

88-2 116

84
2804

SOME ASPECTS
OF THE
HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY
IN
SRI LANKA



Presidential Address
by
JAMES T. RUTNAM

சாளுக்கியப் பேரரசின்
பெ. 1-57-ம் ஆண்டு,
கங்கோட்டி

9 November 1974

சாளுக்கியப் பேரரசின்
பெ. 1-57-ம் ஆண்டு,
கங்கோட்டி

JAFFNA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
23 AMMAN ROAD
JAFFNA, SRI LANKA

**SOME ASPECTS
OF THE
HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY
IN
SRI LANKA**



**Presidential Address
by
JAMES T. RUTNAM**

9 November 1974

**JAFFNA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
23 AMMAN ROAD
JAFFNA, SRI LANKA**

JAFFNA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
23 AMMAN ROAD, JAFFNA, SRI LANKA

1975

Foreword

For almost a century from the time of its inception the Government Department of Archaeology has functioned as the sole research centre for archaeology in this country. During the last fifty years, especially during the Commissionership of the late Prof. Senarat Paranavitana, the Department undertook remarkable research and publication work in this field. While the Department still continues to be the only place where any appreciable research and publication work in archaeology are undertaken, the output is not on a par with that of the forties and fifties.

The Department of Archaeology established in our University (then the University of Ceylon) in 1956 made a good start under its first Research Professor S. Paranavitana. But that Department is now struggling for its survival, having lost its original home in the salubrious campus at Peradeniya.

It is indeed regrettable that in a country that has gained much fame for its archaeological treasures, the value of archaeological studies is not being appreciated fully. Our scholars have a very great responsibility to shoulder in this respect. Until such time as the Government and the University realize the need to give archaeology its due place, voluntary organizations have to help keep alive the tradition of archaeological research.

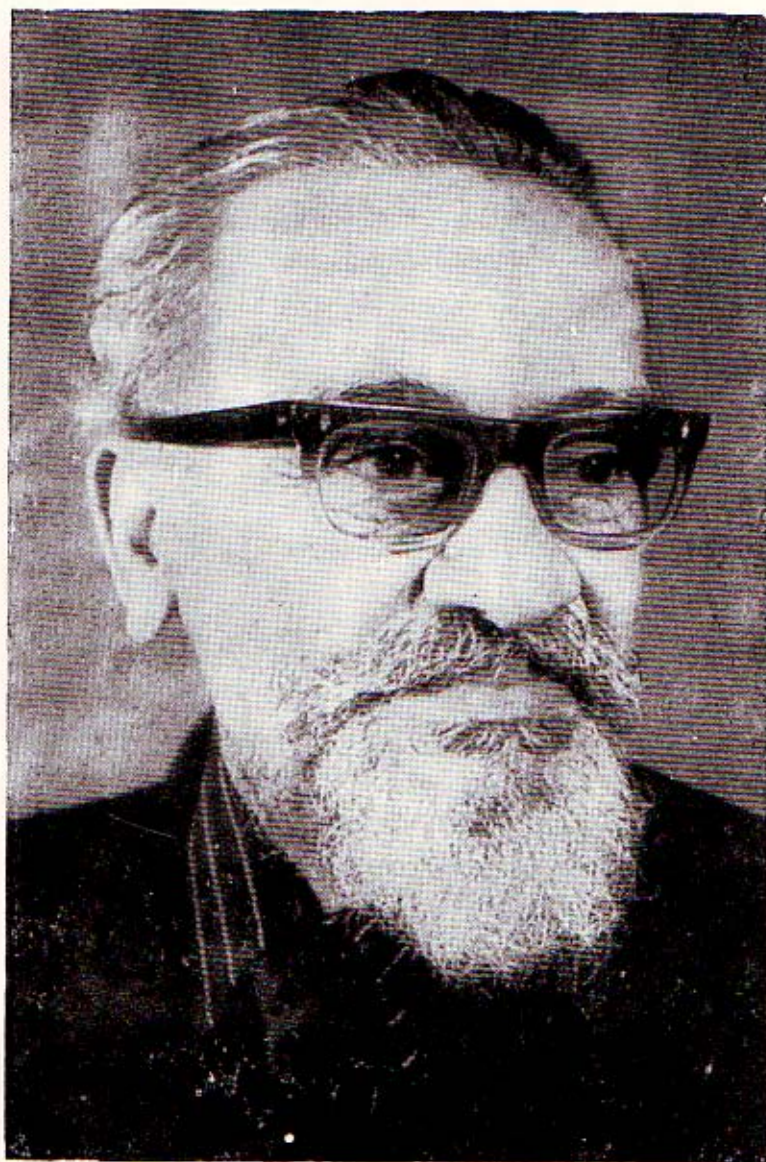
The Jaffna Archaeological Society, it must be admitted, is setting a fine example in this respect. It has undertaken, during the short period of its existence, not only archaeological surveys that have resulted in the discovery of inscriptions and monuments but also serious publication work. Its publications include a journal of Tamil epigraphy called *Epigraphia Tamilica* and an annual bulletin entitled *Pūrvakalā*.

This booklet containing the text of the Presidential Address delivered by Mr. James T. Rutnam in 1974 is its sixth publication. The author, on whose seventieth birthday this month the Society is releasing a Felicitation Volume, belongs to that small but reputed class of amateurs who have made worthy contributions to historical and archaeological scholarship in our land.

It is hoped that this publication, which reminds our younger scholars of the commendable archaeological work done by this class of amateurs, local and foreign, will stimulate new interest in the subject and lead to a fresh awareness of the value of such work for our country.

*
Karthigesu Indrapala
Vice President
Jaffna Archaeological Society.

13th June 1975,
23, Amman Road,
Jaffna, Sri Lanka.



