

THE TOMB OF ELARA AT ANURADHAPURA

by

DR. JAMES T. RUTNAM

"It is to the credit of the people of Ceylon that during two thousand years and more they obeyed this decree and continued to pay their homage to one who was a brave man and a just and humane ruler"—G. P. Malalasekera in *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, Colombo, 1928, p. 34.

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at the University of Jaffna under the auspices of the
South Asian Studies Seminar and the Jaffna Archaeological Society

DEDICATED TO
A DEAR AND ESTEEMED FRIEND
S. SIVASUBRAMANIAM
Attorney-at-law
AN APOSTLE OF TRUTH AND LOVE

FOREWORD

This booklet consists of the text of a lecture delivered by Dr. James T. Rutnam in March 1981 in the University of Jaffna under the joint auspices of the South Asian Studies Seminar and the Jaffna Archaeological Society. The author is one of the oldest researchers in Sri Lanka, enjoying the distinction of being the most senior reader in the Government Archives and the National Museum Library in Colombo, having begun his researches in these places as far back as 1923. Although next year he will be completing sixty years as a writer, his writings have been largely on contemporary and modern historical topics in spite of his long-standing interest in ancient history and archaeology. He made an important foray into medieval history with his now well-known essay on the Polonnaruwa Colossus, but the present paper is his first major contribution in the field of ancient history. His article on Rev A. G. Fraser (1971), with which he entered the charmed circle of academics creating a sensation in their midst, the critique on the Polonnaruwa Colossus (1974), and this essay on yet another controversial subject, the identification of the monument that was for long popularly known as the Elala Sohona, are no doubt his most outstanding contributions so far, and these deserve to be published together in one volume.

The subject of this paper, as is well known to readers in Sri Lanka, has created much controversy and disturbed well-entrenched popular beliefs in recent years. Dr. Rutnam, in his own characteristically meticulous and painstaking manner, has made a thorough investigation of the references to the controversial monument right down the ages, as can be clearly seen from the copious notes, and it is our hope that this will help to settle the problem.

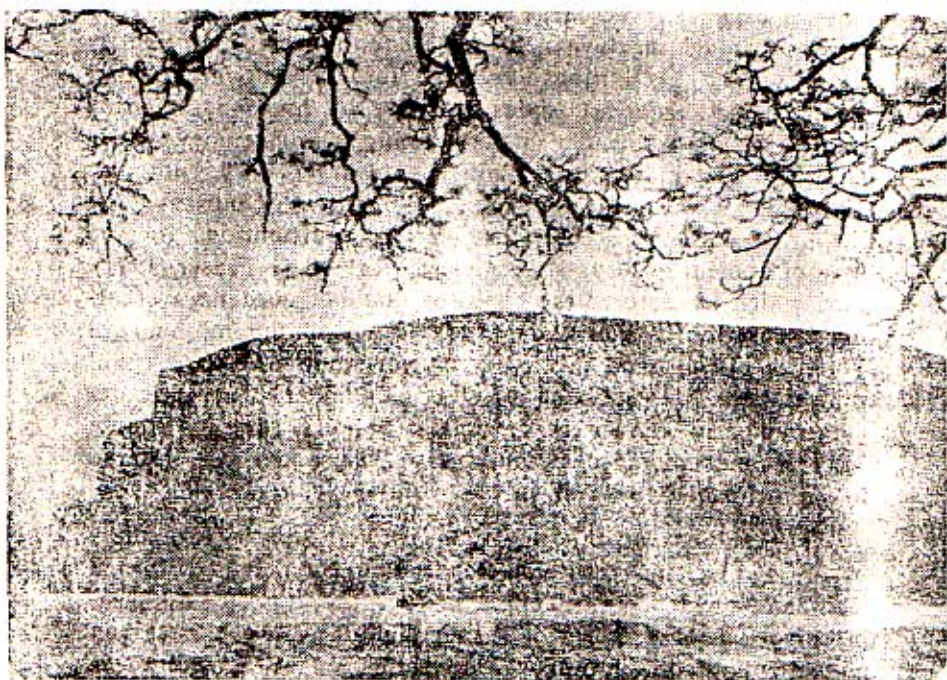
Dr. Rutnam's paper is bound to be an example to many of our younger scholars who do not seem to care much for in-depth analysis, and an eye-opener to some of our older scholars who have over the years allowed the scientific method to suffer in their pursuit of other not-so-worthy ends.

K. Indrapala

Vice-President

Jaffna Archaeological Society

25th May 1981



Photograph by Chandran Rutnam 1981

Elala Sohona or the Stupa of the "So-called" Dakkhina Vihara
(See *Mahavamsa*, XXXIII : 89).

THE TOMB OF ELARA AT ANURADHAPURA

Ever since the aged but valiant Elara, the Tamil king of Sri Lanka, was struck down and killed in single combat by the much younger Dutugemunu, the epic hero of the national chronicle *Mahavamsa*,¹ the place where Elara fell and where his body was later cremated had been revered at the express command of his chivalrous foe.

This event is said to have taken place over two thousand years ago in 161 B. C. For forty-four years the Cola prince had ruled this land, and had ruled (according to the *Mahavamsa*) "with even justice towards friend and foe"². Nowhere else in this national chronicle do we find such singular and unstinted praise bestowed on a ruler.

The *Dipavamsa* also says: "Avoiding the paths of desire, hatred, fear and delusion he ruled righteously being incomparable ...cloud rained during the night, and there was no rainfall during the day".³ Even the elements, it would seem, had favoured this righteous king.

The *Mahavamsa* had illustrated its tribute by identifying the king with the fabulous legends current at the time and had concluded: "Only because he freed himself from the guilt of walking in the path of evil did this (monarch), though he had not put aside false beliefs, gain such miraculous power"⁴.

It is not surprising therefore, that Dutugemunu in the hour of his greatest victory, while grappling with his conscience as we shall discover later, had instantly proceeded to participate in the funeral rites of his noble enemy.

The *Mahavamsa* records; "Near the south gate of the city the two kings fought; Elara hurled his dart, Gamini evaded it; he made his own elephant pierce (Elara's) elephant with his tusks and hurled his dart at Elara; and this (latter) fell there, with his elephant. When he had thus been victorious in battle and had united Lanka under one rule he marched, with chariots, troops and beasts for riders, into the capital. In the city he caused the drum to be beaten, and when he had summoned the people from a yojana around he celebrated the funeral rites for king Elara. On the spot where his body had fallen he burned it with the catafalque, and there did he build a monument and ordain worship. And even to this day the princes of Lanka, when they draw near to this place, are wont to silence their music because of this worship."⁵

A pillar inscription is said to have been set up near this monument and it read as follows : "Let no man, prince or peasant, in future pass this way riding in palanquin or litter with beating of drums".⁶

The author of the *Mahavamsa* has here testified to a unique honour being paid "even to this day" to a Tamil monarch i.e., even after the lapse of over seven hundred years, for the *Mahavamsa* was written only in the sixth century.

The original Pali version in the *Mahavamsa* reads as follows :

*Puradakkhinadvaramhi ubho yujjhimsu bhumipa
tomaram khipi Elaro, Gamani tam avancayi.*

*Vijjhapesi ca dantchi tam hatthim sakahatthina
tomaram khipi Elaram sahatthi tattha so pati.*

*Tato vijitasangama sayoggabalavahano
Lankam ekalapattakam katvana pavisi puram.*

*Pure bherim carapetva samanta yojane jane
Sannipatiya karesi pujam Elararajino.*

*Tamdehapatitatthane kutagarena jhapayi
cetiyanattha karesi pariharam adasi ca.*

*Ajja pi Lankapatino tampadesasamipaga
ten' eva pariharena na vadapenti turiyam.*⁷

It will be noted that the encounter between the two kings took place "near the south gate of the city", *puradakkhinadvaramhi*.⁸ It was there that the body of Elara was cremated with the catafalque; and it was there that Dutugemunu had "built a monument"—but the Pali word in the text was *cetiya*—"and ordained worship".

The commentary or *Tika* on the *Mahavamsa* known as the *Vamsatthappakasini* ascribed by its editor G. P. Malalasekera to the eighth or ninth century and by Wilhelm Geiger to a date between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, had pointed out that the place where the kings fought, *puradakkhinadvaramhi*, was "the (place) east of the *Elarapatimaghara* and west of the potters' village in the southern part of Anuradhapura". The words in the *Vamsatthappakasini* are as follows :

*Puradakkhinadvaramhi ti
Anuradhapurassa dakkhinadisabhage kumbhakaragamassa
pacchime Elarapatimagharassa puratthime ti vuttam hoti.*⁹

The commentator, it will be observed, speaks of a place named *Elarapatimaghara*, as if this place was popularly known and familiar to that generation. What is *Elarapatimaghara*? It means "*Elara image house*"¹⁰ and nothing else. This sanctuary, built no doubt much earlier, had stood there at the time the *Vamsatthappakasini* was written.

