

Buddhist Heritage of Kurundi



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Foreword

The Kurundi archaeological site is unique in Sri Lankan history. There is evidence that the Kurundi Aṭṭhakathā, one of the five main Aṭṭhakathā composed as Sīhala Aṭṭhakathā under the advice of Arahant Mahinda Thera was written at this place. Accordingly, it can be inferred that Arahant Mahinda Thera also lived in this monastery for some time.

I drew attention to the Kurundi archaeological site during my tenure as the President of All Ceylon Buddhist Congress. At that time, when the Department of Archeology and Ven. Galgamuwe Shantabodhi Thera were attempting to carry out development in the Kurundi Vihāra, a case was filed against the Department of Archaeology and Ven. Galgamuwe Shantabodhi Thera at the Mullaitivu Magistrate Court. Ven. Galgamuwe Shantabodhi Thera had a discussion on this matter with me so I provided support for the litigation. The matter was also reported to the Buddhist Rights Commission of the Buddhist Congress by the Director General of Archaeology and the officers of the Department of Archaeology. In the circumstances, I was saddened by the damage to Buddhist heritage in the Northern province. I had determined to preserve a unique archaeological site in the province and hand it over to the Department of Archaeology.

Mr. Henry Parker, Mr. J. P. Lewis and Mr. H. C. P. Bell visited the Kurundi site and wrote various reports about its importance. In 1983, Mr. Cyril Mathew, the then Hon. Minister of Industries & Scientific Affairs also worked with the aim of excavating and preserving the Kurundi archeological site. However, he was unable to accomplish the task due to the protests that emerged at that time. Despite the difficult circumstances, the conservation of the Kurundi archaeological site was started with the Department of Archaeology. There were various disturbances, protests, lawsuits, etc. However, I was able to finish this heavy task with the support of the virtuous people around me as well as by working very patiently and properly. Although the names are not mentioned, many people contributed in various ways to my effort. I must also remember the interest in Buddhism that I received from my parents and Ananda College, Colombo my alma mater.

I consider it a privilege to be able to conserve the Kurundi Stūpa and make it available to the Buddhists. This comprehensive and beautiful book which includes information about the sacred site of Kurundi is compiled with a

view to induce you to visit Kurundi and improve your knowledge in Buddhist heritage.

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have worked to compile this book, and to all those who have supported in various ways to my effort in conserving the Kurundi Stūpa.

Jagath Sumathipala
Hony. President
Buddhaloka Foundation

Editor's Note

The chronicle of the Kurundi Vihāra can be introduced as a hidden chapter in the history of Sri Lanka. We consider it a privilege to be able to uncover the story of Kurundi. We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to Mr. Jagath Sumathipala, Honorary President of the Bauddhaloka Foundation for starting and carrying on the venture despite all the obstacles.

Our thanks are due to Senior Professor Anura Manatunga, Director General of Archaeology for giving us permission to carry out the task.

Measures were taken to describe archaeological and historical data on the sacred site of Kurundi accurately. Maps, plans, photographs etc. were also used to confirm such data. We believe that this publication is of immense value for future archaeology work at Kurundi.

We were pleased to be able to bring out this publication in English and Tamil translations. Our thanks to Dr. Buddhini Wijesuriya for having undertaken the task of preparing an English translation of the book and Ms. Nagaratnam Sudharshini for having undertaken the task of preparing a Tamil translation of the book.

We are grateful to Dr. Malini Dias, former Director of Epigraphy and Numismatics of the Department of Archaeology and Dr. Madulugiriye Wijerathna for English and Tamil proofreading. Dr. Dias also read the Kurundi Slab Inscription to give the reader some idea of what the inscription is about.

Our thanks to Mr. Pani Wewala for his assistance in the preparation of this publication.

Last but not least, we would also like to thank the staff of the Bauddhaloka Foundation, and place on record our thanks to all those persons, who helped us in various ways to make this task a success.

Prof. Malinga Amarasingha
Editor

Introduction

The Kurundi Vihāra which is situated in the Mullaitivu district of the Northern province, Sri Lanka is one of the remarkable archaeological sites in the country. The ruined *stūpa* at the site is the only *stūpa* discovered so far in regard to the lotus shaped (*padmākāra*) *stūpa* built of kabok stone (laterite) during the period of Anuradhapura. The Mahāvamsa, the great chronicle of Sri Lanka records this site as Kurundacullaka Pariveṇa (*Mv.* 33 & 32). During the reign of Aggabodhi IV (A.D. 667-683) this site has been called Kurundapillaka Vihāra (*Mv.* 44 & 21). According to the Aṭṭhakathā the site was known as the Kurundapāsaka Vihāra. The Kurundan-malai Slab Inscription of Udaya IV (A.D. 946-954) mentions this site as Saṅgārāma Sirisaṅgabo Rajamahā Vihāra. The Slab Inscription also reveals that there had been a *padhānaghara* called *Abhaya-Isiripav* on the premises (Inscriptions of Ceylon, Vol. V, Pt. II: 221-224). During the reign of Vijayabāhu I (A.D. 1055-1110) the site was also known as the Kurundiya Vihāra (Lankā Viśvavidyālaya I Kāṇḍaya II Bhāgaya: 409). This site hidden in the jungle for many decades is currently known by the names of Kurundi Vihāra and Kurundāvaśoka Vihāra.

The Kurundi Vihāra was hidden in the jungle for many decades. A new era has dawned on this damaged archeological site, which was receiving the attention of seekers for hidden treasure, people of various religious beliefs and those who interested in the past. Mr. Jagath Sumathipala, Chairman of the Bauddhaloka Foundation, and others came forward to associate with the archaeology work at the Kurundi Vihāra. Accordingly, with the supervision, guidance and academic contribution of the Department of Archaeology, the work was done with the financial support of the Bauddhaloka Foundation. Many facts that could add a new page to Sri Lankan history are revealed by this work. It is expected that many more facts will be uncovered in the future. It is fortunate to have the blessing of Ven. Galgamuwe Shantabodhi Thera as well as the contribution of the Sri Lanka Civil Security Force and the Sri Lanka Army in carrying out the archaeology work at the Kurundi Vihāra.