JAMES THEVATHASAN RUTNAM
President

TEXT OF AN ADDRESS ON SOME ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN SRI LANKA DELIVERED BY MR. JAMES T. RUTNAM PRESIDENT OF THE JAFFNA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY AT THE RAMANATHAN HALL OF THE JAFFNA CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA, THIRUNELVELY, JAFFNA ON 9 NOVEMBER 1974

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I fully appreciate the honour that the Jaffna Archaeological Society has conferred upon me by electing me President of this honourable and learned Society. I am conscious of my own limitations in so wide a field as the one in which we are engaged, but I yield to none in the interest, devotion and enthusiasm I have evinced in this and related subjects for well-nigh half a century.

I am also conscious of the fact that this is a historic occasion, for I have been given the privilege to deliver the first public address at the Jaffna Campus of the University of Sri Lanka at the Ramanathan Hall, dedicated to the memory of a great patriot, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan.

I am reminded, as I speak, of the historic moments following the dark days in Sri Lanka in 1915 when Ramanathan reached the pinnacle of fame in this country such as no other Ceylonese had ever reached before or since, and when as the large painting which you see hanging in this Hall testifies, he was dragged in his carriage by his adoring countrymen like a Roman Conqueror returning with the spoils of war.

Apart from the artist who had captured for us that glorious hour, the poet too has left for posterity these memorable lines:

*"Not horses but relays of men
Draw his carriage through the streets.
A halt is made; he leaves his seat,
Now see him stand
Above the crowd
A new-enfranchised country's choice
And now he speaks; be proud
To tell in ages hence you heard that voice"¹*

I have heard that voice many times, but not on that occasion; for then I was only a lad of ten years. I remember however the echoes that were heard in my home and in every home throughout the land.

Time moves on. The fascinating study of the material remains of man's past, known to us as archaeology has also progressed. We have now arrived at a stage when it is possible to speak on the history of Archaeology. This serves to confirm the truism which I venture to state: Whatever studies one pursues, one finally gravitates to the study of History.

1. A. C. S(eneviratne) *Ceylon Daily News* following Ramanathan's death on 26 November 1930.

The Father of History was Herodotus, and he has also been described as the Father of Anthropology and Archaeology. Archaeology has thus engaged the interest and attention of people from classical times.

Like most sciences Archaeology too began with curiosity on the part of man. Interest in antiquities, both for possession and study, had manifested itself during the course of time, and this interest had taken a turn towards formal historical antiquarianism as distinct from dilettantism.

The advance of natural science at the close of the eighteenth century was a turning point in the history of all disciplines. Archaeology was able to burst its boundaries and engage in the study of prehistoric man even without assistance from contemporary written sources. Geology and Physical Anthropology became indispensable aids, and a section of Archaeology described as Prehistoric Archaeology took shape. Gone were the days of Archbishop Ussher² who claimed that man was created in 4004 B.C., and of Bishop Lightfoot who went one better than His Grace, when with a misplaced zeal for exactitude he asserted that the Creation had occurred at 9 a.m. on 23 October 4004 B.C.³

Today Archaeology has become a popular subject. It has attracted both trained and untrained minds. The potential danger arising from mishandling of material by the latter could, however, be averted in a socialist State such as ours, without in any way dampening the public interest, with proper guidance, supervision and assistance being made available to bona fide researchers by the State and the University Campuses.

It is not my intention in this discourse to dwell solely or at length on the historical narrative, for in that case I feel I shall be obliged to repeat the accounts given by such able and learned scholars as D. T. Devendra, Saddamangala Karunaratna, R. H. de Silva and C. E. Godakumbura, all officials of the Archaeological Department of Sri Lanka at one time or other.

In 1959 D. T. Devendra^{3a} contributed an article under the caption *Seventy Years of Ceylon Archaeology* to a journal of the Institute of Fine Arts of the New York University entitled *Artibus Asiae* published in Ascona, Switzerland.⁴ Devendra had dated the commencement of Ceylon Archaeology from the appointment of Harry Charles Purvis Bell as Archaeological Commissioner in February 1890. He followed up this article in 1969 with a small booklet entitled *The Story of Ceylon Archaeology*, where he traced the beginnings of his story to 1868 when an "Archaeological Commission was appointed to consider practical measures to be taken to conserve ancient architectural structures and other works of art". This booklet was published by the Archaeological Society of Ceylon, Colombo, which Devendra as its Vice-President from its inception had fondly nourished and supported until his untimely death.

Saddhamangala Karunaratna^{4a} had earlier in 1956 published a *History of Archaeology in Ceylon* in Sinhalese. The need for a History of Archaeology

2. James Ussher (1581-1656) Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, whose chronology was later inserted in the margins of the Authorised Version of the Bible; See Vergilius Ferm *An Encyclopaedia of Religion* New York 1945, p. 807.
3. Joseph Lightfoot (1828-1889), Bishop of Durham; See Glyn E. Daniel *A Hundred Years of Archaeology*, London 1952, p. 27.
- 3a. (1902-1972) Former Assistant Archaeological Commissioner, See *JCBRAS* Vol. XVI NS 1972 pp. 38-39.
4. Vol. XXII November 1954 *Alfred Salmony Commemoration Number*, pp. 23-47.
- 4a. Senior Assistant Archaeological Commissioner.

in Tamil is now felt strongly and I trust one would be forthcoming soon. Karunaratna's book was followed by a short article on the same subject that was contributed by him to the Fifteenth Anniversary Souvenir of the Engineering Association of Ceylon, Colombo, issued in 1957.

In 1969 R. H. de Silva^{4b} traced "the history of antiquarian studies in Ceylon and the development of archaeological work ever since the importance of safeguarding the cultural heritage of this Island was appreciated by the British colonial Government in the nineteenth century". His contribution consisted of a long chapter in Volume 3 of the three-volume centenary work of the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs issued that year on Education in Ceylon.

In this chapter de Silva begins with a description of a discovery by Lt. M. H. Fagan in 1818⁵ of the ruins of Polonnaruwa, the famous capital of Parakrama Bahu the Great (1153-1186) and which also was for some years in the eleventh century the provincial capital in Sri Lanka of the Chola Empire. This city was entombed for as long as half a millenium, and the Portuguese and Dutch were never aware of its importance.