The commentator also describes, drawing obviously from his own personal knowledge, what was earlier proclaimed in the second century B C. by Dutugemunu, and what was testified to by the author of the *Mahavamsa* as an observance in the sixth century, that even in the time of the commentator the princes of Lanka when they drew near to this place were wont to silence their music, and also to circumambulate the sanctuary with garlands and perfumes, and worship the *cetiya* (*stupa*).¹¹ Senarat Paranavitana, our former Archaeological Commissioner too agrees that up to the time of the commentator i. e., more than 1000 years after Elara's death, his "image received worship".¹²

Now that we know the extent of the posthumous sanctity that was attached to Elara for whom there has been both an image and an image house, the word 'monument' used by Geiger in translating *cetiya* is not correct. The proper word should have been *stupa* or *dagaba*.¹³

It is strange that Geiger had left the Pali words *cetiya* and *thupa* to remain respectively untranslated when describing the structures put up over the cremation sites of the Saints Mahinda and Sanghamitta. In the case of the former he translates *Cetiya* c' *ettha karesi*¹⁴ and here did he build a "*cetiya*", and in the case of the other he translates *thupa ca tatta karesi Uttiya so mahamati*¹⁵ the most wise Uttiya also had a *thupa* built there. Geiger had frankly confessed elsewhere, "I by no means am content with my translation of the *Mahavamsa*".^{15a}

The respect, indeed the reverence, given by Dutugemunu to his fallen enemy, Elara the righteous ruler, is surely unique in the annals of the island's history. We can now understand why Dutugemunu was stricken by conscience on his death-bed.¹⁶ We can also understand the exceptional veneration Dutugemunu had paid to Elara from the moment he was slain. The *arahats* had consoled him saying that his "slaughter" of a great host numbering millions was equal only to "slaying one and a half human beings": the rest, they explained, were unbelievers (*micchaditthi*) and men of evil life (*dussila*) not more to be esteemed than beasts (*pasusama*).¹⁷

Of the exceptions, one, they said, had taken the "three refuges" and the other had pledged himself to observe the "five precepts". Elara, who was a "pious Hindu" according to E.W. Adikaram,^{17a} was apparently one of the exceptions. Hence, we suppose the adoration, an adoration that had, as could be seen, continued for two millennia, and been paid not so much as an act of duty in obedience to a king's command, but as an act of worship towards an exalted being who had gained a niche in the national pantheon.

The *Saddharmalankaraya* of the fourteenth century expressly states that Dutugemunu had "caused a Dagaba named (after) Elara (to be built) at the place where he was burnt".¹⁸ The author confirms the continued observance of what had earlier been described in the *Mahavamsa* of the sixth century. 'Even to this time', (i. e., in the fourteenth century), *Saddharmalankaraya* says "when princes came to this place drums etc., are not beaten".¹⁹ It is significant that this had taken place even after the Cola conquest of Anuradhapura. The *Elara Dagaba*²⁰ had thus withstood and survived the ravages of war.

During the time of the Portuguese and the Dutch, certain parts of this country were overtaken by the jungle. For instance, Polonnaruwa and its environs were enveloped and remained unknown for nearly half a millennium.^{20a} But Anuradhapura had continued to be cherished in the memory of the people. We know that Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe, for one, had made an effort to restore some of the monuments of the place.

It is agreed that mistakes had been made in the identification of some of the ruins of Anuradhapura.²¹ But traditionally it was well-known that there was one spot over all others where kings and commoners had been enjoined that they should not pass without paying due respect and veneration. It was a *continuing* injunction that had been handed down from mouth to mouth, from generation to generation, and the chance of making a mistake is impossible.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Pilima Talawa was fleeing from his enemies he is reported to have insisted at Anuradhapura, on observing this age-old rite and custom. Forbes in his *Eleven Years in Ceylon* published in 1840 says: "The ruined tomb of an infidel is now looked upon by many Buddhist pilgrims as the remnant of a sacred edifice, although twenty centuries have elapsed since the death of Elara. I do not believe that the injunctions of his conqueror have ever been disregarded by a native. In 1818 Pilima Talawa, the head of the oldest Kandyan family, when attempting to escape, after the suppression of the rebellion in which he had been engaged, alighted from his litter, although weary and almost incapable of exertion; and not knowing the precise spot, walked on until assured that he had passed far beyond this ancient memorial".²²

George Turnour in his translation of the *Mahavamsa* published in 1837 has in this connection printed a footnote in his book saying, "These honours continue to be paid to the tomb of Elara up to the period of the British occupation of the Kandyan territory".^{22a}

During the whole of the nineteenth century, if not for a long time earlier, this ruined structure was well known as the *Elala Sohona* and many a pilgrim to Anuradhapura had been dutifully paying it honour, closely following ancient custom and practice. Emerson Tennent in his book *Ceylon*, which ran into five editions in 1858 and 1860 had this to say in this connection in Volume I, Part 3, Chapter 5 headed *Sinhalese Chivalry—Elala and Dutugemunu*: “The contest between the rival chiefs is the solitary tale of Ceylon chivalry, in which Elala is the Saladin and Dutugemunu the Coeur-de-Lion. So genuine was the admiration of Elala’s bravery that his rival erected a monument in his honour on the spot where he fell; *its ruins remain to the present day and the Sinhalese still regard it with respect and veneration.*”²³ (emphasis added)

S. M. Burrows, who had served as an archaeological surveyor of Sri Lanka from August 1884 to the end of February 1886, had published a book entitled *Buried Cities of Ceylon* in 1885. It ran into four editions. In this book Burrows says: “Satiated with military success and penitent for the bloodshed he had caused, he (Dutugemunu) determined to devote the rest of his life to expiatory acts. But his first care was to erect a generous and fitting monument to his rival Elala and to enact that the music of processions should cease and kings alight from their palanquins as they pass the tomb. The site is marked by a conical mound of earth, nor was the generous monument less lasting; as in 1816 (*sic*) Pilima Talawe, the head of the leading Kandyan clan was escaping through Anuradhapura after the unsuccessful attempt at insurrection, he alighted from his litter, weary as he was, and walked on until he was well past the venerable memorial”.²⁴ Burrows’ map of Anuradhapura appearing in his book marks the site as “Elala’s tomb”.²⁵

In 1896 Burrow’s successor H C. P. Bell, known to be a cautious explorer, began “the examination of the tree-covered hillock, anciently one of the larger *dagabas* of Anuradhapura but now popularly known as Elala’s Tomb (*Elala Sohona*)”.²⁶ In a footnote Bell had correctly surmised at the time he began cutting the trenches, that this was “perhaps the Thupa built by Kanittha Tissa (A. D. 165—193) in the *Dakshinarama* (*Dipavamsa* XXII: 24)”.^{26a}

In the two paragraphs immediately following, Bell had concluded: “Elara’s body was cremated and his ashes deposited in a tomb at the spot whers he fell ‘near the southern gate of the city’ (*Mahavamsa* XXV: 69—73). This site would therefore be in the neighbourhood of the *Dakshina Vihara* constructed by the warrior Uttiya half century later in the reign of Wattagamani Abhaya (*Mahavamsa* XXXIII: 90) (*Dipavamsa* XIX: 19).”²⁷

Bell's reasons were confined to quotations from the two chronicles. He was satisfied that the *Elala Sohona* built 'near the southern gate of the city' was in fact in the 'neighbourhood of the *Dakshina Vihare*' where he surmised he was then digging.

The examination and digging of the *Elala Sohona* continued from 1896 to 1900, when the work was stopped as the 'digging and removal of the spoil proved too expensive for a limited vote'. In all his five Annual Reports, Bell had continued to name the site '*Elala Sohona*'.²⁸ This was the position up to 1900.

Eight years later H.W. Cave wrote in this connection: "Then followed an act of chivalry on the part of Dutthagamani so remarkable that it has been regarded with admiration for twenty centuries. He caused Elara to be cremated on the spot where he fell and there he built a tomb. He further ordained that the tomb should receive honours, and that no one should pass it without some mark of reverence: *and even to this day these injunctions are to some extent respected* and the tomb is still marked by a huge mound"²⁹ (emphasis added).

Be it noted— Dutugemunu had decreed that this reverence be paid in the second century B. C; Mahanama, the reputed author of the *Mahavamsa*, bears witness to it being followed in the sixth century A. D.; The author of the *Vamsatthappakasini* confirms its contemporary observance which would have been in the 8th or 9th century according to Malalasekera, or between the 11th and 13th centuries according to Geiger; the author of the *Saddharmalankaraya* testifies to it being followed in the fourteenth century; Turnour and Forbes in the nineteenth century and Cave in the twentieth century.

Today this noble tradition (unbroken, as we shall see, until 1948) that had distinguished a nation and its people and elevated them to a unique position in the annals of chivalry has, alas, disappeared. Even if we concede that the *Elala Sohona* is not the tomb of Elara, has any honest effort been made to look for it? The only clue we have is the gruesome remark of Paranavitana, in his Annual Report of 1948: "It is not impossible that the Medical Officer of Anuradhapura sleeps over Elara's ashes".³⁰ How we respect and honour the chivalry of Dutugemunu!

No one appears to have challenged the popular belief until 1948, when Paranavitana appeared on the scene and sought to suggest that the mound was the tomb of Dutugemunu.³⁰ Soon afterwards on the orders of Paranavitana a board was displayed at the site that the mound was Dutugemunu's tomb³¹ No one now alights from his carriage and walks past it with solemnity

Paranavitana is honoured as a great archaeologist in Sri Lanka. but like all of us he is fallible. In a growing number of instances he had been proved wrong, and sometimes grossly misleading. His reading of the so-called interlinear inscriptions have been found to be nothing but tissues of hallucinations, if one must not call them fiction. His numerous books on the interlinear inscriptions are pure and simple fairy tales.³²

In 1946 Paranavitana had begun his excavation of the *Elala Sohona*. He continued this work until 1949 and his observations appear in the Annual Reports of 1946, 1947, 1948 and 1949, published by the Archaeological Department. These observations have been incorporated into a single article entitled: "*The Dakkhina Thupa of Anuradhapura: The Tomb of Dutthagamini*" and published in 1972 in Paranavitana's book *Glimpses of Ceylon's Past*.³³

In his report of 1946, Paranavitana, taking up the story from where Bell had left, wrote: "Mr. Bell questioning the popular identification of the mound gave cogent reasons for taking it as the *stupa* of the Dakkhina Vihare".³⁴ Bell's five reports are available to us. It is only on two occasions in these reports that Bell refers to the Dakkhina Vihare. The initial instance was a single footnote that appeared in Bell's first report, where, as we have already observed, he had surmised that the *Elala Sohona* could *perhaps* be the *thupa* referred to in the *Dipavamsa*, Ch. XXII: 24. Bell had also said in the same footnote that "this site" where "his ashes" (viz., Elara's) were "deposited in a tomb" would *therefore* be in the neighbourhood of the Dakkhina Vihara".³⁵ It was here that he cites the 'cogent reasons' he found in the *Mahavamsa* Ch. XXXIII and the *Dipavamsa* Ch. XIX. The second instance where Bell refers to Dakkhina Vihara is in his report for 1898 where he compares the 'probable' Dakkhina Vihara with the other large viharas.³⁶ Nothing more was said here. *Nowhere do we find Bell "questioning" the popular identification of the mound.* This is quite plain and clear to anyone who cares to read Bell's reports.

