was the treatment of drapery of the Buddhas. The folds are indicated by convex ridges during the early period as seen in the headless Buddha.<sup>3</sup> The treatment of drapery with schematic folds of the Anuradhapura standing Buddha figure exhibit a close relationship to the Buddha type at Amaravati.<sup>4</sup>

The drapery is indicated by the typical method of 1200 A.D. viz., the groove method. Here each fold is marked by two grooves, one shallower than the other. The ridge between the two is flatter and wider than in the headless Buddha (Colombo Museum No. 34). The section is that of a Cyma curve.<sup>5</sup> In the four statues at Gal Vihara there is slight variation—each fold is marked by three grooves. There is a waviness which accentuates as time goes on.<sup>6</sup> There is another very important feature in the stone cutting technique. Action has to be taken to overcome or create optical illusions as in painting. One such instance is seen at Isurumuniya where the effect is to increase the apparent dimensions of the pool.<sup>7</sup> This reminds one of the slight bulge in the Asoka pillars.

1. A.S.C. 1902, p. 6.

2. I.I.A. p. 149.

3. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, pl. 52A. See also Colombo Museum No. 34.

4. P.A.I.C.J. p. 84.

5. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 98, pl. 55.

6. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 98.

7. H.I.I.A. p. 162.

There were necessary technical limitations dictated by religious or iconographical requirements. In the canonical posture is sculptured the Buddha recumbent at Gal Vihara.<sup>1</sup> The depression in the bolster is cleverly shown as well as anatomical lines of the figure. There are certain measurements that are essentially followed—the Tantrimalai recumbent Buddha figure lies in the same direction, i.e., on its right side with head resting on a bolster.<sup>2</sup>

### Relief

Images of the Buddha have been generally sculptured in the round. The technique is the simple one of chiselling a slab of rock until the desired shape with required features are obtained. From very ancient times objects and images have been carved in the round out of stone and other material. Any number of instances can be quoted from Anuradhapura period onwards. This is the normal method.

What is noteworthy is the technique where the image is sculptured almost in the full except for a remnant connecting the image to the original boulder or slab. This is so in the case of Avkana Buddha. The Buddha sedent at Gal Vihara is sculptured in carvo-relievo, only the back remains united to the rock matrix.<sup>3</sup>

Good examples of high relief carving are available from Anuradhapura slabs and pillars as well as from other later sites. This technique also develops considerably and shows various phases discernible as styles.

The finest exmple of a massive work in low relief work came from Buduruvegala. These figures are in high relief and completed in stucco.<sup>4</sup> The Saseruva Buddha is carved in semi-sunk relief.<sup>5</sup> It is cut from the wall in high sunk relief and united to the rock throughout even at the back of arms and hands.<sup>6</sup>

Low relief work is not so common though present throughout. Some of the guardstones and even the moonstones are sculptured in this technique. The guardstones at Cave No. 12, Vessagiriya, in sunk relief are distinctly archaic.<sup>7</sup> Many bas-reliefs of uncertain date occur. One of the most remarkable is the

1. A.S.C. 1907, p. 14.

2. A.S.C. 1911-12, p. 68.

3. A.S.C. 1907, p. 10.

4. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 3, p. 50, pl. 34, 35.

5. A.S.C. 1895, p. 6.

6. A.S.C. 1896, p. 12-13.

7. A.S.C. 1907, p. 7.

scene of bathing elephants from Anuradhapura. The relief is very low, so as to evade distinct photographic record.<sup>1</sup>

The colossal statue of Buddha after 12th century A.D. at Dove near Bandarawela is carved in low relief on the face of a rock.<sup>2</sup>

### Plaster and Paint

There is not the least doubt regarding the fact that some at least of the images were originally plastered and painted. This may have been done for a multitude of purposes. Hence the rough weather worn blocks now visible do not produce the effect originally designed by the artists. Sufficient evidence is also available from the actual images where to this day some of the plaster and paint can be observed. Whether this plaster-paint is the original or later introductions it is not certain.<sup>3</sup> But the preservation does establish the tradition and continuity. Sometimes the plaster surfaces were painted with lacquer as in the Mahathupa.<sup>4</sup> The colour effect of images particularly of the Buddha may have been obtained by jewels of various hue.<sup>5</sup> Not only sculpture in the round but beautifully carved Naga stones at the Abhayagiri contained traces of painting at the base and interstices.<sup>6</sup> A strange find at the Monastery A at Abhayagiri was made of crystal eyes containing pupils which were stained blue or black.<sup>7</sup> The elephants at the basement of Abhayagiri — Lankarama ruins were covered with a thick coating of plaster and painted like those at Ruanveli.<sup>8</sup> At Jetavanarama chapel traces of colour are extant on the cobra male-female figures and the basement pattern.<sup>9</sup>

At Vessagiriya painted figures have been observed in caves. In cave 9 the outline of a female figure painted in yellow with dashes of red and a touch of green. In cave 10 a small figure of a prince was coloured in red and yellow.<sup>10</sup>

At Tiruketisvaram red plaster still adheres to the images showing the objectionable habit of the Sinhalese of thus disfiguring old images.<sup>11</sup> Later at Buduruvegala some of the

1. H.F.A. p. 150.
2. A.S.C. 1926-27, p. 7.
3. H.F.A. p. 146.
4. Mv. p. 220, v. 4, 6.
5. Mv. p. 204, v. 72-73.
6. A.S.C. 1894, p. 2.
7. A.S.C. 1892, p. 3.
8. A.S.C. 1890, p. 7.
9. A.S.C. 1894, p. 2.
10. A.S.C. 1907, p. 6.
11. A.S.C. 1907, p. 28.

details of the figures are completed in stucco which were also originally painted.<sup>1</sup>

At Gal Vihara are rock cut seated Buddhas with traces of ancient painting.<sup>2</sup> These can be clearly seen even today. An interesting ceremony connected with painted images of the Buddha is the annual ceremony of uncovering the sacred eyes and applying collyrium to them. This was generally done by the ruling monarch.<sup>3</sup> Parakrama I is mentioned as having placed with his own hands a jewel as eye upon the statue of the Buddha.<sup>4</sup>

### Composition.

Objects in the round can be fashioned out of one solid mass or by piecing together the different parts into one whole. Both methods seem to have been employed. It may be that whilst fixed images were made in one mass those meant for transportation would have been made in separate parts. The different members have been found displaced and fallen near the images to which these originally belonged. These fallen parts in most cases have fitted into the respective positions when being restored. This method was in use during the Mohenjodaro times.

Mahavamsa<sup>5</sup> records how the Buddha image placed to the east of the Bodhi Tree was made with body and members fashioned out of jewels of different colours, beautifully shining.

Crystal eyes were often used for the eyes of the Buddha images. The eyes were originally set with rock crystal and other semi-precious stones as the deeply cut eye sockets indicate. Crystal eyes of this kind may be seen in the Colombo Museum.<sup>6</sup> Pious kings are often referred to as having placed precious gems as eyes of the Buddha images. Mahinda IV (1026 A.D.) carved to be set with rubies the eyes of the incomplete colossal statue in stone.<sup>7</sup> It is most unlikely that any such precious stones would be available now since so much spoliation has occurred during the past ages. Crystal eyes once set in large stone images of Buddha have been found.<sup>8</sup> King Buddhadasa (341 A.D.) placed a jewel as eye in the stone image of the perfectly enlightened one in the Abhayagiri Vihara.<sup>9</sup>

1. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 3, p. 50 pl. 34-35.

2. H.I.I.A. p. 163.

3. E.Z. II, p. 254.

4. Cv. p. 9, v. 77-78.

5. Cv. p. 204, v. 72-73.

6. A.S.C. 1936—p. 16.

7. E.Z. I, p. 228.

8. A.S.C. 1892, p. 3.

9. Cv. p. 11, v. 123.

Reference is also made to the practice of transporting images from place to place. Upatissa II made an image wholly of gold of the departed Buddha and placed this figure in a great chariot.<sup>1</sup> King Jettha Tissa sent for the great stone image from the Pacinattissa Pabbata and set it up in the Abhayagiri.<sup>2</sup> It is said that images of Mahinda were carried in procession.<sup>3</sup> Fa Hien mentions seeing images of the Buddha carried in procession.<sup>4</sup> The colossal Buddha at Maligavela, Uva, has been transported to the site and set up on a pedestal.<sup>5</sup>

The joggle holes in the neck, hands and ankles of a standing Buddha image proved that the feet and other members had, as is usual with the standing Buddhas, been separately carved.<sup>6</sup>

### Technique of Metal

Reference to objects fashioned in gold, silver, gems, bronze, etc., are found scattered throughout the literary records such as the Mahavamsa.<sup>7</sup> Actual objects and small images have been discovered. Some of these are very old. It is quite likely that the technique of beating out the metal into the desired shape was in vogue. Some of the images spoken of as gilt may as a matter of fact have been coated or covered with gold dust.

It is interesting to note the variety of objects supposed to have been wrought of massive gold at the time of constructing the Ruanveliseya. These were the figures of the 4 great kings, 33 gods, 32 maidens, 28 chiefs of Yakkhas, devas, dancing devatas playing instruments, devas with mirrors in hand and a host of other devas with flowers, lotuses, swords and pitches.<sup>8</sup> If this is to be accepted then there is no doubt that all manner of objects were actually fashioned. This must presuppose a knowledge of a variety of techniques in the utilization of metal.

That means the simple flat objects may have been cast by pouring the molten metal into the required form on the ground or on a block of clay (open hearth method). Later a mould of at least two pieces must have been used for spear heads, etc. (valve mould). Then the 'cire perdue' method may have been used for images, etc. Castings had to be trimmed and polished with sand and hammered to remove any roughnesses. Rivetting, soldering and brazing must have been known.

1. Cv. p. 19, v. 192.

2. Mv. p. 48 v. 14.

3. Cv. pp. 34, v. 58, p. 68, v. 29-30.

4. Records of the Western World

5. A.S.C. 1934, p. 21.

6. A.S.C. 1892, p. 6-7.

7. Mv. p. 207, vv. 89-92.

8. Mv. p. 207, vv. 89-92.

Mahasena made two bronze images and set them up on the west side of the temple of the great Bodhi Tree, <sup>1</sup> 300 A.C. King Sri Meghavanna, 304 A.C., had a golden life size image of Mahinda made. <sup>2</sup> King Dhatusena made for the Buddha image a bandolier of gold—a golden garment. <sup>3</sup> Mahinda II, 737 A.C., made..... in silver, a splendid statue of the Bodhisattvas Meteyya. <sup>4</sup> He also made in pure gold an image of the Master. <sup>5</sup> Sena I made an image of the Victor wholly in gold 846 A.C. <sup>6</sup> Mention is also made of golden images made and set up by Mahinda II as well as other golden images spoiled by the Pandu King. <sup>7</sup> Sena II, 866 A.C., restored the golden images destroyed earlier by the Pandus. <sup>8</sup> Rambava slab inscription mentions that king Mahinda IV caused to be made a golden image of the chief of sages, <sup>9</sup> 1026 A.C., also gilded the statue of the Bodhisattva. <sup>10</sup> Parakramabahu I is supposed to have built a number of golden images. Kirthinissanka Malla placed in the Dambulla Vihara golden statuettes of the Master and also gilded a number of others. <sup>11</sup>

### Gem Cutting and Carving

Gems are mentioned along with the metal objects and image, as having been used for the eye and crowns not only to produce various hues but also to satisfy the piety and generosity of kings and others who gave them as offerings. It would be the height of optimism to expect these to remain intact even in a Buddhist country owing to the incessant wars and feuds that took place. But the images do show that provision had existed to place gems at certain parts—particularly the eyes and crown. There was clearly a developed technique in setting and carving gems. But very little is left to help the study of this ancient technique which must have been allied to sculpture.

Nevertheless, there are a number of references to gems and also seals carved with fine images have been discovered. A flat crystal oval in shape and carved in intaglio with the figure of a

1. Mv. p. 269, v. 31.
2. Cv. p. 4, v. 68-70
3. Cv. p. 35, v. 61.
4. Cv. p. 123, v. 137,
5. Cv. p. 135, v. 77.
6. Cv. p. 144, v. 66.
7. Cv. p. 140, v. 34.
8. Cv. p. 151, v. 48, 49.
9. E.Z. II, p. 69.
10. E.Z. I, p. 228.
11. Cv. II, p. 128, v. 23.

dancing girl.<sup>1</sup> It is a flat piece with edges bevelled.<sup>2</sup> One cornelian seal represents a woman holding a flower.<sup>3</sup> Another cornelian seal represents a king.<sup>4</sup> This technique had been well developed. Coins may have been struck by the same craftsmen.

The images were only made of jewels of different colours, beautifully shining crystals, red coral, sapphires and diamonds were so cut according to the size and shape of the limbs.<sup>5</sup> Crystal eyes with pupils stained blue or black were set in large stone images of Buddha.<sup>6</sup> Jewels were used as eyes.<sup>7</sup> The eyes were originally set with rock crystal or other semi-precious stone as the deeply cut eye sockets indicate.<sup>8</sup> He made a diadem of rays and a coil of hair out of dark blue gems.<sup>9</sup> He made an image of the Master and furnished with a costly diadem of jewels.<sup>10</sup> Deva made a diadem jewel and net of rays for the Master.<sup>11</sup> Sangha placed a dark blue jewel diadem as the stone image.<sup>12</sup> Udaya IV fashioned a diadem of jewels which sparkled with the rays of precious stones.<sup>13</sup> The stone statue was set with brilliant sapphires of the first water.<sup>14</sup> Mahinda IV set the eyes of the great stone statue of Mahinda with large brilliant rubies. He caused to be set with rubies the eyes of the incomplete statue in stone (of the Buddha<sup>15</sup>).

### Implements Used

We are not fortunate in finding any direct reference which throws light on the tools used by the artists in fashioning such works of art and constructing such stupendous monuments. Some insight may be gained by a close and careful examination of the remains. No doubt the artists may have used a variety of chisels ranging from large to very fine ones. The larger ones may have been used to obtain the rough shapes which were later worked with finer chisels. The direction of the marks indicate that the craftsman knew the qualities of the stone and applied his knowledge. In this search the unfinished specimens are certainly

1. A.S.C. 1933, p. 8.
2. M.A.S.C. III, p. 30-31.
3. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 92.
4. H.I.I.A. p. 159, fig. 133.
5. Mv. p. 204 v. 72-73.
6. A.S.C. 1892, p. 3. f.n.
7. Cv. p. 11, v. 123.
8. A.S.C. 1936, p. 16.
9. Cv. p. 35, v. 61.
10. Cv. p. 123, v. 137.
11. Cv. p. 168, v. 65.
12. Cv. p. 157, v. 87-88.
13. Cv. p. 177, 49, 50.
14. E.Z. II, p. 68.
15. E.Z. I, p. 228.

more useful and informative than the finished products. Considerable labour and patience helped the craftsman. Though not possessed of the best steel chisels the Indian craftsmen who possessed infinite patience<sup>1</sup> must certainly have contributed in great measure towards the production of art objects. The few surviving specimens establish the fact that the skill of craftsmen combined with such qualities also could have produced such a volume of outstanding work. Sand and rough leaves may have been used to obtain a smooth surface and a polish.

Iron implements belonging to ancient periods have been discovered. The collection from Sigiriya is particularly interesting. Even this does not contain any chisels used for stone cutting.<sup>2</sup> The mallet would have been used but, this being made of wood, would not have been preserved. There was bound to be a measuring stick of some sort. This too would have been of wood.

The absence of material evidence surviving from the ancient times precludes a detailed study of ancient implements. The only other method left is to infer from the tools used today. Even here very little knowledge has survived. The stone cutting art has degenerated and is practically lost.

### Sculptors

Master builder—Sthapatis—are also mentioned and these were also the sculptors.<sup>3</sup> The number of art objects discovered from the ruins as well as those mentioned testify to the state of the sculptor's art. This technique of the craftsman goldsmith, suggests the knowledge of the sculptor's art as well.<sup>4</sup> The art of ivory carving was practised by King Jettha Tissa, 379 A.D.<sup>5</sup> This king himself is believed to have made a beautiful image of the Bodhisattva as beautiful as if done by miraculous power.<sup>6</sup> Moggalana III, 608 A.D., granted villages for the maintenance of viharas and also repaired the images that were decayed.<sup>7</sup> At a later date various classes of craftsmen are mentioned. The tablet of Mahinda IV, 975 A.D., mentions master artisans, guild of artisans, carvers, workers in wood and master lapidaries.<sup>8</sup> A still more interesting reference is found in the Jetavanarama inscription "there shall be clever stone cutters and skilled

1. J.S.C. Vol. 2, p. 1, p. 6.

2. John Still, 1908, J.R.A.S.

3. Mv. Ch. 30, vv. 5—11.

4. Ibid, v. 72.

5. Cv. Ch. 37, v. 101.

6. Ibid, v. 102-3.

7. Cv. Ch. 44, p. 79, v. 49.

8. E.Z. Vol. I, No. 7, p. 109.

carpenters.....they all shall be experts<sup>1</sup> (1000 A.D.) That this tradition continued is seen by the Gadaladeniya Rock inscription (1350 A.D.) He built a three storied image house by engaging master artisans, such as Ganesvaracari, the chief of the guild of sculptors who was well versed in such arts as architecture and image making.

1. E.Z. Vol. I, No. 1, p. 8.

## CHAPTER XII

### BUDDHA FIGURE IN SINHALESE SCULPTURE

Greatly divergent views have been and are being held with regard to the origin and date of the appearance of the Buddha figure in Indian art particularly in sculpture. For a true appreciation of the subject in respect of Ceylon it is therefore relevant that the facts relating to Indian art should be always borne in mind. As regards Indian sculpture it is said that the Indians did not know how best to represent the master. Even if they knew, and there is no reason to believe that they did not know how to portray a king, they were puzzled as to the method and manner of representing the master in plastic form. It must be presumed that the making of images of kings was known for the indigenous tradition inherited through the Indus culture and civilization may have still survived in 300 B.C. as evidenced by the Mauryan sculpture.<sup>1</sup> So the Indian artist would have had the knowledge of delineation but what he lacked, therefore, was the shape and form and the ethics of it.

Persia, Egypt and Greece knew of the cult of the Image in 5th century B.C.<sup>2</sup> The Greeks say the Indians worship images. Patanjali mentions exhibition of images by the Mauryans. The Romans, too, mention images.<sup>3</sup>

During the lifetime of the Buddha it is certain that he was worshipped. The people would have worshipped not only him but also the Bodhi Tree under whose shade he attained Buddhahood. The Buddha is said to have related the Kalinga Bodhi Jataka<sup>4</sup> so that the people who wished to reverence the Buddha might place their offerings at the Bo Tree when he was absent.

Devendra adduces the following points which may have prevented the adoption in ancient India of a Buddha image. The Buddha did not consider himself a divine almighty God. The places of worship were the Cetiya's and not image houses. Buddha's greatness could not be conceived in the form of an image and even, if conceived, no one dared to portray him in human form.<sup>5</sup> There was no need to have an image of the Buddha as the objects of veneration were saririka and paribhogika Cetiya's, and also an image if it enshrined a relic. The uddesika Cetiya came to be venerated later. In the scheme of veneration therefore the Buddha image was not so vital.

1. Nihar Ranjan Ray. Mauryan and Sunga Art, p. 7.

2. B.I.C. Devendra, p. 8.

3. B.I.C. Devendra, p. 10.

4. Kalinga Bodhi Jataka—No. 479.

5. B.I.C. p. 14.

After the Parinirvana the people would have worshipped the relics and also the Cetiya's embodying such relics, be they bodily or otherwise. This was the tradition even anterior to Buddhism. This tradition continued for centuries. At least there is no evidence as to the existence of the image of the Master during the Bharhut and Sanchi times, 150 B.C. Cunningham<sup>1</sup> says that the early Buddhist had no statues of the Buddha. He is not once represented in the sculptured bas-reliefs of Bharhut, 150 B.C. There is no image at Sanchi 100 B.C. But there is evidence of the continued veneration of the Bodhi Tree and the Cetiya. Besides, by this time the Buddha had come to be equated and in fact represented by the Bodhi Tree and Cetiya. Furthermore symbolism had superseded reality for the presence of the Buddha was indicated by a symbol. There are a number of such symbols, viz., the vacant seat, walk (cankramaṇa) etc.

In the ancient sculpture at Bharhut, Sanchi, Gaya and Amaravati numerous scenes are found where the figure of the Buddha is left out but represented by a symbol where one would expect to see it. Is this a feature of the popular art of the day? Was it also the tradition not to represent him in person in the literary art of the times. Of this we have no evidence. It would therefore be unwise to judge the absence of the image wholly from negative evidence.

It must be presumed therefore that the local tradition was to exclude the image from the early sculpture. Then when and how did the idea originate and materialize if the idea was not conceived in India. There is scanty evidence. If it was not in India one should also presume another tradition, probably alien, that came to be introduced some time during the ancient period and which came to be accepted by the local artists themselves. The source of this tradition is attributed to Greece but the carriers of this tradition appear to be those associated with Greek settlements in India coming from the time of Alexander's invasion in 327 B.C.

Foucher traces this art tradition until it is incorporated into and becomes fused in the Indian tradition and distinctly known as the Gandharan art.<sup>2</sup> Vincent Smith, Coomaraswamy and Codrington are of the view that this school dominated and influenced the whole of the Indian art tradition spreading its branches as far as Amaravati. Dr. J. P. Vogel places the Buddha images at about 50 A.D.<sup>3</sup> Cunningham<sup>4</sup> points out that the oldest representations

1. Mahabodhi 1892—p. 60.

2. Foucher—The beginning of Buddhist art 1917—p. 5, 19, 72, 75, 104, 117.

3. *Artibus Asiae* Vol. XVII—p. 184.

4. Mahabodhi, p. 53.

of the Buddha are found on the coins of the Indo-Scythian King—Kanishka, 100 A.D. Two inscribed objects help to date the Buddha statue to 100 A.D. These are the Shah-ji-ki-dheri reliquary (78 A.D.) and Friar Bala Statue (80 A.D.).<sup>1</sup> The Indian evidence therefore points to the existence of the Buddha figure in or around 100 A.D. in India.

That the Buddha image came to be portrayed in India during the first century of the Christian era as a result of the fusion of the Graeco-Bactrian art and the ancient Indian art tradition at a centre in North-Western India is a generally accepted view among most scholars. The human concept of the Gandharan school and the spiritually idealised aspect of the Mathura school entered the synthesis. The third concept of representing the Buddha is by symbols and this arose in the Kistna valley at Amaravati, Jaggayapeta, and Nagarjunikonda. The symbols representing the Buddha identified so far are the Cetiya, the Bodhi tree, the swastika, sripada, chattra, triratna, dhammacakka, cankamana and ladder. Whereas in the area midway between these two centres, that is, the area portraying the Buddha by the image and the area portraying him by the symbols, are found a few sites like Buddha Gaya and Patna, at which both the technique of symbolism and representation by human images are found.

There is another view now receiving attention and that is that the representation of the Buddha in human form may have evolved in other neighbouring Buddhist lands as well. One of these may very well be Ceylon. It pre-supposes independent lines of art developed in different countries where Buddhism came to be introduced during very early times. So far all Buddhist art has been evaluated and judged and dated by the techniques and styles recognized in India. Hence, "we generally hear of Amaravati, Andhra, Gupta, Pallava, but not Sinhalese characteristics and styles."<sup>24</sup> So far the achievements of the Sinhalese artists have not been truly assessed and interpreted as independent and original efforts. The past achievements of the Sinhalese in other spheres of activity, such as architecture, irrigation engineering and tank construction lead one to suppose the probability of the evolution of the Buddha image in Ceylon even earlier than in India.

That the Sinhalese did not follow the Andhra tradition in regard to the art symbolism is evident from the fact that the aniconic symbols representing the Buddha did not appear to have been venerated by the Sinhalese. This fact also establishes the

1. Devendra D.T.—Buddhist Image and Ceylon p. 6

2. D. T. Devendra, B.I.C. p. 3.

probability that the North-Western tradition of art may have influenced the Sinhalese in the creation of the Buddha image in the art of sculpture; for the best images of the early period bring out the elements of wisdom, compassion and strength which are more closely related to the ancient art of Mathura than to that of any other area. Then why is it that the Buddha images are so few? The paucity may be explained in several ways. Concentration of activity at Anuradhapura, the exclusion of extraneous details, the small size of the Island, less diversity, crystallization of canons of art are some<sup>1</sup> of the probable reasons that can account for the paucity of numbers. However, a few ancient specimens have been preserved and the literary tradition of the Island supports the belief that the Sinhalese may have evolved the Buddha figure independent of India.

Now let us examine the evidence available in respect of the Buddha image in Ceylon. This leads us to an analysis of the position from ancient times in order to assess the attainments in respect of figure representations of various religions prior to the official introduction of Buddhism in 207 B.C.

The evidence from Ceylon can be said to be comparatively better in so far as a few references to a Buddha figure go back to about 200 B.C. although doubt may be cast about the genuineness of the date itself. Before we come to that point it may be useful to consider the position prior to the arrival of Mahinda from the sociological point of view, viz., social, cultural and religious.

There were a number of ethnic groups which comprised the people of the Island. They were the Yakkhas, Rakshasas and Nagas. As is now reckoned by scholars these are the people of Australoid, Negroid and Mediterranean stocks. They were at a less advanced state. Perhaps they really have brought with them other ethnic strains.

Assuming this to be the basic racial composition we are unable to attribute to this any cultural attainment of a high order. There is one factor that should not be missed out in such a reckoning and that is the Indus culture. To what extent this culture diffused into the Island and to what degree it persisted the present knowledge does not permit us to say. Nevertheless, it is a point that looms large.

In Ceylon itself there was a level of culture obtaining at the time of the sixth century B.C. which cannot be despised or considered low when judged by the contemporary standards. Light is thrown on the problem by three sources, viz., Valahassa

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1. D. T. Devendra, B.I.C. p. 75-76.