This book was compiled as a publication of the Bauddhaloka Foundation to mark the conservation of the Kurundi Stūpa by the Foundation and handing it over to the Department of Archaeology.

To
The late Dr. (Mrs.) Milina Sumathipala

Chapter One

Geophysical Environment

Mullaitivu district is located in the northeast of Sri Lanka in the Northern province. It has an area of 2693 km² (Statistical Hand Book 2021:1). This area is bounded by Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Kilinochchi districts. The archaeological site of Kurundi stands in the vicinity of Manal Āru stream which flows into the Nayāru lagoon in the Mullaitivu district. The island was divided into three administrative or political divisions known as Ruhunu Raṭa, Pihiti Raṭa and Māyā Raṭa in the past. Accordingly, this area was comprised within Pihiti Raṭa at that time.

The area marked as Nagadiba on the Ptolemy's Map of Ceylon in the 2nd century A.D. now encompasses the Vavuniya district. The Thonigala Inscription (c. 4th century A.D.) which is in the same district mentions this place as Uturupasa (*EZ. III: 72–188*). It was also called Patittāraṭṭa during the period of Anuradhapura. It had come within the Rajaraṭa and located in the north of Sri Lanka (Vavuniya district). Rajaraṭa which was also called Uttarapassa, Uttara Dēśa, Uttaraṭṭa, Uturpasa and Utur Karā (Weerasinghe 1985:11).

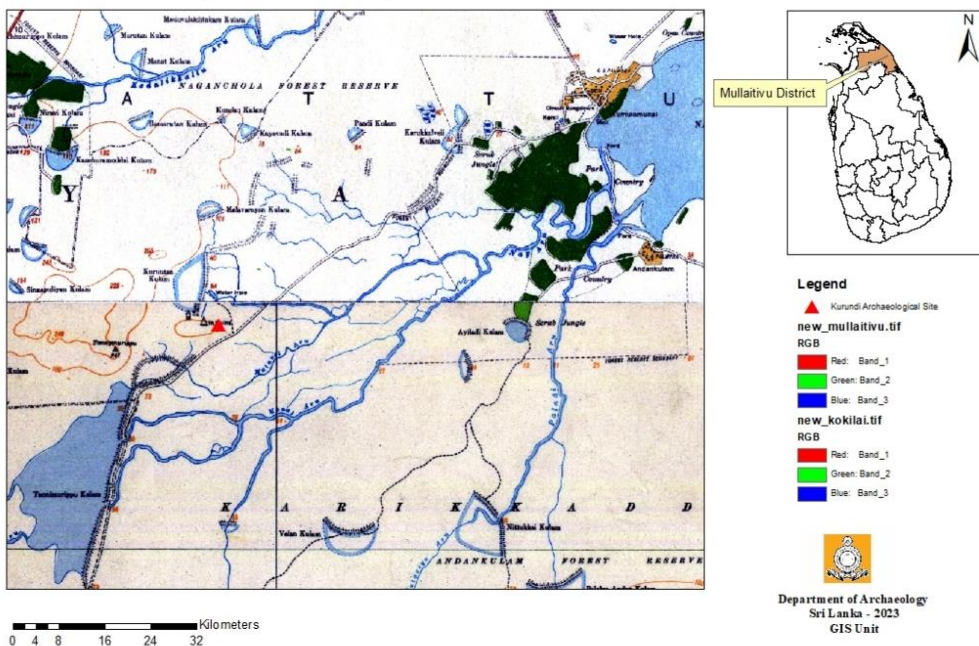
Kaḍaim-Poth or the boundary books introduce Kurundugamu Raṭa. It is assumed that it was Kurundiraṭṭa which is mentioned in the chronicle (Abeyawardena 1978:96). According to the regional divisions of ancient Sri Lanka, the respective zone belonged to the Vanni chieftaincies which delimited from Jaffna in the north and Aruvi river in the south. The districts of Vavuniya and Mullaitivu were southern and northern portions of the Vanni respectively. The Dutch had calculated the land area of Vanni as an area of approximately 1864 km² during their period of occupation in the maritime provinces of Sri Lanka. They had also calculated the Mullaitivu district as an area of 927 km² (Lewis 1895:1).

has a slightly gravel mixed character. Considering the soil distribution, it belongs to the Regosol flat soil type in recent sand and sand ridges.

The area receives annual rainfall from the northeast and southwest monsoons. It receives an annual rainfall between 250-500mm from the northeast monsoon (November-March) and an annual rainfall between 1000-1500mm from the southwest monsoon (May-September). The average temperature is around 27.5°C. Taking into account Sri Lanka's precipitation regime which is divided according to the factors of temperature and rainfall, this area belongs to the dry zone of the country. The annual drought hazard probability in the area is between 10% - 20% in both the cultivation seasons, namely, *yala* and *maha*. Average dry weather is 2-3 months in a year.

Sri Lanka is divided into three main zones under vegetation classification. Accordingly, the Mullaitivu district belongs to the category of dry zone forests. According to the data related to the year 2012, the total forest area in Mullaitivu District is 169,305.5 hectares (Gunasena Sri Lanka Sityam Potha 2018:34).