But this is not all. Paranavitana goes on to state, "Bell, it may be recalled, expressed the opinion half century ago that the mound concealed the remains of the *stupa* of the Dakkhina Vihara and not of the Tomb of Elala as popularly held. Bell's reasons for this view given in his report of 1898, p. 5 were universally accepted". How could anyone "universally accept" Bell's reasons in his report for 1898, p. 5, when they are simply not there? It would be as mysterious as the reading of the interlinear inscriptions by Paranavitana.

Bell had never said that the mound was “not the Tomb of Elala as popularly held”. Search where you will, you will always draw a blank. We find it necessary to repeat that in all of Bell’s five reports which we reproduce in an *appendix*³⁶, he has expressed only two views on this site. Firstly, the mound is “perhaps” the *Dakkhina Thupa*, and secondly, that the site of the *Elala Sohona* would *therefore* be in its neighbourhood. Parनाविताना goes into raptures praising Bell, his predecessor in office. The praise is no doubt justified, but it is for what Bell has *not* said.

On the contrary, Parनाविताना does not seem to view with favour, or accord the same sort of praise to the comments A. M. Hocart, another of our former Archaeological Commissioners, had felt urged to make in this matter. Hocart had pointed out that “even if it (*Elala Sohona*) were taken to be a stupa, it was not necessarily opposed to the (popular view that the mound was the monument built to commemorate *Elara*” (emphasis added).³⁷ Parनाविताना had refuted this by saying, “Hocart had not made a study of the available topographical information”.³⁸

To charge Hocart, who is known to have been Parनाविताना’s mentor in Archaeology, with not knowing his business is most unfortunate. Parनाविताना is certainly an excellent scholar in his own way, and a painstaking researcher. But he is so sure of himself and of his strange hunches that he brooks no criticism or correction. Two of our former Archaeological Commissioners, besides Bell and Hocart, have criticised or taken a contrary view to Parनाविताना,³⁹ but he had not offered them the courtesy of a reply. He just ignored them completely and contemptuously. True scholarship naturally suffers.

R. H. de Silva, then an Assistant Archaeological Commissioner, was one of them. He dared to criticise Parनाविताना’s views on the *Dakkhina Thupa*. De Silva’s long and carefully researched criticism appeared in the *Ceylon Observer* Sunday Morning edition of 24 March 1957. It was prominently displayed on a full page with head-lines “*Dakkhina Thupa—Not Dutugemunu’s Tomb*”. De Silva had analysed the relevant parts of Parनाविताना’s Reports line by line, and had succeeded in upsetting Parनाविताना’s conclusions. Being a qualified archaeologist, specially trained in the chemical aspect, he took care to test “the lumps of clay” found at this site. He also studied the reference in *Saddharmalankaraya* and other literary sources and finally declared emphatically that the evidence brought forward by Parनाविताना did not support Parनाविताना’s own conclusions that the *Dakkhina Thupa* was Dutugemunu’s tomb.

One important point de Silva had stressed was that nowhere in any of the literary sources do we find mention of a *thupa* having been built over Dutugemunu's cremation site, and that Dutugemunu himself had never expressed a desire for such a *thupa*, although Dutugemunu is reported to have expressed an unusual dying wish in the following words: "In a place where the *Great Thupa* may be seen, in the *malaka* (bounded about) for the ceremonial acts of the brotherhood do ye burn the body of me, the servant of the brotherhood".³⁸

The bereaved brotherhood would have strictly followed the king's injunctions. The body of the dead king was accordingly cremated in a *malaka* of the Mahavihara, and the place was renamed *Rajamalaka* to commemorate this event. Geiger had defined *malaka* as a space marked off, and usually terraced, within which sacred functions were carried out. In the Mahavihara there were thirty-two *malakas*.³⁹

The *kammamalaka* where Dutugemunu's body was cremated could only have been *within* the precincts of the Mahavihara, for, knowing as we do the exceptional nature of Dutugemunu's ardent wish to be identified with the *Sangha*⁴⁰, it could not have been otherwise. But the *Mahavamsa* records that the body of the king was burnt in the *malaka* "outside the precincts of the Monastery". This is based on Geiger's rendering of the Pali term *nissima malaka*.

Abaya Aryasingha in a recent communication to the press differs from Geiger and offers a likely alternative translation for this term, namely, a terrace rendered unsuitable for the approved purpose. Since, he says, a cremation was held (though of a king) in this place, the brotherhood of the *bhikkus* must have surely "abandoned this place and preferred some other place to hold *sanghakammas*. Naturally a cremation place forfeits its right to be called a *kammamalaka*."⁴¹

The *Mahavamsa* records that after the cremation two halls called *Makutammutasala* and *Ravivitasala* were built at this site to commemorate the attendance of the dancing women and the other loyal subjects who had assembled there to vent their sorrow.⁴² Aryasingha relates that there was also a pavilion "built over the site of the cremation", quoting a passage in the *Mahabodhivamsa Granthipada Vivaranaya*.⁴³

Nowhere do we read of a *thupa* or *cetiya* being built over it. Nowhere do we read of the populace paying homage to his cremation site throughout the centuries. Nowhere do we read that

the *Dakkhina Thupa* was built over the ashes of Dutugemunu. Surely the author of the *Saddharmalankaraya* could have, while reporting that the *Dakkhina Thupa* was built at the *Maha-pulila-maluva* (of which more later) added the words "where Dutugemunu's body was cremated and where his ashes were laid" This would have been the obvious thing any knowledgeable writer would have done if that was true, being aware of the pre-eminence of Dutugemunu in the religious and national history of Sri Lanka.

On the other hand, we have the evidence of the *Mahavamsa* that on his death, Elara was deified by his conscience-tormented conqueror. He enjoined *worship* and caused a *cetiya* to be built. A *cetiya* is more than a "monument"—it is a *thupa*. The *Mahavamsa Tika* refers to an *Elarapatimaghara*, an image house of Elara. Nowhere else do we hear of an image of a king of Sri Lanka being worshipped on temple grounds.⁴⁴ Nowhere else do we hear of a tomb being given such extraordinary obeisance for over two thousand years, until, sad to say, this was stopped and a much honoured king's will defied by an order from a mere archaeological commissioner of our time.

It is not surprising therefore, that there was a public outcry when Paranavitana began to dig up the *Elala Sohona* in 1947. He himself says in this connection, "we started to clear the passage opened by old treasure seekers on the Western side. Before we had proceeded very far with this work, however, a certain section of the people of Anuradhapura started an outcry that the department was desecrating sacred places, reportedly held meetings of protest, sent urgent telegrams to the Ministry to intervene, and in all possible ways tried their utmost to create public opinion against us."⁴⁵ Paranavitana had to call the Minister from Colombo to his aid, and print some 5,000 copies of a pamphlet for distribution during the *Poson* season before finally assuaging the feelings of the outraged public.⁴⁶ He continued digging until 1948 and his reports of his work are found, as we had earlier observed, in the Administration Reports of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon. Conservation had been carried on thereafter.

In his Reports, Paranavitana disclosed his discovery of a long inscription in *Brahmi* characters, the longest of its kind in Sri Lanka, on a number of broken slābs. Although thirty-three years have passed since this discovery the translation of the writing on these slabs by Paranavitana has not seen the light of day. This translation was handed over to the Archaeological Department as early as 1967.^{46a}

Meanwhile, Saddhamangala Karunaratne, the present Archaeological Commissioner had edited and translated this same inscription and included it in his thesis for the Ph.D. degree of the University

of Cambridge. This learned thesis, entitled *Brahmi Inscriptions of Ceylon* which some of us have had the privilege of cursorily reading at the University Library at Cambridge, is still deserving of publication although it is now twenty one years since it was accepted.⁴⁷

Karunaratne's reading of this slab inscription appears in *Ancient Ceylon No. 1* published in January 1971.^{47a} What we can gather from this reading is that the inscription relates to various donations given for the maintenance of the "*Tissa-maha-cetiya* of the Dakkhina Vihara which had been inviolably established by the great king Pita, son of His Majesty". Paranavitana had observed that "the name Dakkhina Vihara occurs in more than a dozen places in the legible part of the document".⁴⁸ Thus we have found confirmation that the mound called *Elala Sohona* was part of a *thupa* named *Tissa-maha-cetiya* of the Dakkhina Vihara established in the reign of *Vattagamani Abhaya* (the "Pitaraja" of the inscription, circa 80—77 B. C.).

The *Mahavamsa* has recorded that one of the seven warriors of Vattagamani Abaya had "built to the south of the city the so-called Dakkhina Vihara".⁴⁹ It will be noted that the author of the *Mahavamsa* himself has described it as the so-called Dakkhina Vihara in much the same way as the *Elala Sohona* had come to be described in more recent times as the Dakkhina Thupa.

There has always been a confusion about the founding, rebuilding and repairing of *viharas* and *thupas*.⁵⁰ In some cases the person who repairs a shrine comes to be known as the one who had built or founded it. In the present case it is generally accepted that Uttiya had built the Dakkhina Vihara. As noted above, this does not exclude rebuilding, expanding or repairing.

Kanitttha Tissa (167—186 A. D.) is reported in the *Dipavamsa* as having "built" a *Vihara* and *Thupa* in the Dhakkhinarama. The *Mahavamsa* clarifies this by saying that this king had (only) "added a mantling to the *thupa* of the Dakkhinavihara and a refectory, besides doing away with the boundary of the Mahameghavana. And moving the wall of the Mahavihara to the side, he also made a road leading to the Dhakkhinavihara".⁵¹

The *Tissa-maha-cetiya* described in the slab inscription is thus the *thupa* that was enlarged by Kanitttha Tissa. It was another name current at that time for the *Dakkhina Thupa* otherwise known as *Elara Dagaba*^{51a} or *Elala Sohona* in the south of the city. The *bodhi-ghara* discovered by Bell at a site in the south of *Dakkhina Thupa* may well have been "part of the Dakkhina Vihare".⁵² The *Elarapatimaghara* too was situated in the south of the city. The "spot where *Elara* had fallen" and where his body was cremated, where Dutugemunu had built

a *dagaba* or *cetiya* over the ashes and had ordained worship, is described in the *Mahavamsa Tika* as being between a potters' village on one side and the Elara image house on the other. We have, therefore, a monastic complex in the south of the city of Anuradhapura, and admittedly this was outside the precincts of the Mahavihara. It had evidently included a *dagaba* or *cetiya* built over the ashes of Elara, a *bodhighara*, and an image house of Elara, all within the southern monastery known as Dakkhina Vihara.