Jataka<sup>1</sup>, three Visits<sup>2</sup> of the Tathagata and the arrival<sup>3</sup> of Vijaya. From these accounts which may contain some germ of truth, if not the whole, it may be safe to presume that the sixth century Ceylon could not have been devoid of a knowledge of arts and crafts. The fourth factor is the contiguous position of the Island with the continent of India. This in itself presents an avenue of vast influences both direct and indirect. Agriculture was a highly developed art and along with it must necessarily be found other allied arts. The Nagas<sup>4</sup> are supposed to have possessed a jewelled throne of exquisite workmanship, showing thereby the knowledge of arts and crafts. The Mahavamsa<sup>5</sup> records that "Kuvēni" showed Vijaya and his followers rice and other (foods) and goods of every kind that had been on the ships of these traders whom she had devoured. Only at a certain level of culture can one expect to find the art of cooking rice with condiments.<sup>6</sup> Further the knowledge and practice of fine arts must also be presumed to be the concomitant of a developed culture during a period of leisure. Also Kuvēni<sup>7</sup> is said to have "approached the prince adorned with all the ornaments and made a splendid bed adorned with a canopy."<sup>8</sup> At night Vijaya heard the sounds of music and singing.<sup>9</sup> That writing too was known and practised in Ceylon at that time is shown by the passage "the messenger<sup>10</sup> laid the gift and letter before the king. He sent ..... and craftsmen and families of the eighteen guilds entrusted with a letter to the conqueror Vijaya."<sup>11</sup> It may be safely presumed that even during this period sculpture was known.

Since the possibility of sculptured representations existed during the sixth century B.C. it becomes necessary to ascertain the nature of these images. That these were secular there is no great uncertainty. Whether these were religious is another question. That some of them embodied primitive religious beliefs may be assumed. But to what extent did these satisfy the religious beliefs of more developed religions remains to be seen. This brings us to the question what religions prevailed prior to the arrival of Mahinda in 207. B.C.

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1. Valahassa Jataka.
  2. Mv. Ch. I—The Visit of the Tathagata.
  3. Mv. Ch. VI.
  4. Mv. Ch. I.
  5. Mv. Ch. VII, v. 24.
  6. Mv. Ch. VII, v. 25.
  7. Ibid VII, v. 27.
  8. Mv. Ch. VII, 28.
  9. Mv. Ch. VII, v. 30.
  10. Mv. Ch. VII, v. 51.
  11. Mv. Ch. VII, v. 3, 8.

A variety of primitive beliefs must have prevailed. These were related to the worship of Yakkhas and Nagas. Crude representations of the natural form of these class of persons may have been made for worship and other purposes. Clay figures of these same Yakkhas and Nagas may have been used for making offerings. Some of these may have been painted much like the present day bali images. There was also another aspect of worship. Natural sites and objects like mountains, trees, hills, and places. These may have been worshipped as such or may have been worshipped in personified form as man or animal. During the time of Pandukabhaya<sup>1</sup> we observe the crystallisation of these forms of worship and beliefs and their establishment in an organised form under the patronage of the king.<sup>2</sup> That two systems of clearly defined and regularly established belief and worship<sup>3</sup> prevailed in the society of the day is only to be expected. The popular beliefs were closely connected with the more primitive forms whilst the more developed prevailed among the more intelligent and educated classes associated with the Court and higher circles of society.

This deviation and differentiation into two classes of believers may have been developing all along as a result of the contact with the neighbouring continent. That Brahmanism<sup>4</sup> had found a place in the religious sphere cannot be denied. There were ascetics even at the time of Vijaya's arrival.<sup>5</sup> Vijaya and his followers may have undoubtedly professed that faith even as the many visitors who may have entered the Island prior to him.<sup>6</sup> That it had developed to a considerable degree is established by the reference to it and other beliefs prevailing. During the time of Pandukabhaya for not only the king himself but the nobles and others of the Court circles would have professed this form of worship. Into such a form of religion it is very unlikely that image worship did not enter. In fact temples and other places for the performance of all religious activities would have been set up under the king's command.

That various other forms of religion had been known and recognised is also to be accepted because the king had recognised them by the establishment of separate quarters in the city for their living. Their temples and places of worship may have had

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1. Mv. Ch. X, v. 84, et. seq.

2. Paranavitana—J.R.A.S. (C.B.) XXXI 1929, Pre-Buddhist Religious Beliefs in Ceylon.

3. Mv. Ch. X, vv. 89-90.

4. Adikaram—E.H.B.C. p. 43.

5. Mv. Ch. VII—vv. 6-7.

6. Valahassa Jataka.

the recognition of the king because his subjects may have demanded these concessions. We hear of Paribbajakas and Ajivakas; Niganthas and Samanas. These sects may have persisted into very much later times even after the introduction of Buddhism for during Vattagamani Abhaya's reign a reference to a Nigantha named Giri is recorded in the Mahavamsa.<sup>1</sup> Even as with others these religionists also may have had diverse images both for worship as well as for other purposes in the religious pantheon. That is the point of reference to craftsmen and families of the eighteen guilds entrusted with a letter to the conqueror Vijaya.<sup>2</sup> Further exchange of letters continued.<sup>3</sup>

During Pandukabhaya's time we hear of a city wall laid out with four Chief Gates divided into separate quarters for different communities. "Year by year he had sacrificial offerings made to them and on festival days he set with Cittaraja and having gods and men to dance before him."<sup>4</sup> He built the Abhaya Tank.<sup>5</sup> Architecture was known and practised; and dancing was in vogue. There lived in various quarters of the city persons of diverse religious faiths—many ascetics—Niganthas, heretical sects, wandering mendicant monks, ajivakas, brahmins..... with the nunnery, hermitages, chapels, monasteries, dwellings and residences.<sup>6</sup>

Then comes the question what about Buddhism. In a society that has been closely patterned on the Indian model and in a country where most of the main Indian religions seem to have prevailed can it be that it did not come under the influence of one of the main religious beliefs of India, viz., Buddhism. It is not very likely more so since the contiguity and easy access to the continent made it inevitable for Buddhism to have found a place however insignificant that penetration may be. Its tolerance should have gained admission wherever others may fail.

Almost inevitably we are led to believe that Buddhism may have been known to the Islanders, having been brought by earlier carriers in the shape of single teachers or missions. It would have been strange if it had not found a place amongst the other religions. But most certainly a Brahmin dominated royalty and Court would have had very little to do with it since the contemporary Indian kings also cared very little for the religion which was almost being forgotten when Asoka restored it to a place perhaps never equalled since in India.

1. Mv. Ch. 33 v. 43.

2. Ch. VIII—v. 57.

3. Ch. VIII—v. 3, 8.

4. Mv. Ch. X—v. 86, 87.

5. Mv. Ch. X, v. 84.

6. Mv. X, Ch. vv. 96-102 (325-307 B.C.).

Assuming Buddhism had found entry into the Island prior to 207 B.C. why is it not once mentioned anywhere in the Mahavamsa? This is accounted for as a deliberate and wilful attempt on the part of the Mahavamsa author to give dramatic emphasis to the great event of the introduction of Buddhism by Asoka through his son Mahinda. Examining the position further we hear of the three visits of the Buddha to the Island and then the erection of the Cetiya over the jewelled throne of the Nagas at Kelaniya. Frequent arrival of persons from India is mentioned. It is very unlikely that there were no Buddhists among them. But surely the Sakyan<sup>1</sup> clansmen who definitely arrived could not have abandoned the message of the Master who was their near kinsman. At least Bhaddakachchayana<sup>2</sup> and her friends who arrived in Ceylon did not appear to be ignorant for some of them came disguised as paribbhajakas.<sup>3</sup> This shows that there were Bhikkhunis in their midst.

There is also recorded in the Mahavamsa the fact that the Mahiyangana Thupa existed at an earlier date<sup>4</sup> for Uddha Culabhaya, Devanampiyatissa's brother's son, is recorded as having seen the wondrous Cetiya and covered it over afresh and made it 30 cubits high. Further Prince Dutthagamani made a mantle-cetiya over it 80 cubits high.<sup>5</sup> Another very strong reason for the quick spread of Buddhism soon after its official introduction by Mahinda may be due to the prevailing knowledge of Buddhism in the Island. The strong probability exists that Buddhism was not altogether foreign to the Island in 207 B.C.

Assuming that Buddhism had been known earlier, then what would have been the most likely objects of worship in commemoration of the Buddha? These would be the sarira cetiyas and paribhogika cetiyas. That this has been the case is clear both in Ceylon and India.<sup>6</sup> The third category comes to be mentioned later. It is the uddissa cetiya,<sup>7</sup> which signified an image or some other object made to resemble the figure of the Buddha. When all three classes came to be mentioned the uddissa Cetiya is invariably mentioned third showing its least importance and later addition to the group. It is then fairly clear that the images came to be venerated later than the Bodhi Tree relics.

1. Mv. Ch. VII, v. 48.

2. Mv. Ch. VIII, v. 20.

3. Mv. Ch. VIII, vv. 20-23.

4. Mv. Ch. I, v. 21.

5. Adikaram E.H. B.C. p. 46.

6. Adikaram—Early Ceylon.

7. Dhammapada Atthakatha III—251.

It seems reasonable to assume that the cult of the Bodhi Tree and cetiya certainly existed from the time of Mahinda. What about the Buddha image? Ancient Pali literature does not help very much. The commentaries<sup>1</sup> refer only once to a figure of the Buddha. This is repeated again.<sup>2</sup> This reference is not to an ordinary image (patima) but to one in which is enshrined a relic of the Buddha and hence occupying the position more of a Thupa than of a statue.<sup>3</sup> Sinhalese literature nor the stone inscriptions nor images offer any evidence about the Buddha image. It is true that there is the so-called image of king Devanampiyatissa but that does not help as it is not the inability nor knowledge to make sculptured images that is the problem but the propriety of making an image of the Buddha and how it should be made that is in dispute. No one denies the ability and knowledge to make images in the round or even in the flat bas-reliefs. In Ceylon the art and method of representing the Buddha by symbols do not seem to have found favour. That stage of development has not occurred in Ceylon. Whether the representations referred to at the Maha Thupa contained this symbolism no one can say. It is not likely since the actual image of the Buddha is referred to by this time.

We are thus led to assume that the Buddha image could not possibly have existed prior to the arrival of Mahinda in 207 B.C. The next question then is how soon after his arrival was it portrayed? What was its origin?

Mahavamsa records a long list of presents sent by Asoka in return for the gifts<sup>4</sup> from the king of Ceylon, Devanampiyatissa. This list does not include any image of the Buddha or any other representation of his. It is certain that a Buddha image would have accompanied the mission as it is the natural object to have found a place in the list if it was then known and made. It was not known in India and the Indian evidence confirms this view.

On the full moon day of the month of Kattika, Mahinda spoke thus to the king, Devanampiyatissa, "Long is the time, O Lord of men, since we have seen the Sambuddha. We lived a life without a master. There is nothing here for us to worship."<sup>5</sup> This is clear and leaves no doubt that the likeness of the Buddha was not available in Ceylon at this time in 200 B.C. If we behold the relics we behold the conqueror.<sup>6</sup>

1. Manoratha Purani 11—6.

2. Papanca Sudani—878.

3. Adikaram E.H.B.C. p. 141.

4. Mv. Ch. XI, vv. 28-31.

5. Mv. Ch. XVII—v. 2.

6. Mv. Ch. XVII—v. 3.

When the ruler of the earth had completed the beautiful Thupa in the Thuparama he caused it to be worshipped perpetually with gifts of many jewels and so forth.<sup>1</sup>

Thupas, Viharas, etc., are mentioned as having been constructed and founded from 200 B.C. by a succession of monarchs but nowhere is any image of any sort or anyone mentioned in records relating to the whole Island including Anuradhapura environs, Rohana and Kelaniya of 200 B.C. A detailed description of the decoration of the Lohapasada is recorded in the Mahavamsa<sup>2</sup> but nowhere is any human image mentioned.

The following finds mention, viz., auspicious<sup>3</sup> figures, lion, bull, elephant, water pitcher, fans, standard, conch shell and lamp. These same adorned the relic chamber of Maha Thupa<sup>4</sup> viz: rows of four footed beasts and rows of geese.

On a throne erected to the east of the Bodhi Tree, he placed a seated shining golden Buddha image. The body and members of this image were duly made of jewels of different colours.<sup>5</sup> This is the earliest reference we have to the Buddha image and it is noteworthy that it is made in precious metal and gems. This is natural and is to be expected. Similar images existed at all cardinal points of the Thupa. Other events in which the Buddha may have been depicted here and there in the relic chamber were the scenes from the Buddha's life from the Sambodhi to his death.<sup>6</sup> These are the scenes depicted as the Buddhist monuments in India where the presence of the Buddha is shown by a symbol. It is not too certain if a similar symbolism was followed in these scenes. But the bold fact remains that his image is mentioned and hence there is no reason to doubt his presence. We have therefore all postures of the Buddha namely: sitting, standing and reclining (Parinibhana).<sup>7</sup> The paintings in the relic chambers of the dagobas at Mihintale and Mahiyangana confirm the existence of paintings.

A long list of scenes are recorded and the king commanded them to make all figures here in the enchanting relic chamber of massive wrought gold.<sup>8</sup>

There are three references to the form of the Buddha that was assumed by the relics that were brought for the Maha Thupa.

1. Mv. Ch. XVII—v. 62.
2. Mv. Ch. XXVII, vv. 30-42.
3. Mv. Ch. XXVII, v. 37.
4. Mv. Ch. XXX, v. 65.
5. Ch. XXX, v. 72, 73.
6. Mv. Ch. XXX v. 78-87.
7. Mv. Ch. XXX v. 78-87 and 97.
8. Mv. Ch. XXX, v. 97.

in so far as these performed a miracle.<sup>1</sup> King Vasabha (124-168 A.D.) is mentioned thus: "In like manner the same king made four beautiful Buddha images and a temple for the images in the fair courtyard of the Great Bodhi Tree.<sup>2</sup> He was a very meritorious king and seems to have restored, repaired and constructed a large number of Buddhist works, dagobas, viharas and tanks, etc."

King Gothabhaya (302 - 15 A.D.), made at the 3 entrances to the Bodhi Tree three, statues of stone.<sup>3</sup>

King Jettha (315 - 325 A.D.) is mentioned as being interested in Buddhist works of art. "The great and beautiful stone image that was placed of old by Devanampiyatissa (200 B.C.) in the Thuparama did king Jettha Tissa take among the Thuparama and set up in the Arama Pacina Tissapabbata."<sup>4</sup>

King Mahasena (325 - 352 A.D.) sent for the great stone image from the Pacinatissapabbata (Vihara) and set it up in the Abhayagiri (Vihara). He set up a building for the image.<sup>5</sup>

The facts of paramount importance emerge from this survey. One is that the Buddha image in particular and representation of the Buddha are specifically referred to during the reign of Duttagamini in the construction of Maha Thupa during 140 B.C.

Firstly: For the first time the Buddha image is mentioned in 140 B.C. and the site, posture and material are relevant.

The most natural place to keep the Buddha image, an introduction from India, would be under the Bodhi Tree. This is supported by the frescoes discovered within the relic chamber at Mahiyangana. It is just here that mention is made. As time goes on the site shifts from the Bodhi Tree, the courtyard of the Bodhi Tree to dagobas and special temples erected for the purpose. The posture is also as one would expect and that the seated attitude. This is not only in keeping with the site but also in conformity to the true facts of attainment of Buddhahood under the Bo Tree. The material is said to be gold. Here again in what other material would the sculptors of the day dare to show the representation of the august personage? Besides, the artist seemed to have worked under the direct inspiration and actual possession of Visvakarma.<sup>6</sup> It is only natural therefore to use gold. We must therefore assume that the Buddha image was known and came to be made in Ceylon during Dutugemunu's day for the first time.

1. Mv. Ch. XXXI, v. 98-101.

2. Mv. Ch. XXXV, v. 89.

3. Mv. Ch. 36, v. 104.

4. Mv. Ch. 36, v. 128, 129.

5. Mv. Ch. 37, v. 14-15.

6. Mv. Ch. XXX v. 11.

That it should take place during the time of this great Buddhist builder adds further support to it. That means the Sinhalese knew this in or about 140 B.C.

But a disturbing factor is the references in the Mahavamsa<sup>1</sup>, a little later, during Jettha Tissa's reign (315-325 A.D.) to the great and beautiful stone image that was placed of old by king Devanampiyatissa (200 B.C.) in the Thuparama for Jettha Tissa is said to have taken this image from the Thuparama and set it up in the Arama Pacinatissapabbata. For one thing it was still the tradition to display these images of the Buddha in open courtyards or parks. Perhaps placing of images in ill-lit temples was a later practice.

This refers to the knowledge and existence of a Buddha image during Thera Mahinda's time in Ceylon. It could not have been introduced from India by the mission since the Buddha image was perhaps not known and was never represented in person. Instead symbolism was used. Introduction from India must be ruled out. But Mahinda's words should be carefully studied here "Long is the time, O Lord of men, since we have seen the Sambuddha. We lived a life without a master. There is nothing here for us to worship." The cetiyas held the third and last place in the list of relics to be honoured. That it was a later introduction also helps to establish the fact that at that time the Buddha image as such was meant for exhibition and not for worship. The second fact is with regard to the relics which were essentially for worship.

It becomes necessary therefore either to consider the Mahavamsa reference as based on forgotten memories as Adikaram<sup>2</sup> is inclined to believe or to accept the theory of an indigenous tradition as Rahula<sup>3</sup> thinks. Can it not be possible that a great and beautiful stone image of the Buddha was made by Devanampiyatissa at the request of the Buddhists of the day? Is it a strange coincidence that it should be found at the oldest and finest cetiya, viz., Thuparama. The details for the image may have been supplied by the Theras who may have later obtained such images from India. In any case the local tradition would have originated since the arrival of Mahinda in 207 B.C.

From this time onwards the images came to be multiplied in a variety of forms. The image cult developed considerably and with the spread of its worship and the festivals<sup>4</sup> associated with

1. Mv. Ch. 36—v. 128-129.

2. E.H.B.C. p. 142, f.n. 7.

3. The Buddhist, June, 1949—p. 17.

4. Paranavitane B.C. Law Presentation Volume.

it the Buddha image came to stay as a very necessary religious symbol. During the 4th century A.D. Fa Hien<sup>1</sup> says that he saw a very beautiful image of the Buddha under the Bodhi Tree. It may have been the oldest. Beneath the Tree there has been built a Vihara in which there is an image<sup>2</sup> (of Buddha) seated. In the Abhayagiri monastery also he saw a very beautiful image<sup>3</sup> more than 20 cubits in height. Of course Mahavamsa has numerous references to the Buddha image after 300 A.D. and these are not relevant here as they have been recorded elsewhere.

Ancient artists in Ceylon and India aimed at fashioning the Buddha image to show wisdom and compassion, in strength and grace. It is rarely that perfect harmony of these two qualities has been achieved in plastic form. Whilst the best Buddha image of the Gupta period emphasized grace in India, those in Ceylon emphasized strength.<sup>4</sup> "The Buddha statues standing at the Ruanveli Seya have an awe-inspiring hieratic quality, massive scales, archaic rigidity of pose. These are Sinhala adaptations of late Amaravati. More than the Andhra prototypes these statues have a heaviness and grandeur suggestive of the images made under the Kushans at Mathura. So the Mathura type may have formed the basis of Ceylon art of Buddha image making."<sup>5</sup> Dr. A. B. Griswold thinks "In contrast to the transplanted Hellenism of Pakistan the Buddha images of Ceylon are manifestations of a unified art. They are orchestrations on a few themes long established and changing very little."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Travels of Fa Hien p. 104 by Legge. Vide E.Z. Vol. I, p. 230, also Travels of Fa Hien p. 67-68 by Giles.
  2. Ibid 104.
  3. Ibid 102.
  4. B.I.C. p. 63—Devendra.
  5. A.A.I. p. 201.
  6. B.I.C. p. 65—Devendra

## CHAPTER XIII

### STYLE AND AUTHORS

Contacts came to be established between Ceylon and the lands to its west, particularly India. The inevitable results followed. Movements of people were mostly from India to Ceylon rather than the other way. These were mostly commercial. Those who went to and from India on pilgrimage were few and even here the influence was from India to Ceylon.

Naturally in the wake of these movements there came to be introduced both consciously and unconsciously art influences of a religious and secular nature. Apart from the conscious introduction of art trends for purposes of religious worship and glorification there was the unconscious introduction of art through objects of utilitarian purpose viz: commerce and trade, travel and pilgrimage.

What degree of attainment in the field of sculpture was possible and actually had taken place in the early days it is not very easy to establish. What indigenous elements prevailed and were strong enough to survive the cultural impacts from India, we have no way of judging. To what extent and degree Pandukabhaya art tradition owed to the earlier surviving elements it is not known. The art of Pandukabhaya's day cannot be belittled in its importance for it seemed to have suffused all cultural activities. At least at this point Indian styles and patterns may have considerably influenced the sculpture of the day. If we are to believe the Mahavamsa,<sup>1</sup> there does not appear to have been any doubt of the very close relationship that is revealed. Its extension to the realm of sculpture may be presumed. If so it is not unreasonable to assume that Sinhalese sculpture of the 4th century B.C. was akin to that prevailing in India.

That there was a developed indigenous tradition in arts and crafts in Ceylon before 4th century B.C.—Pandukabhaya's day must be conceded. In support of this we have sufficient evidence from the Mahavamsa records relating to the affairs in Ceylon prior to 400 B.C. Further positive evidence can be found in abundance from the art of demonology as practised by the Sinhalese of today. Of particular interest would be the art of Bali images which preserve sculptural elements in a marked degree. It is very likely that the materials used in this art may have been fragile and not durable. Most probably stone as a material could not have entered into the list of material utilised by the indigenous population.

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1. J.S.C. Vol. 2, p. 2, p. 78.

Wood, clay and ivory may have been the chief material. In any case these would have perished leaving no traces of a material nature.

If stone as a material for art and architecture was introduced by the new comers, the technique of stone craftsmanship would have left no room for the absorption of indigenous traditions and technique. Hence it is unlikely that any indigenous sculptural elements would be intrinsically or extrinsically discernible in Sinhalese sculpture. As this survey deals mostly with the stone sculpture that aspect of style may be ruled out as practically non-existent.

Ceylon is rich in sculpture of many kinds from the early centuries of the era. It is difficult to fix dates to numerous specimens. Some of the principal monuments have been subject to alterations, hence even periods are difficult to distinguish. Dated dedicatory inscriptions are rare. But styles of art can be distinguished and to discern local styles of art a close study must be exercised. The production is not equal to that of India except the colossal statues and a few others.<sup>1</sup>

But unlike in India the Ceylon monuments have escaped in some degree the cupidity and vandalism. The mutilation is due to the incessant wars between South India and Ceylon.<sup>2</sup> These have escaped the destruction owing to their detached construction, material of manufacture and spirit of Buddhism, sparseness of later population and conquests by Brahmins and Islam.<sup>3</sup> Therefore "Ceylon alone of all known countries possesses a series of Buddhist monuments extending from the time of Asoka to the present day."<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless two changes, one negative, i.e., the retreat of the Sinhalese, the other positive, i.e., Dravidian predominance, have helped the evolution of style. Further Ceylon was cut off from Aryan India of North-North East but still the rest influenced the style, pattern and execution.<sup>5</sup> In sculptured details there is great similarity between India and Ceylon.<sup>6</sup>

What remains for consideration is the alien style of stone sculpture. Even in India no remains anterior to Mauryan times have been discovered although stone work may have been undertaken in other spheres. As most of the contacts of the day were with the northern area and the society of the time was modelled

1. H.F.A. p. 146.

2. B.A.I.C.J. p. 75.

3. H.I.E.A. p. 227.

4. L.C.C. p. 49, Ferguson.

5. I.I.A. p. 150.

6. H.I.E.A. p. 235.

on the northern Aryan pattern in town planning, administration kingship traditions and customs we must expect northern styles in sculpture as well.

Naturally, craftsmen and artists professing knowledge of stone manufacture may have been brought from India and these would have maintained their close connections with the Indians. There would have been a parallel development of this branch of craftsmen. For one hears of the arrival in the Island of various guilds.<sup>1</sup> Even as in other cultural spheres they would have continued the Indian tradition which during Pandukabhaya's day had developed to such a degree of efficiency as to make possible the construction of large tanks, buildings, secular and religious and civic establishments. If the authenticity of the Mahavamsa record is accepted we must presume that the art of stone construction in architecture and irrigation attained a high degree of development. But unfortunately no material remains have survived and therefore for the present the matter must be left at that.

During Pandukabhaya's time 400 B.C. mention is made of the building of a tank and also palaces. These are highly developed architectural attainments in the construction in stone for the efficient execution of which a knowledge of stone cutting is essential. Sculptural embellishments may have been present.

Coins were known at this time and we hear of 1,000 pieces of money. These would have carried punched marks at least, if not the figures and symbols of kings. A knowledge of carving is also required to produce the dies to cut these.

It is most unlikely that along with these was not present a knowledge of carving and sculpture for these very often go hand in hand.<sup>2</sup> Coins in thousand pieces of money and splendid wagons were known. Abhaya tank had been built by this time and tanks were known even in Vijaya's time. It is likely that stone cutting had been known.<sup>3</sup>

In 377-307 we hear of tanks, city gates, royal buildings, seats, chapels, houses, town streets, buildings, hermitages, temples, monasteries, dwellings for ascetics and brahmins, lying-in-homes, halls, hospitals. With a developed system of town planning, architectural development and building construction it is most likely that art and sculpture were in vogue.<sup>4</sup>

1. Mv. Ch. 7. vv. 56-57; also Ch. XIX v. 67, also Buddhist India by Rhys David p. 90-96.

2. Mv. Ch. p. 66, v. 11, p. 67, v. 25 (p. 70, v. 31).

3. Mv. Ch. p. 74, v. 84.

4. Mv. Ch. p. 74.

Mahavamsa also records <sup>1</sup> a number of art objects during 247 B.C., viz., fan, diadem, sword, parasol, shoes, turban, ear ornaments, chains, pitchers and set of garments. These indicate the knowledge of crafts particularly fine work by goldsmiths. At Vidisa the tradition of fine arts had attained the peak of development in India for do we not hear of the ivory carving <sup>2</sup> at Vidisa (Rhys Davids—India). The fact that Mahinda was living at Vedisagiri makes it certain that he knew all about carving and sculpture of the day both at Bharhut and Sanchi. He and his followers certainly would have brought that tradition to Ceylon. <sup>3</sup>

Basic forms such as the existence "at each cardinal points of richly carved oblong projections from the terraced basement which were doubtless, chapels, or thrones for the Dyani Buddhas" as seen at Sanchi, <sup>4</sup> were known. Absence of sculpture on the rail and a surface on the dagoba for sculpture are noticeable features that may explain the absence of fine sculpture to a certain degree. <sup>5</sup>

This is confirmed also by the decorative motifs as procession of animals, horses, bulls, lions, horned lions, and elephants so similar to Sanchi Torana. <sup>6</sup>

Sculpture in stone was influenced by the first Buddhist mission under Mahinda and naturally early Sinhalese art bears this character. Of these Sanchi influence remains the natural style of the period. <sup>7</sup> But the styles changed according to the growing popularity of the Buddha image, influences of Mahayana and artistic popularity.