Kurundi Archaeological Site (One Inch)



Kurundi Archaeological Site

Livelihoods in the area are based on agriculture and animal husbandry. There are evidences for the existence of rice cultivation since ancient times. Water has been obtained for cultivation from the northeast monsoon. Four main tanks, seventeen medium-sized tanks and four hundred and nine small-sized tanks have provided water for agriculture. The coast of this area encompasses about 70 km. Nayāru, Mātalan, Nanthikadāl and Kokilāi lagoons are parallel to the coast. The location is very suitable for fishing. It is famous for shrimps and crabs (Statistical Hand Book 2021:3,5).

The Colebrooke-Cameron Reforms of 1833 established a unified system of administration embracing the entire country. It divided the country into five provinces, namely, Central, Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western. The provinces were subdivided into districts with a hierarchically arranged system of administrative structure. New provinces were carved out of existing provinces bringing their total number to nine by 1889. However, the Northern province was further included.

The current administrative structure of Sri Lanka consists of Provincial, District, Divisional Secretary Divisions and Grāma Niladhārī Divisions. Accordingly, the Northern province consists of the districts of Vanni, Jaffna and Mannar. Vanni district was later renamed into two parts: Mullaitivu district and Vavuniya district. At present, the Northern province operates under five main administrative districts. Mullaitivu district is one of the newly added districts in 1979.

Districts, Divisional Secretary Divisions and Grāma Niladhārī Divisions of the northern region including the land extent:

District	Divisional Secretary Divisions	Grāma Niladhārī Divisions	Land Extent (ha)
Mullaitivu	06	136	2,693
Mannar	05	153	1,996
Vavuniya	04	102	1,891
Jaffna	15	435	1025
Kilinochchi	04	95	1,279

Six Divisional Secretary Divisions of the Mullaitivu district:

- ❖ Thunukkai
- ❖ Manthai East
- ❖ Puthukkudiyiruppu
- ❖ Oddusuddan
- ❖ Muhudubaḍa Pattu (Maritime Pattu)
- ❖ Welioya

(Statistical Pocket Book 2021:6).

According to the current divisions, the Kurundi archaeological site belongs to the Muhudubaḍa Pattu (Maritime Pattu) Divisional Secretary Division. The area was mentioned as Karikkaddumulai South in the past. There were 18 villages located in Karikkaddumulai South. Population of those villages is as follows (Lewis 1895:76).

Karikkaddumulai South

Village	1817	1839	1881	1891
Alampil	71	44	71	94
Andankulam	22	62	52	71
Chemmalai	41	42	80	99
Chivantamurippu	-	-	-	-
Iranmiyankulam	3	-	-	-
Kadduttaddamalai	-	-	-	--
Kanakanayankudiyiruppu	27	-	-	-
Karadippuval	10	-	-	-
Karuvaddukkeni	44	66	109	60 147
Kokkilay	-	-	-	-
Koddaippanikkankadu	-	71	182	147
Kokkuttoduvay	78	107	239	361
Kumilamunai	108	-	-	-
Kunchukkulam	28	-	-	-
Taddamalai	56	90	12	23
Tuvarankarai	24	-	-	-
Tuvarankilam	15	-	-	-
Veppankulam	12	-	-	-
	539	482	745	1,002

Population Distribution:

Population of Divisional Secretary Divisions, Mullaitivu district from 1817 to 1891 (Lewis J.P 1895:46):

Divisional Secretary Division	1817	1839	1871	1881	1891
Karikkaddumulai North	1233	1751	2636	2922	2810
Do. South	539	589	858	745	1002
Mulliyavala	750	833	1098	1209	1041
Putukkudiyiruppu 6	1106	1138	1523	1348	1194
Karunavalpattu North	302	-	-	-	-
Do. South	633	528	443	387	331
Tunukkay 7	539	517	390	390	538
Meipattu North	598	862	798	636	606

Population by main religion from 1881 to 1891 (Lewis J.P 1895:92).

District	Sex	Hindu	Buddhist	Mohammeda n	Christian
		1881-1891	1881 -1891	1881 -1891	1881- 1891
Vavuniya	Males	68 - 66	12 - 13	9 - 9	11 - 11
Mullaittivu	Males	81 - 80		5 - 6	14 - 14
Vavuniya	Females	66 - 68	13 - 15	9 - 9	11 - 10
Mullaittivu	Females	81 - 79		6 - 6	13 - 15

Population of Divisional Secretary Division of Muhudubada Pattu (Maritime Pattu) by ethnic group where the Kurundi archeological site is located (Statistical Hand Book 2021:34).

Mullaittivu	Sri Lanka Tamil	Indian Tamil	Sri Lanka Moor	Total
3.53%	89.82%	0.53%	5.96	0.16

Population of Mullaitivu district by ethnic group (Statistical Pocket Book 2021:34).

Ethnic Group	1953	1963	1971	1981	2001	2012
Total Population	8,098	10,582	12,690	14,847	16,930	20,359
Sinhala	5617	7,513	9,131	10,980	13,876	15,250
Sri Lanka Tamil	885	1,165	1,424	1,887	7,32	2, 269
Indian Tamil	974	1,123	1,175	819	855	840
Sri Lanka Moor	464	627	828	1,047	1339	1893
Indian Moor	48	55	27	-	-	-
European	7					
Burgher & Eurasian	46	46	45	39	35	38
Malay	25	33	43	47	55	44
Vedda	1	-	--	-	-	-
Sri Lanka Chetty	-	-	-	-	-	6
Baratha	-	-	-	-	-	2
Other	32	21	16	28	37	18

Population of Mullaitivu district by religion from 1953 to 2012 (Statistical Pocket Book 2021:9).