Evidently the Elara *Dagaba* built by Dutugemunu was the first structure at this place, and the Vihara built in the reign of Dutugemunu's nephew Vattagamani Abhaya was the second. As in most other monastic complexes in Sri Lanka these were enlarged and added to in the course of time. According to Senake Bandaranayake, "apart from the *stupa* itself, everything else has (now) been obliterated"⁵³ The stub or stump of the *Elala Sohona*, however, has fortunately remained to tell us the true story.

During the excavation of the so-called *Dakkhina Thupa* (to use a suggestive epithet in the *Mahavamsa* of the sixth century) Paranavitana has reported the discovery of charcoal and ash. He had dug thirty-eight feet from the top of the mound when he found a stone pavement. After removing the stone slabs he dug deeper arriving at a depth of thirteen feet from the level of the pavement and fifty one feet from the top of the mound. Here he found ample traces of a "compressed layer of charcoal". In the course of his digging he had discovered that *stupa* robbers had ransacked the place.⁵⁴

Almost as an after—thought, he wrote in paragraph 67 of his extensive Report of 1948, "It may here be mentioned that fragments of charcoal and lumps of ash were met with sporadically at levels considerably above the bottom of the pit. It is evident that *stupa* robbers had thrown up much of the charcoal and the ash which they found, and in the filling of the pit later these became scattered all over the place".⁵⁵ It will be noted that the word "ash" is mentioned twice here and there is no other mention of it anywhere else in his Reports.

De Silva who had dealt with Paranavitana's views in 1957, had at the time examined some fragments of charcoal and lumps of clay, but he does not seem to have seen the "ash". What happened to this ash?⁵⁶

The debate between de Silva and Paranavitana was over (among other issues discussed) the nature of the fire, and the inconceivability that "Dutugemunu's funeral pyre would have stood at the bottom of a pit the depth of which is equivalent to the depth of the foundation

of the *Dakkhina Thupa*."⁵⁷ As the place had been ransacked by vandals and robbers and as there was the likelihood, to say the least, of flaming torches being used by the despoilers to find their way in the darkness, the examination of this area had become more complicated. In any case this issue itself is of no consequence to us in determining whether the *Dakkhina Thupa* was Elara's or Dutugemunu's tomb. We may therefore leave it alone.

But de Silva's arguments centering on the literary and topographical evidence are formidable. It is very creditable that a young Assistant Commissioner, with preferments in his career to look forward to, was daring enough to express his views publicly and unreservedly against his reputedly omniscient Chief, who had about that time relinquished his post and been appointed the first Professor of Archaeology at the University of Ceylon, but who nevertheless was still a force in the Department. All that de Silva seemed to have got in reply to his serious attempt to differ from Paranavitana was contemptuous indifference from the latter.

An incidental reference to the *Dakkhina Thupa* in the *Saddharmalankaraya* of the 14th century had been used by Paranavitana to build up, in his own characteristic and skilful way, an amazing thesis to prove that Dutugemunu's ashes were buried under this *thupa*, and in this process to disprove and demolish the age-old belief that the *Elala Sohona* was nothing but the tomb of Elara.

In paragraph 49 of his report of 1948, Paranavitana had announced the foundation of his thesis as follows: "The *Saddharmalankaraya* has recorded a tradition, that the *stupa* of the *Dakkhina Vihara* was built at a place known as *Maha-pulila-maluwa* (the great terrace of the *pulila*)."⁵⁸ For some reason or other he does not give the actual reference. Paranavitana has been found, for reasons of his own, to be very selective in citing chapter and verse when giving references. In some cases he is quite lavish with details, but in others he leaves it to the reader to look for them. The student is thus led to great inconvenience in trying to seek the sources of Paranavitana's assertions. Administration Reports of a Commissioner of Archaeology should specially not suffer from inadequate documentation.

However, we have now traced the reference and are able to give below a translation of the words in the *Saddharmalankaraya*. "Our Buddha, in the eighth year after attaining Buddhahood on the invitation of the divine ruler named Mahasammāna and having arrived at the city of Anuradhapura stayed at the *Maha-pulila-maluwa* where the *Dakumu-Maha-Saya* (later) stood".⁵⁹

Having referred to the above text Paranavitana rushes to correlate it with a reference in Geiger's *Mahavamsa* to a "picula" tree

mentioned in connection with the visit of the Saint Mahinda to Anuradhapura. The quotation in the *Mahavamsa* reads as follows: "and the therā (Saint Mahinda) went to the royal dwelling and scattered eight handfuls of blossoms about the *picula* tree standing on the south of it."

Before we go any further we are obliged to correct the above translation of Geiger. This correction was brought to the notice of scholars by the learned A. P. Buddhadatta Mahathera. He had pointed out, with which Geiger later agreed, that this passage should read as follows: "And the therā (Saint Mahinda) went to the royal dwelling and *standing on the south of it*, scattered eight handfuls of blossoms about the *picula* tree".⁶⁰ From this correction we find that the *picula* tree was *not* stated as being on the south of the royal dwelling.

Having shown us that south of the city there was a *maha-pulila-maluva* over which the *Dakkhina Thupa* (later) stood, and that at the time of the Saint Mahinda's visit to Anuradhapura there was a *picula* tree, which would have been later the site of a *kammamalaka*, Paranavitana has rushed to say that both the *maha-pulila-maluva* and the *kammamalaka* were one and the same, with a view to drawing some fanciful conclusions that Dutugemunu was cremated at this *malaka* and that his ashes lay at the bottom of the *thupa* built over it.

This is typical of Paranavitana's more recent methodology with which other scholars have now become familiar. His syllogism is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} A &= B \\ b &= C \\ \therefore A &= C \quad \text{E-u-r-e-k-a!} \end{aligned}$$

Indeed this *sounds* plausible, but it is *obviously* fallacious. For there is a vital difference between the capital "B" and the simple "b" although they sound alike.^{60a} Whoever in the wide world had said that the *maha-pulila-maluva* and the *kammamalaka* are one and the same? Where do we find that the *kammamalaka* where Dutugemunu's body was cremated was the one that was built where the *picula* tree once stood? There were, as we had already observed thirty-two *malakas* at Anuradhapura sometime or other. Where do we find in all literature that a *thupa* had been built over Dutugemunu's ashes? During the 2109 years since Elara's ashes were laid to rest, no one, not a single old text, not a single commentary, not a single inscription, not a single *ola* leaf, not a single archaeologist, not a single historian, has said that a *thupa* was built over Dutugemunu's ashes. But Paranavitana says so. Must we blindly follow his *ipse dixit*?

To the credit of Paranavitana it must be said that he did not for long continue to press his opinion, tenacious though he generally was, on scholars and the public. For, after 1948 and the subsequent display of a board marking the *Dakkhina Thupa* as Dutugemunu's tomb, Paranavitana contented himself with depositing the so-called "ashes" of Dutugemunu in the Archaeological Museum at Anuradhapura. Meanwhile R. H. de Silva had proclaimed with banner headlines in the Sunday press *Dakkhina Thupa—Not Dutugemunu's Tomb*,⁶¹ and had eventually taken steps to remove the misleading board at the *Dakkhina Thupa*. This drew no protest from Paranavitana, a power to be reckoned with even then.

In chapter 3 of Part 2 of Volume 1 of the *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon* which Paranavitana had edited and was published in 1959, Paranavitana had occasion to refer to Elara and Dutugemunu. In a footnote relating to Elara's tomb he maintained his known position that it was "in reality *Dakkhina Thupa*", and that Elara's monument "must have been a few yards to the north of the present Medical Officer's bungalow at Anuradhapura", where he identifies the southern gate of Anuradhapura. He admits that up to the time of the commentator of the *Mahavamsa* "Elara's image received worship".⁶² He says nothing about Dutugemunu here. It is only when he describes the cremation of Dutugemunu that he allows his conjecture to come out in print as follows: "The body was cremated in the terrace outside the boundary of the Mahavihara where the Sangha used to assemble for public functions, *most probably* at the spot where the *Dakkhina Thupa* was later built"⁶³ (emphasis added). "Most probably" was the furthest he could go, and the "ashes" thus remained undisturbed in the Museum.

"Thirty-two years later", wrote Marcus Joseph, a correspondent to the *Sun* newspaper in its issue of 2 July 1980, "on hearing that the ashes were lying unnoticed in the Museum, E. L. B. Hurulle, Minister of Cultural Affairs [who has since alerted the Archaeological Department to look for the bones and ashes of Vijaya and the garment of Kuvenci⁶⁴] was shocked. He immediately rushed his officials and brought the ashes down to the Colombo Museum and sealed the ashes". "Thereafter", Joseph continued, "he (the Minister) brought it to the notice of the President and the Cabinet, and on their advice the Minister appointed a Committee consisting of the country's outstanding archaeologists and historians to study literary evidence surrounding the history of the ashes".

This Committee was appointed in November 1978. It took nearly six months to study all relevant documents after which it is said to have submitted its findings to the Minister, who in turn brought them to the notice of the President and the Cabinet.

On 28 February 1980 the *Ceylon Daily News* published on its first page under the caption "Yesterday's Cabinet Decisions" the following announcement: "The ashes of King Dutugemunu are to be laid to rest in the *Dakkhina Thupa* where they were found. Tests conducted in Paris by the Government of Sri Lanka established that the ashes are nearly 2000 years old. Other historical facts prove that they are the ashes of King Dutugemunu".