The carved stone figures of the early period present in common certain features due to early Indian Buddhist art. These are:

- (1) Gigantism of figures, series of columns, thresholds—plinths,
- (2) the monolithic character of most,
- (3) the precision of outline, accuracy of surfaces, and finished execution in hard *syenite* granite and limestones, and
- (4) the avoidance of florid scrolls and excessive details, III B.C. <sup>8</sup>

From Pandukhabaya to Devanampiyatissa is another period of development though not spectacular yet significant enough

1. Mv. Ch. p. 79, vv. 28.
2. Rhys David—Buddhist India, p. 93.
3. Mv. Ch. p. 88, v. 87.
4. H.I.E.A. p. 230.
5. A.S.C. 1890, p. 5.
6. H.I.I.A. p. 161.
7. I.I.A. p. 145.
8. Ibid

in the history of the Island. From the point of view of art, there is very little that can be measured owing to the meagreness of the information.

The social organization would have provided for the class of artist and craftsman who were one and the same. Mauryan art in all their profusion may have found their way into the Island. Sculpture would have been known and practised in the Mauryan style and technique though employed for purposes other than Buddhism. There is no way of knowing actually any information regarding the sculpture of the day according to the knowledge obtaining now. If and when fresh discoveries reveal any material evidence the present views may change. Judged by the Indian standards it may be presumed that the style was not dissimilar to the Mauryan in India.

Animals in the round may have been sculptured in realistic detail. Decorative motifs would have been the palm and honeysuckle, pot and foliage, stylised animals and symbols. The monolithic column was unknown but the stone polish seems to have been employed as is evidenced from later works. If what is deemed as Devanampiyatissa's image is true, then it is not unlikely that the human figures were portrayed in natural style.

As for the authors of the day there can be no doubt that the work was carried out in guilds by groups of craftsmen under a master. These may be called schools which could not have been many. Even the few groups would have produced work of a closely related and similar nature as to make one product distinguishable from another. These two developed according to Indian influences. Although we cannot assert the existence and establishment of very many schools of art as in India, such as Asoka, Sunga, Andhra, Gupta, Pallava and Chola, the Sinhalese sculpture would have been naturally influenced considerably to change its course in relation and reaction to the Indian.

Undoubtedly it was the mission of Mahinda and the introduction of Buddhism that gave a fillip to stone sculpture. Sculpture may have embraced also a variety of subjects, images, decoration, carving, etc. In this new influences of style and subject-matter the source would certainly have been Sanchi and its environs. In character and style, therefore, early Sinhalese sculpture must be Asokan.

Fresh religious impulses motivate genius to find expression in spheres of art. This is the main reason for the upsurge of art in Asokan times. It was so in a remarkable degree in Greece, Rome, Egypt. Even so the new Buddhist impulse set in motion

1. I.I.A. p. 147.

the spirit of humanity in the fulfilment of religion through expression in art. Unlike an abstract painting sculpture found quite a reception not only among the elite but what is more important among the ordinary masses.

The style must naturally be very similar if not identical with that obtaining at Sanchi. Of course at Sanchi there were two styles, namely, the imperial Court style and the indigenous popular style. That monumental specimens of these styles have survived in stone to this day at Sanchi itself helps considerably the study and understanding of the elements of art and sculpture that would have entered into the local tradition if any. It is very unlikely that the local Sinhalese tradition would have superseded the Imperial tradition. On the other hand the local tradition would have been submerged yielding place to the new Indian one. We are fortunate that sufficient material has survived to establish this beyond doubt.

The account<sup>1</sup> of the Maha Thupa as recorded in the Mahavamsa provides a clue to the condition of the countries with which Ceylon had sculptural relations during 200 B.C. These relations would have naturally given rise to an infusion and exchange of styles in art and sculpture. Human contacts introduce in turn ideas and psychological dispositions conducive to acceptance and copying of those styles and fashions acceptable to the presumably superior culture. Images and other offerings as well as art treasures may have been introduced from India by the lay and clerical visitors specially invited to the ceremony connected with the Ruanveliseya.

During this period there flourished in India the kingdom of the Andhras which had its capitals both in the East and the West. But it is the style of their eastern art that has a characteristic feature. This art and sculpture flourished at Amaravati centre. Andhra affinities in sculpture have been recognized in Sinhalese sculpture but the material evidence is scanty and also belong to a later period. In the few specimens that have been discovered there is the difficulty of establishing their origin. They may have been imported from India (Amaravati) or locally fashioned. One certain criterion is the material, be it limestone or marble. And these few pieces are made of that material. But this material is not found in Ceylon with the result that a further doubt presents itself. Could the material have been imported to be worked by local or foreign sculptors?

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1. Mv. Ch. XXIX, vv. 29-45.

The following are some of the finds recognized by Coomaraswamy —

- (1) two bas-reliefs
- (2) Girihandu Vihara slab
- (3) a short obelisk at Sigiriya with 3 panels not identified.
- (4) 4 more slabs from Sigiriya
- (5) sculpture at Pabulu Vihara—2 seated Buddha figures
- (6) haloed Buddha figure on throne and
- (7) two fragments of cross bars of a railing found at Abhayagiri Vihara.

All these specimens<sup>1</sup> are small and may have been brought to the Island by pilgrims from South India.

Strangely enough hardly any evidence, material or otherwise, as to the existence of the earliest phase of the Amaravati style has been observed so far. It is presumed that the influences began to take effect only towards its final phase. This is further borne out by the absence of symbolical representation of the Buddha as found at Amaravati. What may be presumed as Amaravati style can belong to the 3rd century A.D.

One Buddha head in limestone was found at Vilgam Vihara, Magam Pattu, Southern Province, belonging to the early Christian era and a limestone figure of the Buddha headless was also found near Bundala, in Magam Pattu.<sup>2</sup> Several fragments of the torso of a Buddha carved in marble and in a style reminiscent of Amaravati school have been found at Situlpavva.<sup>3</sup> There is also a Bodhisattva head in a severe grand style similar to Amaravati found at Anuradhapura—400 A.D. and also Maitreya head.<sup>4</sup> The sculpture of the Eastern chapel of the Eastern Tope is a bit late for the date of the building which is 400 A.D.

It is very likely that older material came to be utilised in its construction. However, the style of the sculpture could be thus explained as belonging to an earlier phase and date. A similar feature appears on the chapels of the Northern Temples.<sup>5</sup>

Also found in a ruined building south of the Anuradhapura Kurunegala<sup>6</sup> Road carved in limestone is the annunciation carved in flat style. This is in the style of the Amaravati school.<sup>7</sup>

1. A.B.I.A. Vol. II, 1935-36, p. 15, A.R.C. 1910-11 p. 69; pl. 40-44, Read from Vol. 8—14 inclusive 1933-39.

2. A.S.C. 1933, p. 16.

3. A.S.C. 1934, p. 20.

4. H.I.I.A. p. 161—fig. 289, 290.

5. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 95, pl. 44. This is the fragment of a square pillar from the northern temple in a style so characteristic of Amaravati by its slimness.

6. For provenance see Devendra, *Artibus Asiae* Vol. XIX (L)

7. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 95, pl. 42, No. 466.

Then also there is the colossal dolomite figure of a standing king or Bodhisattva (traditionally King Dutugemunu) and two Buddhas standing in a severe and very grand style found on the platform of Ruanveli Seya. This is like an Amaravati image.<sup>1</sup>

Then the question is how and when did this style enter the Island. We have observed that the closest contacts between South East India and Ceylon existed during 300 A.D. as a result of the brisk trade when Ceylon acted as an emporium to the commercial ships. It is not unlikely that the commercial elements of the population encouraged their own art and sculpture. In order to realise this there may have been established a small community of artists from Amaravati. But with the decline of trade and commerce the community of artists and patrons would have withdrawn to the mainland leaving behind a few trained local craftsmen who could never have attained the full knowledge of the style of sculpture or achieved anything. The style may have therefore faded out and died a natural death but not before it produced a few other sculptured objects as evidenced by the fragment of a square pillar<sup>2</sup> from the Northern Tope at Anuradhapura which is characterised by that slimness and vivacity so peculiar to Amaravati. This school may have established a branch in Ceylon. We do not know whether the artists came from India or were indigenous.<sup>3</sup>

Almost post-Gupta in style is the square slab of limestone similar to the Amaravati stone preserved at Girihandu Vihara. The delineation is flat almost like a drawing.<sup>4</sup> Three similar Buddha figures, life size, from Anuradhapura presumably with right hand in Abhaya mudra, whilst the left hand holds the monastic robe are in this style in general and particularly so in the treatment of drapery with schematic folds. These images exhibit a close relationship to the Buddha type at Amaravati.<sup>5</sup>

Gradually but inevitably the new movement under the Guptas began to spread rapidly and forcefully. Its inherent dynamic force suffused the literature and art of the country. The human genius and ingenuity normally expended on imperial wars was directed to the realm of art, architecture and sculpture. The art movement assumed such immense proportions as to overcome everything and establish its unique position under the state patronage. All other art trends succumbed or temporarily subsided into the background perhaps to exist as provincial manifestations.

1. H.I.I.A. p. 161, fig. 294, also 293.

2. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 95, pl. 44 (1, 2.)

3. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 95, p. 144 (1 & 2) Colombo Museum No. 30.

4. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 78.

5. B.A.I.C.J. p. 84.

Ceylon was not slow to gain by this change of outlook and seems to have embraced the Gupta tradition and style in full measure. Sinhalese art reacted to the new movement most favourably and from about the 3rd century A.D. its direct influences may be observed in the style of her sculpture as in all her cultural activities.

Principal additions to the art tradition of the day were the Mahayana images, fresco paintings and changes in stone sculpture. The new style surpassed all others and is particularly revealed to us through the medium of her sculptured remains. The movement gathered momentum until in about the 5th or 6th century the style blossomed further in all its purity. The finest flower of the movement is seen in the Anuradhapura Buddha images and Sigiriya frescoes and Isurumuniya carvings.

From about the 3rd century A.D. numerous important changes seem to have taken place although perhaps only the dominant ones can only be seen now owing to the paucity of the material preserved and discovered. Ceylon reacted to the Indian influences during the Gupta period in all cultural activities, the principal additions being Mahayana images, fresco painting and changes in stone sculpture.<sup>1</sup>

The following changes are noticeable due to Gupta influence. The stone rail and beams are carved, the rosettes at the intersections being more ornate. Balustrades show finer carving. The figures are more floriated. The movement is for greater elaboration.<sup>2</sup> The most important may be epitomised as a change from accurate straight line to the flowing curve. The flowing curve gave birth to a series of new patterns developed along the Sanchi tradition or evolved through it, but the Asokan tradition<sup>3</sup> also continued.

The following stylistic changes are also noticeable, viz.,

- (1) Stone rail; beams are curved, and rosettes at the intersection are more ornate,
- (2) Balustrades have fine carving,
- (3) Figures are more floriated,
- (4) Movement towards greater elaboration.

The objects sculptured in the Gupta style can be best seen in Anuradhapura monuments of the early period. The isolated Buddha figures of the 5th century remain undoubtedly the gems of the style. Although the moonstones and guardstones are equally interesting and important one Buddha figure in limestone (headless) made in Gupta style was found near Bundala, Magam

1. I.I.A. p. 148.

2. I.I.A. p. 149.

3. I.I.A. p. 149.

Pattu, Southern Province.<sup>1</sup> The pair of lovers from Isurumuniya are also in this style and form a very good representation of the style during 400 A.D.

Although the characteristic material used by the exponents of the style of this period was brick and limestone gneiss has been found to be in use at the same time. Two or three stone slabs from Isurumuniya are sculptured in gneiss and these belong to 400 A.D. This is in early Gupta style in Ceylon.<sup>2</sup> Lion and capital mouldings<sup>3</sup> in a moulding in Rajamaha Vihara near Pottuvil 600 A.D. are in gneiss. But actually the florid Gupta style of 600 A.D. is so far missing.<sup>4</sup> The figure that stands in front of the temple at Kurukkalmadam (Mannunai) is flat and is in front view only. The sculptor has not dared to detach the arms from the body or the hands from the arms. In flatness it resembles the slab at Girihandu Vihara. This may be post-Gupta of 600 A.D.<sup>5</sup>

The Gupta style begins to disappear in its active role in the art of central and Northern India. The Amaravati style subsided yielding superior position to the Gupta but about the 6th century A.D. began to rear its head in South India as Pallava. The excellence of the Pallava style manifests in stone. This style preserved much of the fine line and the delicacy of expression of the Amaravati style. It also showed the Gupta grandness and rhythm. It was the immediate successor of the Gupta style in South East India during 600 A.D.

This style clearly manifests itself in a few out of the way places in Ceylon. But these are not without interest in themselves. An unfinished figure in a cave at Andiyagala<sup>6</sup> can only be identified as pre-Pallava by the high Pallava Crown as the figure is blocked out. This represents a man in the same attitude as the man and horse at Isurumuniya. Most of the Pallava monuments seem to have remained unfinished. Pallava in style and similar to Isurumuniya are the group of elephants amongst lotus and fish carved in low relief on the rock slopes bordering a tank not far from Isurumuniya.<sup>7</sup> The themes are limited to elephants in streams.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the Pallava phase had no time for full expression on any large and approved scale. The only site where Pallava style was

1. I.I.A. p. 149.

2. C.A.R. p. 16.

3. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 6.

4. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 77.

5. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 78.

6. J.S.C. Vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 77, pl. 47 (b).

7. H.I.I.A. p. 162.

8. J.S.C. Vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 96, pl. 48.

really expressed was at Isurumuniya.<sup>1</sup> There are several other monuments found at Anuradhapura and elsewhere in Ceylon that appear to be Pallava in origin and style.<sup>2</sup>

Foreign influences seemed to have ceased in their impact of styles with those local ones after the 8th century A.D. There seems to have ensued a phase of Mahayana influence in art and sculpture without the introduction of a style characteristic of the period except in one aspect. It may be presumed that the beginning of colossal isolated images of the Buddha started at Aukana during 6th century and may have been a vogue of the 9th century Mahayana influence. This is further borne out by the presence of these large images in remote out of the way sites. We have them at Buduruvegala where the central image of the Buddha may have been taken as the style of the times. Of course the style appears to be basically Gupta in all essential elements. There is the Awkana image, then the images at Saseruva, Polonnaruwa and Tantrimalai, Elahera and Dove. All of these present a common style in general not only in their colossal aspect but also in style.

The Chola style though very clearly characteristic of the style of architecture at Polonnaruwa scarcely manifests itself as such in the sculpture of the 11th and 12th centuries. The style of sculpture is the natural evolution of chaste Gupta of the 8th and 9th century A.D. as seen at Nalanda and Ellora. In Ceylon this has not been popular for we do not possess any remains worthy of true sculpture.

The sculpture at Polonnaruwa is really in the style of a natural Sinhalese evolution and not therefore dissimilar to the literary style in painting. This chaste style is absent in India even as the painting record is absent. What Ceylon preserves is perhaps the natural development of the 8th and 9th century style of sculpture,<sup>3</sup> and may be considered as peculiar to Ceylon. It is in a way a revival of the classical Gupta style of the 6th century A.D. The finest representation of this may be the seated Buddha at the Gal Vihare, 12th century.

However, one may not be far wrong if one were to suggest two distinct styles of sculpture during 1200 A.D. and particularly at Polonnaruwa. One<sup>4</sup> is the natural development of the Gupta style through the 8th century development from Hinayana and the other,<sup>5</sup> a new style through the 9th century Mahayana

1. A.S.C. 1936, p. 18, 19.

B.A.I.C.J. p. 84.

2. A.S.C. 1936, p. 19.

3. Compare Medirigiriya and Vatadage at Polonnaruwa.

4. Buddha images at Vatadage.

5. Large images of the Gal Vihara Group.

sculpture and preserved to this day at Gal Vihara Group of images. These may possess a Brahminical element of the 9th and 10th century sculpture.

### Authors

Throughout Sinhalese art the problem of authorship remains anonymous. Considerable uncertainty therefore has prevailed and this has led to much speculation and doubt. Absolute certainty may never be attained in any case. Hence the suggestion of foreign authorship cannot be refuted absolutely.

In sculpture unlike in painting there is a continuous succession of monumental remains coming down from early times. This helps considerably in clarifying the issue and establishing the case for Sinhalese authorship with certainty. Apart from the material evidence there are the references in Pali literature including the Mahavamsa to establish the tradition and prevalence of sculpture from the pre-Christian times. Further, from about the early Buddhist period we have actual relics of other art manifestations well represented in the extant monuments of architecture and stone construction. The record is so impressive as to convince even the sceptic that the authorship rests with the Sinhalese.

When one reviews the other branches of art one is amazed at the close parallelism, indeed identical manifestation, that runs through the whole course of Sinhalese art and sculpture as compared with the Indian movements. It is this remarkable closeness and parallelism that has led to misinterpretation. But nevertheless, closer and more intelligent examination reveals considerable diversity and even differences amidst apparent similarity. It can never be denied that the ancient works of art of the Sinhalese were conceived and constructed by men who have not only had close contact with and training in the mainland but what is more these men possessed the same philosophy of life and outlook towards art as the Indian counterparts. India was the main source of art during ancient times and her neighbours naturally attempted to follow her closely. The degree of following in certain periods almost led to imitation and copying more so since Ceylon was the closest and nearest neighbour related by ties closer than geography and race.

It must also be borne in mind that in spite of these social, racial and religious ties the Sinhalese maintained a popular tradition which fluctuated with the rise and fall of the cultural level of the people. It is this Sinhalese hall-mark of art that the Sinhalese impressed on all that they produced or adapted thus giving the objects a characteristically Sinhalese look. The attribution to Indians of the authorship of Sinhalese sculpture can be dismissed more easily than in any other sphere.

Even if the authorship in general is not that of Indians what about the authorship of special styles such as Gupta and Pallava sculpture. This change is derived from the fact that Sigiriya paintings have been said to be the works of Indian artists from Ajanta. Even this is not necessary for, to any one who follows carefully the art history these styles and phases appear quite normal and expectedly in the right period and place. There is nothing mysterious, freakish or exceptional in these stylistic manifestations which fall within the true art growth of the country. It may be that close stylistic, technical, methodical and racial resemblances prevail but what cultural traits of the Sinhalese do not so conform to the Indian on basic elements. The assumption of foreign authorship—be it Indian or otherwise, is untenable and incongruous in the context of true facts and if accepted leads one to the absurd conclusion when one may have to confess that the earliest dagobas, irrigation works, sculptures were the creation of the Indians.

Having dispelled the belief that the authorship may be attributed to Indians, let us deal with the other suggestion that requires examination, that is whether these authors were bhikkhus or lay Sinhalese. This is indeed a more difficult thing to prove or disprove for an art object may show a racial characteristic, a stylistic feature or a technical process of creation but never can it show a clue or element to recognise a bhikkhu. We must therefore rely not on intrinsic qualities but on literary, social and religious information in order to elucidate this suggestion.

The history of sculpture in Ceylon is practically synonymous with the history of Buddhism as preserved in stone. This is naturally to be expected and it is not surprising that this should be so. It is true to say that Buddhism gave birth to sculpture as sculpture propagated Buddhism. For the glorification of the Buddhist faith sculpture was exploited to the utmost degree not only by the portrayal of Buddha and Bodhisattva images but also by other art motifs employed throughout art.

In this course of history of sculpture the patrons were as much or even more responsible for the creation of these objects of art which to them of the ancient times were objects of worship and subjects of religious edification caused to be erected through piety and devotion for the sake of acquiring merit and propagation of Buddhism. In the historical survey an attempt was deliberately made to mention the works of religious devotion caused by the worthy monarchs of old. The history of sculpture shows this in greater detail.

These patrons caused others to portray the sculptured objects. Culavamsa mentions "that the king caused the building of 300 image temples and the restoration of 6,100 decayed image houses. He had 476 diverse kinds of images made. He also restored 31 grottos and 79 decayed temples of gods.<sup>1</sup> It was the custom of mighty kings to erect new buildings, images, etc., and repair old ones. Every great king without exception has done this. For this purpose they may have commissioned artists. The question that has now to be settled is who these artists were. Were they Indians or Indigenes? If Indigenes do they belong to the professional classes or priestly classes? Did the kings of old maintain artists attached to the court for the specific purpose of carrying out works of art.

As the ancient authors of all works of art and literature seldom or ever mentioned their names, it is generally inferred that these works were undertaken and accomplished by schools under the leadership, direction and guidance of the Masters. None of these is known in Ceylon. But eighteen of these Masters are known by name, and in the texts other names are mentioned with whom no particular work can be associated,<sup>2</sup> so that as a matter of fact the effort was communal and not individual. As for the authorship of sculpture not one of the authors is known nor will any one ever be known. There seems to have been other weightier reasons for not inserting the name of the author in any single object of art throughout its long history in Ceylon. Lithic records carved on sculptured objects or elsewhere do not help. There are references to the erection of images in the Pali commentaries and Mahavamsa. Actually Jettha Tissa is spoken of as the artist king who wrought in ivory.<sup>3</sup> There may have been other kings<sup>4</sup> whose names have passed unrecorded. But in any case they cannot be reckoned as the actual authors of the sculpture.

From ancient times master builders were mentioned as sthapati and these were also sculptors. These were employed in the construction of the Maha Thupa.<sup>5</sup> It was then a recognised guild or institution. In a stone tablet<sup>6</sup> of Mahinda IV, 975 A.D., these are mentioned; viz: master artisans, guild of artisans, carvers, workers in wood and master lapidaries. Another inscription<sup>7</sup> 10th century A.D. mentions clever stone cutters.

1. Cv. Ch. II, p. 117, v. 15-61.

2. The Art of India, p. 13, Stella Kramrisch.

3. Cv. Ch. 37, p. 9, v. 101.

4. Cv. Ch. p. 79, v. 49—Moggallana II—made images.

5. Mv. Ch. 30, vv. 11, 72.

6. E.Z. I, p. 111-112.

7. E.Z. I, p. 8.

These were stationed in the village to work on temple repairs. The tradition seems to have come down to 1400 A.D.; For example, see the following in the Gadaladeniya Rock Inscription. <sup>1</sup> "He built a 3-storied image house by engaging master artisans, Ganesvaracari the chief of the guild of sculptors who was well versed in such arts as architecture and image making". It has been suggested by some writers "that the artisans <sup>2</sup> and tools were probably brought from India at first and the progress was maintained. Skilled workmen were welcome." This may have been so occasionally but there does not appear to be any necessity since a well established long standing tradition of stone carving is noticeable from at least Padukabhaya's day. Further, this appears to have been founded on the North Indian Aryan organization according to guilds which even during the 6th century B.C. had developed considerably in Buddhist India.

There is yet another point that requires clarification and that is whether the authors of the sculptures were laymen or bhikkhus. On the positive evidence this may be as difficult to establish as the race of the authors themselves. However, there is no need to credit the monks with the entire authorship or a part of it when the sociological background of the sculpture is taken into consideration. Further it is well known that various persons belonging to professional guilds arrived in this Island from time to time it may be safely presumed that a class of sculptors existed in Sinhalese Society from at least Pandukabhaya's day. No guild of bhikkhus is mentioned. No Pali or Sinhalese literary work, no ancient lithic record refers to monk sculptors. They had definite religious duties to fulfil. Bhikkhus have been precluded from practising art by precept. Mention is also made of heretical monks who professed and practised worldly lore, arts and crafts. No specific mention of a stone worker is on record. We know of authors of literary works who were monks. We know of heretical sects of Bhikkhus. But none of these is reported as having practised the art of sculpture. This is only natural. Assuming that there were monks adept in worldly lore, arts and crafts, it is least likely that they would have professed sculpture as it was a requirement of the society in groups or as a whole and not by individuals. Even if they did profess an art no patron will commission a monk to undertake the sculptural task. At least this is not likely in Ceylon. It is a fact that they looked after the temples, superintended works and attended to repairs but nowhere are they known or said to have undertaken sculpture.

1. E.Z. IV, p. 108.

2. I.I.A. p. 146.

The obvious and inevitable conclusion would be to credit the authorship to the Sinhalese who seem to have organized themselves for such undertakings in guilds, schools, families or classes under an accepted and reputed leader. There is no strong reason to presume otherwise nor need this position be doubted unless the contrary can be proved by strong evidence.

Nevertheless, a slight difficulty arises at this stage with regard to the concept Sinhalese. The term embraced a wide connotation and may denote more than one racial element although it may include all persons acceptable to the rest of the population as constituting membership of one and the same larger community. The racial components of the Sinhalese should not be considered and need not enter the concept of Sinhalese race at this stage. The Indians who arrived, and inter-married got absorbed into this society. Those of the artisan classes admitted others of similar or equal status. Fresh blood was thus infused into the racial stock. This may have been maintained from very ancient times in a community of sculptors firmly established and progressively maintaining its traditions in unbroken continuity of family succession. These were the men whose special services were commissioned by king, noble or any other.

New techniques and new styles in art travel as fast as fashions in modern society. After a process of selection those that are suitable came to be adopted and these came to stay. Many factors determine this acceptance, the strongest being racial kinship and geographical closeness. Centuries of experience bestow a knowledge that helps this process of selection. It is certain that the Sinhalese community of sculptors could not have continued in isolation. Active communion of thought prevailed. Actual contacts of persons existed. The mainland of India was the source of all its art and the styles and techniques that evolved in the vast sub-continent naturally and inevitably came to be absorbed and accepted by the Sinhalese artists. There can be no exceptions to this. There was constant borrowing by the Sinhalese. Hence it is only natural that new styles and movements in India should produce their counterparts in Ceylon. It is exactly such a phenomenon that one observes throughout Sinhalese sculpture. It is not the men but the mind that produced the close similarity.