Religion	1953`	1963		1971	1981	2001	2012
Buddhist	5209.4	7003.3		8536.9	10288.3	12986.6	14272.1
Hindu	1610.5	1958.4		2238.7	2297.8	1312.9	2561.3
Islam	541.5	724.0		901.8	1121.7	1435.9	1967.5
Roman Catholic	724.4	884.9		1004.3	1130.6	1185.9	1552.2
Other	11.9	11.4		8.3	8.3	8.4	6.4

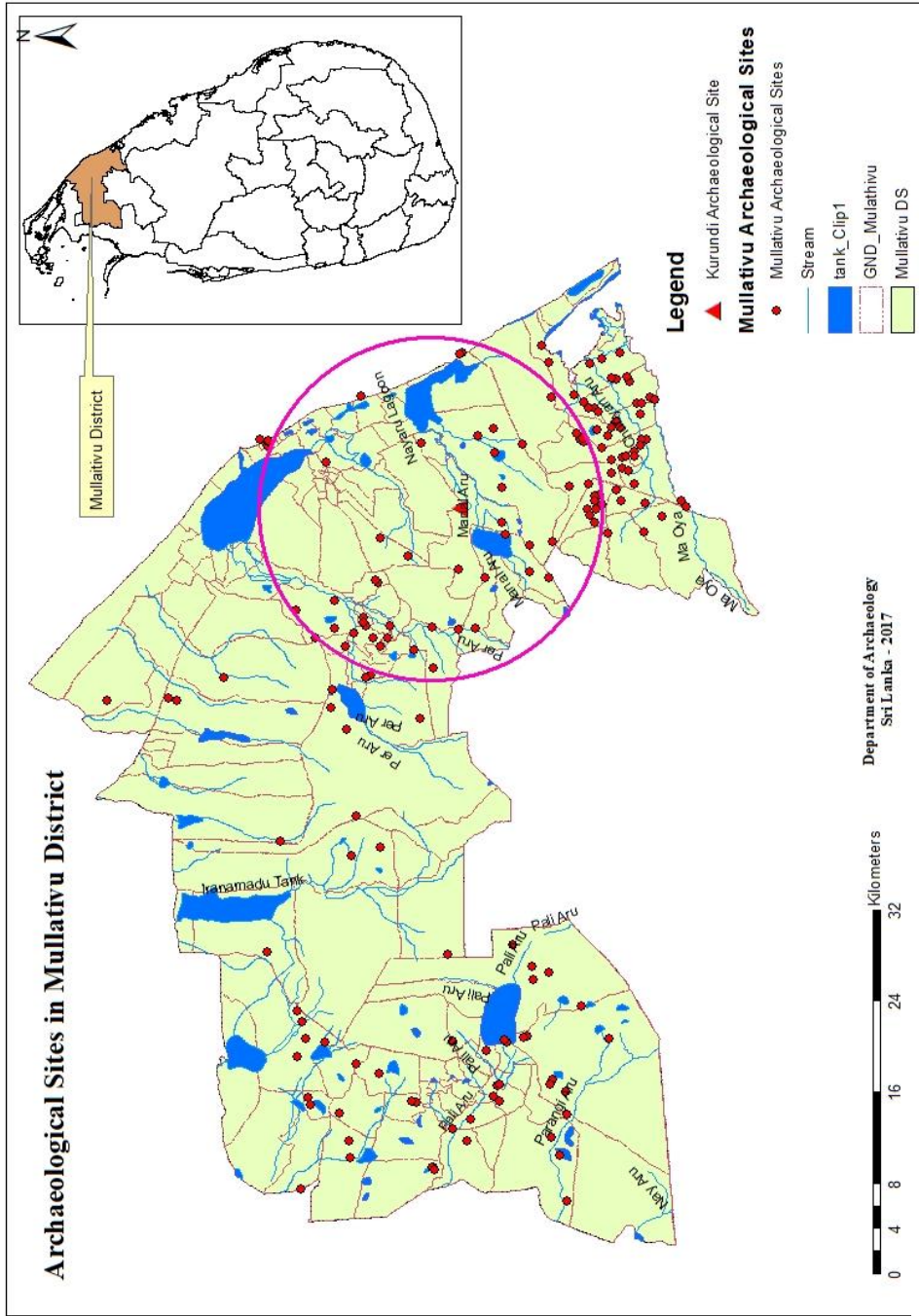
Population of Divisional Secretary Division of Muhudubada Pattu (Maritime Pattu) by religion where the Kurundi archeological site is located 2012 (Statistical Pocket Book 2021:35).

Buddhist	Hindu	Islam	Roman Catholic	Christian	Other
1.01%	72.33%	6.17%	17.28%	2.93%	0.08%

Data presented above confirm that the people of different ethnic groups and religions lived in this area during the colonial period.

07 Malays, 04 Afghans, 01 Kaffir and 03 Parthians lived in the area around Vavuniya and Mullaitivu in 1891 (Lewis 1895:81). This provides evidence that this area has been a centre of international trade since ancient times.

The Department of Archaeology has discovered one hundred seventy-six archaeological sites during the documentation of archaeological sites and monuments of the Northern province of Sri Lanka. Based on archaeological evidence, it can be assumed that this area remained with a large population during the period of Anuradhapura.