On 12 August 1980 the *Ceylon Daily News* reported, "The Government has made arrangements to build a monument to deposit the ashes of King Dutugemunu at Anuradhapura. The ashes were taken in a motorcade from the National Museum of Colombo to Anuradhapura via Maagama, Tissamaharamaya, the birth place of the king. The ashes will be visible through the bullet proof glass which covers the open receptacle. This monument is estimated to cost Rupees eight lakhs".

The Report of the Committee has not been published. The Committee consisted of twelve individuals,⁶⁵ some of whom have achieved distinction and now hold high office in their specialised fields, while, it would seem, some have still to win their spurs. The present Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Archaeology are two of its members... But R. H. de Silva, a former Commissioner who had differed from Paranavitana in this matter, was not one of them. Abaya Aryasingha, Head of the Department of Archaeology at the Kelaniya University was a member, but we find he had dissociated himself from the Committee (*Vide* his letter to the *Ceylon Daily News* of 10 January 1979).

From the announcement of the Government we find that it had received a Report on scientific tests conducted in Paris, as well as a Report on the historical facts. Where are these Reports? Did all the members sign these Reports? And who were the scientists, and what was the organization that had conducted the tests in Paris?

From the articles that appeared in the *Ceylon Daily News* of 29 January and 26 February 1980 we find that Dr. Granville Dharmawardene, Head of the Radio-Isotope Centre of the University of Colombo, had engaged himself in these tests. He is said to have worked with scientists in the Atomic Energy Commission of France. Well and good. But where is the Report? Was it signed by the Atomic Energy Commission of France?

We are obliged to ask these questions for we find from the two articles referred to, that Dr. Granville Dharmawardena has himself claimed to be an authority on a special type of technique which he had "developed for studying ancient materials". An article in 1969

in the prestigious British scientific journal *Nature*⁶⁶ is listed under Cousins and Dharmawardena. Evidently the latter is our Dr. Granville Dharmawardena from Sri Lanka of whose achievements, as disclosed by him, we should be very proud indeed. But since the "name" of the Atomic Energy Commission of France has been "dropped" in passing, it is nothing but fair to expect its *imprimatur* in any certificate produced.

For our present purpose, however, the only question to be answered is whether the "ash" was from a human source (doubts have been expressed about it), and whether it was 2000 years (plus/minus) old?⁶⁷ Of course nobody could say whether it was Dutugemunu's or Elara's—the real bone (ash) of contention. Again, where is the certificate? And does it have the signature of the Atomic Energy Commission of France?^{67a}

Although there has been much talk of scientific tests, these have hardly any relevance to the present controversy. There is written evidence, and an almost uninterrupted tradition for 2000 years that the body of Elara was cremated in the south of the city and that a *cetiya* was built over it. The only question is whether the southern dagoba, now in ruins, was that *cetiya*. Against this position Paranavitana has speculated that as the *stupa* was built at a spot where a *pulila* tree once stood, and as Dutugemunu was cremated at a place where a *picula* tree once stood—there is no evidence whatever that he was—could these places have been one and the same? There is no tradition to support this conjecture, and to be frank, no literary evidence either.

Let us now see how the Committee had dealt with this problem. But again, where is its Report? Of the twelve members,⁶⁸ how many had signed it, indeed how many had *seen* it? Marcus Joseph's article in the *Sun* has fortunately given us some clue towards knowing the contents of this elusive report.

The Report (described as a summary) that appeared in the *Sun* on 2 July 1980 was evidently based on a copy in the possession of Marcus Joseph. This copy was made available to us. It is entitled "Report on (*sic*) the Sub-Committee appointed to Examine the ashes of king Dutugemunu". It has a "bibliography" which is confined only to the 23 references indicated in the text. It rightly describes the position taken up by Paranavitana who, the Report says, had declared "*of course with a fair degree of uncertainty*" that the ashes "*could be*" the ashes of King Dutugemunu.

Paranavitana had made every effort to prove that the ashes were those of King Dutugemunu and had obviously failed. But the Committee had taken upon itself the task of going one better than

Paranavitana by making "uncertainty" certain. They had however exposed their bias by saying that they were examining the ashes of Dutugemunu, not the *alleged* ashes of the king. Perhaps this was an honest mistake. Let it pass.

We are not sure who among the twelve had really drafted this Report, but it certainly does little credit to the scholarly stature of such archaeologists as Saddhamangala Karunaratne and Roland Silva. Most of the arguments advanced, though to no avail, could not have escaped the eagle eyes of Paranavitana. The Report therefore looks like flagellating a deceased equine.

It is now clear that the *malaka* that came into being over the site of the *picula* tree is different from the *maha-pulila-maluva* where the *Dakkhina Thupa* later stood. For the case to make them identical was based firstly on an incorrect translation of a *strophe* in Geiger's *Mahavamsa*.

The *Vamsatthappakasini*⁶⁹ has stated that the *picula* tree was in the south-east of the royal house or pavilion and the *Mahabodhi-vamsa*⁷⁰ glossary has said that it was in the south-east of the Bo-tree.

For our guidance we should also note here that *picula* is the name for the Sinhalese *imbul* (*himbul*) tree, and that *pulila* is different, being the name for the Sinhalese *Kavudu-Bo* tree. Neither of these names apply to the *Tamarix Indica* given by Geiger. But Paranavitana has rested his whole theory on the basis that "the tree which is called *pulila* in Sinhalese (*Tamarix Indica*) is referred to as *picula* in Pali"^{70a}. But is this so?⁷¹

The *kammamalaka* was definitely within the boundary of the *Mahavihara*, and we agree with Abaya Aryasinghe that after the cremation of the king this *malaka*, becoming polluted, could have been declared *nissimamalaka* after we suppose a valid *simasamugghata*.⁷² It is inconceivable that Dutugemunu who had always wanted to be identified with the *Sangha*, even taking up the position of preaching *bana* to the monks,⁷³ should have asked to be cremated on his death at a place *outside* the *Mahavihara*. He chose the *kammamalaka*, and that surely was within the monastery. But the site of the *Dakkhina Thupa* has not been at any time within the *Mahavihara*.⁷⁴ Thus this argument, too, falls through. An apologetic attempt to argue that these ancient sites change is far from convincing. Paranavitana never made use of such arguments. His were more plausible, though not always correct, as we now know.

This *Dakkhina Thupa* was known as the *Tissa-Maha-Cetiya* according to the slab inscription discovered by Paranavitana. Nowhere in the

chronicles do we find any mention of this name. This only goes to show that the *Dakkhina Thupa* had many names. Originally known most likely as the *Elara Thupa*, it was described in the *Mahavamsa* as the *thupa* of the so-called *Dakkhina Vihara*, the southern *Vihara* as opposed to the *Uttaravihara*, the northern vihara which was the other name for the Abhayagiri Vihara. Both these places are situated almost in the same longitude.⁷⁵

Of one thing we are certain. Elara's body was cremated at the southern gate of the city and a *thupa* was built over it. Geiger following Turnour describes the spot as "near the Southern gate",⁷⁶ which is wrong, for the Pali *pura dakkhina dvaramhi* means "at the southern gateway of the city". The Sinhalese *Mahavamsa* of Sumangala and Batuwantudawe translates the *strophe* correctly as "at the south gate of the city": *nuvara dakunu vahasal dora di*.⁷⁶

The writer of the Committee's Report, which is still being kept a secret, makes much of "funerary mounds over places of cremation of royal personages", but the three references produced do not really acknowledge any such universal practice or custom. One of the instances quoted is the unique case of the *cetiya* built over this very Elara's cremation site.⁷⁷

In this *dharmista* era it is a cruel irony of fate that a cherished memory which had lasted for over 2000 years, and which had been a proud boast of the people of Sri Lanka should now be threatened with extinction. There is not a tittle of evidence that Dutugemunu's ashes were buried in this mound. And the 'ash' that was said to have been found among the sand and charcoal that had contaminated it, may not be human ash, far less 2000 years old; but if at all it is so, the likely one to whom it belongs is Elara. Let us not make ourselves the laughing stock of the world.

NOTES

1. *Mahavamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, (*Mhv.*) tr. by Wilhelm Geiger, Colombo 1960. This is a work of the sixth century A. D. Although it has a strong bias against the Tamils, following increasing Sinhala—Tamil differences and hostility during the times preceding and current, it is surprising that as far as Elara was concerned it had not allowed its evident bias to over-ride recognition and appreciation of Elara's just and righteous rule. This may be explained as being due to the fact that there was earlier a credible contributory source known as the *Sihala-atthakatha—mahavamsa* common to the *Dipavamsa* (see fn. 3) and the *Mahavamsa*; and the apparent anti-Tamil slant which is noticeable with the insertion of the Dutthagamini epic in Chapter XII of the *Mahavamsa* was due to additions introduced by its author in the sixth century. Cf. The views on the *Mahavamsa* by Wilhelm Geiger, G. C. Mendis and Lakshman S. Perera; also W. I. Siriweera "Dutthagamini Elara Episode: A Reassessment", *Lanka Guardian*, Vol. II No. 19, February 1, 1980, pp. 12, 13 and 19, and R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, "The People of the Lion: The Sinhala Identity and Ideology in History and Historiography", *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. V, Nos. 1 and 2, Colombo 1979, pp. 1 to 36.
2. *Mhv.*, XXI. 14.
3. *The Chronicle of the Island of Ceylon or the Dipavamsa*, tr. by Bimala Churn Law (Dpv), Maharagama, Ceylon 1959. Ch. XVIII. vv. 50, 52. This work is attributed to the fourth century A. D. when apparently there was no racial conflict as such. It speaks of Sena and Guttaka as two Tamils who had reigned righteously for ten years, and of Elara (he is not described as a Tamil) whose righteous rule lasted forty-four years.
4. *Mhv.* Ch. XXI. v. 34.
5. *op. cit.* Ch. XXV. vv. 69—74.
6. John M. Senaveratna, *Dutugemunu—his Life and Times*, Colombo 1946 p. 59.
7. *Vamsatthappakasini*: Commentary on the *Mahavamsa*, also known as *Mahavamsa Tika (MT)* ed. G. P. Malalasekera, Pali Text Society, Oxford, 1935. Vol. II, p. 483 vv. 69—74.
8. *ibid.*, v. 69.
9. *MT*. p. 483 lines 8—10.
10. Senarat Paranavitana, *University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon (UCHC)*. ed. H. C. Ray, Colombo 1959. Vol. I. Part I. Ch. 3. "The Triumph of Dutugemunu" fn. 28: "This would indicate that up to the time of the commentator Elara's image received worship".

