

A Study of Prehistoric and Early Historic Cultural Information, through Archaeological Remains at the Jethavanaramaya Vihara Complex in Anuradhapura

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Introduction

It was able to uncover information with regard to a prehistoric and early historic culture at above mentioned site with the help of the Archaeological Research Excavations carried out at, Jethavana stupa, stone compound and Southern sand compound. It is very important to have learned of this pre – historic information through scientific archaeological excavations by adopting a phenomenon number system of the, land strata. On the surface of the reddish brown Earth area of about 100 – 150 meter density and tools made of land rock that had been used by the prehistoric inhabitants of this cultural era. As well as compound of Jethavana stupa could be quoted as a place where cultural remains of hundreds and thousands years old had been archaeologically disclosed. When analyzing the purpose and the in the perpetration of archaeology the support rendered by the ancient coins is of utmost value. It is a clear fact that the “coins” had gained prominence as an exchange medium. It has been found a number of different kinds of coins used in Sri Lanka since the 3rd century B:C up to the 7th 8th centuries AD. Among those.- Punched marked coins, Swastika coins, Ball type coins, Lion coins medieval coins could be notified. In addition as foreign coins found associated with stupa, Roman coins, Gupta coins, pandyan coins, Andhra coins kushana coins, pallva coins, Dutch coins, English coins, could be quoted. In addition, Lion coins Bull type coins Massa, Silver-punched marked,

gold –kahawanu, Aka coins, Copper, gold plated – Ada massa, de-Aka, Copper Silva plated - punched marked coins. When paying attention to the coins found at the places such as 400 cm deep at stupa compound and at four squares and stupa tomb which had been reported to have exchanged during the 3rd century B.C up to 7th, 8th centuries AD. Is considered prominent.

Discussion

The excavation seasons in 2002, 2003 were helpful in uncovering tools made of, Smokey Quartz, Clear Quartz, Chert mineral rocks. Out of their tools Scraper tools and blade tools were dominant on this site and they were 4.5 cm in length or less. These tools were introduced by SiranDeraniyagala as micro lithic tools¹. Sudharshan Seneviratne points out that, the rocks used to produce these tools had been found especially from upper “Kala Oya” valley and the upper upcountry region². Hand rocks which could be amenable are used to manufacture tools with a sharp edge. Chirt and Quartz are the best rocks in it. A chart type of rock weighting 12 Kg was uncovered at Jethavana excavation, which had been brought from outside the region. It is very logical to believe that these rocks have been brought here as raw materials to manufacture rock tools. Archaeological excavations carried out at Anuradhapura Inner-city, which is about 200 meters north of Jethavana stupa, has proved of a civilization of prehistoric settlement in the Jethavana land region. It is very clear that cultural facts had been found in Anuradhapura Inner-city excavations, of a Mesolithic civilization during the period prior 5000 BC to 1000 BC³. The stone tools were found in Reddish brown Earth region was fact to note. As described by P.G. Cooray, their rocks are naturally exact is the North Central Province⁴. While this Stone Age culture was being in existence at Anuradahapura Inner-city region, “Megalithic” cultural artifacts were found in Jethayana region as well. It is

very important to note here that “Megalithic” culture rock tools had been found in this region which was a completely different culture. With the uncovering of further and more “Megalithic” culture stone tools, at the research and excavation carried out at “Wessagiriya” land, proves beyond doubt of the presence of prehistoric culture in the south region of Anuradhapura. In carrying out a research of the material environment in the central Malawatu Valley (Kadhamba River Central Valley) it has been found that a very suitable environment had existed, in the region covered from ‘Wessagiriya to Abhayagiriya’ for a prehistoric culture. The caves as human settlement covering the area from the left bank of “Kadhamba” valley, is about 1 km west of the settlement of human livelihood requirements for Prehistoric humans were naturally provided in this environment.

Especially the caves at “Wessagiriya” and “Abhayagiriya” were natural homes for the inhabitants, and also the surroundings at the caves were very beneficial for hunting and find their livelihood⁵. The material cultural information proves beyond doubt that, there had been a link between the Jethavana prehistoric human shelter with that of the prehistoric human shelter at Anuradhapura inner-city and Wessagiriya. The link had been progressing at a steady pace. The culture that settled down after the Mesolithic era would be the original and prehistoric culture, as per archaeological research and surveys done, surrounding Anuradhapura⁶. At the moment there are 4 archaeological centers spread throughout the country having cultural information of this particular era⁷. Agriculture, Animal husbandry, Metal work with the use of Iron and bronze, Pearl industry, village settlements, Burial systems of mass scale, Reddish color clay pat industry, Blackish color clay pot industry, scrawling of icons on clay pots after burring, are things that had been proved to be introduced to Sri Lankan culture, through the