Archaeological Sites in Mullativu District

Chapter Two

History of Kurundi Monastic Complex

Kurundāvaśoka Vihāra can be introduced as a unique monastery among the monasteries found in the Mullaitivu district. It is believed that the Buddha visited this place during his second visit to Sri Lanka (Sessional Papers, 1886:449; Lewis 1895:310-311). Kurundāvaśoka Vihāra is the temple built by King Khallāṭanāga during his reign (110-103 BC). It is also the temple of Kurundapāsaka which is mentioned in the chronicles and Aṭṭhakathā. According to the Mahāvamsa, there was a monastic educational institution called Kurundacullaka (*Mv.* 33 & 32). Samantapāsādikā, commentary on the Vinaya Piṭaka of the Pāli canon mentions about Kurundi Aṭṭhakathā. During the reign of Emperor Dharmāśoka (c. 268-232 BC), the third Buddhist Council took place in Pāṭalīputra under the leadership of Moggaliputtatissa Thera. Buddhist Scriptures known as the Pāli Tripiṭaka which was compiled at the gathering was brought to Sri Lanka by Arahant Mahinda Thera in 250 BC. In order to teach Tripiṭaka to the Sinhala monks, Arahant Mahinda Thera wrote it in their own language. These are called “Heḷa Aṭuvā”. They were again translated into Pāli by Buddhaghosa Thera under the supervision of the arahants living in the Granthakāra Pariveṇa of the Mahāvihāra. Buddhaghosa Thera learnt Mahā Aṭuvāva, Pachcharī Aṭuvāva and Kurundi Aṭuvāva from Buddhatta Thera at the Mahāvihāra (Kulatunga, Siḷumiṇa, 5 Janavāri 2019). Buddhaghosa Thera had used five Heḷa Aṭuvā, namely, Mahāṭṭhakathā, Mahāpachchariyatṭhakathā, Kurundatṭhakathā, Saṃkhepatṭhakathā and Andhakatṭhakathā in his work. Literary works mention that the “Kurundi Aṭṭhakathā, one of the main Sinhala commentaries was compiled at Kurunvēlu Vihāra. Weerasinghe says that Arahant Mahinda Thera wrote aṭṭhakathā in the language of local inhabitants for their benefit. Mūla or the Mahāṭṭhakathāva, Mahāpachchariya and Kurundiya are the Sinhala Aṭṭhakathā. Of them, the Kurundi Aṭṭhakathā is considered to have belonged to the Buddhist centre called Kurundan Malaya in the Mullaitivu district where Buddhist ruins abound (Weerasinghe 1985:47). Thus, this place can be also considered as a temple where Arahant Mahinda Thera lived. According to the Mahāvamsa, King Aggabodhi I (A.D. 571-604) built the Kurunda Vihāra around which he planted a coconut plantation said to have been 3 yojanas (25 to 30 miles) in extent (*Mv.* 41 & 16 & Rahula

Walpola 1956:240). Furthermore, according to the chronicles, this area was known as Kurunduveva. The large tank known as "Kurunthan-Ur" and located some distance from the ruins of the ancient Kurundi Vihāra was Kurundavāpiya or Kurunduveva, which was built by Aggabodhi I. This is now called Thañnimurippukuḷam. This tank is fed by the water of Manal Āru stream (Lankā Viśvavidyālaye Lankā Itihāsaya 1964:340). Lewis's report states that in this area, there were many abandoned large and small tanks built by the Sinhalese. Accordingly, Kurundivāva and Thannimurippuvāva were the main tanks. According to the report of Parker, Thannimurippu and Kurundi tanks are located in the Nayāru basin (Nicholas 1959: 86-87).

It is mentioned that a minister of King Aggabodhi IV (A.D. 667-683) built a *pāsāda* in Kurundapillaka Vihāra (*Mv.* 44 & 21). It is said that King Vijayabāhu I (A.D.1055-1110) restored Kurundi Temple (Lankā Viśvavidyālaya I Kāṇḍaya II Bhāgaya: 409). During the reign of Parākramabāhu II (A.D.1236-1270), Kurundi was among the fifteen camps built by the Dravidian kings of Kālinga Māgha and Jayabāhu and their forty-thousand strong army. According to the Mahāvamsa, the forced camps were liberated by the army of King Parakramabahu II (*Mv.* 83:16-32). Chronicles, Pūjāvaliya and Nikāya Saṅgrahaya mention that the forts of Māgha and his assistant Gajabāhu were located at the places such as Puḷatthipura (Polonnaruva), Kurundi (Kuruṇḍu). At that time, King Çandrabhānu, who had fled after a great war (lost), gathered Tamil forces from regions such as Pāṇḍya and Cōḷa became powerful, and accompanied the Javanese army and landed at Māvatu. The king, who had captured the Sinhalese who lived in areas like Padī Kurundi, went to Subhapabbata (Yapahuwa) and camped there (*Mv.* 83:15-16 & Liyanagama 1989:168). Thus, it seems that Çandrabhānu powerfully attracted the Sinhalese of Padī and Kuruṇḍu regions (Abeyawardena 1978:96).

H. C. P. Bell mentions about Kurundi in the Archaeological Survey Report of 1905. Accordingly, there are evidences for the existence of a large settlement in this area in the past. "A hill in the jungle about seven miles north-east Otiya-malai. The name means 'hill of the kuruntan tree': the *kuruntan* is called *panguru-gaha* in Sinhalese" (Bell 1905:19) .

According to the Kaḍaim-Poth or the boundary books, the name "Kurundaka" was known as "Kuruṇḍugamu Raṭa". The term "Raṭa" was

probably used to indicate a particular area or a district (Abeyawardena 1978:105). There is an opinion that Kedhe and Kadawat *korales*, which are situated to the north of Anuradhapura are known as Kuruñdu Raṭa. However, according to Nicholas, Kuruñdu Raṭa is located in the southern portion of Karikattumalai in Vavuniya. He further mentions that the present Kurunthanivoor comprises the ancient Kurundiraṭṭha (Nicholas 1979:102).

There are old reports that present information regarding the archaeological site of Kurundi. The Lewis report, one of the oldest reports, has long descriptions regarding the archaeological remains of the Kurundi site. As mentioned in the report, there is “a flight of stone steps led from the end of the bund to the summit of the hill. The top of the hill is flat, and of elliptical or oval shape. Round the side facing the bund, and possibly round all the summit, a retaining wall of squared blocks of the hard altered gneiss has been built to a height of 7 ft. or 8 ft. at a batter of ½ to 1. There are several ruins on the hill, and at the back of the northern part of the bund; but they are all dilapidated, more through wilful defacement by the later Tamil occupants than by the action of time. About half-way between the southern end of the bund and the southernmost bund is the site of an ancient temple, with a stone five-headed cobra” (Lewis 1895:311).