11. *MT.* p. 484. lines 15 & 16. See also G. P. Malalasekera *Extended Mahavamsa* (EM.) Colombo 1937 p. 222. Ch. 25. vv. 182—184.
12. *Vide fn.* 10. above
13. *Mahavamsa (SMV)* tr. Ven. H. Sumangala and Pandit Batuvantudawe, Colombo, 1946, fourth edition, has the correct rendering *citakaya* (meaning *dagaba*) for *cetiya*, p. 106 v 73
14. *Mhv.* Ch XX. v. 44.
15. *ibid.*, v. 53.
- 15a. Wilhelm Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in Mediaeval Times*, ed. by Heinz Bechert (CCMT) Wiesbaden 1960 p. XXII.
16. *Mhv.*, Ch XXV. vv. 101—103: "he, looking back upon his glorious victory, great though it was, knew no joy".
17. *ibid.* pp. 177—178 vv. 104—112 This is one of the most perplexing passages in the whole of the *Mahavamsa*. It has posed inconvenient questions and has elicited ingenious answers. It is sufficient here to refer to Paranavitana's embarrassed explanation in pp. 160 and 161 of the *University of Ceylon: History of Ceylon* Vol I, and the forthright and humanistic (and therefore Buddhist) confrontation of the problem by Walpola Rahula in pp. 227, 228 and 229 of his book *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1956. An amusing attempt by Jotiya Dhirasekera in his article in the *Narada Felicitation Volume*, Kandy 1979, pp. 68—75 to refute Rahula and in the process take on scholars such as H. Kern and Bardwell L. Smith (*Two Wheels of Dhamma* 1972) has made us none the wiser about what he refers to as "the deflected and distorted view of the *Mahavamsa*" and his statement that the "hall-mark of scholarship is not the veneration of miscreant gurus or the perpetuation of their heresies". It is not clear at whom the dart was aimed, the poor monk or the pious *arhats* from Piyangudipa (Pungudutivu in North Sri Lanka) who had come all the way by air in the second century B. C., according to the *Mahavamsa*.
- 17a. E. W. Adikaram *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*. Colombo 1946, p. 60; as "a pious Hindu" Elara too would have observed the five precepts. Writing on the introduction of Buddhism into Ceylon, Adikaram had observed the spread of dissentient schools and the growth of ritual. He says "Considerable attention is paid to the development (or corruption) which the faith underwent in its new home".
18. *Saddharmalankaraya* ed. M. Piya Ratana, Colombo 1971, p. 547; note the phrase "*Elala nam dagaba*".
19. *ibid.*
20. *vide fn.* 18, the Cola occupation began in 993 and ended in 1070 A.D.

- 20a See James T. Rutnam, *The Polonnaruwa Colossus*, Chunnakam, (Jaffna) 1979, pp. 4-7.
21. *ibid.*
22. Major J. Forbes, *Eight Years in Ceylon*, London 1840. Vol. 1, p. 233
- 22a George Turnour, *The Mahavamsa*, Cotta, Ceylon 1837, Vol. 1. p. 113 *fn.*
23. Emerson Tennent, *Ceylon*, London, fifth edition, 1860. pp. 301, 303.
- 24 S. M. Burrows, *Buried Cities of Ceylon*. Colombo 1885, first edition, p. 5.
25. Copy of Sketch reproduced.
- 26 H. C. P. Bell. *Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon for 1896, 1897, 1898, 1899, 1900* See Appendix A
- 26a. *ibid*
27. *ibid*, the reference in the *Mahavamsa* should be XXXIII not XXIII.
- 28 *ibid*
29. H. W. Cave, *The Book of Ceylon*, London 1912, p. 548.
30. S. Paranavitana, *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon (ARASC) for 1948* paragraph 71.
- 30a. Paranavitana. *ARASC 1978*, paragraph 49 ff.
31. R. H. de Silva, "Dakkhina Thupa—not Dutugemunu's Tomb". *The Ceylon Observer, Sunday Morning Edition*, March 14. 1957
"In fact today the name board of the Archaeological Department designates this monument as the place where Dutugemunu was cremated."
32. We are obliged to make these comments much as we would have wished to refrain from doing so. For our present work is not only a refutation of Paranavitana's strange theory, but also of his methodology. We do so with a sense of duty and responsibility, and feel much relieved to find ourselves in the company of many other scholars. Further and fuller information in this connection is available in our *Some Aspects of the History of Archaeology in Ceylon* published in Colombo 1974. Our present Archaeological Commissioner Saddhamangala Karunaratne has dismissed Paranavitana's "Interlinear Inscriptions" with the words "Perception should be free from any trace of imagination", (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. VI, 1971 No. 23 Note 4). Our present Deputy Archaeological Commissioner Roland Silva in association with A Dennis A Fernando had tried a photogrammetric method to read these inscriptions and had failed. Professors K. Indrapala, R. A. L. H. Gunawardena,

- A. Liyanagamage, W. H. McLeod of Australia, and S. Kiribamune have not been able to see any value or credibility in them. The latest comment is from Prof. K. M. de Silva who has felt obliged to say that these are the "bizarre products of a fertile but declining imagination." (*The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, Vol. VII, New Series, No. 1, 1977/79, p. 83)
33. pp. 1—20.
 34. ARASC for 1946 para 28.
 35. See Appendix A: Report for 1896 *fn* "Mahavamsa XXIII" should read "Mahavamsa XXXIII".
 36. See Appendix A—Report for 1898.
 - 36a. Appendix A below.
 37. ARASC for 1946 para 28: Hocart's views are reported by Paranavitana but he had not given us the reference, and we have not been able to trace it as yet
 38. *ibid*; Hocart was Archaeological Commissioner from 1921 to 1930; Geiger dedicates Part II of the *Culavamsa* to Hocart "in sincere gratitude".
 - 38a. R. H. de Silva and Saddhamangala Karunaratne; the latter's pioneer and learned treatise on *The Brahmi Inscriptions of Ceylon* was ignored by Paranavitana when he published his work on Early Brahmi Inscriptions some ten years later; See Paranavitana *Inscriptions of Ceylon* Vol 1, Colombo 1970. Two other reputed scholars who had dared to disagree with Paranavitana were not spared his scorn and fury viz., D. J. Wijayaratna (See *EZ* Vol. V, pt. 1, No. 4, pp. 35 to 65) and D. E. Hettiaratchi (See *JCBRAS* Vol. 1, NS. 1950 pp. 174, 175.)
 - 38b. *Mhv.* Ch. XXXII VV. 57, 58.
 39. *Mhv.* Ch. XV p. 99 *fn* 4
 40. *ibid*.
 41. See his letter to the *Ceylon Daily News* 10 January, 1979, p. 8. He wrote, "To commemorate this sad event, according to the *Mahabodhivamsa Granthipada Vivaranaya* (MRGV), a pavilion was built on the site of the cremation".
 42. *Mhv.* Ch. XXXII. VV. 78, 79.
 43. We were not able to trace this passage in the *Mahabodhivamsa Granthipada—Vivaranaya* (Pali *Bodhivamsa Getapadaya*) ed. Ratmalane Dharmakirithi Sr., Dharmarama, Colombo 1957 (*MBGV*), and requested Dr. Ariyasinghe in a personal communication to furnish us the reference. He promptly explained in his reply that on page 139 lines 14—15 it is stated "a *kutagara* named *picudumulla* was cons-

tructed when the pavillon built there had collapsed", and put forward a plausible conjecture that it applied to the *malaka* where Dutugemunu's body was cremated. But there does not seem to be any more need for a possibly wearisome debate countering speculation with speculation when it is plain that we have no positive evidence from archaeology or literature to substantiate Paranavitana's guess-work; while on the other hand we have over 2000 years of tradition, a long line of literature, and also archaeological and topographical probability to establish that the so-called *Dakkhina Thupa* was none other than the southern *cetiya* built over the cremation site of Elara's dead body, and situated in the south of the city of Anuradhapura. Dr. Abaya Ariyasinghe was one of the twelve members who formed the Committee to report on this question. He had sent a dissenting memorandum, a copy of which we were able to see only after the text of our work was completed. It is entitled *The Kammanalaka and the Dakkhina Thupa at Anuradhapura*. It is here that he quotes from the *MBGV*. He finally "discards the supposition" that Dutugemunu was cremated at this spot.

44. See *fn.* 77 below.
45. *ARASC* 1948 paragraph 60.
46. This dissatisfaction and discontent have never totally abated. As recently as 14 June 1980 Underwood Manivasagam, Attorney-at-law of Colombo, had written to the President against this callous distortion of history, appealing to him to call for further information on the question, and to have the entire matter investigated "on the basis of truth".
- 46a. See *Ancient Ceylon* No 1. January 1971, Note by Editor facing p. 126;
47. Steps are being taken to publish this learned treatise soon.
- 47a. See *fn.* 46a, above pp. 127—140.
48. *ARASC* 1948 paragraph 47.
49. *Mhv.* XXXIII: 89.
50. This is accepted by all scholars.
51. *Mhv.* XXXVI: 12—14.
52. Vide Senake Bandaranayake *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture*, Leiden 1974 p. 52; also Bell *ARASC* 1895 p. 2 quoted by Bandaranayake.
53. *ibid.*
54. *ARASC* 1948 paragraph 63 & 64. The *Dakkhina Thupa* was ransacked and plundered by Kassapa in the reign of Dathopatisa I. Kassapa later succeeded to the throne as Kassapa II.
55. *ARASC* 1948 paragraph 67.