## CHAPTER XIV

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A FEW SELECTED SPECIMENS

(The numbers of figures mentioned are the same as those given on the Plates)

#### Fig. 2

#### Standing Figure of a King

The figure appears to be that of a king sculptured out of fine grained white sandstone. It was also discovered at Anuradhapura near the Ruanveli Seya. Probable date of its creation may be 100 A.D. Unlike other standing figures this one is in a fair state of preservation.

The figure is of very graceful proportions with fine features still clearly discernible. It wears an ornamented head gear showing the knot of hair on summit. The ears are long and nicely separated. The ear-lobes are pierced but are devoid of ornaments. At least five neck ornaments are visible. The person wears armlets and bracelets. Rings are also worn on the small fingers. An elaborate waist ornament with hanging clusters is also worn. Besides, the folds of the lower garment or extra ornamental bands droop on either side of the waist. Anklets are also worn.

The figure wears no kind of upper garment. The lower garment is a loosely flowing dress resembling an Indian Dhoti but with numerous folds of dress pendent at either side and in front as far as the ground.

The sculptor has made no attempt to delineate the rhythmic movement of supple limbs or express the masculine vigour of the body. The features are effeminate, expressive of the smoothness and softness of the female body. Nor is the figure life like. It stands erect and stiff holding the clasped hands in an act of adoration placed centrally at the chest but at an angle to the body unlike that of the horizontal position of figure 3. The figure is carved in the round and is fairly well modelled.

No one can yet ascertain what its relationship to the architectural set up of the area would have been but it is not likely that it stood alone. No symbols are carried nor does it stand on a pedestal or ride a 'vehicle.'

It is indeed difficult to think what the figure stood for or the purpose for which it was erected. This too may represent a royal devotee in the act of worshipping a religious figure or symbol. Nevertheless, the pose and the demeanour do not harmonise with such an intent or purpose.

Fig. 3  
**STANDING FIGURE**

From a general observation one may safely guess that the figure represents a royal personage. But no one can say whether the is a Bodhisatva or a mere king.

The image is fashioned out of sandy limestone. It was discovered at Anuradhapura near the Ruanveli Seya. The image is badly weathered, well beyond recognition of details. It is in erect posture. The image may be dated to 100 B.C.

At closer examination one sees the process of weathering advanced. The surface has peeled off in many areas particularly the face as almost to make it difficult to recognise the details of expression. One can therefore only get a general idea of the appearance. But there can be no doubt that the figure is that of a noble person.

He does not appear to wear an upper garment. The lower garment is worn in Indian Dhoti fashion with pleated folds reaching down to the ankles in front. Ornaments are worn around neck, upper and lower arms, waist and ankles. A broad waist band of an ornamental nature is also worn, at the waist on the left side. Signs of a sword are visible with a protrusion that may indicate the hilt. Head gear is worn. A floral band decks the forehead.

Apart from the general treatment of the subject which seems to betray good workmanship nothing further can be stated about the sculptor's ability in the matter of portrayal of the limbs, and muscles. Nevertheless, there pervades throughout the image a feeling of calm and serenity.

The figure is in the round, standing erect with some stiffness in an attitude of obeisance with hands clasped in front of the chest arranged in symmetrical shape. The ears are not delineated but strong traces of a beard flowing down to the neck may be discerned. Much cannot be said about style of portrayal. There pervades a heaviness about this image which may characterise it as belonging to an early phase of sculptural development. The relationship of this image to an architectural scheme cannot be guessed.

The image carries no symbols of any kind. It is also unlikely that it rested on any special pedestal but there is no evidence to show that it did not.

The purpose of creating this massive figure and erecting it in relation to some other scheme is not known nor is it likely to be known. But it may very well be the representation of a royal devotee in an attitude of adoration associated with a building or object which seems to be receiving his respectful recognition.

Fig. 4

**COLOSSAL FIGURE ON BUND OF TOPAWEWA**

The extraordinary figure appears to be that of a pious elderly person standing almost erect holding before him with both hands a short object slightly sagging at the middle. The image itself is carved in the round on a face of the boulder of rock to which it still remains linked from behind. It remains as originally carved on the bund of the Topawewa at Polonnaruwa in a fair state of preservation. The details of face and body are visible. The lower garment has peeled off in some parts. The image may be dated to twelfth century A.D.

The features are cleverly delineated in detail although the figure is so massive. The face is very characteristic expressing some serious responsibility bordering almost on anxiety. The general proportion of limbs is somewhat heavy and even massive. The chest, belly, and arms appear to be in keeping with the age of the figure as expressed on its face. The moustache seems somewhat Chinese in appearance whilst the long flowing beehive shaped beard is Indian. Throughout the face there pervades a Chinese feeling as well.

The upper part of the body is fully bare. A loosely flowing cloth is worn from the waist down to the ankles. This is tied in front at the waist with a belt. The garment is divided at the middle. The horizontal grooves carved on the cloth resembles the treatment of robes in the Buddha figures.

No ornaments are worn on neck, chest, arms and legs. An elaborate headgear resembling in shape a truncated cone rests on the head quite clear of the forehead. A linear pattern very much like a basketware design is carved on the hood. The ear lobes are pierced and these distended lobes hang down to the shoulder but are devoid of ornaments.

The general treatment bestows a look of massiveness and advancing years. There is a determined expression on face which is both dignified and forceful. The muscles tend to be plump generally. The eyes, nose and lips are well delineated. The figure as a whole stands erect intended clearly to be looked at from the front view only. One cannot help noticing the presence of a slight foreign look on face as well as head gear but as to what influence such an effect manifested itself it is not possible to say yet.

Its function in the architectural plan of the vicinity cannot yet be evaluated. But it is now known that this image faces the ancient library located at a distance of 100 yards to its front.

There are no extant signs as to the image being enclosed with a built up temple or covered for protection from the elements of the weather.

The image bears no symbols except the one object held on the palms of both hands. This object has not yet been definitely identified. For it is this that may provide the clue to its identification.

The theme and purpose of this massive and aged figure remain a mystery. Many interpretations have been attempted. Could it be a sage or king? No one can yet tell. The purpose may be the perpetuation of the memory of a remarkable personality represented in lasting rock in a characteristic symbolic pose and attitude through which he was best known to, and identified by, the people of his day.

Fig. 67  
**STANDING BUDDHA**

A colossal figure of the Buddha in a standing posture hewn out of the mass of gneiss rock. The image is in its original position still remaining slightly linked to the original boulder from behind. It is in Abhaya Mudra. The image is in a very fair state of preservation probably as a result of it being for a long time protected within a building as an object of worship. The figure stands at Awkana below the bund but not far from the Kalawewa tank at a distance of 1 1/2 miles.

The figure is beautifully sculptured with sturdy features and massive limbs. No attempt has been made by the artist to portray exact anatomical details in true proportion. The flowing folds of the robe are shown by grooves. The right shoulder and arm are bare. The folds are gathered at the left shoulder. No ornaments are worn. The head is covered with a series of lumps planted regularly with a crest surmounting all of them.

One observes the diaphanous treatment of the robe, the folds of the robe being depicted by a series of wavy grooves. Eyes are carved out with lids shown open. The lips are thick. So is the nose. There is a stiffness of limbs and wooden like rigidity of the body.

The colossus stands erect bending its left arm upwards at the elbow and showing the palm of hand outwards. The image is not completely in the round. There is an apparent novelty in the style of the image that is characteristically different from the Anuradhapura images. It is certainly not in direct line of development of the Anuradhapura sculptural tradition.

This is lacking not only in suppleness but in concentrated expression of meditation. It is certainly not purely local in style and conception but is an adaptation of the Indian to suit local needs of the period. This standing colossal figure of the Buddha may have stood at the interior of an image house as the central object of worship for the religious devotees who came to honour the Master. Later the stone members of the building enclosing it may have collapsed. The stone may have been cut out of the living rock *in situ* whilst the temple around may have been built of stone or brick. In fact this may be the precursor of colossal Buddha figures carved at Polonnaruwa during the twelfth century A.D.

No symbols of any kind are carried by the figure as it exists today. The image is standing on a stone lotus pedestal circular in shape. This lotus is neither well carved nor elaborate.

Although the purpose of the image appears to be for worship in a temple no one who studies this in relation to the surrounding environment can deny to it a close association with the Kalawewa irrigation system.

Fig 12, 13

### STANDING IMAGE OF BHIKKHU

The colossal figure is that of a standing Bhikkhu cut out, almost in the round of the massive gneiss boulder. There is still a rock strip left at the back linking the figure to the rock matrix. It stands in its original position at the Polonnaruwa (Gal Vihara) rock cave site. It may be dated to the twelfth century A.D.

The image is one of a series of three sculptured figures found on the same boulder stretching horizontally for nearly 200 yards. Whether the original intention was to portray in sculpture a sequence of events or isolated images one cannot be sure. The narrative idea strikes one at the mere sight.

It is a massive figure closely resembling the standing images of the Buddha found elsewhere. The figure is well-proportioned, lucid in expression and clear in delineation. It is expressive and well executed. The loosely flowing robe is draped beautifully exposing to view the right shoulder. As is customary the image is devoid of any ornaments or symbols.

Treatment of hair on head is schematic, the representation being effected by a series of cone shaped dots. The lobe of ear is pierced. The peculiar treatment of the robe is noteworthy. The rib shaped carving not too close to each other is well executed

as to convey the lightness of material used. The robe gathered on the left shoulder and side is portrayed as a vertical panel of nicely fluted rock. The robe reaches as far as the ankles.

The body is substantially large and the limbs slightly stiff. Nevertheless there prevails a sweet naturalness of expression. No attempt is made to delineate the muscles.

The image stands in an erect position expressing a calm confidence in something unintelligible to the beholder. There is something unique in the position of arms which may perhaps denote an expression of the fulfilment of an attempted task. There is no feeling of great sorrow in the mood of the person but there is an air of remarkable aloofness. It may be an expression of self-surrender more than anything else.

The figure possesses a style characteristic of its own. One hardly feels the presence of foreign elements in style or technique but there is certainly evidence of the continuity of the local sculptural tradition. As to what its relationship is to the cave itself or to other images in the architectural make up of the group as a whole one does not know. The image may have been used for worship and is placed on a circular lotus pedestal cut out of the same rock.

The function and purpose of this image are not known. It may even be a Buddha figure representing the stage immediately preceding parinirvana when the Buddha arrived after his weary journey to rest. The image almost adjoining this on the left is the Buddha in the parinirvana posture.

Fig. 15.16

### FIGURE OF A SEATED BUDDHA

The figure portrays a seated Buddha in the posture of meditative contemplation known as 'dhyana mudra.' The image is carved in the round out of rough sandstone. It was discovered at Anuradhapura. The image can now be seen at the Colombo Museum. Although badly weathered in places it is in a fair state of preservation. This figure can be assigned to the fifth century A.D.

This Buddha figure is beautifully portrayed in exceptionally pleasing proportions. The various parts of the body are worked out into a harmonious whole without any loss of balance. The finer details of the face are clearly expressed with a subtleness of expression and a clarity of exposition that are not commonly observed in similar images. The robes cover the left shoulder leaving the right shoulder and right breast bare.

The treatment of body, limbs, face and head is cleverly effected. The hair is portrayed in rows of separate lumps but arranged together in a shapely bun on top. The shapeliness of limbs and the suppleness of the figure bestow a rhythm and poise that is clearly expressive of the highest ideal of the concept of meditation. There is uncertainty as to whether the sweet expression on face is an enigmatic smile or merely an attentive focussing of eyes on the tip of the nose in an act of supreme meditation.

The sitting position is the regular posture assigned to this class of images. Here one sees the right arm resting easily on the palm of the left which itself is slightly bent at the elbow. The back is held in an erect stance and the crossed legs are placed horizontal to the ground, the right leg again resting on the left. Indian influence is unmistakably present but that does not deny this image a characteristic Sinhalese origin. The local touch is also clearly distinguishable. The area that may have influenced the sculptor most in creating this image is the North Indian for the image betrays Saranath style.

There is no evidence of an associated nature to establish its relationship to the other monuments of Anuradhapura. But the posture and expression do convey the impression that the appropriate position for such an image would have been under the Great Bo Tree or in an image house.

Fig 20.11

### SEATED BUDDHA FIGURE

This is a very beautiful figure of the Buddha seated in the dhyana mudra hewn out of the mass of gneiss rock that forms the cave itself. It is still well established in position at the Gal Vihara at Polonnaruwa. The image is in a fine state of preservation as a result of its location within the rock cave. It is datable to twelfth century A.D.

The features are clearly discernible. The ears are long with pierced lobe. The nose, eyes and lips remain completely unweathered. The forehead is somewhat receding.

A loosely flowing robe covers the body from shoulder to feet leaving bare the right shoulder. The method of treating the robe is the groove technique. Three grooves mark the neck. The robes are shown well draped and with loose folds. The hair on head is treated with dots in rows, rising to a bun shaped lump on the summit. The same treatment is seen in the Buddha figure from Toluva (Fig. 15).

As an object of art this figure does not show high quality lacking as it does a rhythm and harmony between limbs and stressing a weak note by its equal and stiff appearance.

The posture is erect but meditative. There is a slight stiffness about the body whilst the trunk is somewhat elongated. The right hand rests flat on the left but both in turn are placed on the lap. The crossed legs are not so well stretched but a bit stumpy, the right resting on the left.

The image is portrayed under a parasol-like canopy showing concentric circles. On either side of the image are two door jambs surmounted by a Makara Torana with devas above. Two guardian deities carrying fly whisks stand by but they carry no symbols.

The Buddha image is seated on a padmasana which is itself placed high in level with the eye of the devotee standing by. The purpose of this image is obvious. There is no doubt that it constituted the central object of worship in this cave to which many devotees came to pay homage as the cave itself was one of the most beautiful temples of that group.

Fig. 23 26

### RECUMBENT BUDDHA IMAGE

The colossal figure represents the Buddha in the parinirvana posture in the typical style. It is carved almost in the round from the rock boulder to which it still remains joined all along from behind. This is the last of the three colossal Buddha figures at the Polonnaruwa caves. The image is fairly well preserved all round except for partial defacement of the face.

Very few details can be distinguished. The face is wooden in appearance, shapeless and dull. The usual long robe covers the body up to the ankle leaving the right shoulder and breast bare.

The shape of the face is round and not artistically sculptured. The eyes are merely cut, forehead is narrow and ear is unshapely. The hair on head is schematically shown by a few series of dots. The fine textured robe is depicted in a series of closely grooved ribs which are arranged close together in twos unlike in ones in the other images. The rest of the body is well executed in shapely proportions except for the stiffness of the feet and right leg. The seemingly unreal limbs are very artificial.

It cannot, in the strict sense, be considered as being in the full round as only the round effect is restricted to the frontal aspect whilst the back is flat. There is very little evidence to show that

foreign influence is present. Its function in the architectural design is obviously as an image placed at the innermost chamber of the cave built by brick walls. This image should be considered in association with the other two images to its right.

No symbols are carried. The head rests on its own arm placed on a narrow bolster with an open lotus flower carved on the near side. There is also a smooth board at the feet. The rest of the ground remains plain.

The purpose of sculpturing this image at the site is not quite certain. If considered in association with the other two colossal images carved to its right on the same stone ridge then it may be concluded as the final incident in Buddha's life. Whatever it is the image may have been primarily intended for worship.

Fig 25.38

### SEVEN HEADED COBRA

The figure of a cobra true to life is carved within the rectangular stone frame. It has seven fabulously outstretched hoods arranged symmetrically, three on either side of the middle hood. The material used is fine grained sandstone. The slab was discovered at the Eastern Dagoba at Anuradhapura and may be dated to the sixth century A.D.

On the upper panel of the same stone slab are portrayed three small 'chaitya' windows. However, there are no other signs to indicate borrowing of such fanciful forms from Gupta times. Two octagonal columns surmounted with capitals are also carved in bold relief on either side.

The treatment of the snake is naturalistic and would have appeared to be quite real but for the several hoods. The details such as scales and variation of girth from head to tail give the figure a true appearance. The hooded section is separated from the rest of the body by a sort of ornamental collar. Above the head and to its right and left are seen flowers. On the topmost point is a clip like carving.

The body of the cobra is symmetrically arranged in the shape of two figures of 8. One can observe both in the atmosphere and carving itself obvious feeling and elements of the style prevalent at Amaravati. The Naga slab seems to play no real part in the architectural set up except to stand as guardian at the entrance to the building for snakes in legend are believed to guard treasures.

Fig 27<sup>30</sup>**MOONSTONE**

This is a semicircular stone slab characteristically carved in the shape of the half moon. Such stones are generally known as moonstones. This one is found at the entrance to the so-called Queen's Pavilion at Anuradhapura. The state of its preservation which is most satisfactory may be due to the hardness of the material. The details of carving are clear. Similar moonstones may be seen at the Thuparama Temple and on the golf links. This may belong to the sixth century A.D.

There are eight concentric bands, the space in each band being carved alternatively with animal freezes and floral designs. The space within the three bands at the central area is carved in the likeness of an opened lotus flower in circular bands, i.e., firstly the central pollen surface, secondly a ring of pollen grains and thirdly two bands of lotus petals. The fourth band contains an undulating floral design. The fifth band carries a row of shapely geese facing to the right in a row. The sixth band depicts a floral design. The seventh band portrays a series of animals alternating with elephant, horse, lion and bull in that order. The eighth and outermost band contains a floral design.

The workmanship is admirable, the details of the animals being carved out with considerable artistic and technical skill. The work has been executed with great care and delicacy. The artist has instilled into the animal figures a liveliness and gentle movement that are supremely graceful. On the whole the moonstone is carved in a highly artistic manner. Of particular significance is the treatment of animal figures where anatomical exactitude has not been sacrificed to achieve the artist's purpose. The floral designs and animals have been carefully executed with a fine sense of detail but yet true to real life. All the details are clearly impressed. The carving is in high relief.

The moonstone is apparently an architectural devise introduced for sake of beauty of design as an adjunct to the entrance of a building. These stones are unique both as regards the concept and decorative beauty which are singularly pleasing indeed. As objects of stone carving they preserve to this day an art of stone work whose magic pleases the eye and mind in one act.

**N.B.**

One noteworthy feature about the moonstone is that at Anuradhapura the four animals viz., elephant, horse, lion and bull succeed one another in one and the same band whilst the geese

have a separate band to themselves. At Polonnaruwa each animal has a separate band to itself in the following order of bands beginning from the circumference—geese, lion, elephant and horse. The bull is always absent at Polonnaruwa. This may, perhaps, be due to strong Hindu influence during the twelfth century A.D.

Fig. 29<sup>32</sup>

### GUARDSTONE WITH NAGA PRINCE

The central figure of a prince is portrayed on a slab of rock in tribhanga attitude carrying objects in both hands. The person is shown between two pillars, surmounted by a floriated arch with 'Makara' head and human figures. The material is granite and the figures carved on the slab are in a fair state of preservation. This was discovered at the so-called elephant stables at Anuradhapura and may be dated to the sixth century A.D.

The central figure is certainly the most prominent and hence it may be the important one, too. It stands on a plain slab. A dwarf is shown to its left standing in the left corner. There is also the somewhat still figure of a youth with detailed expression looking on. This lifeless little body is a bit disproportionate.

The princely body is heavily laden with ornaments from head to foot. His upper body is bare whilst the lower is clothed with a skirt made of diaphanous material worn up to the ankles. The dress itself betokens princely status. The resplendent ornaments hang loosely from the waist.

The ear, neck, chest, waist are covered with a wealth of ornaments fashioned in a variety of shapes and designs. A beautiful tiered crown rests on the head. The ear lobe is distended and bears a massive pair of pendants. At least five types of necklaces are worn. A studded belt is worn above the navel. Armlets and bracelets are also worn. The 'upavita' string is worn on his right side. Elaborate bands are fastened at the waist whilst the loose folds of the cloth hang at either side. At the right side is carried a sword only the hilt of which is visible. The figure has anklets and toe rings.

The artist has created a general sense of round form but the figure lacks rhythm and a modelling effect. The limbs appear wooden and stiff, muscles are not delineated and the face is devoid of expression. The figure is in tribhanga posture and is carved in bold high relief. A slight degree of Amaravati influence is detectable. The figure holds on the upturned open palm of its left hand raised shoulder high a pot with foliage whilst in the down stretched right hand is held a creeper.

No pedestal is shown separately. Surrounding the crowned head is a halo of seven hooded cobras issuing from behind. On either side of the square pillars are two additional pillars on the capitals of which are standing elephants.

It is certain that the figures are intended for the specific purpose of bestowing protection to the building and its contents for no one could do this better than the Naga Princes who are also the guardians of the earth's treasures. Here one sees the perpetuation in stone of the legendary Nagas either in actual or symbolic form.

Fig. 32-34

### DWARF DOOR-KEEPER

This is a grotesque representation of a dwarf as janitor sculptured in stone at the entrance to the Ruanveli Seya. The figure has been well preserved although the details have been somewhat weathered. This may be a work belonging to the sixth century A.D.

The dwarf is not true to life. Physical features are those of a person stunted in growth, deformed in physique but possessed of all natural human faculties. The dwarf is of middle age and its very sight evokes laughter. On the upper part of the body he wears jewelled ornaments whilst on the lower a dhoti with frills. The usual ornaments are worn on the limbs.

The figure stands in a slightly bent posture carved in high relief. It appears to have been well modelled. The figure is placed within an arch having a horizontal base. It carries in its right hand a club like object whilst the left arm is rested against the waist. The most peculiar attire is the head-dress which is a sort of brimmed cap surmounted with a spiral shaped cone.

These figures may have been set up as a janitor, either singly or as the lower panel of guardstone slabs, at the entrance to sacred buildings. There are many signs of borrowing from the Sanchi tradition as the figure resembles the dwarfs found on the capitals at the western gateway of Sanchi.

The purpose of erecting these figures is not clear. But they do evoke a feeling of lightness and laughter. The philosophical resignation helps to lighten the mystery and burden of life. They are believed to afford protection from evil spirits hence their function as guardians.

Fig. 38-41

### BODHISATTVA HEAD

This is the head of a Bodhisattva modelled in stucco. The composition is carefully worked out in mortar, lime, brick and sand as to obtain the necessary adhesive strength. The state of preservation is fair. It was discovered at Thuparama and may be dated to VI century A.D.

This figure gives a fair idea of the likeness of a Bodhisattva face belonging to this period. The face itself is oval in shape. Any Mongolian cast of countenance is absent. The well set thin nose is elegant. The eyes are well portrayed. Although the mouth is small the lips are pronounced and thick. The chin is not unduly pointed. The skin shows a fine smooth texture. The whole appearance is one of calm dignity and benign kindness.

A band is worn around forehead. On this is carved a beaded string pattern where the decorative squares are evenly placed on the band. The head gear has suffered damage and is broken. There are signs of a circular crest on the head. It may be identified as the head of a Bodhisattva.

Any signs of foreign influence are not noticeable in the general appearance. If any affinity can be traced to any school, at least in feeling, this can be assigned to Amaravati. The fact presents a softness that contrasts strikingly with later imagee of the same class. It conveys a feeling of deep sympathy.

The image may have adorned a temple used for worship of the Buddha image.

Fig. 49.56

### SCENE OF ELEPHANTS

The rock face at the pond at Isurumuniya Temple contains two carved scenes. One is a group of three fine tusker elephants and the other a lone tusker. All the animals are portrayed in the act of sporting in the waters. The figures are carved in high relief on the face of the living gneiss rock just above the normal water level of the pond and are in a fine state of preservation, probably due to the undisturbed location often protected by the water. The site itself is one of religious significance and is still a place of worship commanding a unique position by the bund of the Tissa Wewa. The sculpture shows unmistakable elements of Pallava art and the scenes may be dated to the seventh century A.D.

#### Scene to left :

In the foreground is a baby elephant whilst in the background are two huge tuskers. The animals are portrayed true to life by an artist with a full understanding of the art of portraying elephants. The animals seem real, their eyes being particularly well delineated. Only the trunk appears still and unnatural.

#### Scene to right :

Here is portrayed only one elephant and it is singularly well carved. The head, trunk, eye, tail and the whole body appear almost real. There is a lively movement and the scene is comparatively better than the other.

Generally speaking one cannot help feeling that the artist seems to have understood and appreciated the anatomical details and expression of elephants. The carving on rock resembles very closely the art and style of ivory carving.

The purpose of these scenes is not clearly understood as yet. This may be an attempt by an influential local body to introduce the art trends so uniquely impressed by the Pallava sculptors on the rock at Mamallapuram in South India. A similar school of art may have developed in Ceylon and Isurumuniya may have formed a temple of worship particularly of the Hindus.

Fig. 53. <sup>60</sup>

### SEATED HUMAN FIGURE AND HORSE'S HEAD

The composition comprises a seated human figure with right hand resting on his folded but raised right knee. The head of a horse is carved in the background to the right of the man. The scene is carved in a side niche of the boulder gneiss rock at Isurumuniya above the pond. The finer details have been weathered but the general outline and features are in a fair state of preservation. The carving may belong to the Pallava school and may be dated to the seventh century A.D.

The physical features, as can be discerned, are the thick lips, long nose and elongated eyes. No upper garment is visible. A short cloth is worn below the navel. It is tied at the waist with a band. The head is portrayed as being covered with a close fitting cap surmounted with a two-tiered hood descending to the neck. Circular rings hang from the ear-lobes. One string like necklace reaches the chest. Armlets and bracelets are worn. The feet carry anklets.

The figure itself is well proportioned shapely and supple. The man is resting at ease. The sculpturing is of a high degree of artistic excellence where musculature on body, legs and arms is clearly delineated. But the posture itself is very unusual conveying the impression of a person sitting at ease in thoughtful anticipation. The carving is in high relief.

As regards style there is no doubt that the art belongs to the Pallava School. There is present in the composition particularly in the human figure undeniable Pallava influence in respect of general presentation, treatment and technique. No symbols of any kind are carried and the seat is shown as that of the ordinary ledge of rock.

All the same the horse's head is not too well carved. It is wooden in appearance. A band runs across its forehead just

below the ears. Nevertheless, the animal's expression conveys a feeling of faithful companionship during a common mission.

So far the purpose of the composition has not been satisfactorily explained nor is it clear. It may be the representation of a hero with his faithful companion but as to whether the figure belongs to legend or fact and who he is are subjects awaiting elucidation.