The report further states that “behind the bund there are the ruins of at least three temples or buildings of importance, such as at Maḍukanda, Mahakachchaṭkoḍi, iṛaṭperiyakuḷam, &c., having three parallel rows of squared stone pillars ; in one case there had been at least three of these rows. At one place there were standing two *doratupāla* stones covered with carved figures of guardian goddesses, exactly like those at Maḍukanda, but they were more than half buried, and the space between them, where there is evidently a flight of steps, is completely buried, with a tree growing in the middle. One of the two *makara toraṇa* stones which form the balustrade of the steps as at Maḍukanda is lying on the surface turned over on its side, and the other is probably lying buried somewhere near. On digging here the top step was seen, and the whole are probably *in situ*. There is also a large inscribed slab” (Lewis 1895:311).

According to the report, “on digging here, the top step was seen, and the whole are probably *in situ*. There is also a large inscribed slab. In another place are is a roughly-executed figure of a bull, the head broken off but

forthcoming, and a figure representing a worshipper. These figures evidently belonged to the Hindu temple which was built after the Tamil invasion” (Lewis 1895:311). The report also mentions of “a large heap of bricks, apparently the remains of a *dāgāba*, and there are pillars on all sides. The town or large village that was built on the low side of the embankments, and traces of which are to be seen in the fragments of pottery that line the beds of the smaller water-courses, is termed Kurungama in the inscription. The Tamil name was Kuruntan-ur. The later Tamil residents built a temple here, and they demolished the *vihāre* built by Sanghabodi and other buildings, and removed nearly all the bricks and the stonework to it.” Lewis has mentioned in his Vanni Manual that the materials available here were used for the construction of the Mullivaikkala Hindu Temple around 1858 (Lewis 1895:311). As he points out that, “it is not known when the tank was breached and the town was abandoned; all that can be said is that there is nothing to indicate that the place has been inhabited since the thirteenth or fourteenth century” (Sessional Papers 1889: 449 & Lewis 1895:311-312)¹⁹. Lewis has also recorded in the Vanni Manual that “at Tannir-muruippu, unfortunately, most of the stone have been removed to build a Hindu temple, otherwise it is in a good state of preservation (Lewis 1895:295).

H.C.P Bell mentions about Kurundi in the Archaeological Survey Report of 1905: “Kuruntan-malai stands between the north end of the tank called Tannir-murippu and the south end of the bund of Kuruntan-kulam. Both these bunds lose themselves in the lower slopes of the hill. The hill is densely covered with jungle, in places thorny, so it is difficult to judge of its height. But I should guess it to be about 200 feet. It entirely differs from all other hills visited on this circuit, for there is not a single rock on it, and measures 150 yards by 100 yards. It is rectangular in shape, and about three acres in area. It is raised about 10 feet above the terraced, near the summit. The summit is flat and measures 150 yards by 100 yards. It is rectangular in shape, and about three acres in area. It is raised about 10 feet above the terrace below, and was surrounded by retaining wall, built in batter to prevent slips. This wall is traceable for the whole circuit, and in several places is in fairly it is not possible to give very accurate measurements. However, those on which my plans and description are based are approximately correct. On the summit there are four buildings Before giving an account of the buildings, Bell describes “the material of which they are

built, for although in many respects the general plan of construction is according to the conventional Sinhalese style of architecture, yet the peculiarity of the material renders the appearance far from ordinary” (Bell 1905:33).

Bell reveals “the pillars and steps are monolithic and gneiss, as at Anurádhapura and elsewhere ; but the walls of the buildings and of the terraces, the *dágaba*, and its several tiers are built of small cut blocks of stone like large bricks, equally unlike the stone walls of the Anurádhapura builders and the later Polonnaruwa brickwork. The stone is a hard, brown, porous one, rather like solidified sponge” (Bell 1905:33). Bell notes that Parker, in his remarks on this hill, calls it ‘altered gneiss’. It is cut into blocks about 10 in. by 12 in. by 4 1/2 in., but not always of exactly the same size, and these are laid dry in no regular bond. None of the walls seem to have been coated with plaster” (Bell 1905:33).

Bell explains how buildings are placed approximately one in each corner, namely, “the *Dágaba* in the north-east, the *Viháré* in the north-west, the *Waṭa-dá-gé* in the south-east, and a large building of good finish in the south-west. This last is probably a *Piḷima-gé*” (Bell 1905:33).

Bell further explains that “the *Dágaba* was a very small one on a lofty base built in four tiers, of which I think the upper two were circular. Owing to the lack of tenacity of the stone blocks, and consequent decay of the building, it is not easy to make sure of this. On both the south and west of the lower tier steps led up in the wall to the higher level, as at Mirisavēṭiya *Dágaba* at Anurádhapura. One pillar stands before the western side of the *Dagaba*, and probably formed part of a chapel or altar-house. The *Dágaba* retains enough of its shape, and at the same time is sufficiently breached, to show that it was built throughout of the stone blocks already described” (Bell 1905:33).

According to Bell, “The *Viháré* is a thirty-six pillar building, 50 ft. by 40 ft. , which faces east. The walls and entrance are below ground. The pillars are well dressed, and measure 1 ft. square by about 10 ft. above ground” (Bell 1905:33).

Bell describes that “the *Waṭa-dá-gé* is a circular building 35 feet in diameter. The outer wall is built about 2 1/2 feet thick of stone blocks, and includes twelve pillars, all broken. Within this is another circular room surrounded by

eight pillars, of which three are unbroken and stand about 5 feet above the *debris*. All the pillars are square. The entrance is on the north and consists of four plain stone steps 3 ft. 8 in. wide. If these were guardstones and balustrades, they have been removed or destroyed” (Bell 1905:33).