research of material environmental objects and backs of human era had been in existence at Anuradhapura and at many areas of Sri Lanka during the period, 100-400od, 100-400 BC⁸. It is very important that, thee spreading of this particular culture had been identified, during the period, 950-250 BC, with the revelations of excavations carried cut at, AG 69, AMP. 88, ASW.88/89 within the precincts of Anuradhapura Inner city⁹. The most advanced period of original historic cultures activated from Anuradhapura Inner-city, could be identified, through the basalt early historic period¹⁰. Seneviratne gave the opinion, that, a great use of mineral resources from soil layers had been used during this period¹¹. Deraniyagla is of the opinion that, this period proves of an improvement of Anuradhapura into a township¹². However, the process of Anuradhapura moving towards a developed township was evident during the period of Middle Lower Early History. During this period the inner-city settlement covered a land extent of about 250 hectares, as per Deraniyagla¹³.

The great chronicle of Sri Lanka provides valuable written information on how king Pandukabaya, planned urban development of Anuradhapura during the period 4-5 BC century, to arrive at factual decisions¹⁴, as described in it, the king had planned main or lead village and servant or secondary villages to offer services¹⁵. This is very important as there had been villages or settlements, outside the parameters of the inner-city of Anuradhapura. The materials and objects discovered from the surface of layers of the land of the Jethavana Stupa compound, black and red wear (B.R.W.) and black ware (B.W.) bronze and iron mettle, information and various other details of mineral rocks. It is imaginable, with the available material facts on hand, that, original historic culture had existed in the inner-city of Anuradhapura as well as in the Jethavana site. Settlements do not progress in isolation. While the settlements of inner-city

progressed as central settlements, it was provided with ancillary services by the cluster settlements around and the vicinity of the center. This vital thinking has been common to both Sri Lanka and India, as per the research on proto historic researchers¹⁶. It is clear that, long before the erection of the stupa Jethavana site, there had been human settlements as proved with material facts of original culture, discovered from the Jethavana site.

Parts of black and red ware (B.R.W.) and black wear (B.W.), shells, rock pieces which belong to the original historic or proto historic soil layers, used to manufacture tools and pots. It could come across, items such as, blue glass debris, coins of Laxmi, coins of the swastika mark, punch marked coins, buildings constructed with bricks and related information. Also, we find red ware (R. W.), from the soil layers that had been deposited over a period of time after the culture of the Jethavana Stupa site. Deraniyagala points out that, such soil layers on which settlements had existed at inner-city, took place during the period 250 – 100 B.C. He recognizes this period as, Middle Early History, He further states that, during this period, Anuradhapura settlement had a land area of 100 hectares¹⁷. It is very important to note, that settlement existed in parallel in this period, is recorded with the available information on the Jethavana Stupa compound. The monument made of bricks which belongs to the original historical era, has been reported from Jethavana Stupa, south stone compound in the year 1992. Most of the items discovered from Jethavana excavation sites, which had been used for industrial purposes are believed to be from soil layers of the early historic and historical period. Metal industry and Industries, which used Mineral rocks as raw material are some of the Industries that, had been in existence during this era. This is a clear fact, with available our research information. Among Industrial activities identified at the site

of the Stupa stone compound, details of the Metal Industry are Very important. Raw materials found, such as Iron slag, items of Iron, items of Bronze, Bronze slag and the crucible used to boil metal, that had been used in the Metal Industry are facts of vital importance¹⁸.

Apart from all those evidences, the ancient coins have been discovered from this site, which is given valuable information regarding the early historic phase of the area. It is accepted that the oldest coin in Sri Lanka as well as in India is punched marked coin¹⁹. The productive origin of this coin named as word “Dharana had taken place in the Indian peninsula²⁰. But it had been revealed by the archeological excavations that punched marker coins had been manufactured in Anuradhapura and Tissamaharama. Among the punched marked coins found at Jethavaramaya it had been found such coins made of copper and silver were found with punched marks on both sides of the coin and sometimes on single side Accordingly the punched marks seen on coins at Jathavanaramaya could be mentioned as follows-swastika mountain, stupa, tojine, geometrical marks. When studying the reports on punched coin it is obvious that coins had been found in the soil layers belonging to the period of pre- Jethavanaramaya and Jethavanaramaya era of Jethavana stupa especially from the excavations done at the stupa compound. That evidence had been found in the fact that those coins had been used at pre Jethavana era. Accordingly, as denoted by Thusithamendis the denoted research officer along with the layers wherein those coins were found, as there were factors to say that red ware (R.W) and black colored clay ware (B.W) and also factors related to metal had been found it has confirmed and pointed out that this could belong to the pre- historical era.