Fig. 56 65

### A SEATED MAN AND WOMAN

The figure of a man and woman both of princely status seated very close to each other in an attitude of intimate attachment. The composition is unique and is depicted on a slab of sandstone which is fairly worn out as seen today. At present the slab is deposited at the Isurumuniya Temple. One is not certain of the theme of the composition. Whatever the subject may be it is a grand piece of carving. It may be dated to Gupta period of fifth century A.D.

In look the man is short and somewhat dwarfish, having a flat nose and thick lower lip but the body and limbs are in fair proportion. The woman is well proportioned, fine featured with delicate nobility of expression but somewhat matronly in appearance. The man shows no upper garment and wears a short skirt resting well above the knees. He wears a breast string (upavita). The waist band is tied below the navel. Anklets are also worn. The hair is knotted on summit of head in bun shape.

The woman betrays no signs of an upper dress but wears up to her ankles a loosely flowing (dhoti) skirt the profuse folds of which are gathered into a knot at her waist. Her head dress is an elaborate crested ornament. She is also adorned with spiral earrings, armlets, bracelets, several necklaces, a breast string, splendid waist band, anklets and toe rings.

The general treatment of the figures is excellent. The limbs are portrayed with that suppleness and delicacy as are becoming of the persons, whilst the man is virile the woman is gentle. Their facial expression conveys a tenderness of anxious concern almost of love on the part of the male which seems to be reciprocated by the female with a submissive concern of longing.

The man is seated on a low seat with his left leg crossed whilst the right leg rests on the ground. The woman has her legs bent at the knees but resting on the ground. The couple are not in an attitude of deep embrace but of tender caress, the woman leaning heavily on the man's left arm which itself stretches around the face to the forehead over the ear. Both figures are portrayed in full face.

The high relief is beautifully executed giving almost a full sense of modelling. The composition brings out the touching sentiments of a loving couple in an attitude of near embrace. The whole scene betrays ample Gupta influence. Even the theme itself may be inspired by an Ajantan painting.

The man carries a symbol in right hand but the woman has none. But the right hands of both are in a symbolic pose that seems to show a 'mudra' of caution. On the background towards the left is a sword and a circular object which may represent a shield. To the right there is a long spiral object.

The couch that accommodates the pair is low and appears to be depressed owing to the weight of the woman. The objects shown in the background may be the ornamentation of the couch itself.

The purpose of the scene remains as yet unknown for certainty.

Fig. 58. 67

#### ANNUNCIATION

This is a slab of fine limestone on which is carved in high relief a scene depicting the annunciation of the Buddha. The material is so characteristically similar to Amaravati as to suggest its importation to this Island. The slab was discovered in a ruined building south of the Anuradhapura-Kurunegala road and is in a fair state of preservation although the surface has weathered very much owing to continuous exposure. This is now to be seen in the Colombo Museum. It can be dated to late Amaravati (400 A.D.).

The composition on the slab portrays the annunciation of the Buddha. Three females are seated in the foreground whilst the arm of a fourth figure is on the extreme left. Four figures are seen in the background, three of whom are in attitudes of worship. The central figure is that of a lady lying on a mattress on her rightside.

The female figures wear their hair in one long braid. They show more life and are generally better portrayed with waist band and other ornaments on hands and feet. The male figure to the extreme right holds a spear, carries a sword and kneels on a carved seat. All of them wear ornaments.

The general treatment is not well done. The figures appear squat and puppet like. The relief work is not impressive and much anatomical inexactitude is noticeable. The work is not in perspective but there is the bird's eye view effect. It seems to suggest that the central figure is surrounded all round with beings. Certainly the event is deemed to be an important one.

The portrayed women may belong to the Saranath tradition in technique and style of presentation but may have been imported to the Island through the Amaravati agency. The seated figures of women are better portrayed. The whole panel is in somewhat high relief but very flat.

There is undeniable influence from Amaravati tradition but certainly not the best of it is recreated in Ceylon sculpture here. What function these slabs fulfilled architecturally it is doubtful. No symbols as such can be identified. Two seats having cushions on either side of the panel are carved.

The purpose of the scene approaches very closely that attempted in the portrayal of the birth of the Buddha at Amaravati. Therefore, one may be permitted to suggest that Queen Maya may be the central figure lying on the couch and the (devas) deities around announce the birth of the Buddha.

Fig. ~~62~~ 68

### MIRACLE OF SRAVASTI

This is a slab of limestone of a kind commonly used in Amaravati for sculpture discovered in a ruined building south of the Anuradhapura-Trincomalee road. This is now in the Colombo Museum. The scene is fairly well preserved although the slab itself is broken. It is datable to 400 A.D.

The scene is portrayed within a rectangular frame whose border contains a bead and reel decoration. A central regal figure is seated erect with his left leg crossed and the right hanging down. The arms are not clearly visible but they appear to be portrayed in symbolic form. Immediately in front of the central figure is visible the face of an old personage. In the foreground are two figures one with crossed hands seated on carved circular seats. In the background are other human figures in acts of adoration posed in mid air as it were.

The figures wear ornaments, armlets, bracelets and waist bands and head gear. The general treatment of figures in this slab is superior to that of the other (Fig. 12). The technique employed is more developed. The carving is in very high relief. Although the proportion of the limbs do not appear to be anatomically accurate the limbs and muscles are generally better treated. The figures themselves possess life and do not appear wooden. The faces of the better preserved figures convey greater expression. But the feet are poorly portrayed.

The central figure is apparently seated in ('raja lila') regal grace. It is beautifully modelled with athletic proportions truer

in anatomical details than in other figures but unfortunately nothing is preserved above the shoulders of the figures.

The composition is in a style and technique very reminiscent of Amaravati sculpture as regards slimness, vivacity and feeling of aerial suspension of figures that is noticeable in the figures belonging to the better phase of that art. There is an obvious modelling effect wrought in marble. The figures are in very high relief. Foreign influence is too apparent in the local finds. But on closer examination one is led to believe these to be imported objects both on grounds of material and art style. The figures carry no symbols that can be recognised.

The purpose of these manifestations may have been to illustrate the events from the life of the Buddha in narrative style. No significance can be attached to its architectural function.

In this connection it is useful to note the following specimens executed in a similar style and technique in similar material found in the Ceylon Journal of Science, Vol. I :—

- (a) fragment of square pillar from northern tope at Anuradhapura—Pt. XLIV—figs. 1 & 2.
- (b) Eastern chapel or altar of Eastern Tope—Pt. XLV—figs. 1 & 2.
- (c) Similar style appears on the chapel of the Northern Tope.

## CHAPTER XV

### SHORT NOTES ON THE PLATES

1. The so-called Devanampiyatissa image standing on the summit of Mihintale hill can be considered very ancient. Its arms are broken and lie on the pedestal which itself is carved in the shape of an open lotus. Although the image seemed to have been sculptured in the round, it is shapeless and lacks depth. Being flat and wooden like, it resembles a carving made of wood, ivory or stone. The body looks more early Egyptian than early Sinhalese whilst the face is well modelled in detail. The headgear cannot be identified. The skirt-like robe is portrayed according to an early scheme of representation. The details of the image cannot be discovered owing to its bad state of preservation. One cannot help remarking that on stylistic grounds the head including face does not seem to have belonged to the original image (2nd century B.C.).

2. Known popularly as the statue of Dutugemunu this is a well proportioned piece of sculpture delineated in a more developed and pleasing style. More details are visible, hence identification becomes easy. Still one cannot be certain whether it is Bodhisattva or a king. Due to stylization a certain stiffness is present but the image radiates a feeling of devotion and compassion. The details of jewellery and the arrangement of the dhoti give it a status of royalty which is indelibly impressed on the face. The image now stands well protected on the compound of the Ruanveliseya (1st century B.C.).

3. This is another image of a king named popularly as Bhatiya Tissa. The hopeless state of preservation does not help a proper examination or evaluation. The general scheme of portrayal confirms its royal status given by popular belief. A semblance of sadness is present on the face. The attitude of the arms and the robust heaviness of the body show it to be later than Fig. 2, but a certain measure of similarity cannot be ignored. It also stands on the Ruanveliseya compound, (1st century B.C.)

4. The image of colossal proportions which is carved out of a standing rock boulder still defies identification, although several theories have been put forward about it. It is a unique statue, technically and artistically. The general proportions are in beautiful harmony and balance. A certain learned appearance is present on the face, but it is not devoid of worry and advanced age. The headdress is peculiar in that its shape is conical and the pattern on it resembles the head of the Bodhisattva. The pierced and elongated ears are similar to those of Fig. 12. The

moustache streaming on either side resembles that of Deva rishis with flower offerings in India, Hallapya Gudi Temple, (8th century). The bee-hive shaped beard is not dissimilar to the image of Agastya from Chandi Banon, Batavia, (9th century) or that of Sadhu from Alampur in South India (12th century A.D.). The object held on the palms deserves further study. The method of depicting the dhoti resembles that on Fig. 13. A strong knot holds the cloth at the waist. This resembles the knot of cord used by the yakkha figure of Patna, India, of the 2nd century B.C. (12th century A.D.).

5. This image of the Standing Buddha possesses a delightful serenity, although the limbs and trunk seem both heavy and stiff. The face is beautiful and peaceful. The hair is depicted schematically. The robe is draped on one shoulder and rests above the ankles. The three ribbed folds and the gathered piece are shown in Amaravati style, while the body resembles the Katra type of image. The right hand is not in any known Mudra. Could it be wrongly fitted or conceived? (4th century A.D.). It now stands in the image house at the courtyard of Ruanveliseya.

6. Here is a standing figure of the Buddha as it is shown at the Colombo Museum. It is one of the few Buddhas portrayed in this style and technique. In this image the robe clings to the body and had no folds. This is strongly reminiscent of the Saranath Buddha figure (5th century A.D.), although the robe is portrayed in Amaravati style. As regards the rest it closely resembles Fig. 11. There is a marble like impression due to the cleverness of sculpturing. The arms are broken and hence no indication of the hand mudra can be given. This is one of the most beautiful standing Buddhas (6th century A.D.).

7. The colossus at Awkana is cut almost completely out of the huge boulder in proportions that surpass the living. The pedestal is lotus shaped. The expression on the face is different from the other images. The spiritual hair and the siraspota are noticeable features. The lips are firmly delineated but the nose is broad. The neck is stout and stiff. The right hand is in a peculiar mudra somewhat similar to that of Fig. 5, but showing more of the palm. The robe is shown by a series of ribs and the fold is beautifully fluted. The closed left hand is not well done. The uniqueness lies in the size as well as the attainment of harmony. A heaviness of limbs and body are not altogether absent (6th century A.D.).

8. This is another large image in outline cut out of the rock but not in the round. The details are not present as the plaster and colouring have fallen out. The nose and lips are well delineated. Note the right arm in Abhaya mudra (9th century A.D.).

9. A Standing Buddha figure from Maha Iluppalama is reminiscent of late Amaravati. The face is full and well carved. The hair is not well seen. The right hand is broken below the elbow but the mudra may be that of Abhaya. The robe is shown in ribs and the folds in grooves. The left hand is placed below the collar bone and not on the left shoulder as in Figs. 5 and 7 (6th century A.D.).

10. The Standing Buddha image from Pabulu Vihara, Polonnaruwa, is a type that is commonly found in Amaravati. The hair is portrayed in lumps but not too elaborately. It combines the simple elegance of the Amaravati style with the massive sternness of the Mathura style. The arms are broken. The groove method of showing folds in the robe is used. The pedestal is lotus shaped (9th century A.D.).

11. A standing stone image of the Buddha in the Thuparama Temple, Polonnaruwa, resembles the figures at Anuradhapura. The hair is delineated by the spiral method. The eyes, nose and lips are nicely portrayed to give modelling effect. The arms are broken. The left arm is used to rest the gathered fold of the robes at the elbow. The folds of the robe are shown by small grooves. It stands on a pedestal (12th century A.D.).

12. A colossal image of the Buddha made of brick and plaster stands three flexioned at the temple at Polonnaruwa. It is popularly called 'Tivanka Pilime'. As the details have been worked in plaster and paint, one does not get a true idea of the beauty of the image. The proportions are beautiful in spite of the huge size. The importance of the image lies in the peculiar pose given to it. What special significance that has one cannot say. There must have been a good reason. The image itself has been executed by an artist of high attainments (12th century A.D.).

13. The standing stone statue is one of the 3 large figures chiselled out of a massive rock boulder at Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa. It too had defied identification. The hair is portrayed in a spiral dot style. Its real beauty lies in the face. Though generally known as weeping Ananda there are no indications to suggest grief or Ananda. The crossed arms are characteristic of this image. The folds of the robe and the gathered folds are shown by two grooves and a rib as in Fig. 4. It stands on a lotus pedestal. The proportions and general feeling do not indicate that it is a Buddha image (12th century A.D.).

14. The Standing Buddha image at Saseruva is cut out of a large boulder. It is another colossus that follows the Awkana style, generally. The features, the hand poses and the manner

of portraying the robes resemble that of the Awkana image but fall far below it in artistic merit. The hair is in dots without siraspota. The fingers of the right hand are differently posed. The image is bulky. The grooves of the folds are not so deep (late 12th century A.D.). This tradition is continued and the later effort is the incomplete Standing Buddha carved out of a boulder at Dove, Bandarawela (16th century A.D.).

15. This is a large stone Buddha seated on a high pedestal located in the Abhayagiri area North, Anuradhapura, on the Outer Circular Road. This image has become famous as the 'Samadhi Pilima.' The head surface shows no bulge. The hair is delineated by a series of snail shell curls. The seemingly closed eyes and thin lips are finely portrayed with a sensitiveness of painting. The restored nose is its only ugly spot which mars the beauty of the serene face. The arms rest lightly on the lap. The feet are crossed. The sheath-like flimsy robe is indicated by a few lines of the upper border. The erect frame is in perfect balance, the traditional stare being immanent on the face. The buoyancy has created a feeling of ethereal suspension as it were. The basic idea of the seated image may have been derived from the Kushan images from Katra. This stands unique when compared with some of the finest meditative images of the Gupta period although the medium and general get up give it a characteristic difference (3rd century A.D.).

16. The image is as it was in its original setting at Toluville, Anuradhapura. At present it is in the Colombo Museum. The Seated Buddha, too, is shown meditating but not in such a state of perfect buoyancy as Fig. 15. This is cast according to a different pattern. The hair is shown by a bulge and snail shell like dots. The nose and lips are finer. The limbs are bigger and the body is massive. The portion of the body above the waist is in perfect harmony that can only be matched by that of a perfect athlete. The arms rest on the lap. The crossed legs hold the natural fulness of flesh. The robe is shown by one line. Nevertheless, the image possesses a beauty and gentleness which quality it is difficult to convey in the rough stone medium. The chipped nose, cracks on the chest and broken fingers are the result of weathering (5th century A.D.).

17. Seated Buddha figure is to be seen at Pankuliya, Anuradhapura. Two points of portrayal are to be noted. One is the position of the hands and the other is the delineation of the gathered folds of the robe at the left. The knot of hair is shown by the protuberance and the hair by spiral dots. The face is thin and eyes, nose and lips are carved fine. It does not possess the same artistic excellence as Figs. 15 and 16 but its importance lies in the

symbolism of the hands. The meditative pose follows the traditional pattern. The pedestal has no significance. Its state of preservation is not good (6th century A.D.).

18. A Seated Buddha image from the Colombo Museum is included for comparative purposes. The head is missing. The method of early bronze casting is revealed. The folds of the robes seem to be well indicated with a naturalness. The hands are not in any known mudra. The general proportions are good (7th century A.D.).

19. Buddha from Badulla is also cast in bronze. The head is beautifully done with hair shown in dots. The meditative pose is not unnatural. The delineation of the robe appears different from Fig. 18. The right hand is in an unidentified mudra whilst the left holds together the folds of the robe. This is altogether different from the usual grasp. It is in the Colombo Museum (7th century A.D.).

20. This Seated Buddha image comes from Medirigiriya. It is sculptured in the same style as that of Fig. 16. Apart from the general shape details are wanting due to heavy weathering. The hair, robe and arms are executed similar to those of the others of this class. The body is somewhat elongated, the legs are squat. But the face and body are well done. The meditative pose is clear and the Anuradhapura tradition is obvious (9th century A.D.).

21. The Buddha in the rock cave at Polonnaruwa is seated cross-legged on a beautifully carved lotus flower cut on a pedestal. Above him is the canopy. The tradition followed is similar to that of Fig. 16. The hair is shewn in well arranged dots. The nose, eyes, lips are clearly marked out. The folds of the robe are shewn by ribs in the Polonnaruwa tradition, and the gathered end is in belt form. In this image too the elongation of the body seems obvious and in this respect closely follows Fig. 20. The excellent state of preservation enables a study of details. Little care has been devoted to the portrayal of legs and feet (12th century A.D.).

22. It is an image of the Buddha found seated at the northern entrance of Vatadage, Polonnaruwa. The wig like mode of showing the hair differs markedly from previous figures. The shape of face and the Mongolian expression on it conveys the impression of a different racial type. The few preserved lines suggest the manner of wearing the robe. There is a general stoutness of body and limbs not unlike the Mankuvar stone image (448 A.D.). The contemplative pose is well expressed. The feet and hands are better portrayed (12th century A.D.).

23. The seated colossal Buddha image from Galvihara Polonnaruwa, is one of the finest stone figures at the site. There is an apparent difference between this and Fig. 21 as regards portrayal of hair, halo, facial features, background symbolism and end of gathered folds. The hands and feet are well carved in Fig. 23. The base provided by the crossed legs for supporting the vertical body is in proportion as in Fig. 16. The robe is shown in ribbed method (12th century A.D.).

24. Seated Buddha from the rock cave at Tantrimalai, is neither impressive nor artistic. It is a degenerate copy of the image in the rock cut cave at Polonnaruwa, Fig. 21. The details are also similar though less impressive. The siraspota is an addition and the robe is depicted by the groove method. The image has peeled off badly and the details are not clear. The hands and feet are flat (late 12th century A.D.).

25. The Recumbent Buddha images appear late during the ancient period. Naturally these are colossal. The stone cut image at Attaragollewa near Elahera is one of the earliest. It is very badly preserved and the face is completely devoid of details. The left arm and feet are well modelled. There is an impression of a robe treated in the two ribbed method (10th century A.D.).

26. The recumbent colossal image of the Buddha at Galvihara, Polonnaruwa, is a very impressive image similar in style to the seated image namely, Fig. 23. This comes out clearly in the details of the face. The right leg, feet and right hand seem wooden and still whilst the rest of the body is alive as it were. It is beautifully natural, the robe is shown by 3 ribs and two ribs. The depression on the bolster is very natural. With a certain reservation the image can be considered good but not impressive enough to move the onlooker by suggesting the sorrow of parinirvana (12th century A.D.).

27. The recumbent Buddha from Tantrimalai is an attempt to copy the parinirvana at Polonnaruwa. The face was wasted beyond recognition. The limbs are dwarfed and disharmonic. The robe is shown by faint grooves. It cannot be considered a work of art but it serves as an example of the ineffectiveness of the efforts of the sculptor who made the stone image (later 12th century A.D.).

28. The seven hooded snake is portrayed in symmetric form with the object of balancing the coils on either side. There is a lifelike naturalness visible in the scales. The figure is symbolic and functions as a guardian at the entrance. Note the collar like band tied at the base of the hoods. See the 3 chaitiya windows above the hood (6th century A.D.).

29. Another unusual composition of a cobra concept comes from the Vahalkada at Medirigiriya. The main trunk of the snake is surmounted with 3 hoods and 2 hooded snakes stand on either side. Owing to the heavy weathering of the stone surface hardly any appreciable details remain to view. This stone may have been intended to afford protection (9th century A.D.).

30. Moonstone from the Queen's Pavilion, Anuradhapura, is one of the unique specimens of decorative carving. The arrangement of concentric circles enables rows of birds and beasts to be portrayed with a truly remarkable realism. Note the wine creeper, bead and reel pattern, geese, and acanthus like scroll which motifs find expression in early Greece and India. The elephant, horse, lion and humped bull are represented in art during Mauryan times. At the centre are the petals of the lotus flower. Whatever might have been the symbolic representation of all these animals and elements, one fact stands prominent and that is the antiquity of the concepts and the naturalness of their execution (5th century AD.).

31. This illustrates the whole complex of the moonstone, guardstone with janitors, flight of steps and the makara balustrade. One of the finest pieces of sculpture preserved anywhere in Ceylon is the moonstone at the northern entrance to the Vatadage at Polonnaruwa. Each member of the complex has been separately treated (12th century A.D.).

32. Guardstone with janitor under an elaborate makara arch represents the anthropomorphic transformation of the snake symbolism. See the snake hood differing from the head decorated with a gorgeous crown, this being the embodiment of plenty and prosperity. The youth's hands are full, his body is bedecked with costly ornaments and dress. He is indeed a harbinger of all that is good. The face shows undoubted traces of Mongolian race (6th century A.D.).

33. The lone pillar standing in front of a dagoba bears a decorative pattern issuing from a pot. The elephants, horses and men are in pairs symmetrically arranged alongside the stem bearing foliage. It is difficult to interpret the symbolism. It may perhaps denote the superiority of the spirits over nature. There is a feeling of Amaravati style in the carving itself (6th century A.D.).

34. This pot-bellied ugly faced dwarf is from the Palace at Anuradhapura. The head-dress is lotus-shaped. On either side of the crown are snakes. The flowing hair hangs down in ringlets. A series of necklaces and garlands indicate prosperity and riches. The dwarf grasps a long staff with his left hand.

Could this figure be a personification of Kuvera, the Lord of riches in the shape of an earth god protecting the wealth of the world? It is indeed a caricature of Kuvera, (6th century A.D.).

35. This is a pillar capital from the Brazen Palace, Anuradhapura. The noteworthy sculpture comprises the scroll and the frieze of joyful ganas arranged in a beautiful pattern. The ancient members such as the cable, the inverted lotus and the bell have changed almost beyond recognition. The whole unit is one of a composite character, (2nd century A.D.).

36. A dwarf from the Vatadage guardstone, Polonnaruwa, is in direct line of evolution from Anuradhapura. The headdress is simple, the face is less ugly and the ornaments are few. The squat and deformed limbs appear less pronounced. The pose has been altered from that of Fig. 34. The hands bear no objects. The image is casting an anxious look presumably at his master standing above him (12th century A.D.).

37. This is a figure of dwarfs from the Rajyavesyabhujanga pavilion. The original function of these guardstones has now been forgotten. Instead they have assumed the role of smiling, frolicsome, carefree components of a balanced pattern (late 12th century A.D.).

38. This is a railing from Anuradhapura, showing one of the entrances. The gate pillars are carved with the pot and foliage design. The beautifully dressed stone slabs are plain. The lack of profuse carving on the railings in Ceylon is an inexplicable practice which is in strong contrast with that of India. Nevertheless, the general structural pattern resembles that of the Indian portotypes. The stone slabs are so arranged as to leave very little space between the horizontal and vertical members (6th century A.D.).

39. The stone railing comes from the Vatadage at Medirigiriya. It resembles the Anuradhapura railing closely, the difference being the floral carving at the base. The dressed stone slabs are not ornamented. The stone slabs are arranged even closer together than at Anuradhapura. The approach to a stone built wall is to be expected as the next stage of development (9th century A.D.).

40. This railing comes from Nissanka lata mandapaya, polonnaruwa. It assumes the shape of a fence of dressed but plain stone slabs. The coping stone is missing. It may be another development of the ancient idea of the railing. It looks as if all the care has been lavished on the creeper like vertical posts of the pavilion (late 12th century A.D.).

41. The head is that of a Bodhisattva from Thuparama at Anuradhapura. It is now in the Colombo Museum. These heads are not uncommon, some of them being in stone and others in brick and mortar covered with lime plaster. The headdress is uncommon and beautiful. It is the headdress that helps to differentiate a Bodhisattva figure from a Buddha. The details of face are missing. Perhaps the face may have been painted. The figure has a pleasing and benignant expression (4th century A.D.).

42. This image from Kurukkamadam, Eastern Province, has an unusual interest. The face is beautifully delineated, but the body is not so well done. It is in a meditative pose. The features resemble those of Pallava images. The cylindrical headdress is peculiar and yet resembles that worn by Vishnu at Mamallapuram. But more noteworthy is the position of the arms, the two legs on the right and the lump on the left being characteristic. Perhaps the figure had more than 2 arms. Unidentified (10th century A.D.).

43. The head of Maitriya Bodhisattva is seen in the Colombo Museum. The face is not its interesting feature although it is well modelled. The high headdress is one of the most uncommon so far discovered. The drooping garlands seem to be surmounted with an inverted lotus flower. A dagoba is in the inlet (7th century A.D.).

44. The Seated Bodhisattva in bronze comes from Medirigiriya. It is not unlike the metal Buddha figures from India. The slim shapely body with beautiful limbs is indeed a beautiful object of art. The smiling face itself conveys the impression of joy resulting from thoughtful concentration. The right hand bears a Vajra and hence the image is called Vajrasattva Buddha. The left hand rests on the lap. The head, neck, ears, waist and arms bear ornaments. The crown is tiered. Note the dhyani Buddha on the crown, (9th century A.D.).

45. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is another image beautifully cast in bronze. It appears to be an Indian type not found in, Ceylon. Nevertheless, one gets an idea of the physical make up of such a figure. It is at the Boston Museum (9th century A.D.).

46. The standing bronze image is believed to be that of goddess Pattini which is now in the British Museum. This is included for comparative purposes. The beautifully ornamented headdress, the sweetly innocent face, lovely breasts and shapely arms give the image a distinct place in Sinhala art. The diaphanous treatment of the lower garment is most effective, specially

in this medium. The hands appear to be in some unidentified mudra and the pose too is intentional.

47. The standing figure of a Bodhisattva in stone is from Medirigiriya. It is in a bad state of preservation. Although the figure is slim there is much liveliness about it. The expression is one of firmness and not compassion. The arms by means of two openings above the elbow seem to provide for supporting something. The purpose for these openings cannot be understood (9th century A.D.).