C. E. Godakumbura^{5a} chose the *History of Archaeology in Ceylon* as the subject of his Presidential Address to the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, which he delivered on 29 November 1968. Godakumbura's other contributions of a like nature were published in *Ceylon Today*, the journal of the Ceylon Government Information Department. In the issue of that journal for October 1965 Godakumbura gave a summary of the work done until then on the pre-history of Ceylon.⁶

In 1967 *Ceylon Today* carried a series of three articles by Godakumbura on the Archaeology of Ceylon's Northern Peninsula.⁷ Referring to the work begun in Jaffna on 24 April 1966, the author wrote that it was "the first time an organised archaeological excavation was being carried out in the North of Ceylon". In 1968 in the November/December issue of *Ceylon Today* Godakumbura wrote on the history of *Epigraphical Studies in Ceylon*.⁸ To these studies on the history of archaeology in Sri Lanka we have to add two articles written by anonymous authors, "A Special Correspondent" and "E.R." that appeared in the *Times of Ceylon* on 25 and 27 September 1956 respectively, one on the *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon* and the other a *Profile on Dr. S. Paranavitana* on Paranavitana's retirement from the office of Archaeological Commissioner.

The Administration Reports of the Archaeological Commissioners had dwelt at length and in detail on the work done and the discoveries made from time to time and these have been relied upon by the authors mentioned above.

4b. Archaeological Commissioner.

5. See *Supplement to the Ceylon Government Gazette*, 1 August 1820; *The Orientalist* Vol. 2 pp. 84 ff. Fagan discovered these ruins on 27 June 1820. On an earlier occasion in October 1817 another Officer travelling from Bintenna to Minery is reported to have encountered some of these ruins. The year 1818 may not be quite correct.

5a. Former Archaeological Commissioner; See *JCBRAS* Vol. XIII NS 1969 pp. 1-38; The reference (fn.* p. 13) in that article to the photographer of the 1870s should be to A. Lawton, an Englishman and not to S. K. Lawton a Ceylonese photographer at Kandy during this period. The error was due to me and is much regretted.

6. pp. 19 to 25.

7. January 1967 pp. 3 to 10; September 1967 pp. 10 to 15; November 1967 pp. 11 to 16.

8. pp. 12 to 18; Here Godakumbura dwelt entirely with the interlinear inscriptions of Paranavitana describing them as "a new field of discovery" of "immense philological and historical interest". See fn. 27 *infra*.

One further item needs inclusion here. It is the documented account of the history of the archaeology of the North Central Province given in R. W. Iever's *Manual of the North Central Province Ceylon*.⁹

This catalogue of publications on the history of archaeology in Sri Lanka is, I venture to say, fairly complete. I propose now to confine myself to some remarks arising from a study of the progress and development of archaeological work in Sri Lanka.

First and foremost it must be understood that we use the term Archaeology to embrace a considerable number of subsidiary or related studies and aids. Amongst these Epigraphy is foremost. Then there are Numismatics, Architecture, Chemistry, Geology, Palaeontology, Anthropology, Ethnology, Ethnography, Sociology, Photogrammetry, Linguistics, Dendrochronology, and Carbon Radio-activity. In its restricted sense Archaeology would mean only exploration, excavation—in short digging up the past.

It is impossible in this inter-related world to confine knowledge into water-tight compartments. This is especially the case with Archaeology. This explains why today in the Government Department of Archaeology in Sri Lanka, we have a team of competent archaeologists, who between them have specialist qualifications in chemistry, epigraphy, architecture, oriental languages and excavation.

Archaeology, as we know it now, is a modern science. During the colonial times those in charge of this work were mostly members of the Administrative Service, then known as the Ceylon Civil Service. The Civil Servants were the all-knowing ones, the closest approach at the time among us mortals to *Bon Dieu*, the Omniscient One, if I may say so with utmost reverence. We had Civil Servants who became Governors and Supreme Court Judges in this country. We had others of this fraternity who contented themselves with being Food Controllers and Marketing Commissioners. In this same tribe we had several archaeological officials, the first of them being Harry Charles Purvis Bell who was transferred (no doubt to his own liking) from the eminence of being District Judge of Kegalle to clearing the jungles in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa and digging into the bowels of the earth.

You will note that Bell was an amateur as far as Archaeology was concerned. But amateurs, that is those not professionally or academically trained, have done well in archaeological or related work all over the world not excluding Sri Lanka. In this connection Devendra has listed the following Sri Lanka names in this order: Ponnambalam Arunachalam, Ananda Coomaraswamy, C. Rasanayagam, Paul E. Pieris, C. H. Collins, P. E. P. Deraniyagala, R. L. Brohier, C. W. Nicholas, A. Nell and D. P. E. Hettiarachchi. Devendra says that this list is not complete.

A. M. Hocart^{9a} who was at one time Archaeological Commissioner was specially qualified in Ethnology and had been a member of the Rivers Expedition to the Solomon Islands. A. H. Longhurst, a brother-in-law of the great John Marshall of Indian Archaeology, was himself Superintendent of the Southern Circle of the Indian Archaeological Survey before he came out to Ceylon. P. C. Sestieri, a famous classical archaeologist was sent by UNESCO to work and train students in Sri Lanka.

9. Colombo 1899, Chapter XV, pp. 211 to 242.

9a. (1883 to 1939), Archaeological Commissioner 1921 to 1930, see *Epigraphia Zeylanica* vol. iv p. iii.

Sir William Henry Gregory, the Governor of Ceylon in the 1870s, whose statue stands in front of the Colombo Museum, was responsible for engaging Paul Goldschmidt¹⁰ in 1875 to copy and decipher our inscriptions. He died at the age of 27 years in Galle on 7 May 1877 of malaria contracted in the jungles of our land. E. Müller who succeeded him was an epigraphist. He published his interesting work *Ancient Inscriptions in Ceylon* in two Volumes in London in 1883.