56. It is very strange that de Silva did not see this 'ash'. Where was it since it was discovered and before it went to the Museum?
57. See B. H. de Silva *fn.* 31 above.
58. It is tantalising to find a quotation given without source or context.
59. See *fn.* 18. above, *Saddharmalankaraya* pp. 443, 444.
60. See A. P. Buddhadatta *Corrections of Geiger's Mahavamsa Etc.*, Ambalangoda 1957 pp. 1, II, and pp. 19, 20.
- 60a. See James T. Rutnam *fn.* 21 above, also K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "Review of A Concise History of Ceylon" *The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies* Vol. 3 No. 2, 1960, p. 221: "Thus what some pages earlier was a tentative surmise becomes a basic fact supporting further conjectures".
61. R. H. de Silva, see *fn.* 31 above: De Silva was responsible for the removal of the board.
62. p. 161, note 28
63. p. 163.
64. See *Ceylon Daily News* 17 March 1981 p. 14.
65. See Appendix B. The *Dakkhina Thupa* was not built by Saddha Tissa brother of Dutugemunu as suggested in the Committee's Report. Walpola Rahula had made this mistake by confusing it earlier with *Dakkhinagiri Vihara* in his *History of Buddhism*, p. 80 *fn.* 7 (*Cf Mhv XXXIII: 7, 8 and D. Ferguson The Journal of Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch Vol. 22 No. 64, 1911 pp 197ff*).
66. D. R. Cousins and K. G. Dharmawardena, "Use of Mossbauer Spectroscopy in the Study of Ancient Pottery", *Nature*, London, Vol. 223, August 16, 1969, pp. 732—733.
67. Abaya Aryasinghe *op. cit.* p. 10: "a true test should reveal the possible date of the formation of charcoal and give an analysis of the contents of the sample tested. I wonder whether the authorities are prepared to brave such a risk?"
- 67a. In the *Weekend Sunday* 22 June 1980 Marcus Joseph wrote "An extract of the Atomic Energy Commission Report is as follows: The minute sand particles in these ashes have been separated by studying each particle separately to an age around 1900 to 2000 years". For good reasons we would require proof that this is a genuine extract from a Report of the Atomic Energy Commission as publicly claimed here.
68. See Appendix B
69. *MT.* p. 344 *rajagharassa pubbaḍakkhinamhi*.
70. *Mahabodhivamsa Granthipada Vivaranaya*, 'he dan mahaboyin aknidees maluva ya'. It is now the *malaka* to the south-east of Mahabodhi."

- 70a. *Report on the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon for 1948*, Colombo paragraph 49.
71. The Pali name *picula* to describe the tree where Saint Mahinda scattered the flowers appears only once in the *Mahavamsa*. The corresponding Sinhalese translation of the Pali *picula* appears as *imbul* (*himbul*), silk cotton tree, Latin *Eriodendron Anfractuosum*, in the Sinhalese *Mahavamsa* translation by Sumangala and Batuwan-tudawe (see fn. 13 above). Geiger retains the word *picula*, but adds its Latin name as *Tamarix Indica* in a footnote. Evidently he had followed Childer's *Pali Dictionary* where *picula* is described as the Tamarisk tree. But the *Tamarix Indica* is known in Sinhalese as *Umbiri*, a shrub which grows in the sea-coast. For the silk cotton tree Childers' names the Pali *pichchila*. On the other hand *pulila* is identified in Latin as *Ficus Arnottiana* and in Sinhalese as *Karudu Bo* or *Kaputa Bo*. It is also identified rightly or wrongly with *Kalaha* (Sinhalese), *Pilakkho*, *Pippali* (Pali) and *Ficus Infectoria* (Latin). It is, however, clear that the Pali *picula* is the silk-cotton tree, but there is confusion about the Sinhalese *pulila*. These are probably two different trees, in which case Paranavitana's theory has not even a broken leg to stand upon. The 13th century *Pujavaliya*, however, seems to be the only work where *picula* is translated as *pulila* (see *Pujavaliya* ed. Amaramoli, Colombo, 1953, p. 766): Cf John M. Seneveratna, "Some ancient Plants and Trees of Ceylon", *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, Vol. VII, pp. 31, 36, 95, 100; also *op. cit.* T. Petch, "Sinhalese Plant Names" p. 178 fn., also Wilhelm Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times* (CCMT) p. 231; *The Sri Lanka Forester* 1974.
72. CCMT p. 187 "Only the brotherhood were entitled to remove a *sima*. The terms for this act are *Simam Samuhan* and subst. *Simasamugghata*".
73. *Pujavaliya*, Colombo Edition, p. 177, quoted by G. P. Malalasekera *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, Colombo 1958, p. 38.
74. See Paranavitana ARASC 1948, para 57: The *Dakkhina Thupa* was necessarily outside the limits of the Mahavihara". It was an abode of the Abhayagiri monks from time to time.
75. 80 degrees 23 minutes 30 seconds East longitude approximately.
76. SMV. p. 105. No archaeological evidence is available to help locate the southern gate as it stood in the second century B. C. Presumably it was shifted after the *cetiya* was built 'at the southern gate'.
77. The only other "historical" references provided by the members of the Committee are the the *Madyama Lanka Puravritta* p. 4, and the *Hathanagalla Vihara Vamsa* (1909) p. 77. The former does not refer to a king at all. It refers to a brother of King

Viokramabahu who had chosen to live "for a long time" (as a recluse) in a cave in the Asgiri Korale. The other instance is of the two-storeyed circular relic temple erected at Attanagalla by King Gothabaya in connection with the sacrificial death of King Sirisanghabodhi. The *Mahavamsa Tika* says that the *vihara* built over the cremation site of Sirisanghabodhi is in Anuradhapura, to the south of Issarasamana Vihara, *MT.* p. 671 Ch. XXXVI: 7-9; also, Abaya Aryasinghe *Dinamina* 16 and 17 April 1966. The *cetiya* built over Elara's cremation site is unique, and no other king in the long history of Sri Lanka was deified and venerated with an image of himself and an image house. The nearest parallels we can find are the *stupa* built over the cremation site of Vijayabahu III by his son at Attanagalla, *Culavamsa* Part II p. 166. Ch. LXXXV VV, 76, 77; and the statue (not an "image" for worship as Paranavitana would have it) of Prince Bhuvanaikebahu installed in an image house of the Buddha at Kurunagala by his nephew Vijayabahu IV, *op. cit.* p. 187 Ch. LXXXVIII VV. 56-57 and *UCHC* p. 130. This typical Dravidian practice of head-offering has been found in South Indian history and Tamil literature (See Abaya Aryasinghe, *Ceylon Daily News* 30 December 1980).

As all students of Sri Lankan history will understand, the forms of the proper names in our sources vary according to the language of the source in which they occur. The form 'Elara' occurs in the Pali sources, while the Sinhala sources have the form 'Elala'. In Tamil this name is rendered as 'Ellalan'. In this essay, both 'Elara' and 'Elala' have been used, depending on the source used in each context.

APPENDIX—A

EXTRACTS FROM THE ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF CEYLON

by H. C. P. Bell

(Footnotes included within brackets)

1896 Page 4

“ELALA SOHONA”

The examination of the tree-covered hillock, anciently one of the larger Dagabas of Anuradhapura but now popularly known as “Elala’s Tomb” (*Elala Sohona*), was also started [Perhaps the Thupa built by Kanittha Tissa (165—193 A. D.) in the “Dakshinarama” (*Dipavamsa* XXII., 24). Elala’s body was cremated and his ashes deposited in a tomb at the spot where he fell, “near the southern gate of the city” (*Mahavamsa*, XXV., 69—73.) This site would therefore be in the neighbourhood of the “Dakshina Vihare”, constructed by the warrior Uttiya half a century later in the reign of Wattagamini Abaya (*Mahavamsa* XXIII., 90; *Dipavamsa*, XIX., 19).] This site traditionally connected with the Tamil Ruler slain in single combat by the Sinhalese King Dutugemunu is situated a few hundred yards south of the Sacred Bo-tree, adjoining the Kurunagala road. Two broad trenches are at present being run into the circular mould on the east and north sides; subsequent action will much depend on the result of the trenching. If carried to completion as in the case of “Kiribat Vehara”, it will be a formidable undertaking.

1897 Page 6

“ELALA SOHONA”

The wide trenches, begun in 1896, from north and east into the wooded hillock, commonly styled “Elala’s Tomb”, have been pushed on until the brick wall of the ancient dagaba has been struck. Here the cutting gives a vertical height of 60 ft. Progress is necessarily slow, owing to great amount of earth to be removed, the limited space for working, the constant danger from falling *talus*, and the difficulty of getting rid of “spoil”.

1898 Page 5

“ELALA SOHONA”

The deep cutting into the hillock struck in 1897 the base of the dagaba after the removal of tons of *debris*.

This year by pushing excavations carefully the outlines—as such as remain—of its three concentric ambulatories (*pesadawal*) and of the *garbha* (bell shaped superstructure) truncated and much broken, have been approximately traced. On the East the ambulatories cannot be fixed: the collapse has been too complete. But on the north the base, *pesadawal*, and “bell” are sufficiently well marked to give an approximation to the true calculation of their respective dimensions. Worked out from the partial segment laid bare, the perimeter of the base of the Dagaba is about 564 feet, whilst the circumference of the bottom of the *garbha* above the ambulatories is some 100 feet less.

[This Dagaba ranks as fourth in size of the six large dagabas of Anuradhapura; Abhayagiri (approximate circumference 1,100 ft.); Jetawanarama (1,065 ft.); Ruwanveli (982 ft.); Dakshina (564 ft.) Mirisavatiya (526 ft.); Kiribat Vihara (425 ft.)]

That this large Dagaba - the probable “Dakshina Vihara” resembled its fellows (Ruwanveli, Abhayagiriya, Jetawanarama, Mirisawetiya) in having at the cardinal faces offset wings, or screens, stone-built, has been settled by the discovery *in situ* of the ovolo plinth (24 ft. 8 ins. by 7 ft. 3 inches) of the north “chapel” and a portion of the ornamental *stele* which flanked it west. No traces of the east “chapel” are left. On the South and West the mound has not been opened.