48. This Bodhisattva image is one of the most beautiful objects in stone. The suppleness of the limbs, the benignity on the face and shapeliness of the body have been expressed with an unsurpassing cleverness as if the medium is marble. The dhyani Buddha on the cylindrical crown leaves no room for doubt that it is Mahayana. The rest of the body is without any ornaments. The close fitting dhوتي is neatly gathered at the waist and fastened with a thin band. The arms are broken clean above the elbows. They may have been in separate parts fitted together in a special mudra. The workmanship betrays Amaravati influence of a marked degree. It also resembles the Pattini image (3rd century A.D.).

49. The figure from the Quadrangle, Polonnaruwa, is recognisable as Bodhisattva from the head dress and the elaborate ornaments and dress. Its body is bulky and stiff. The technique and style of portrayal remind of the Amaravati figures. This lacks the gentleness and liveness of the Amaravati tradition. The arms are broken below the shoulders, thereby giving no indication of the hand mudra. On general grounds it resembles Dutugemunu statue, Fig. 2 (2th century A.D.).

50. The Bodhisattva tradition is preserved in the popularly called Kustaraja standing image carved out of a wayside boulder at Weligama. The elaborate head dress with dhyani Buddha, regal ornaments and princely dress is somewhat characteristic. The arms are in a peculiar pose with the hand in a certain mudra. The undue bulkiness imparts a stiffness to the figure. Note the bead and reel sash hanging in front. There is a general resemblance in face and hands to that of the Buduruegala Buddha Fig. 8. The look is directed towards heaven and not earth (10th century A.D.).

51. Here is a series of imposing square pillars from Peacock Palace, Anuradhapura. The capital contains friezes of ganas and garland of flowers. The capital forms a part of the column. The square shape and simplicity of the ornament may be a sign of antiquity, (6th century A.D.).

52. More elaborate hexagonal pillars are seen at Medirigiriya. The capitals contain more ornamentation. The themes are the same, the chief being the frieze of ganas supporting the uppermost panel. The horizontal beams rest on these columns. The capital is fashioned separately and superimposed on the pillar (9th century A.D.).

53. The external view of the Makara balustrade from Anuradhapura is presented here. The beautiful carvings in narrative style are those of stories where men and animals take part. The details of the Saurian beasts are not visible. Perhaps this is not a good specimen to illustrate the care lavished in depicting such details as scales and claws. Already the makara has lost its naturalness (6th century A.D.).

54. The plan of the makara in the complex is clear. Note the foreshortening of the entire balustrade and the manner of its issuing forth from the mouth of the animal. The animal itself is elaborately carved in detail and the snout, eye, ear, scales are noticeable (12th century A.D.) The bull resembles the front position on the column of the guardstone whilst the lion has receded to the background. The janitor faces the visitor.

55. Here is the frieze of elephants from the Ruanveliseya, Anuradhapura, before restoration. The animals are made of brick and mortar plastered with lime. One does not get any idea of the elephant from the remains. But the elephant is the one animal which the Sinhalese depicted correctly and what it looked like in the early composition would be worth ascertaining (2nd century A.D.).

56. One of the most charming animal scenes is this group carved on the rock at Isurumuniya, Anuradhapura. On the left is a group watching as it were the bathing of another group on the right. The beauty lies in the remarkable realism of the animals. The feelings of tenderness shown by the animals in the group have been admirably conveyed. The style of sculpture is unmistakably Pallava both in spirit and technique. Their purpose and object are not known (7th century A.D.).

57. An incomplete head of an elephant from Mahaveliganga illustrates the preference of watery surroundings for carving elephants. The details are not worked out but the ear and eye have been completed. The trunk is sloped up to a point (9th century A.D.).

58. A close up of the Isurumuniya elephant on the right scene provides more details of the carving.

59. Elephant carved on the Rajyavesyabhujanga Pavilion, Polonnaruwa, provides another fine example of the sculptor's cleverness in portraying elephants. The details are completely shown. The slow marked movement of the heavy mass of living flesh is conveyed without sacrifice of anatomical exactness (12th century A.D.).

60. This composition of a man seated in deep contemplation by his horse behind is a unique piece of sculpture which has defied identification. The right hand holds something unidentifiable. The seated posture is not one of the traditional type. Both in spirit and style the image is Pallava and may be a warrior. He wears ornaments. The manner of dress cannot be discovered owing to its bad state of preservation (7th century A.D.).

61. Two terra cotta heads from Kantaka Cetiya, Mihintale, are among the finest creations in that class. The faces have been cleverly moulded in clay to bring out the childlike innocence of sylvan spirits. The details of eyes, nose, and lips can be clearly observed. The hair is done in curls. These have been made by clever modellers with considerable experience. They resemble the faces of the Yakshis in Bharhut and Sanchi (2nd century A.D.).

62. Terracotta figures from Katugampolagama indicate the elements of the traditional craft in no uncertain terms. The ear ornaments and hair resemble those of Bharhut, Sanchi and Kantaka Cetiya. There is a nice expression on the face (12th century A.D.).

63. Another group of terra cotta figures found at Talagawewa appear to have been moulded differently. The features also vary somewhat (12th century A.D.).

64. A very fine piece of sculpture from Anuradhapura in the ancient narrative style displays an ancient scene in the front. A contest between a snake and mongoose can be identified. The human figure is probably an ascetic, unidentified (3rd century A.D.).

65. The most beautiful composition in Sinhalese sculpture can still be seen on a small stone slab at Isurumuniya. Many suggestions have been made about the subject. Similar scenes are found among the early paintings at Ajanta. There are certain symbols like the flaming circle and sword behind the male figure. The right hand holds something. The earrings, hair locks, ornaments and lips suggest a certain resemblance to the man in Fig. 60. The woman's right hand is in a certain mudra. A spiral object, perhaps, a lock of hair, is seen behind. But the scene is one of amorous dalliance between a youthful pair. The love light brightens the male face and maiden innocence rests on that of

the female. Such compositions are seen at Ajanta.....  
The workmanship is chaste and beautiful (4th century A.D.).

66. A panel from Velanadamana, Anuradhapura, shows the seated Buddha above. The chief interest lies in the central theme below. The human figures in movement, some active, some dead, are well portrayed (3rd century A.D.).

67. A group of men and women are seen looking at a female figure prostrate on a bed. The ivory slab is probably damaged. There is much affinity between this and the carved ivory slabs from early Amaravati. This is supposed to represent the dream of Queen Maya. It is now in the Colombo Museum (4th century A.D.).

68. This is another ivory slab showing human figures carved in the Amaravati style. The seated figure in the centre is generally identified as that of the Bodhisattva. The figures are gentler and better delineated than in Fig. 67. The bead and reel pattern along the rectangular border of the panel is very much like that seen at Amaravati (5th century A.D.).

69. This panel from the Eastern Tope, Anuradhapura, is identified as depicting the Bodhisattva preaching. It is in a style closely resembling the marble carvings at Amaravati. The arrangement and delineation of human figures confirm this. Note the position of the hands; the right is in a usual mudra whilst the left is universally found (6th century A.D.).

70. This illustrates two sides of a pillar from northern tope, Anuradhapura. The human figures convey the impression that the technique, style and concept are inspired by Amaravati. The scene is unidentified (6th century A.D.).

71. This has to be studied along with Fig. 70 as it is on another side of the same pillar. The figures are very similar and seem to portray a story in the narrative style. The theme is unidentified (6th century A.D.).

72. These figures in the early style of Amaravati are carved on a marble slab found near Ambalantota. The scene is identified as the great renunciation of Prince Siddhartha. The figures are not well done but there is symmetry in the composition. The theme is an uncommon one for Ceylon sculpture. A close resemblance to the Amaravati figures is present and the technique reminds one of ancient ivory carving (3rd century A.D.).

73. This marble slab was found at Pidurugala, Sigiriya. The figure on the left is that of a Bodhisattva. The hand mudras are interesting. Note the beautiful aura, headdress, and costly garments. The pedestal is lotus shaped.

74. Another marble slab from Piduragala, Sigiriya, is carved with three standing figures of the Buddha belonging to the same tradition of Amaravati. The hand mudras show that the decorative features and style are the same as those of Fig. 73. But the theme is different (6th century A.D.).

75. Buddha's feet from Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa, are, adorned with the open lotus flowers on the sole. This is an auspicious sign often ascribed to the Buddha (12th century A.D.).

76. A cornelian seal of a dancing girl comes from Mahapali, Anuradhapura. The headdress and lower garment are interesting. A lily is held in the fingers (2nd century A.D.).

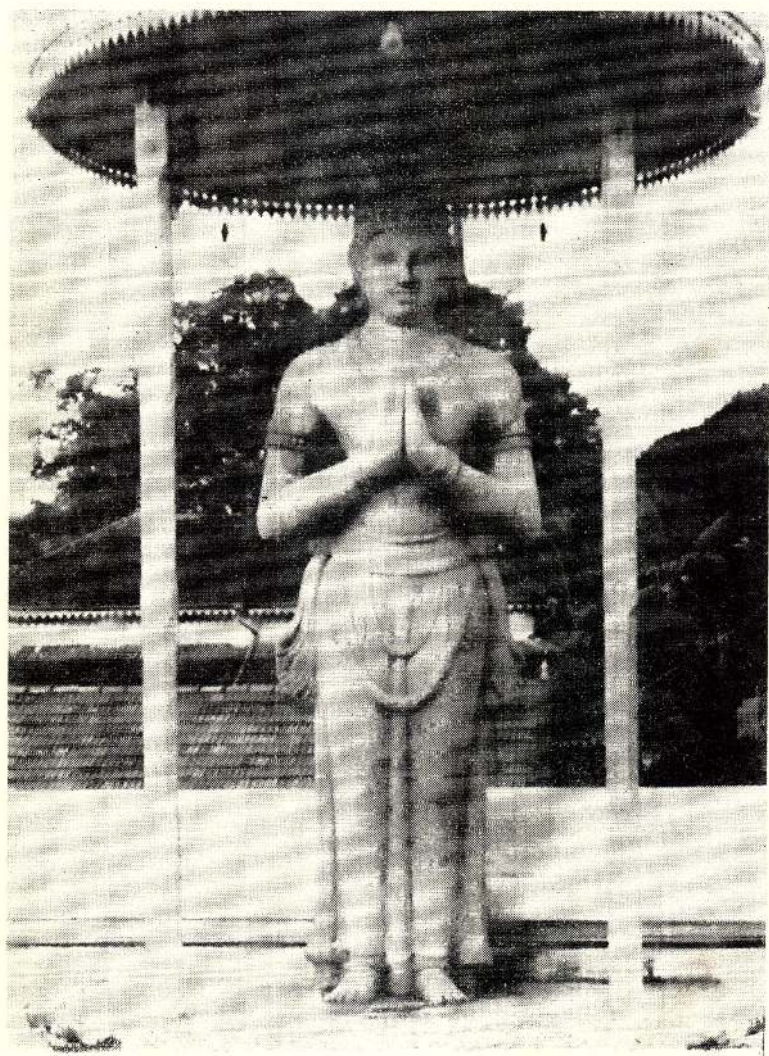
77. This cornelian seal resembles Fig. 76 remarkably. The shape of the figure, the technique of portrayal follow the same tradition of engraving. The figure may be that of a dancing girl. Unidentified (4th century A.D.).

78. The double vajra carved on the rock at Buduruvegala is another interesting symbol. Note the hand below it (9th century A.D.).

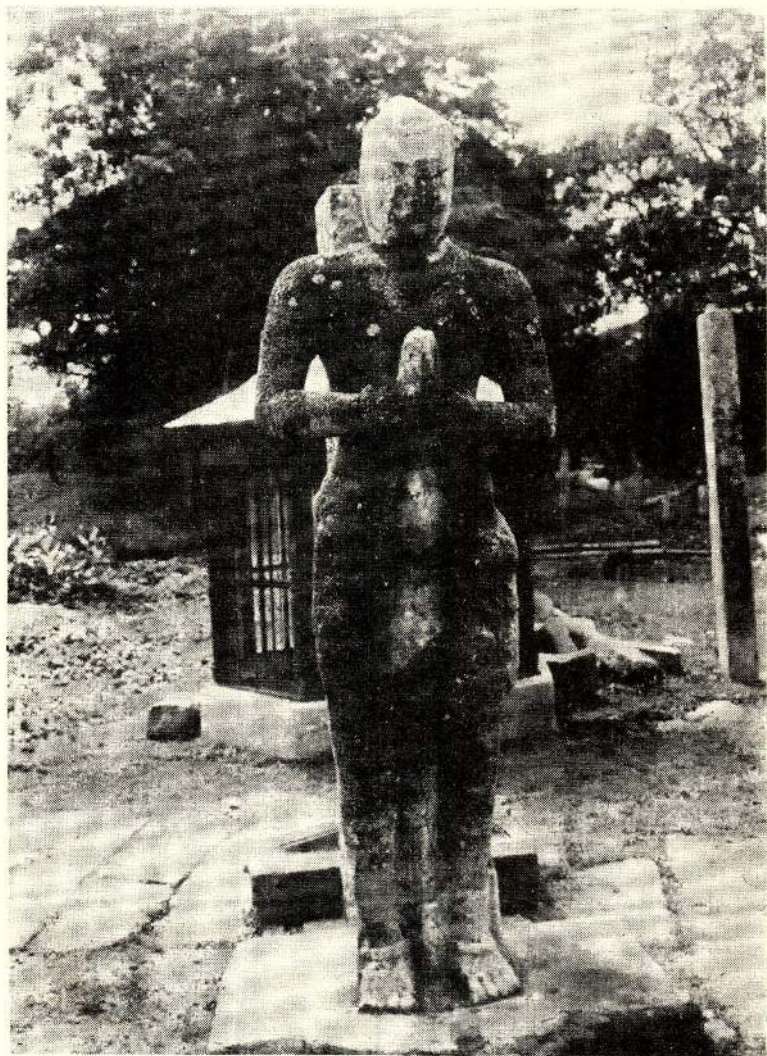
79. The figure of a Swastika is from Medirigiriya. This symbol is found in the ancient punched mark coins and inscriptions. But in sculpture it is rarely found. The Swastika is considered to be one of the most auspicious signs (9th century A.D.).



Standing image at Mihintale - so-called portrait of  
King Devanampiyatissa.



Standing image at Ruanwcliseya, Anuradhapura - so-called portrait of King Dutugemunu.



Standing image at Ruanweliseya, Anuradhapura-so-called portrait of  
King Bhatiya Tissa



Image at Potgul Vihara, Polonnaruwa - so-called portrait of  
King Parakrama Bahu.



Standing figure of Buddha inside the Vihara at Ruanweliseya, Anuradhapura.

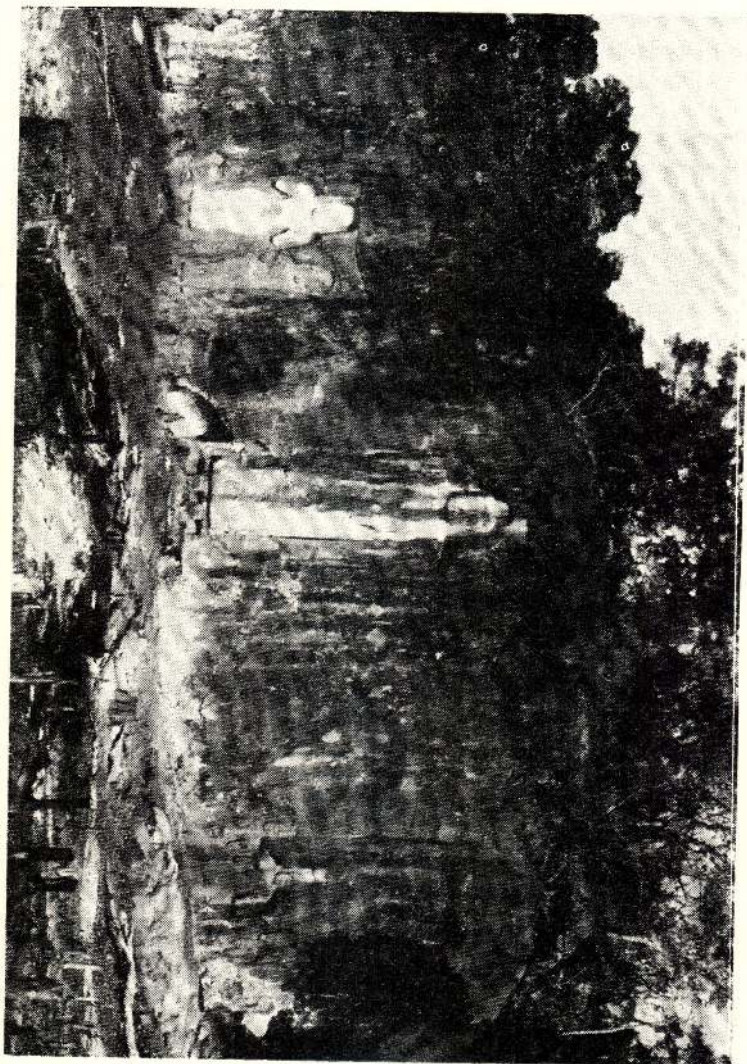


Standing image of the Buddha now in the Colombo Museum.



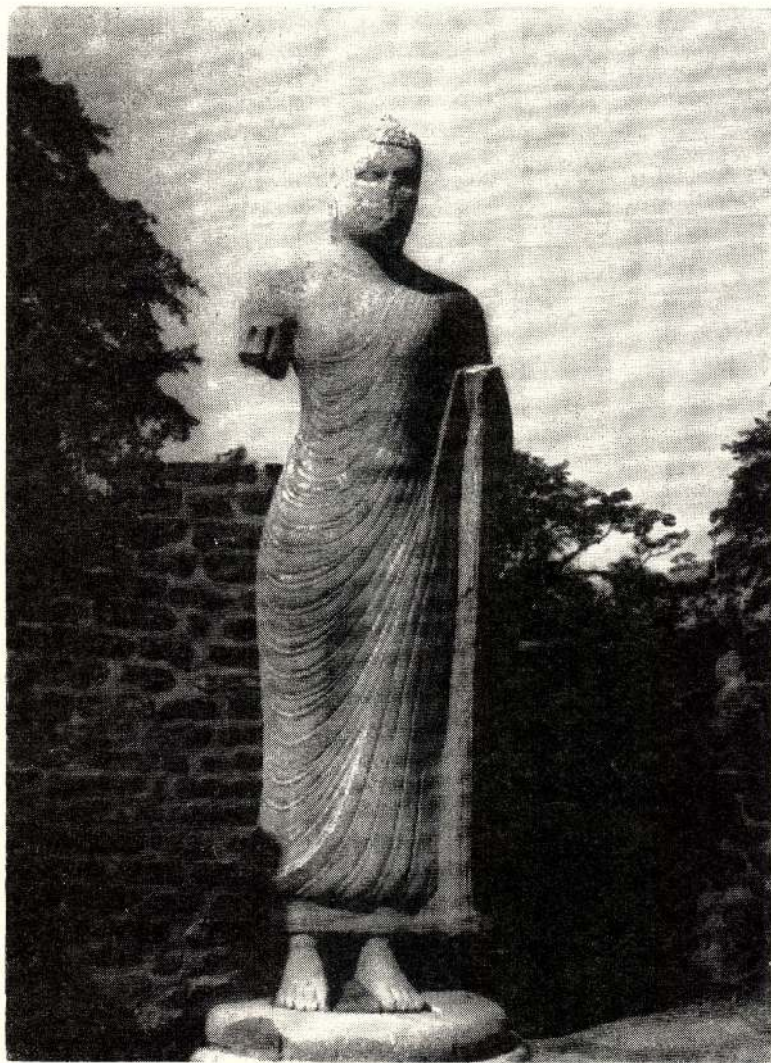
Standing image of Buddha at Awkana.

Buddha image cut from the rock boulder at Budurnvegala.

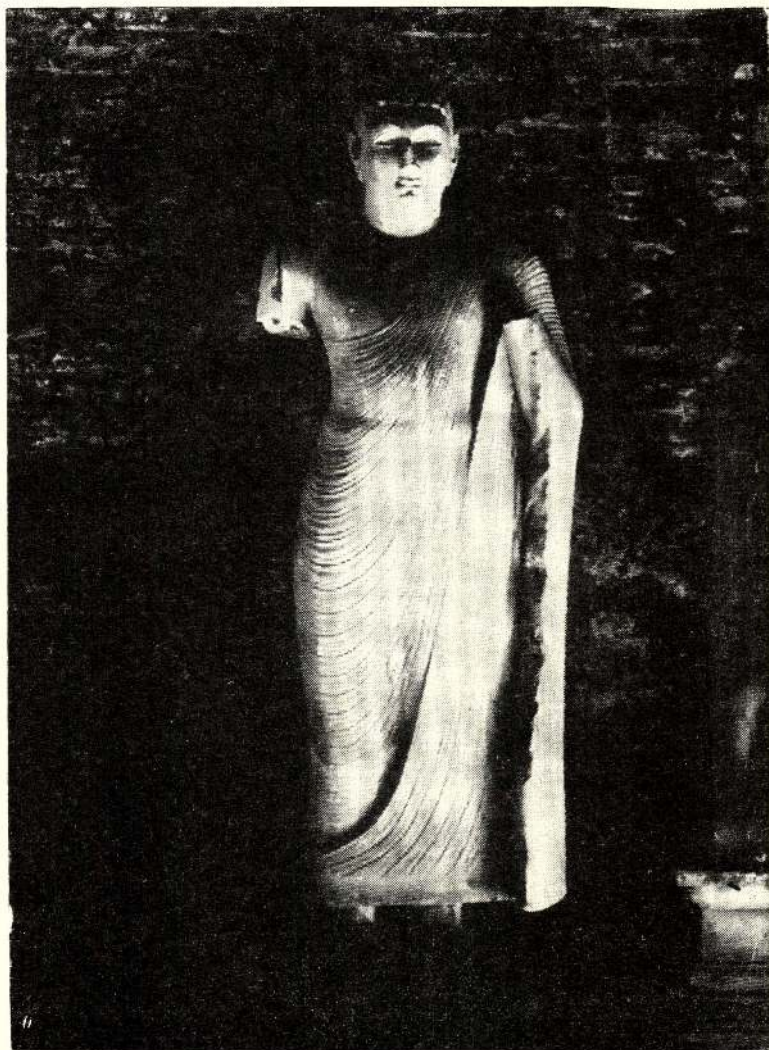




Standing image of Buddha from Maha Iluppalama.



Standing image of Buddha, Pabulu Vihara, Polonnaruva



Standing image of Buddha from Thuparama, Polonnaruva.



Tivanka Buddha image built in brick in Tivanka Temple, Polonnaruwa.



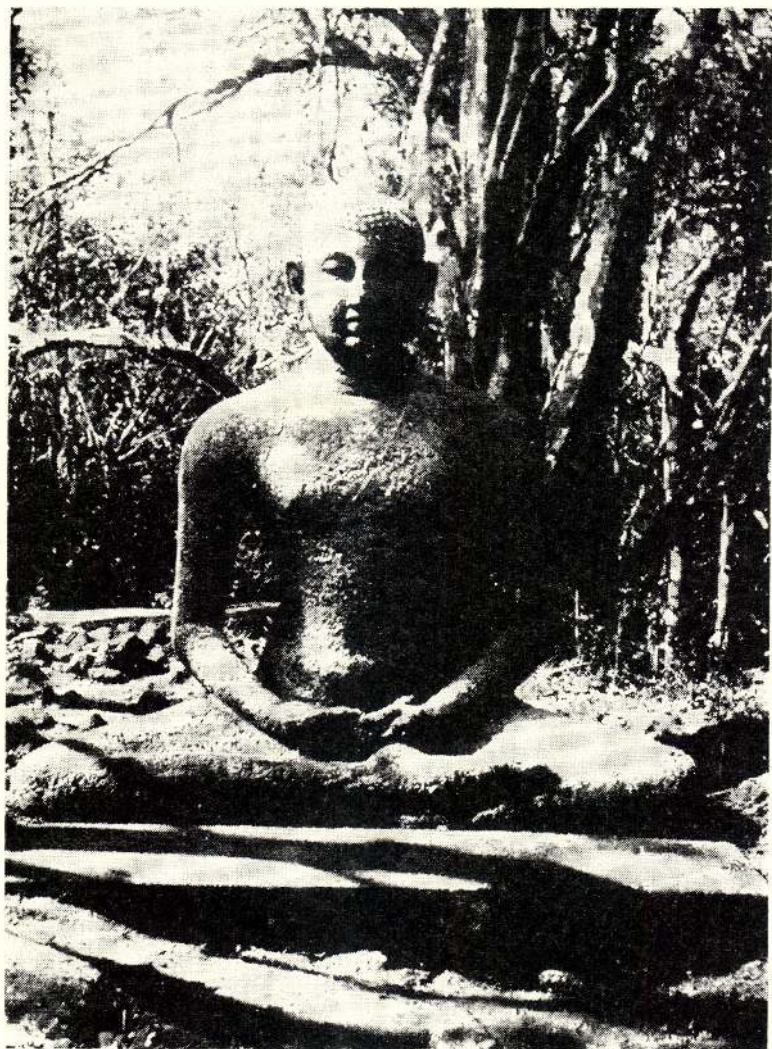
Standing image of Ananda from Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa?