A. O. Brodie, W.A. S. Boake, R. W. Ievers, S. M. Burrows, Joseph Pearson, Henry Parker, John Still and T. W. Rhys Davids came from the Ceylon Public Services and had shown enthusiasm in their work which they performed more often as an avocation.

The only official of the early period who was a qualified Archaeologist unfortunately met with a tragic fate. He was Edward R. Ayrton who was drowned accidentally in the Tissaveva in Tissamaharama on 18 May 1914 within a year of his appointment. He was a young Egyptologist who worked under Flinders Petrie, and was in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes when he decided to come to Ceylon. Had he continued to work in Egypt he would have at least had a share of honour in the glorious discovery of the treasures of Tutankhaman by Lord Carnarvon and Howard Carter in November 1922. We may well speculate with Devendra, whether it was the curse of the Pharaohs that pursued Ayrton to this distant land and finally overtook him.

It is interesting to note here that the world famous Sir Austen Henry Layard who discovered Nimrud and recovered at Nineveh a great library of cuneiform tablets was a son of a Ceylon Civil Servant, Henry Peter John Layard, who was sent to Ceylon along with his brother Charles by their father the Dean of Bristol sometime after the British took over the Maritime Provinces of Sri Lanka.^{10a} The Layard family was well represented in the administrative and judicial services of this country. Even today we are reminded of the family when we come across Layard's Broadway, Layard's Road and Layard's Folly, the last sobriquet reserved by critics to ridicule the construction of the Wellawatte Canal.

When we examine closely the whole range of the story of Archaeology in Sri Lanka, we would find two outstanding figures who between them spanned the period from 1890 to 1956 with a short break during the First World War and a few years thereafter. They are Harry Charles Purvis Bell (1851-1937) and Senarat Paranavitana (1896-1972). Another contemporary figure whose great work had suffered only by comparison with the works of Bell and Paranavitana, but who nevertheless stands pre-eminent in his own self-chosen field of Epigraphy, is Don Martino de Zilwa Wickremasinghe,¹¹ the Editor of the first two volumes of the *Epigraphia Zeylanica*.

Obituary notices of Bell and Paranavitana who (like Wickremasinghe) were not professionally or academically qualified for their tasks before they

10. See K. Indrapala, "Paul Goldschmidt, Sri Lanka's First Archaeological Commissioner" *Purvakala*, Jaffna 1973, pp. 13 to 15; also J. P. Lewis *Tombstones and Monuments*, Colombo 1913 pp. 197, 198.

10a. J. P. Lewis, *op. cit.* p. 25.

11. See *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. IV p. iii; also W. Mendis Gunasekera, "A Pioneer of Epigraphical Research", *Ceylon Observer* 16 January 1975 p. 2.

entered into their vocations, have appeared in the journals¹² of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, a learned institution which has never failed to foster and support Archaeology from the time of its establishment in 1846. Paranavitana who succeeded Wickremasinghe as Editor of the *Epigraphia Zeylanica* had a paragraph each on Bell and Wickremasinghe in his Preface to Vol. IV of that journal. A list of Bell's writings compiled by Lyn de Fonseka appeared in *Ceylon Today*.¹³ An impressive list of Paranavitana's writings up to the year 1963 was published by H. A. I. Goonetilleke^{13a} in the *Paranavitana Felicitation Volume* issued in 1965, and a further list up to 1972 by Goonetilleke appeared in a Special Issue of the Sinhala journal *Sanskriti* published in 1974.

Both Bell and Paranavitana were tenacious upholders of their theories. Bell maintained until his death and in the face of all criticism the old identification of the Abhayagiri and Jetavana dagobas in Anuradhapura, an identification which was challenged on the earliest occasion in 1888 by Hugh Nevill¹⁴ and later by H. Parker.¹⁵ Even Emerson Tennent had described the Abhayagiri in his book on Ceylon¹⁶ in impressive and glowing language, the whole while believing it to be the Jetavana. But we know it for certain now that Tennent's Jetavana is truly Abhayagiri and that his Abhayagiri is truly Jetavana.

In the same way Paranavitana held fast to his theories and conjectures. Some of these have been openly contradicted by scholars such as J. E. Van Lohuizen de Leeuw,¹⁷ R. H. de Silva,¹⁸ A. D. T. E. Perera,¹⁹ Siri Gunasinghe,²⁰ P. C. Sestieri²¹ and R. A. L. H. Gunawardene.²²

The most important of Paranavitana's theories, according to one of his severest and most convincing critics, R. A. L. H. Gunawardene, would "if they are accepted, involve the re-writing of a substantial portion of the ancient and mediaeval history of Ceylon". In an effort possibly to counter the "indo-centrism" of our historical writing both ancient and modern, Paranavitana appears to have gone to another extreme and has argued according to Gunawardene "for a relationship between Ceylon and Malaysia extending