1899 Page 4

“ELALA SOHONA”

It was popularly asserted that ruined buildings existed on the semi-truncated summit of “Elala Sohona”. Excavations to settle the point were temporarily resumed. This surmise has been proved erroneous.

A considerable portion of the summit was dug down to the level⁶ of solid brick forming a flattish pavement.

Deeper cutting revealed bricks laid in step form, each successive course projecting gradually outwards towards the sides of the Dagaba bonding the structure effectively.

At the centre was exposed a vertical mass of brick, roughly square (38 ft.). This was manifestly the base of the *hatares kotuwa* of the Dagaba.

From this run brick walls radiating somewhat indefinitely towards the slopes of the dagaba and presumably intended to support the central tee, the interspaces being tightly filled by brick debris.

Nearing the edge the walls are arrested by portions of an arc of solid brickwork—the tyre, so to say, of a wheel to which the *tee* was the hub and the radiating groins the spokes.

All spoil was thrown down the north and east cuttings, and afterwards removed to the swampy ground near the ex-hospital wards proposed for conversion into a local Museum.

During the course of work at the foot of “Elala Sohona” several lime stone *karandu* (“relic-caskets”) came to light in the spoil. They were all empty.

1900 Page 5

“ELALA SOHONA”

Excavation round the base of this dagaba was resumed for a while, in the hope of joining up the broad cuttings on the north and east by a deep trench skirting that quadrant of the ruin.

The digging and removal of the spoil proved too expensive for a limited vote. Furtherwork has therefore, been stopped.

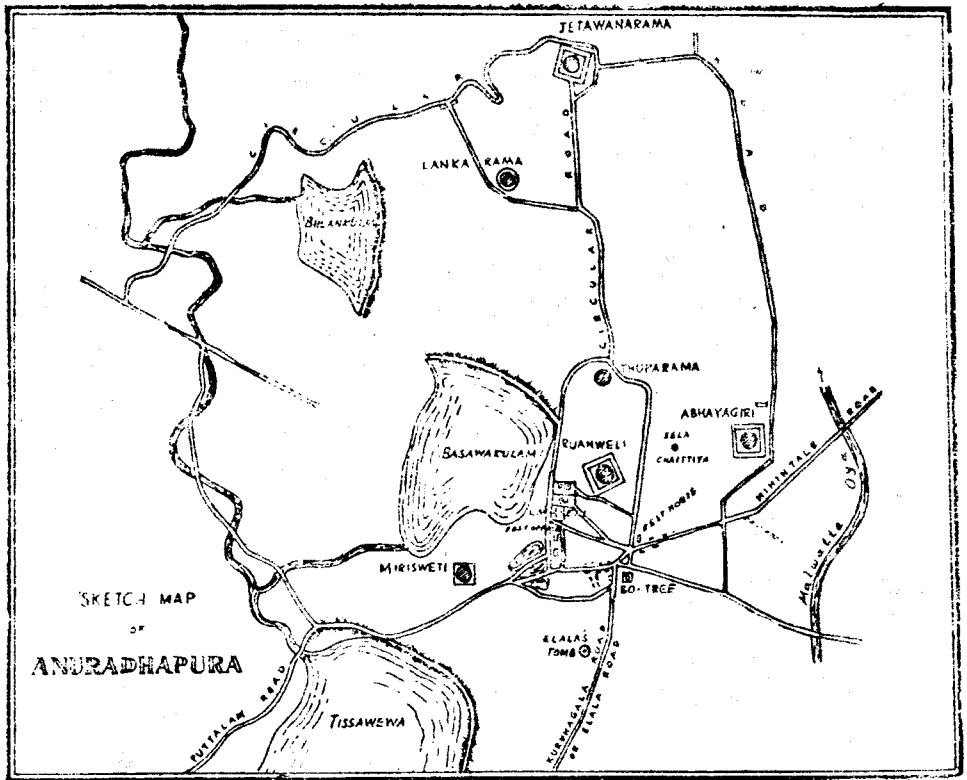
[The spoil from the hillock might well be utilised in gradually filling up pestilential ponds and low ground in Anuradhapura.]

APPENDIX—B

'MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO THE ASHES OF DUTUGEMUNU'

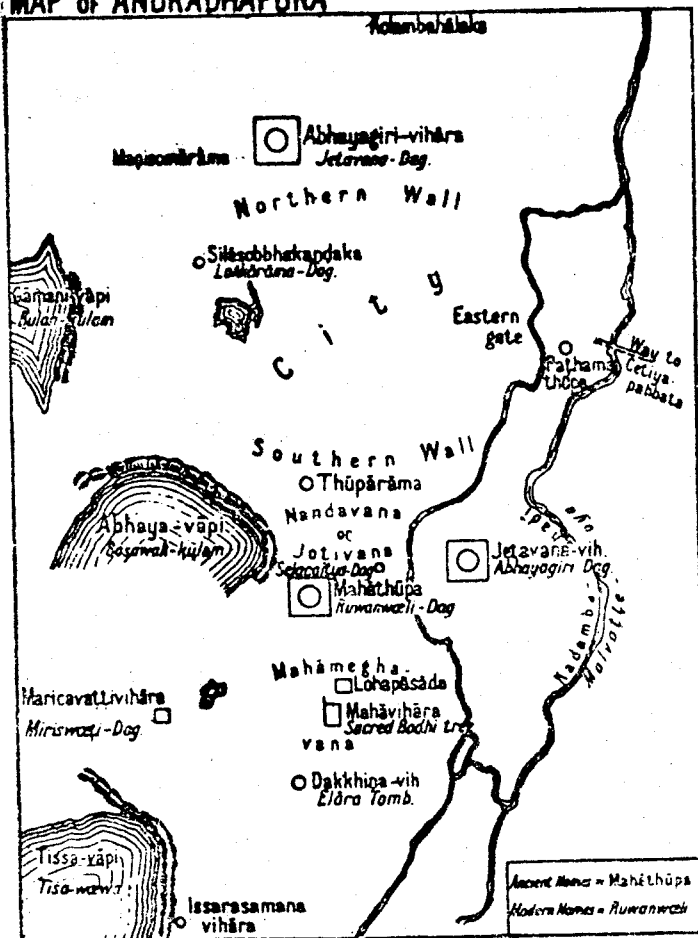
(As published in the copy of the Report referred to in page 17)

1. Dr. Nandadeva Wijesekera (Chairman)
Chief Editor and Chairman of the Board for Compilation of the *Mahavamsa*.
2. Mr. V. V. Abhayagunawardena (Secretary)
Secretary of the Board for Compilation of the *Mahavamsa*.
3. Rev. Dr. Horana Vajiragnana Thera, Royal Pandit
Honorary Editor of the Sinhala Dictionary
4. Dr. Abhaya Aryasingha
Head of the Department of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya
5. Dr. Saddhamangala Karunaratna
Commissioner of Archaeology
6. Prof. P. L. Prematilleke
Professor of Archaeology, University of Peradeniya
7. Prof. Sirimal Ranawella
Head of the Department of History, University of Matara
8. Pandit Gunapala Senadheera
Chief Editor, Department of Educational Publications
9. Mr. Roland Silva
Deputy Commissioner of Archaeology
10. Mr. M. H. Sirisoma
Asst. Commissioner of Archaeology
11. Mt. Sarath Wattala
Archaeological Assistant, Department of Archaeology
12. Mr. Douglas Ranasinghe, J. P.
Jt. Secretary of the Archaeological Society of Sri Lanka



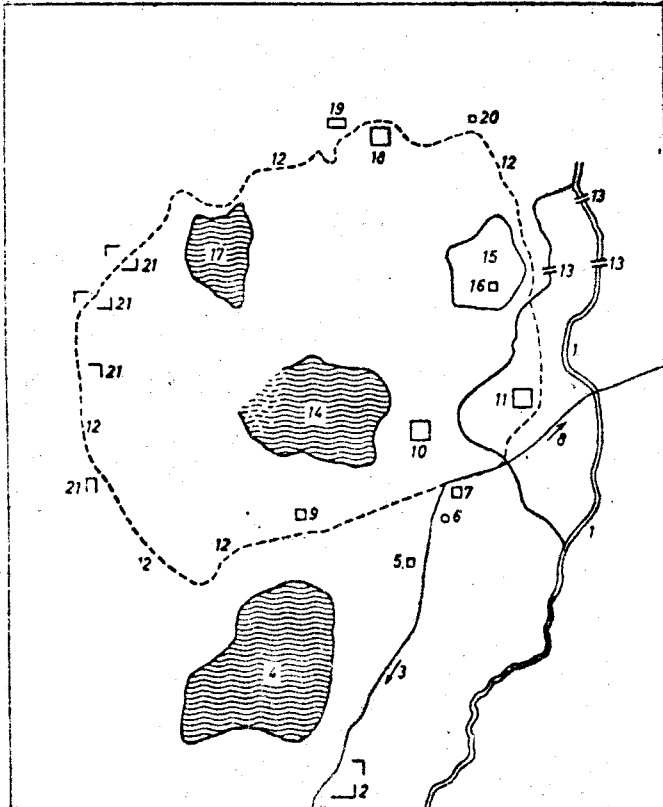
"Elala's Tomb" marked in the sketch map of Anuradhapura in Burrow's *Buried Cities of Ceylon* (1885)

MAP OF ANURADHAPURA



"Elara Tomb": Geiger's *Mahavamsa*, page 136
(1960 Edition)

Plan of Anurādhapura



1. Malvatu-oya. 2. Vessagiri. 3. To Kurunāgala. 4. Tissavāpi. 5. Elara Tomb. 6. Bodhi Tree. 7. Lohapāsāda. 8. To Mihintale. 9. Maricavāpi. 10. Mahāthūpa. 11. Jetavana. 12. Outer Circular R. 13. Bridges. 14. Boesavak Kulam. 15. City. 16. Gedigē. 17. Bulan Kulam. 18. Abhayagiri. 19. Katanapāsāda. 20. Kutampokuṇa. 21. Tapovana Ruins.

“Elara Tomb” Geiger’s *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times*, page 218, published 1960.