Bell notices “the *Piḷima-gé* is by far the most elaborate of the three pillared buildings, and is in the best preservation. It consists of a building on a platform. The platform measures about 85 ft. by 64 ft., and is held up by a retaining wall built of stone blocks to a height of 4 or 5 feet. The entrance to this is on the east. It has plain steps and plain volutes as balustrades; the guardstones are missing. The building measures about 36 ft. by 30 ft., with an additional porch 15 feet square. The main building has thirty-six plain square pillars about 8 ft. by 1 ft. by 1 ft., and the porch has ten pillars, of which at least four, which are all broken, had capitals of different pattern from any I have seen before. The entrance is buried, but it is possible to see that the guardstones bore “flower pot” designs. The doorway between the porch and the main body of the building had a fine stone lintel about 6 feet long, the greater portion of which lies on the ground near by. It is ornamented along its whole length by a double row of carved *ganas* and *makaras*; the former are quite unlike the ordinary *ganas* of the Sinhalese carvings, and have what appears to be high brimless hats on their heads. There are twelve in one row and eight in the other. The walls of the building were built of stone blocks” (Bell 1905:33-34).

Bell says, that “besides the four buildings mentioned above, there are two mounds of stone blocks that seem from their positions to have been porches respectively of the *Viháre* and of the *Waṭa-dá-gé*. Near to the south wall, and about equidistant from the *Waṭa-dá-gé* and the *Piḷima-gé* a few pillars show the site of another small building. There is nothing else above ground on the summit. Below the summit there is a terrace which was retained by a wall similar to that which surrounds the summit. On the north and on the east the terrace was 60 feet wide, but concerning the two remaining sides I am more doubtful, though clearing the undergrowth would settle the matter at once. In the plan I have drawn this terrace wall in dotted lines” (Bell 1905:34).

Bell describes that “on the terrace there are sixteen collections each of twelve wedged stone pillars. These were doubtless the *pansalás* and the living part of the monastery. On the south and west sides of the hill I am inclined to think there was a lower terrace. I found traces of a wall more than 200 feet

wide of the summit on the west, and on the south, besides more traces of walls at a similar distance, I found a long deep *pokuna* about 80 ft. by 60 ft. This pond is only a hollow now, but perhaps excavation would show it to have been stone-lined” (Bell 1905:34).

According to the Bell’s description of Kurundi, “all that remain to be described on the hill are the two broad flights of steps which connect the monastery on the terraces with the ancient city below. An account of the eastern flight, which is the more perfect, will serve for both” (Bell 1905:34).

Bell notes that “from the summit level to the terrace below there is a flight of eighteen steps, each formed of a gneiss slab 17 ft. long by 10 1/2 in. by 6 in. This flight is not sunk through the retaining wall, but starting at its edge, projects for about 10 feet as a landing, and then descends to near the middle of the terrace. Then from the edge of the terrace a grand flight of 100 steps, each 17 ft. by 1 ft. 4 1/2 in. by 6 1/2 in., descends the hill unbroken into the forest below. This flight does not reach to the bottom of the hill, but of the flight which probably continued below it there is now no trace, save where a single stone here and there shows up half-buried. The northern steps are in worse preservation, but have one thing which is lacked by those on the west. At a point about 100 feet from the summit there are a pair of plain guardstones in situ, but buried to within 6 inches of their tops” (Bell 1905:34).

Archaeological remains at the foot of the hill are separately described as Kurundan-Ur in the Bell’s report. Bell does not fully agree with the views expressed by Lewis in the Vanni Manual. He is of the view that all the buildings on the hill are clearly Buddhist monastic buildings and they are well preserved. Although the Hindu constructions in the town beneath are not as numerous as those in Polonnaruva, they are said to indicate the co-operation of the Buddhists with the new introductions (Bell 1905:34-35).

The area covered by Kurundanmalai or Kurundan Vihāra (78 hectares, 1 rood and 62 perches) has been declared an archaeological reservation by a notification published on the Gazette No. 7981 of 12th May 1933 as it was with very important archaeological remains (ASCAR 1933:5). Paranavitana states that the inscription mentioned in various reports during the British period was found in several pieces (ASCAR 1949:33). Further details are

given in the description of the Kurundi inscriptions. Inscription of Ceylon Vol. V, Pt. II Published by the Department of Archaeology in 2004 includes the fragmentary inscription. Further details are given in the description of the Kurundi inscriptions.

The Register of Ancient Monuments compiled by the Department of Archaeology and published by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs includes the archaeological site of Kurundi under 159/1 as follows:

159/1 Kurundanmalai

District : Vavuniya
D.R.O's Div. : Muhudu Bada Pattu
Village : Kumalamunai
Map Ref. : B. 21/58

At the lower end of the Kurundankulama reservoir the remains of an ancient fortress. Three sides of this fortress are encompassed by a stone wall reared on an earth embankment and the other side is bounded by the bund of the reservoir. The remains of a small dagoba are found within the fortress. There also are the guard-stones. The remains of a Siva-devala also survive. Within the enclosed area pillar stumps are found everywhere.

Route: Turn off to the West between the 6th and the 7th miles on the Mullaithivu-Alampil road and proceed about 7 miles on the Nedunkeni road. The archeological remains on the top of the hill are not recorded (Register of Ancient Monuments 1972:219). However, all the remains at the foot of the hill are recorded.