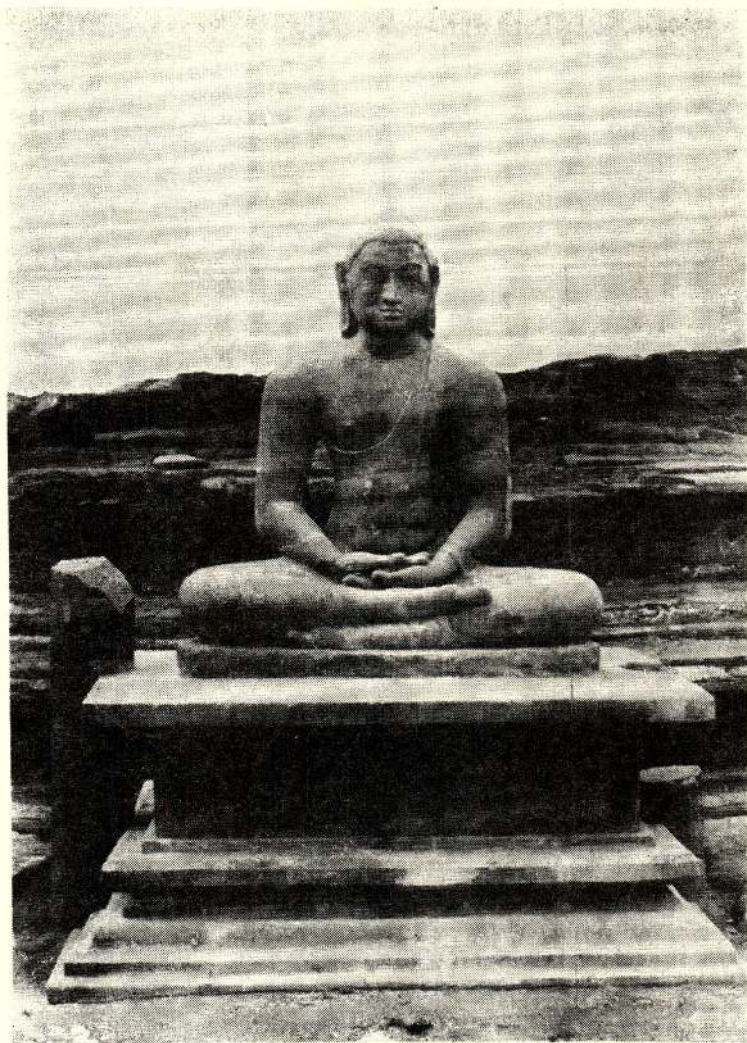
Standing image of Buddha, Sasseruwa, N.C.P.



Seated image of Buddha, Outer Circular Road, Anurādhapura.



Seated image of Buddha, Toluvila, Anuradhapura - now in the Colombo Museum.



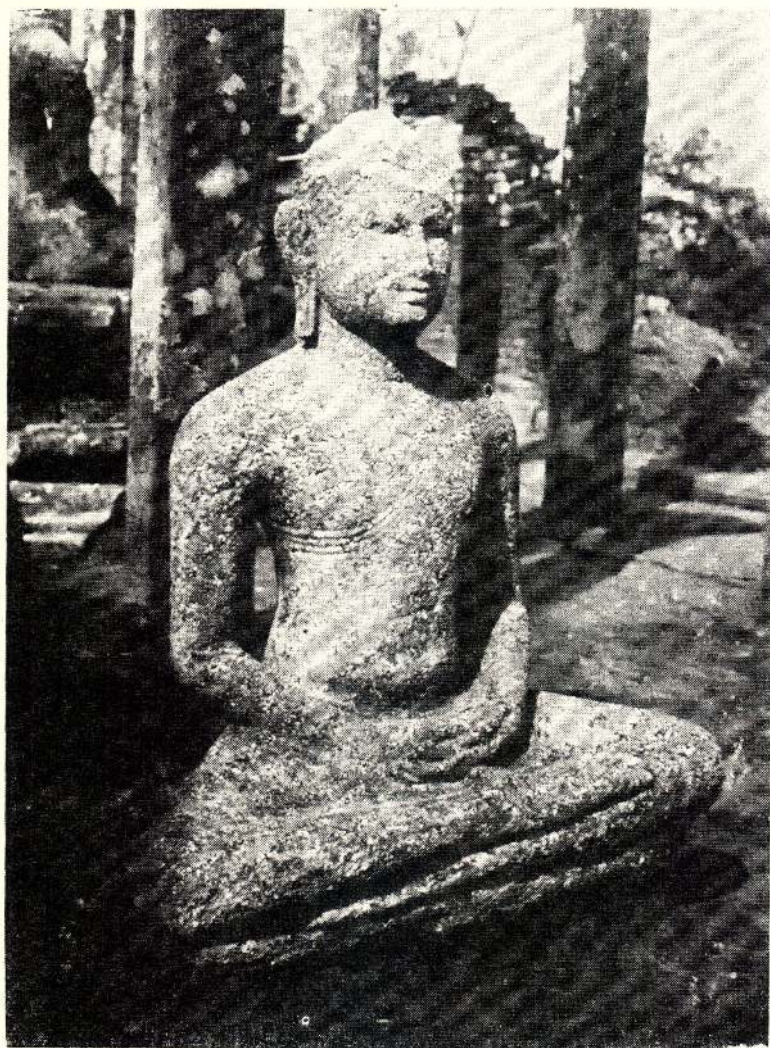
Seated image of Buddha from Pankuliya, Anuradhapura.



Seated image of Buddha in bronze.



Seated image of Buddha in bronze from Badulla.



Seated figure of Buddha, Vatadage, Medirigiriya.



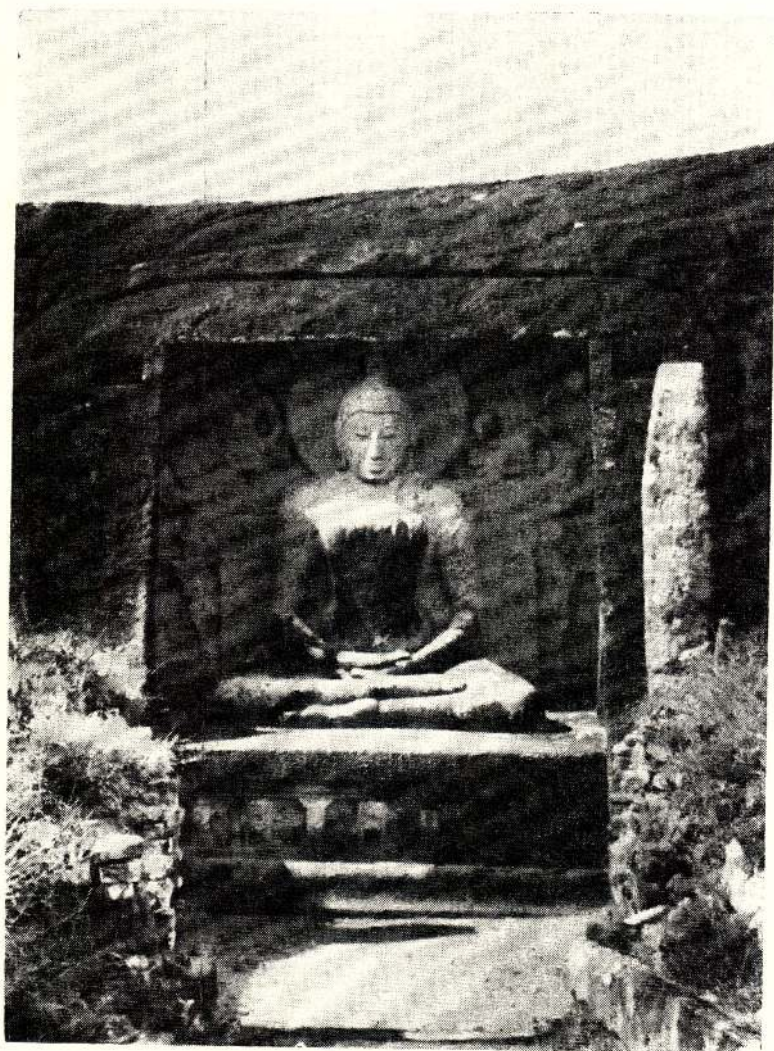
Seated figure of Buddha, Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa.



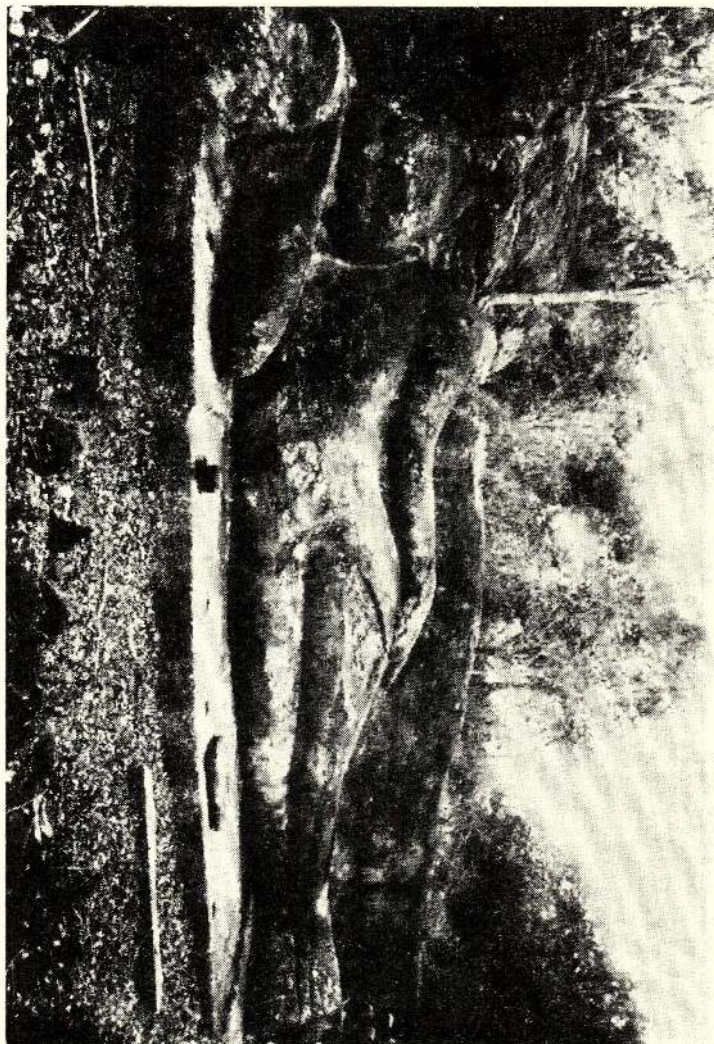
Seated image of Buddha, Vatadage, Polonnaruwa.



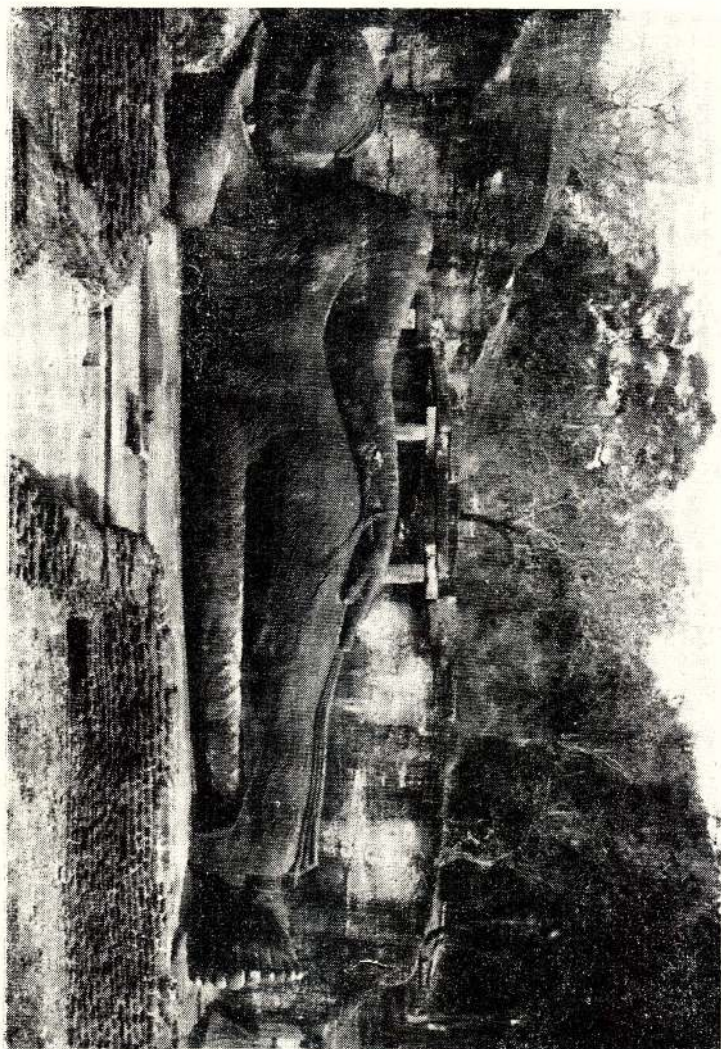
Seated figure of Buddha, Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa.



Seated figure of Buddha, Tantrimalai.



Reclining Buddha at Attaragollewa Elahera.



Reclining Buddha, Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa.

Reclining Buddha, Tantiimalai.

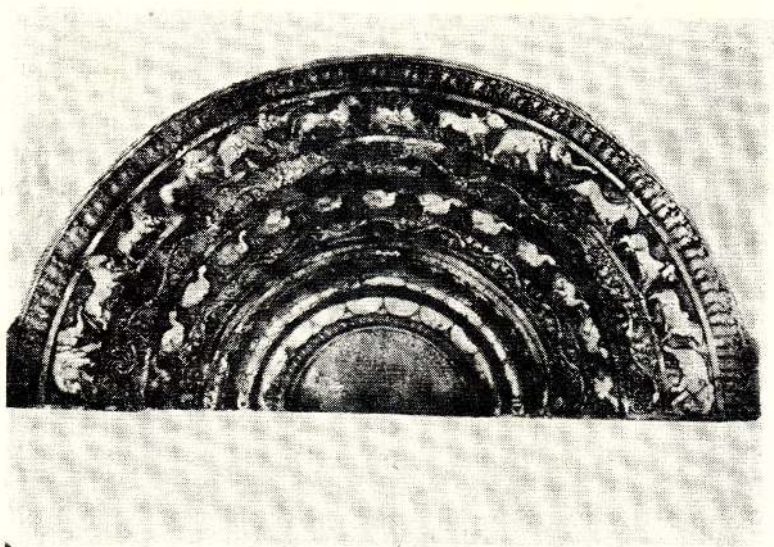




Hooded Cobra, Anuradhapura.



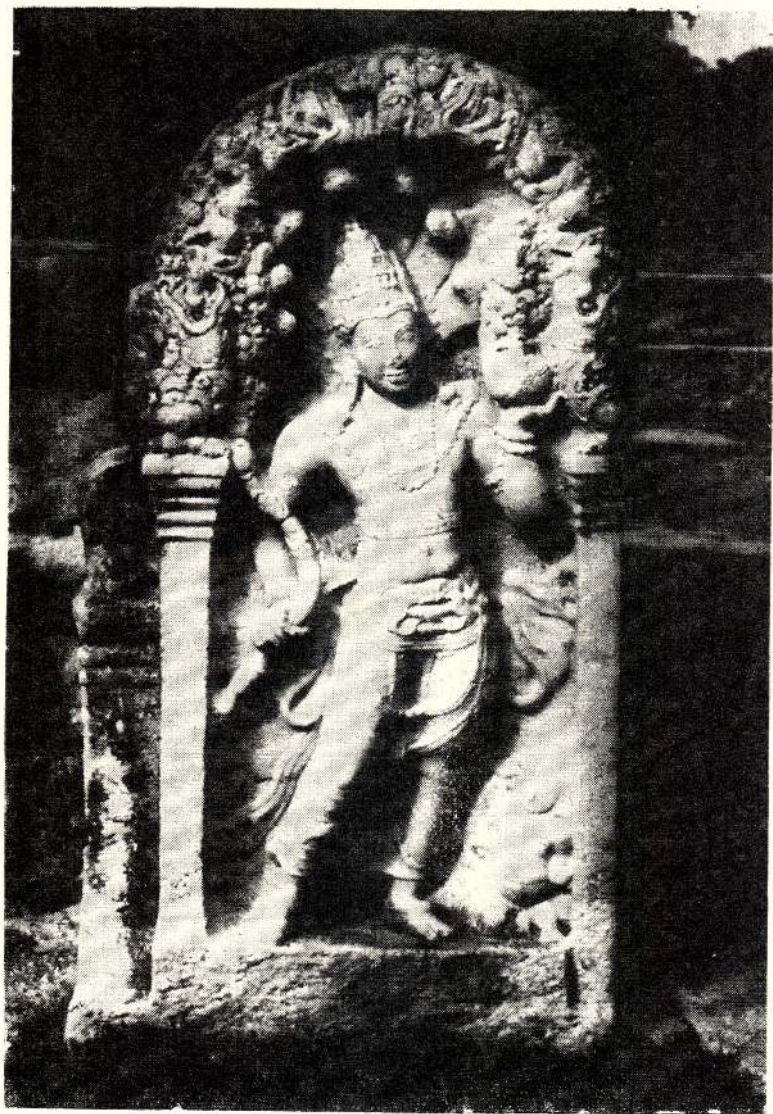
Hooded Cobra from Vatadage, Medirigiriya.



Moonstone from the Queen's Palace, Anuradhapura.



Moonstone, Guardstone, and balustrade Vatadage, Polonnaruwa.



Guardstone, Anuradhapura.



Vase and foliage carved on pillar, Anuradhapura.



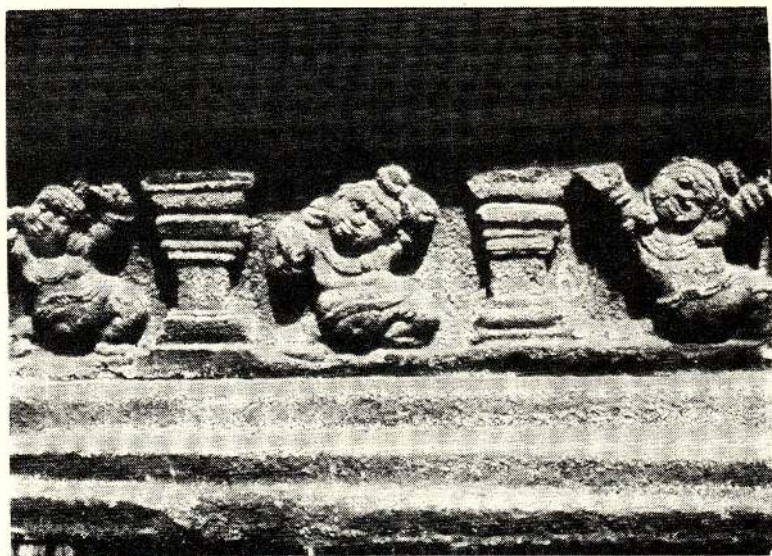
Dwarf from Palace, Anuradhapura.



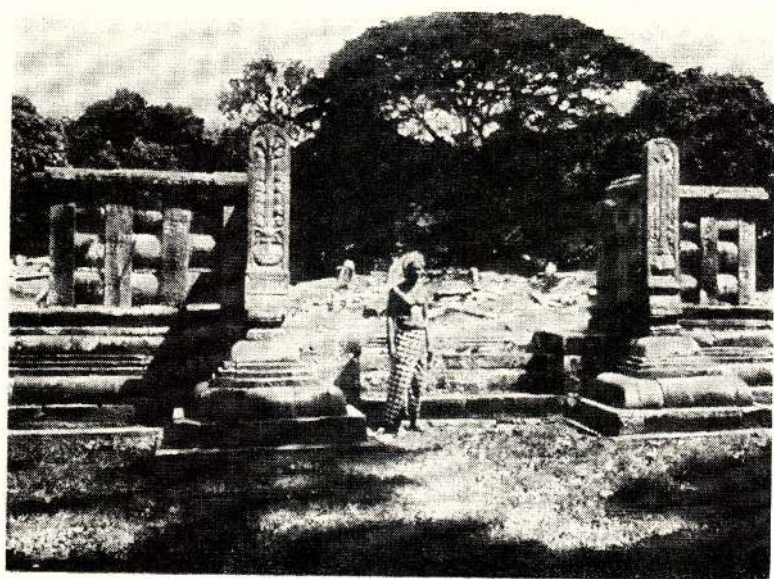
Pillar Capital, Brazen Palace - Anuradhapura.



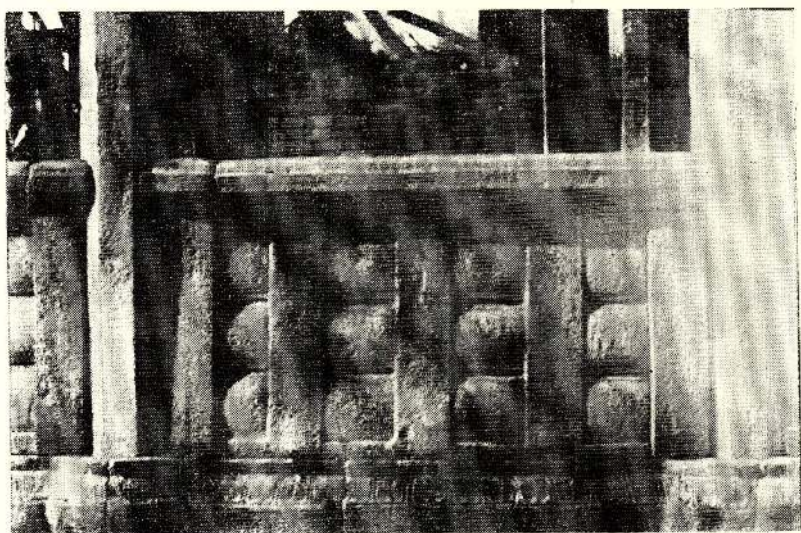
Figure of dwarf from Guardstone, Vatadage, Polonnaruva.



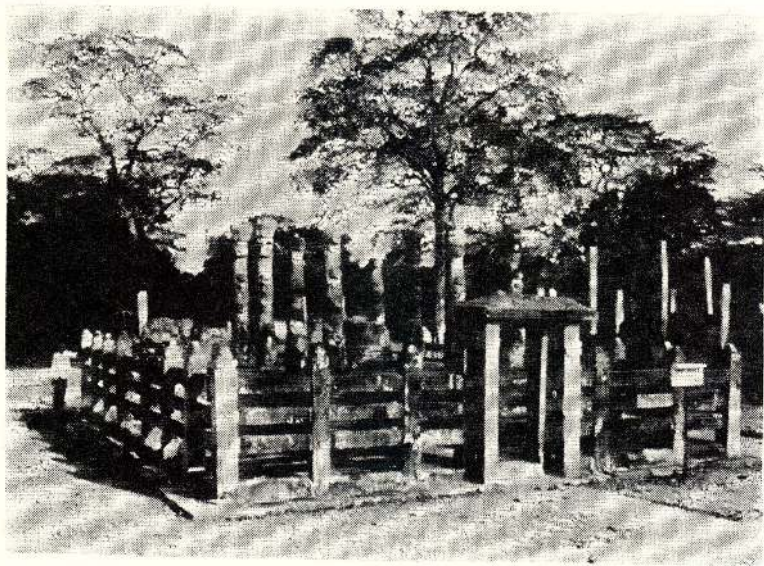
Dwarf figure from Rajavesyabhujanga, Polonnaruva.



Stone railing from Anuradhapura.



Stone railing from Vatadage, Medirigiriya.



Stone railing from Polonnaruwa.



Head of Bodhisattva, Thuparama from Anuradhapura.



Standing figure of deity, Kurukkalmadam, E.P.



Head of Maitriya Bodhisattva, now in the Colombo Museum.



Seated Bodhisattva in bronze, Medirigiriya.



Seated figure of Bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara Boston Museum.



Standing figure of Goddess Pattini (British Museum)



Standing figure of Bodhisattva, Medirigiriya.



Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.  
noolaham.org | aayanaham.org.  
Standing image of Bodhisattva, Situlpavva.



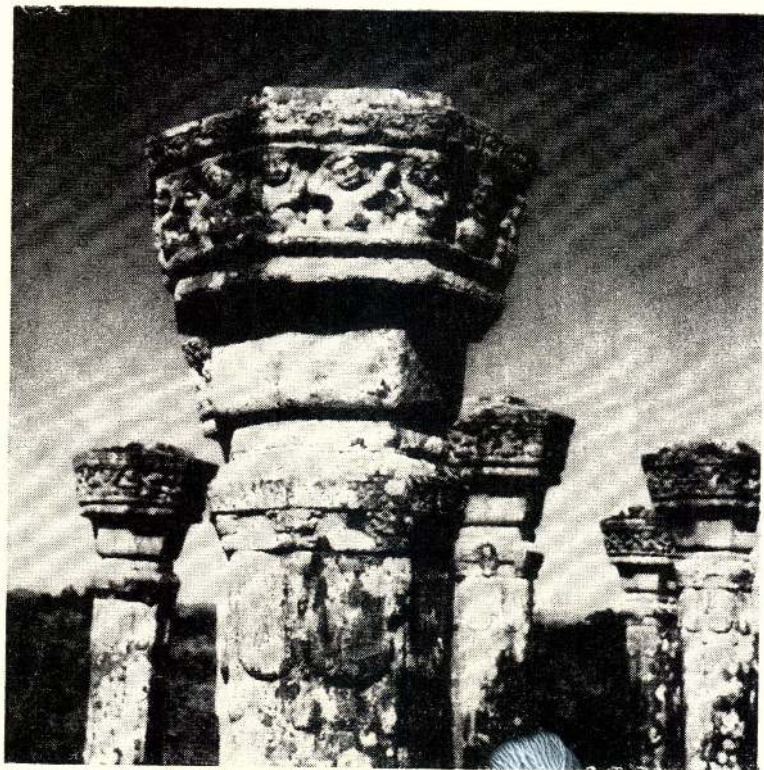
Standing figure of **Bodhisattva**, Polonnaruwa.



Image of Kustaraja, Weligama.



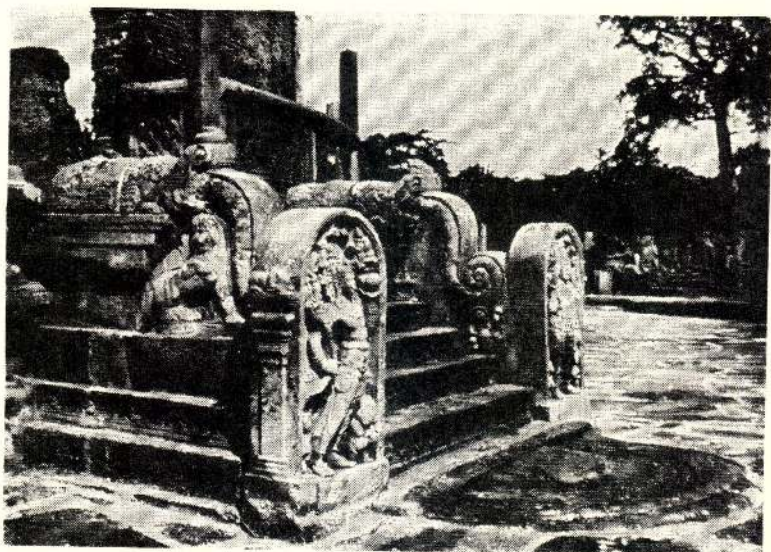
Standing pillars, Peacock Palace, Anuradhapura.