12. See D. T. Devendra, "Harry Charles Purvis Bell", *JCBRAS* Vol. VIII NS pt. 1, 1962, pp. 163 to 165; Godakumbura "Senarat Paranavitana" *op. cit.* Vol. XVI, 1972 pp. 33 to 37.
13. Vol. 1 Nos. 2 and 3.
- 13a. Librarian, University of Sri Lanka, Peradeniya Campus, author of *A Bibliography of Ceylon* 2 Volumes 1970, an indispensable guide to scholars.
14. See Kamalasundari de Silva, "The Abhayagiri and Jetavanarama: A Case of Mistaken Identity", *Ceylon Daily News* 23 October 1965, p. 9; Hugh Nevill b. 19 June 1848, d. in France 10 April 1897, Editor *Taprobanian*, 3 Volumes from October 1885 to 1888, also *Oriental Studies* 1882, Ceylon Civil Service 1869 to 1886; cf. *Ceylon Literary Register* Vol. 2, No. 37, 1888. p. 294; also *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, Vol. 1, Colombo 1924, pp. 10 to 14 where Hocart writes from Ayrton's notes.
15. See H. Parker *Ancient Ceylon* London 1909, pp. 298 to 311.
16. See James Emerson Tennent *Ceylon*, second edition, London 1859, Vol. 1 p. 346.
17. See "The Rock-cut Sculptures at Isurumuni" a paper read at Colombo at the Second International Conference Seminar on Asian Archaeology, 22 to 26 August 1969; also "The Kustarajagala Image" *Paranavitana Felicitation Volume* Colombo 1965, pp. 253-261.
18. "The Dakkina Thupa" *Ceylon Observer* 24 March 1957.
19. "Roruka" *Studies in Indo-Asian Art and Culture* New Delhi 1973, Vol. III, pp. 83 to 89.
20. "The Statue at Potgul Vehara" *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* Vol. 1 No. 2, 1958 pp. 180 to 191.
21. "On the Statue at Potgul Vehara" *East and West* Vol. 9 No. 3, 1958 pp. 233 to 237.
22. R. A. L. H. Gunawardene, "Ceylon and Malaysia" *University of Ceylon Review* April-October 1967 Vol. XXV Nos. 1 and 2 pp. 1 to 64.

beyond the economic and cultural spheres that the earlier writings had postulated", so much so that he had suggested calling the period between the demise of Parakrama Bahu I and the accession of Parakrama Bahu II the "Malay Period of Ceylon History". The subject has been dealt with fully by Gunawardene in his article on "Ceylon and Malaysia" in the last and final issue of the *University of Ceylon Review*. Gunawardene had made a serious attempt to read some of the alleged interlinear inscriptions himself but had found them "unreliable". He further proceeded to test Paranavitana's arguments based on these inscriptions against other known historical evidence and had found them unacceptable and had considered Paranavitana's sources as being "of dubious credibility for purposes of historical reconstruction". Paranavitana had advanced his contention for the first time at a seminar at Dambadeniya in 1958.²³ Notwithstanding Gunawardene's effective disposal of this thesis Paranavitana continued to uphold his position until his dying day.

Paranavitana had engaged himself in a vigorous controversy with K. A. Nilakanta Sastri²⁴ the noted historian of South India, and had also introduced his views into several publications which have all been listed by Gunawardene. Paranavitana had even taken upon himself the grave responsibility to incorporate his novel theories, with scant respect for his critics, into a college text-book written jointly by himself and C. W. Nicholas, the *Concise History of Ceylon*, published by the University of Ceylon in 1961²⁵.

The basis of Paranavitana's arguments was his detection of interlinear writing which he claimed to have found in about twenty-five inscriptions scattered all over the Island and at Ramesvaram in South India. The bulk of these interlinear readings could go to form several volumes. Indeed he claimed to have read copious extracts from a mysterious book (written in Sanskrit prose) named *Parampara-Pustaka* (the Book of Lineages), "written in the reign of Vikramabahu (1111-1132), by a monk named Bhadra who was the pupil of the Sthavira (Head of the Sangha) of Svarnapura (Sri Vijaya) and had received his education at the Abhayagiri Vihara of Anuradhapura."²⁶ He also claimed to have read extracts from four other hitherto unknown and certainly non-extant works named *Sundarivrttanta*, *Magharajavrttanta*, *Suvarnapuravamsa* and *Rajavamsa*.

In the light of Gunawardene's criticism we are obliged to come to the conclusion that Paranavitana's work is a marvellous piece of fiction that only an extraordinary genius with a vivid imagination and an amazing knowledge of the minutest details of the currents and cross-currents of historical events could have been able to produce. Knowing the man as we do, we cannot impugn his integrity. We can only say with the utmost respect that his imagination had been permitted to run riot and that he had become really as he himself had feared, "the victim of some sort of hallucination".^{26a}

23. See *Dambadeni Sahitya Sammelanaya, Sammelana Satahan*, Department of Cultural Affairs, Colombo 1959, pp. 23 to 27, 33 and 34.

24. See S. Paranavitana "Ceylon and Malaysia" A Rejoinder to Nilakanta Sastri, *JCBRAS* Vol. VIII NS pt. 2 1963 pp. 330 to 377; for Sastri's views see *op. cit* Vol. VIII NS pt. 1, 1962 pp. 125 to 140.

25. For a severe criticism of this work See S. P. F. Senaratna *Prehistoric Archaeology in Ceylon* Colombo 1969 pp. 28, 29.

26. S. Paranavitana, "Ceylon and Sri Vijaya" *Artibus Asiae, Essays Offered to G. H. Luce*, Vol. 1, p. 207, 1966.

26a. See Paranavitana *The Greeks and Mauryas*, Colombo 1971 p. 5.