The scientists who had studied about the swastika coin, point out that those are of another developmental stage of punched marked coins. Out of those coins which had been reported from Jathavanaramaya up to now are, only Tree and swastika coin, Elephant and swastika coins. when comparing with the other local old coins found a stupa compound swastika coins were found in minimum level. In general, Swastika coins could be seen with geometrical symbols like, tree with vedi, tojinaya, mountain, and stupa

Among the coins found from the excavations at Jethavana stupa, the majority number of coins had been reported are lion coins. It is taken for granted during the 3, 4 AD. Centuries a viciousness is shown of the largeness and the shape of the Lion coin found at Jethavana. They have been formed giving prominence to the Lion figure turned to left or right and on the front side bearing the lion figure with a circle rounded with four dots. According to Codrington those coins are belonged to the 3rd century and so confirmed because most of those coins had been found at the base of the Jethavana stupa. It is farther confirmed that they had been found deposited in the sand layer of stupa square.

The scientists point out that the bull type coins had been in use during the parallel period of which Lion coins were used. On the face side a bull figure is shown turned to left or right surrounded by a number of dots in rectangular shape and below the bull figure symbol like an altar could be seen on the coin, similar to its face side three dots could be seen surrounded by a dotted frame. As learned people point out that those coins had been in usage during the 3-4 centuries AD, it would have been formed during the period of a single ruler.

It had been reported that Lakshmi coins had found from the layers of the pre Jathavanaramaya habitations, and those coins found at the Jathavanaramaya stupa compound are considered belonging to the period of B.C ²¹it indicates Lakshmi figure on the face side and the swastika on the rear side of those coins. In general, it had been found more Lakshmi coins than other types of coins. Below the foot of the Lakshmi figure at both sides, it is found two figures of Lotus raised upwards and on them two elephants are seated, holding two water jugs with their trunks and thus it believed that Lakshmi figure is being coroneted. On the face side of the coins the swastika and been Diya could be seen²². Since it has been reported that those coins mostly had. Being found in the lowest layers, it could be identified that these coins could have formerly been the local coins could use in Sri Lanka.

Among the coins used during the 7th8th centuries AD it could be seen that gold coins, the coin kahawanuwa made of gold had been found when excavations were done in order to get the stupa grounds surfaced. According to the symbols appearing on the front and rear side of the coins and letters encored therein it had subjected to controversy, among the scientists. Accordingly coins with the sentence “Sri Lanka Vibhu had been found from Jethavana. In addition, coins belonging to mid-era issued by the Kings Sri Vijayabahu, Sri Parakramabahu and Sri Raja Leelawathie had been reported to have found from Jethavanaramaya. In additional to those Greek and Roman coins as well as “Satavahana”, “Kushana” and “Pallava” coins, found from the stupa Ayaka could be taken into granted that commercial activities with the temple grounds³³. According to the studies performed in Sri Lanka in general, it has been able to gather vital information regarding the ancient inhabitations and compositions of coins during the monastic ear from 3rd century

B.C up to 7th 8th centuries AD. When taking into consideration the coins four at the stupa, had been with multitude, but in other parts, the stupa it had been found in average standard. Out of all squares associated with northern squares, the maximum number of coins reported to have been found, above others. According to those reports coins had been found from the surface level up to the depth 370 C.M of the stupa compound. Associated with research excavations at stupa compound JSMP/ 2001/ it had been reported to have found a Lakshmi metal coin at a maximum depth of 370.C.M from the same Research. Excavation the maximum depth of having found a punched marked coin was at the depth level of 230 C.M³⁴.The places where coins had been reported -Four square ,Stupa tomb, North square, East square, West square, Stupa compound, Sand compound

Conclusion

These evidences reveal that, human activities through the stone made tools and other creations in pre historic phase at the site. The continuations of human habitation could be come across till early historical time. The pottery have been identified as Red ware, Black and Red ware. These evidences show the rich material culture in the area. We considered the coins evidences as a truthful and clear factors for studying the human behavior and their economic condition at that period. The karshapana and punch marked coins have been used in primary level in the society. In the later period the lion coins, bull coins and other have been introduced to Sri Lanka. The luxmi coins very rarely found from this land. Anyhow, we can get the clear idea of ancient social, religious, and economic activities in Anuradhapura area based on these coins which was housed at the Jethavana museum.

End notes

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