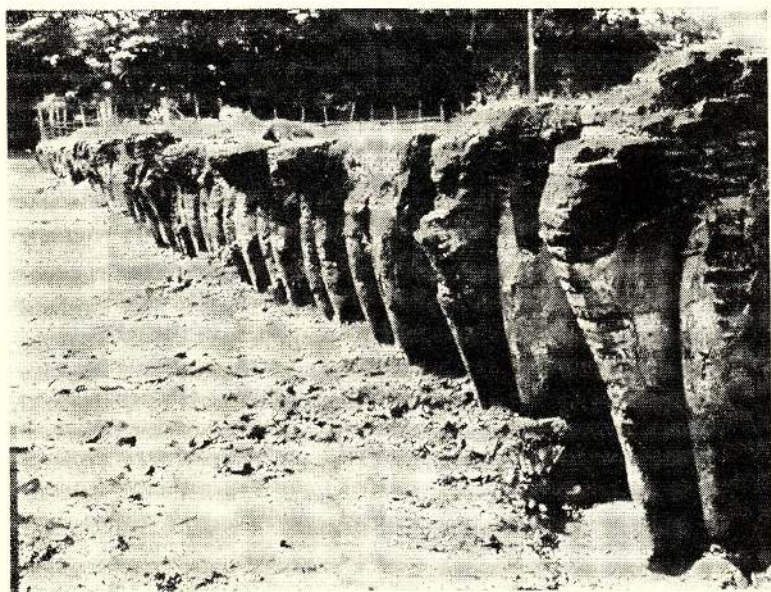
Pillars, Medirigiriya.



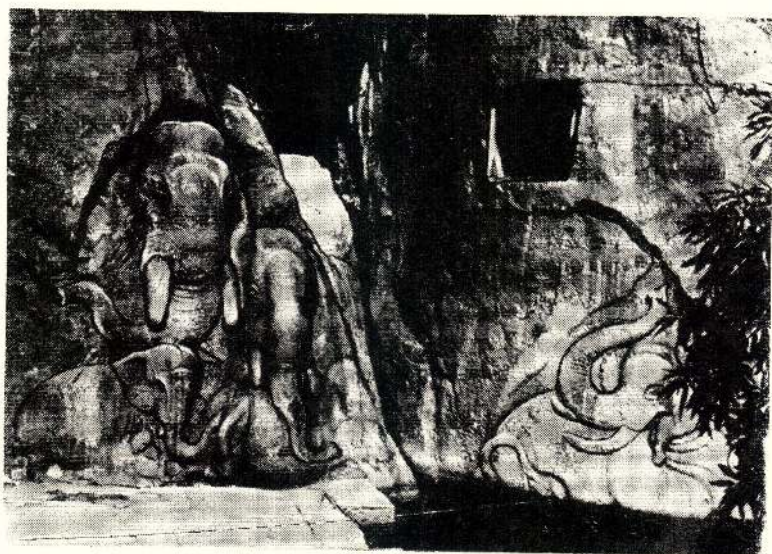
Makara balustrade, Anuradhapura.



Makara balustrade and guardstone at entrance, Vatadage, Polonnaruva.



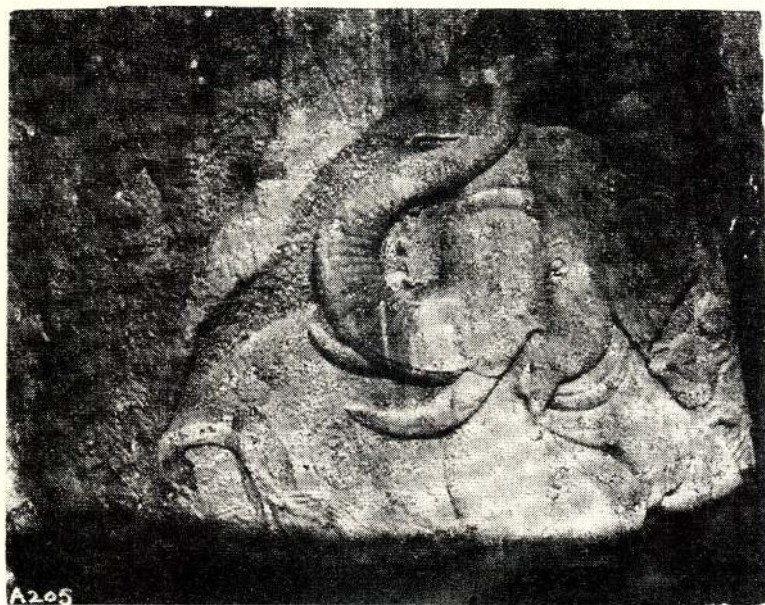
Frieze of elephant figures in brick and mortar, Ruanweliseya,  
Anuradhapura.



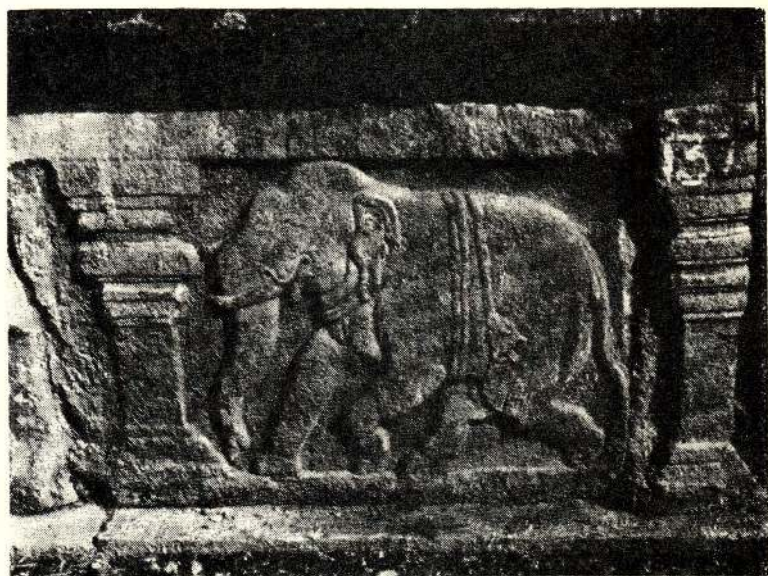
Group of elephants carved on rock, Isurumuniya.



Elephant Head carved on rock, Katupilana - Mahaweli Ganga.



Close-up of elephant, Isurumuniya.



Elephant carving, Polonnaruwa.



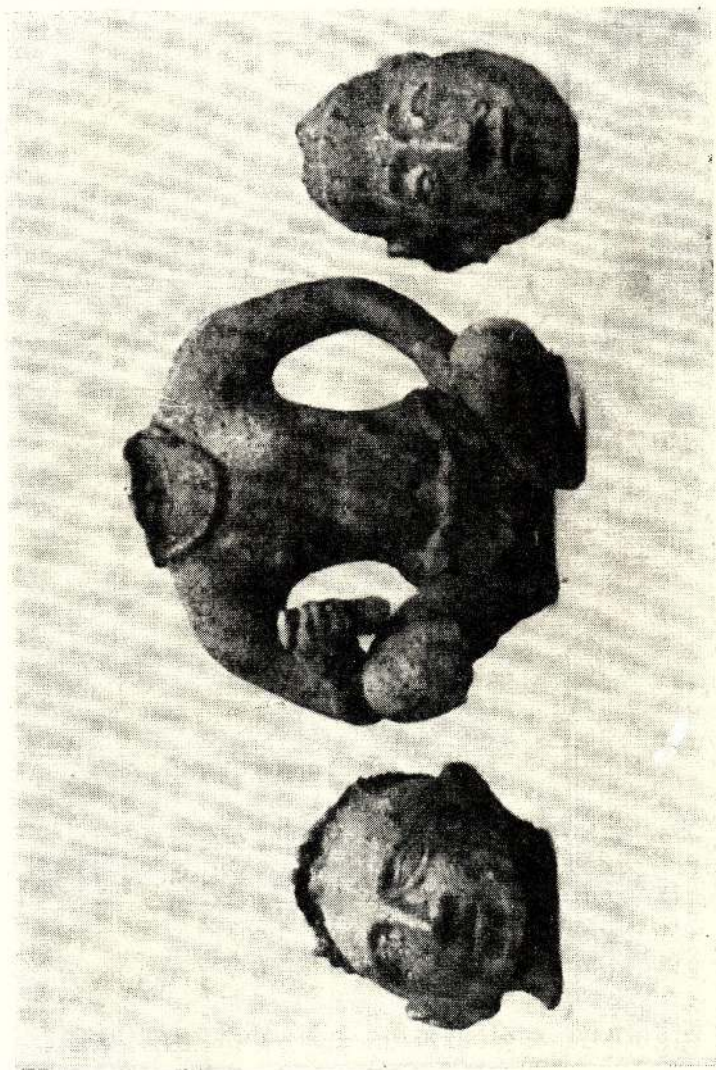
Figure of man and horse's head, Isurumuniya.



Terracotta heads, Kantakachetiya, Mihintale.



Terracotta figures from Katugampolagama.



Terracotta figures from Talagawewa.



Snake and mongoose, Anuradhapura.



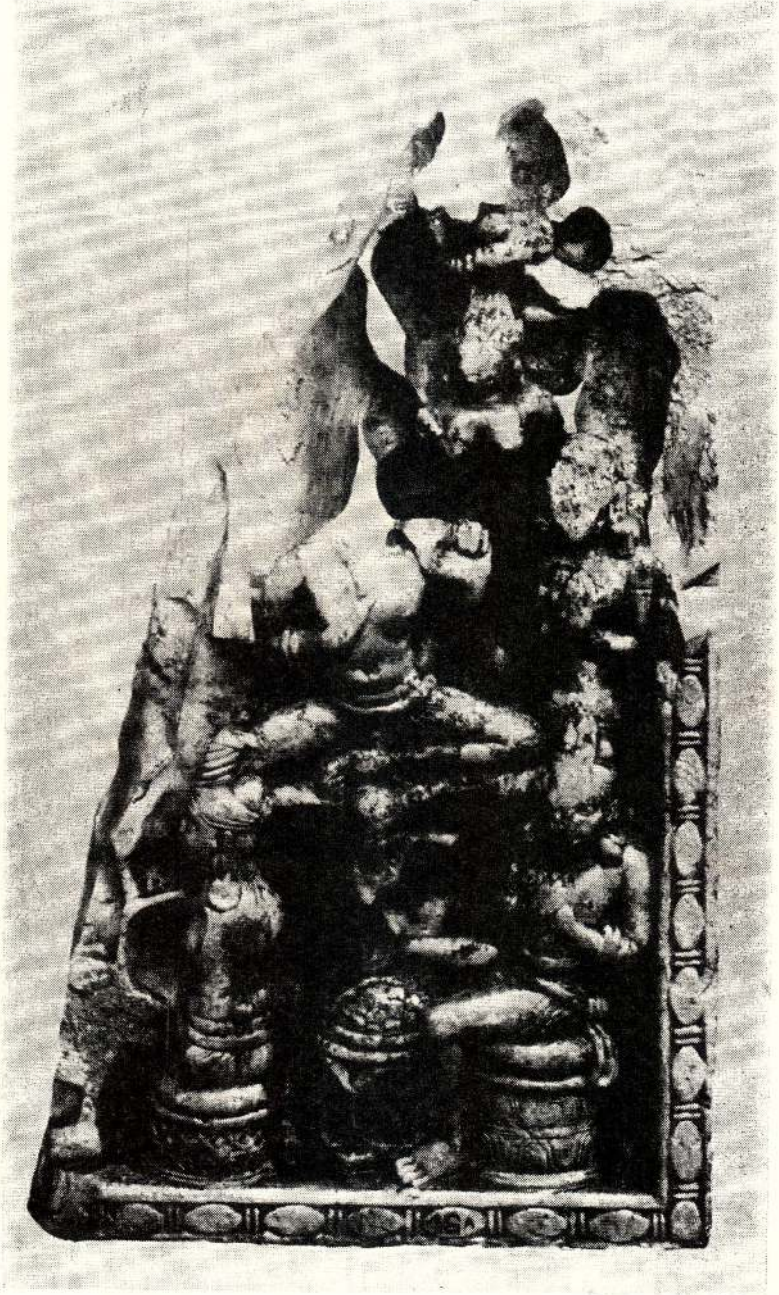
Figure of man and woman, Isurumuniya.



Scenes from Velanadamana Anuradhapura.



Creon of Queen Maya, now in the Colombo Museum.



Bodhisattva and other figures from the Colombo Museum.



Bodhisattva preaching, Eastern Tope, Anuradhapura.



Human figures carved on pillar, Northern Tope,  
Anuradhapura.



Figures carved on pillar, Northern Tope, Anuradhapura.



Renunciation of Prince Siddhartha, Ambalantota.



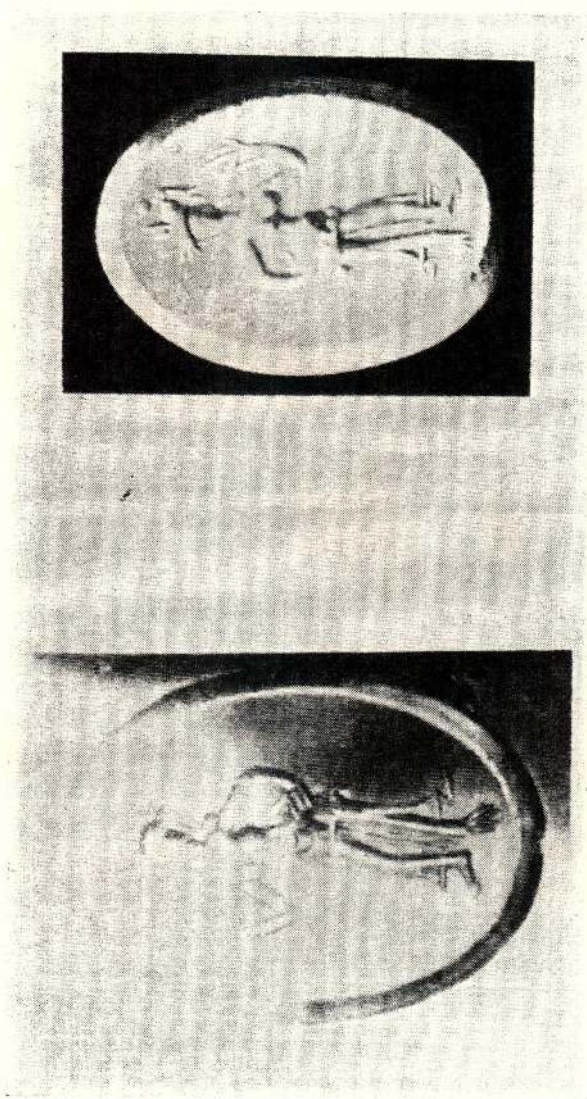
Bodhisattva and another figure in marble, Piduragala, Sigiriya.



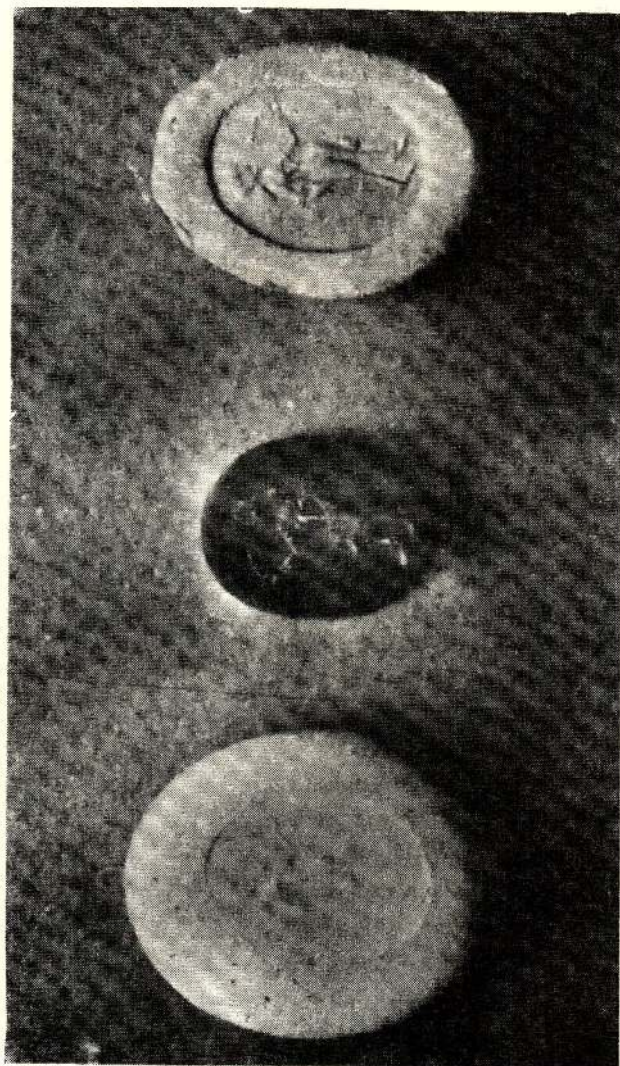
Three figures of Buddha in marble, Piduragala, Sigiriya.



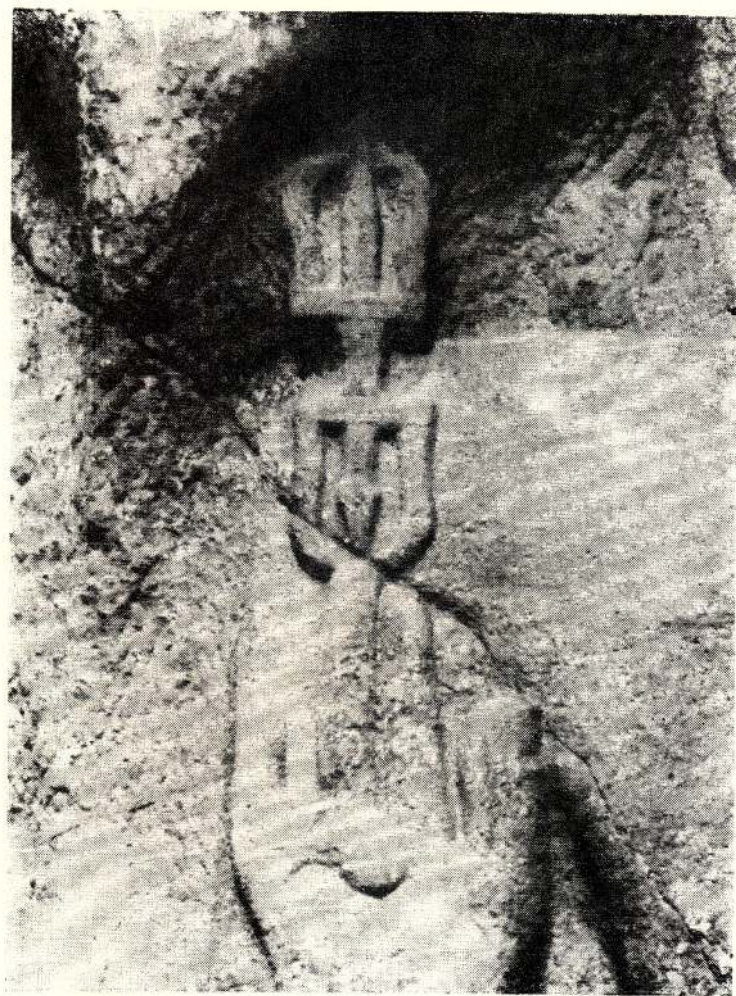
Buddha's feet, Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa.



(Both Sides) Dancing Girl, Mahapali, Anuradhapura.



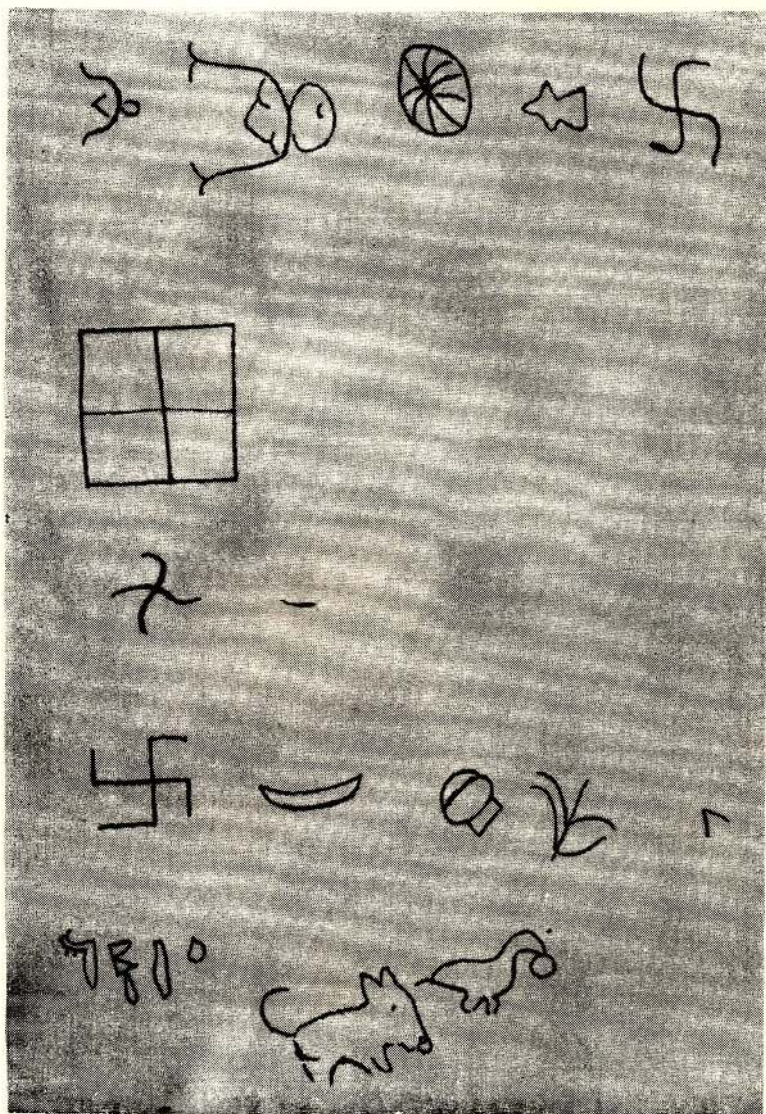
(Both Sides) Cornelian seal of dancing girl.



Double Vajra symbol carved on rock, Buduruvegala.



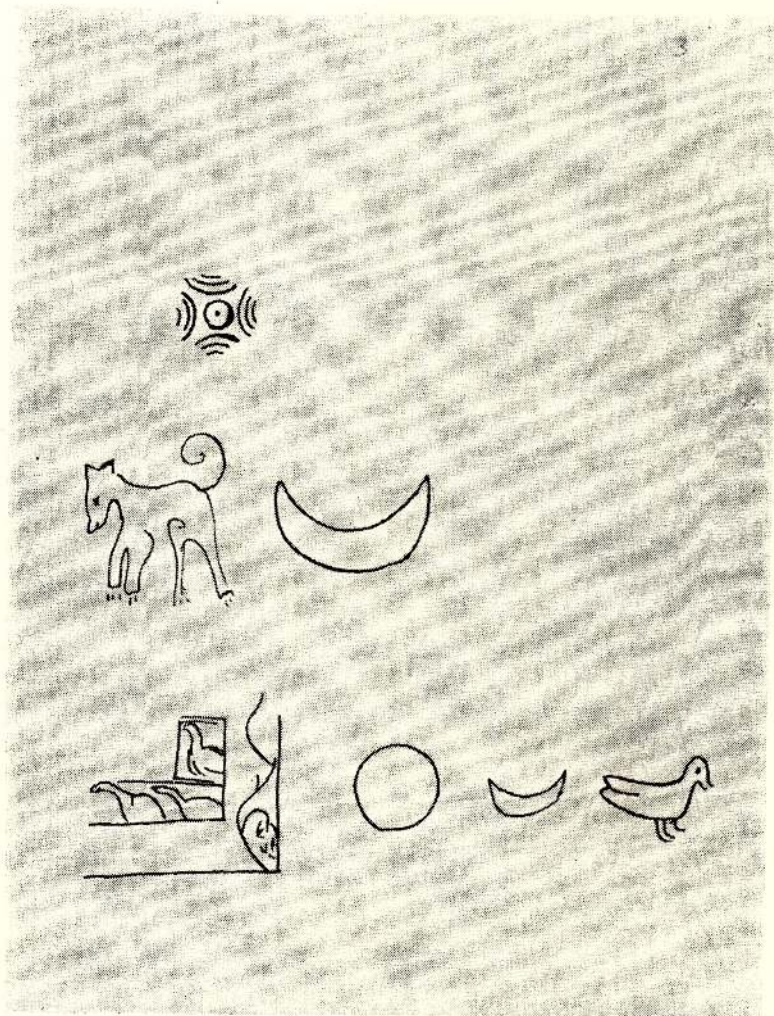
Figure of Swastika, Medirigiriya.



(Several figures) rock engravings.



(Several figures) rock engravings.



(Several figures) rock engravings.

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Dr. Nandadeva Wijesekera, the author of this book, is one, among the few persons now living, who can speak with authority on such subjects as Language, Anthropology, Archaeology, and Fine Arts of the people of Ceylon. He has had a remarkably diversified academic career and the rare distinction of being educated at no less than five of the world's foremost Universities.

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In his book "Early Sinhalese Painting," he has ably pieced together the scattered fragments of painting into one of the finest records about them. In this book he has set down his views on the subject of sculpture in a similar manner, easily intelligible to the reader. Among his books may be mentioned the "People of Ceylon," "Early Sinhalese Painting," "Early Sinhalese Sculpture" and "Veddahs in Transition" (now in the Press).

It is surprising how Dr. Wijesekera can find the time, whilst actively engaged in so many literary and cultural movements to write another book. Yet that is the remarkable secret and the strange fact about this man. Those who know him and his work will find no difficulty in understanding how it can be done.

This book is valuable, if for no other reason, at least to bestir in the mind of the bemoaning critic a feeling of consolation that the tradition of scholarship among the public servants is not yet dead. By his dynamic personality, his fearless approach to the problems and persistent speaking and writing, Dr. Wijesekera has to-day established a reputation as one of Ceylon's best administrators and eminent scholars—a rare combination indeed even in the past and rarer still in contemporary Ceylon.