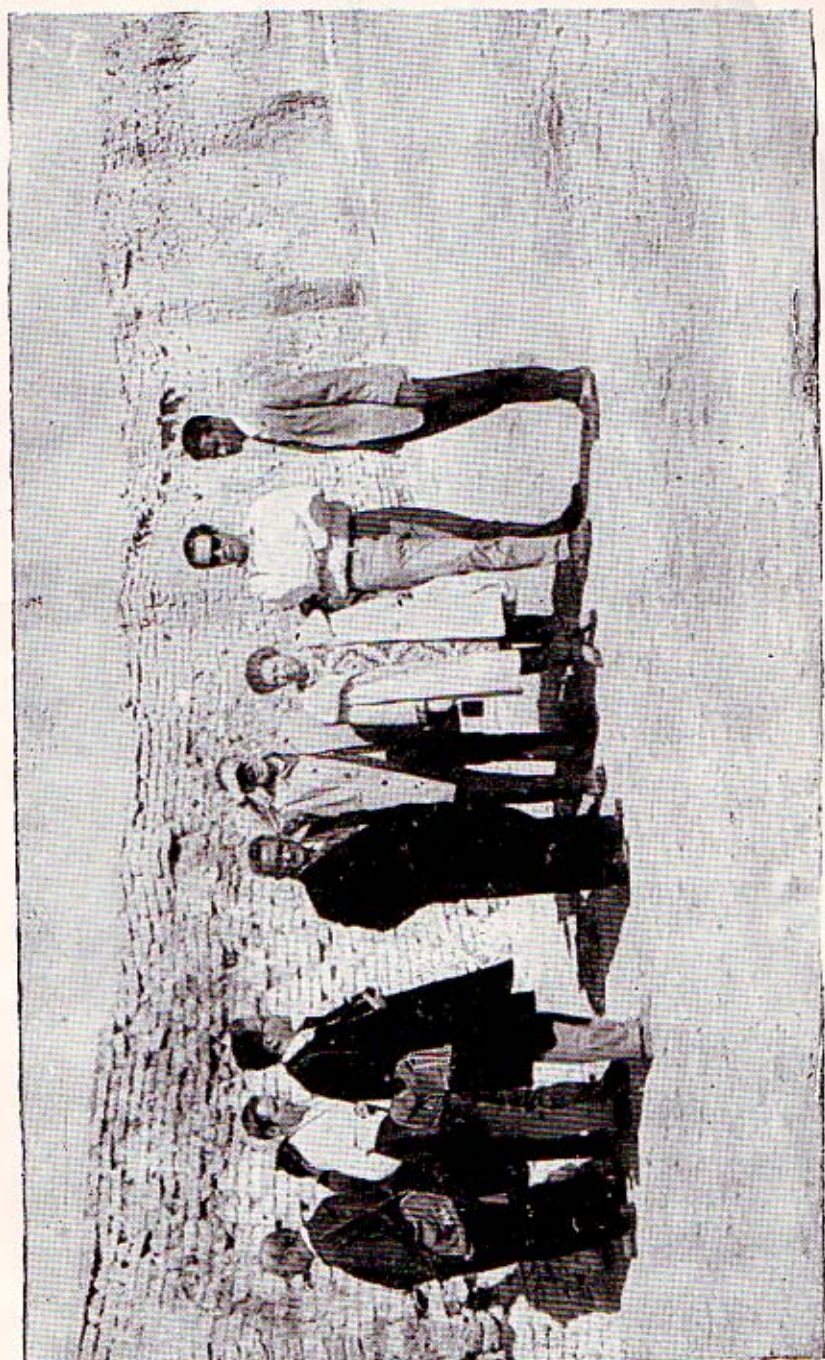
Godakumbura in his article contributed to *Ceylon Today* on *Epigraphical Studies in Ceylon*²⁷ where he refers at length to these interlinear inscriptions does not say that he had read them. As a matter of fact we have no testimony whatsoever that anyone else besides Paranavitana had read these inscriptions.

There is one paragraph in Godakumbura's article on Paranavitana^{27a} which is deserving of record. He wrote "Paranavitana's book, *Ceylon and Malaysia* was reviewed in the journal by a University don. The author thought the review was unfair. Certainly there were errors in the reviewer's reference to some literary texts and place names. Paranavitana replied, and the editor did not publish the rejoinder. Paranavitana ceased to contribute to the journal any more".

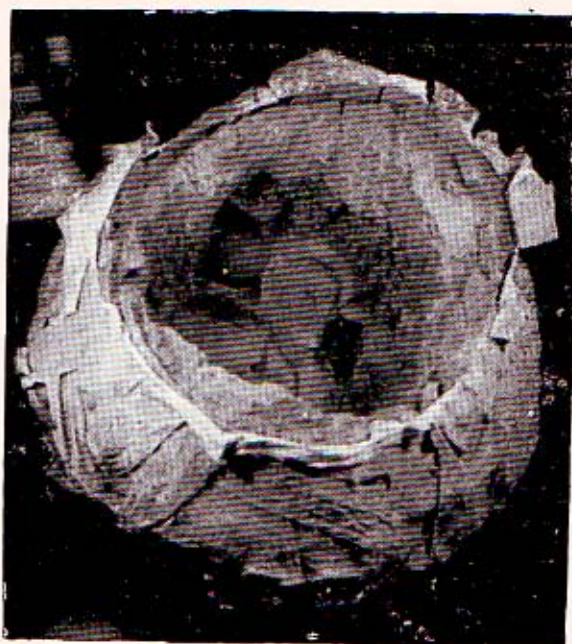
The University don referred to was none other than Karthigesu Indrapala.²⁸ He was the first and only man before Gunawardene to dare to make a "critical review"²⁹ of Paranavitana's stand. For this Indrapala received a furious lambasting by Paranavitana which no wonder the Editor of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society refused to publish.³⁰ One can now understand why A. Liyanagamage had not included his own considered views (which went against Paranavitana on this subject and which he had first expressed in a draft paper intended to form a part of his thesis for the Ph.D. degree) finally in either his thesis or his book *The Decline of Polonnaruwa and the Rise of Dambadeniya*.^{30a}

I had myself been obliged to comment on Paranavitana's views when writing on the statue near Potgul Vihara, where Paranavitana had sought to rely on the interlinear inscriptions to establish conclusively that the statue was that of Vijayabahu I.³¹ I was compelled to animadvert on his methodology in the paper which I read before the IATR Conference in Jaffna last January.³² I shall content myself here with quoting some excerpts from my paper in this connection:

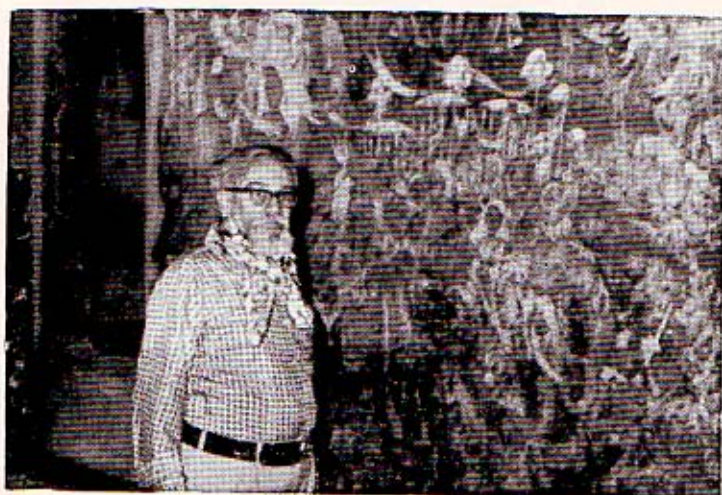
27. October-December 1968, pp. 12 to 18; Godakumbura had accepted without reserve all Paranavitana's interlinear readings; See also Roland Silva and A. Denis N. Fernando *Ancient Ceylon* No. 1, January 1971, pp. 141 to 144 for an account of an unsuccessful attempt to read these inscriptions by the use of photogrammetry; Sad-dhamangala Karunaratna *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. VI, 1973 No. 23, Note 4 "Interlinear Inscriptions" pp. 98 to 101 which ends thus: "Perception should be free from any trace of imagination".
- 27a. Godakumbura's Obituary Notice on Paranavitana published in 1972 (see fn. 12 *supra*); it is strangely silent on Paranavitana's interlinear readings.
28. Lecturer in History, University of Sri Lanka, Peradeniya Campus; Now Professor of History and Archaeology and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Sri Lanka, Jaffna Campus.
29. See *JCBRAS* Vol. XI NS 1967, pp. 101 to 106; also W. H. McLeod "Interlinear Inscriptions in Sri Lanka", *South Asia* (Australia) No. 3, August 1973, pp. 105, 106; cf. S. Kiribamune "Some Reflections on Professor Paranavitana's Contributions to History", *Ceylon Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 1 No. 1 for January 1970, pp. 70 ff.
30. In his inimitable style Paranavitana had lashed out in rage. It was almost libellous, more pungent than his rejoinders to Nilakanta Sastri (see *JCBRAS* Vol. VIII NS pt. 2 pp. 330 to 377) and D. J. Wijeyratne (see *Epigraphia Zeylanica* Vol. V pt. 1 No. 4 pp. 35 to 65) and more contemptuous than his retort to D. E. Hettiarachchi (*JCBRAS* Vol. 1 NS 1950 pp. 174 and 175).
- 30a. See Gunawardene *op. cit* pp. 5 and 13, fn. 17 and 38.
31. See S. Paranavitana, *Art of the Ancient Sinhalese* Colombo 1971 p. 138 (plate 88); See also pp. 134-135 (plate 63) where on the basis of his readings of interlinear inscriptions the Sasseruva Buddha Image is identified by him as a "portrait statue" of Mahasena; also *Sasanapavritti*, Vol. 2, Vesak Issue, May 1973 pp. 7 ff. re Kantarodai stupas built, according to the interlinear inscriptions, by a minister from Sri Vijaya early in the ninth century.
32. James T. Rutnam "Polonnaruwa Colossus", paper read at IV International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies, Jaffna, Sri Lanka, 5 January 1974, organised by the International Association of Tamil Research (IATR), Sri Lanka Branch, Colombo and Jaffna.



Mr. Rutnam at Mohenjo-Daro in Pakistan



Urn Burial at Pomparippu
(Photograph courtesy Government Archaeological Dept.)



Mr. Rutnam looking at a fresco in the Ajanta Caves in India

"The line of argument chosen by Paranavitana to serve his purpose in the present case is typical of a new methodology. It seeks to build an impressive superstructure of erudition and scholarship over a weak and flimsy foundation. In such cases one is intellectually intimidated by the show of clever, copious, vigorous, fluent and incontrovertible advocacy of some trifling (and often irrelevant) circumstance, and such a person is led to applaud with enthusiasm the point gained in the minor skirmish, little realising that the main argument must one day totter because of its weak foundation.

"Since the time of H. C. P. Bell no one had reached the same commanding position in the field of Ceylon Archaeology as Paranavitana. His journey to the top had been long and arduous. And finally having reached the summit he dwarfed his contemporaries. He was the master *sans peur et sans reproche*.

His word was accepted without question. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of oriental literature and was a facile writer of English prose, enough to make the best of English writers envious. It was his *ipse dixit* that concluded every argument, and for a time everyone bowed to him with awe, and even with fear and trepidation.

"All are agreed that Paranavitana was a giant in his generation. His integrity has never been questioned. If he takes a view (not necessarily the correct one) he would explore the entire gamut of human knowledge to substantiate that particular position. In the process he has been known to ignore or dismiss indifferently anything to the contrary. He was an ingenious propagandist of his own preconceived hunches. He expected everyone to look at the prospect with almost identical eyes. This of course could not last for long".

To conclude, as we have observed earlier, Godakumbura had stated that Archaeological work was begun in Jaffna on 24 April 1966, and that was the first time an organised archaeological excavation was being carried out in the north of Ceylon. Let us hope that this will be continued. The Jaffna Archaeological Society which was founded in a modest way in May 1971 by K. Indrapala, V. Sivasamy and A. Kandiah has already done some work with the help of the Archaeological Department, with which it has friendly relations, at Kantarodai, Vallipuram, Mutharaiyan Kattu and other sites in the Vavuniya and Trincomalie Districts and has since issued some publications, especially relating to a large number of Tamil inscriptions which were discovered during their surveys.

The old chronicles of Sri Lanka which were intended primarily to record the activities of the Hinayana Buddhist Sangha have left many things unsaid. Wilhelm Geiger the great *Mahavamsa* scholar had once observed that the priestly compiler of the *Mahavamsa* has a bias towards ecclesiastical things and has often omitted or suppressed facts which are of greater interest to the modern reader. B. C. Law had written "the chroniclers who were mad with the idea of Indo-Aryan rule did not foresee the difficulties to be met by the modern historians".³³ We now have to fill these gaps, correct the slant, restore any mutilations and remove any interpolations in the chronicles.

The story of the Tamils in Sri Lanka has not been fully told. While the presence of the Sinhalese in some districts in the Northern and Eastern Provinces and in the Vanni at some periods in the history of Sri Lanka is not

33. Bimala Churn Law *The Chronicles of Ceylon*, Calcutta 1947 p. 47.

disputed, it is equally true that the Tamils have also held sway at intervals in the Southern part of Sri Lanka. H. W. Codrington has stated that "there can be little doubt that the Jaffna Kingdom was for a time paramount in the Low-country of Ceylon,³⁴ and that Tamil "had been the Court Language of the Kings of Kotte".³⁵

This may explain why the trilingual inscription^{35a} found in Galle was written only in Chinese, Tamil and Persian and not in Sinhalese. Even Alagakonar was known and spoken of as Alagakonar and not as Alagakonara as will be noted from the phonetic transliteration of this word in the Chinese records. In this connection it is interesting to note that Cheng-Ho, the Chinese Admiral had a base at Beruwela where he landed several times in the early fifteenth century, and on one occasion, it is observed with a fleet of some 48 ships and a contingent of 30,000 government troops³⁶. The Chinese records speak of the King of the land as a Soli meaning undoubtedly that he was a Tamil from South India.

We are all heirs to the national legacy of Sri Lanka. We find Buddhist monuments in Jaffna; we also find Hindu shrines and temples throughout the Island. Some of the greatest Buddhists were Tamils. Nilakanta Sastri has described in his article on *Buddhism in South India* that "from the dawn of history up to the fourteenth century A.D. or even later Buddhism held a considerable place in South India and left its marks in the monuments and literatures of the land".³⁷ Jaffna is only about twenty miles from the sub-continent. We have necessarily to draw the right conclusions from this unchallengeable fact.

The great commentator of the Buddhist Scriptures, Buddha-ghosa, was a South Indian.³⁸ So were Buddhadatta, Dhammapala, Sangamitra, Bodhi Dharma, Ilam Bodiya and Seethalai Sattanar³⁹. The greatest Buddhist epic *Manimekalai* was written in Tamil by a Tamil in the second century A.D. Even Kaccayana, the author of the first Pali grammar, came from South India, which for over a millennium continued to be a centre of Pali Buddhism. "Sinhalese Buddhism", Sir Charles Elliot wrote, while acknowledging that it came to Ceylon under the auspices of Asoka, "had probably a closer connection with Southern India than the legends suggest and Conjevaram was long a Buddhist centre which kept up intercourse with both Ceylon and Burma".⁴⁰

34. H. W. Codrington *A Short History of Ceylon* Colombo 1939, p. 84.
35. H. W. Codrington *JCBRAS* Vol. 31 No. 81, 1928 p. 202; see also C. S. Navaratnam. *A Short History of Hinduism*, pp. 191-211.
36. See Ma Huan *Ying-yai Shen-tan* translated and edited by J. G. V. Mills, Hakluyt Society, 1970 p. 11. This refers to Cheng-Ho's Third Expedition when the King of Ceylon was captured and taken to China. Mills confidently identifies *Pieh-lo-li* with *Beruwela* as the Chinese base in Sri Lanka in early fifteenth century.
37. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Buddhism in South India*, *The Mahabodhi*, Vol. 50 Nos. 4 to 6, 1942 pp. 157, 158.
38. See Wilhelm Geiger *Culture of Ceylon in Mediaeval Times* p. 69; also A. P. Buddhadatta *Thero Corrections to Geiger's Mahavamsa* etc. Ambalangoda 1957 p. 142 ff. and *Times of Ceylon* 30 March 1969.
39. T. N. Ramachandran "The History of South Indian Buddhism" *The Buddhist Jayanthi Special* May 1956, Vol. XXVII No. 1 pp. 51 to 53; "Sanghamitra, a Tamil Bhikkhu of the Cola country who lived in the early half of the fourth century A.D. went to Ceylon.... and renewed and enlarged the Abhayagiri Vihara". "Buddhadatta Thera (Fifth Century A.D.) a Tamil of the Cola country, held charge successively of Buddhist monasteries at Mahavihara in Anuradhapura...."
40. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, 1921 Reprinted 1954, Vol. 1 p. xxv.

It is, therefore, not surprising that we have Buddhist monuments in Jaffna so close to the South-east coast of India. The megalithic burials in Pomparippu^{40a} and other places suggest a South Indian culture in Ancient Sri Lanka, but there is no archaeological evidence at all to suggest a North-Indian colonisation.^{40b} I do not want to be categorical. We all make mistakes. That is evident in the history of Research. No side ever wins in this dialogue. We seek only a victory for Truth, and Truth is so elusive that the search will continue for ever so long.

As a message to my fellow members in the Jaffna Archaeological Society I would like to end this discourse with the following extracts from the works of Dr. Paul E. Pieris.

"Long before the arrival of Vijaya there was in Lanka five recognised Isvarams of Siva which claimed and received the adoration of all India. These were Thirukettesvaram near Mahatittha, Munnessaram dominating Salawatta and the Pearl Fishery, Tandesvaram near Mantota, Thirukonesvaram opposite the great Bay of Koddigar and Nakulesvaram near Kankesanthurai".⁴¹

"Everyone must concede that the chief influence which has been exercised on the Sinhalese Court throughout its history was the Dravidian interests of South India. I am of opinion that long before the arrival of Vijaya the country had been fully occupied by Dravidian Races".⁴²

"I hope the Tamil people will realise that in truth there is buried in their sands the story of much more fascinating development than they had hitherto dreamed".⁴³

40a. See Report of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon for 1956, Colombo July 1957 p. G8 and pl. 5 and 6.

40b. S. P. F. Senaratna *op. cit.* p. 30. "In particular, there are no finds which could be traced to either the west or the east of North India".

41. Paul E. Pieris *JCBRAS* vol. xxvi No. 70, 1917 pp. 17 and 18.

42. Paul E. Pieris *Ceylon Daily News*, 22 February 1919.

43. *ibid.*