Mr. Cyril Mathew's appeal to UNSECO to safeguard and preserve the cultural property in Sri Lanka endangered by racial prejudice, unlawful occupation or wilful destruction mentions that "in August 1981, during the recent communal disturbances, when a state of emergency was in force, certain individuals had entered the archaeological reservation without permission and had constructed a tiled roof on the remaining stone pillars of an ancient image house in anticipation of converting it to a modern Hindu Kovil. A section of the floor inside the image house has been concreted and cemented, and a trident has been planted. The stone slab placed before the trident to light camphor, etc., is a sacred footprint stone of the Buddha. The

summit of the adjacent stupa mound has been levelled and cemented again, for the purpose of planting a trident. It is evident that an attempt has been made to construct a Hindu Kovil in an archaeological site where there are the remains of a very ancient Buddhist vihara” (Vide Archaeological Dept. File No: EC/B/N/7 folios 5 and 10. Pp. 44-47 of Appendix D)” (Mathew 1983:17-18).

Due to the civil war persisted for decades, the systematic archaeology work was not carried out in this area. However, various independent researchers have written about this place. Purāvidyā Chakravartī Ven. Ellawala Medhananda Thera delineates ancient ruins scattered around this area, which provide evidence that Kurundi is an important Buddhist monastery dating back to the Anuradhapura period (Ellawala Medhananda 2003: 77).



The *stūpa* before excavation

Chapter Three

Present Archaeological Interventions

With the cessation of hostilities in the North, the officials of the Department of Archaeology after several decades later in 2010 were engaged in their initial exploration to identify and map the archaeological sites and monuments in the Northern Province. Owing to insecure environment during the initial exploration, only the archaeological site on the hill and its surroundings were recorded. The report mentions about the vandalized *stūpa* centre, image house and archaeological remains on the hilltop by treasure hunters (Uturu Palāte Purāvidyā Sthāna Handunāgena Sītiyamgata Kirīme Mūlika Gaveṣana Vārtāva 2010). On this occasion, this site was not identified as the Kurundumalaya Archaeological Reserve. It had been recorded as the “ruins of Tannimurippukulam”. Research and investigations carried out later, revealed that this site had been declared in 1933 as an archaeological Reserve.



The exploration in progress

Despite all the obstacles, the officers of the Vavuniya Archaeological Regional Office carried out an exploration in 2021 within an area of land that was declared as an archaeological reserve in 1933. The exploration revealed that the scatter of archaeological remains is beyond the boundaries declared in 1933. Thus, it was proposed to expand the boundary. A re-survey was done. The land was clearly demarcated. Accordingly, the work is in progress to protect the archaeological site.

The electronic and print media drew public attention to the exploration carried out by the Department of Archaeology. In addition, the information posted on the internet by independent explorers also generated an interest among the public to visit the site and to create an enthusiasm among the public to explore, preserve and restore these sites. However, the down fall of it led to the destruction of this archaeological heritage influenced by treasure hunters as well as religious and racial extremists. It is also regrettable to note that there were unscrupulous individuals keen in making quick money by commercializing the archaeological sites. The threats of destruction and the mutilation of the archaeological sites and monuments were constantly reported.

The Department of Archaeology and Ven. Galgamuwa Shantabodhi Thera proceeded together to develop this archaeological site. However, politicians of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and a group of extremists who were their partisan opposed this by interpreting the move as an attempt of acquisition of land owned by the Tamils and filed the case AR 643/18 against the Department of Archaeology and Ven. Galgamuwa Shantabodhi Thera at the Mullaitivu Magistrate Court through Oddusudan Police on 05 September 2018 on the pretext of a conflict between the two parties regarding the installation of a Buddha statue at the premises. Tamil being the language used by the courts in the Northern Province, it was inconceivable for the Department of Archaeology and Ven. Galgamuwa Shantabodhi Thera to obtain legal assistance to proceed with the case.

Thence forth, Ven. Galgamuwa Shantabodhi Thera had a discussion on this matter with Mr. Jagath Sumathipala the then President, All Ceylon Buddhist Congress and several of its officers. On the same day, Ven Galgamuwa Shantabodhi Thera had a detailed discussion with the Mahā Sangha of the

Buddhasasana Task Force and representatives of major Buddhist organizations, who were the members of the Task Force.

“Meeting there (at the premises of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress) the President Mr. Jagath Sumathipala was a great strength to the restoration of the Kurundi Vihara while the promise given to me by the lawyers of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress to their appearance on my behalf in courts was a great comfort” is stated in the article written by Ven. Galgamuwa Shantabodhi Thera titled “Anāgata Bauddha Punarudayaka Hāravum Lakṣhaya: Mulaitivu Kurundi Vihāraya Yali Goḍa Nagime Meheyuma. The case filed at the Mullaitivu Magistrate Court regarding Kurundi was closed on 17 August 2020 at the request of the Chief Police Inspector of Oddusudan.



The commencement of the *stūpa* excavation

In addition to that, the Director General of Archaeology and the officers gave evidence about the archaeological sites in the Northern and Eastern provinces before the “Buddhist Rights Commission” which was established by the then President of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress. This was also a very important milestone regarding the future of Kurundi Vihāra.

Mr. Jagath Sumathipala pledged his genuine support to the Director General of the Department of Archaeology by agreeing to completely fund the project of conserving Kurundi Stūpa with his personal wealth.



The *stūpa* excavation in progress

Accordingly, the excavation of the *stūpa* at the Kurundi Vihāra was commenced on 18 January 2021 headed by the sponsor, Mr. Jagath Sumathipala with the participation of Hon. Vidura Wickramanayaka, State Minister of National Heritage, Performing Arts and Rural Arts Promotion, Prof. Kapila Gunawardena, Secretary, Ministry of Buddha Sasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs, and Prof. Anura Manatunga, Director General of Archaeology. To facilitate the excavation, a temporary structure for the use of the officials engaged in the excavation was constructed by the Sinhala Veera Vidahana headed by its founder member Mr. B. A. Mahipala, and the Sri Lanka Army. The dedication of the personnel of the Archaeological Department, the soldiers of the Sri Lanka Army and the Sri Lanka Civil Security Force made it possible for the excavation of the *stūpa* to be completed within a very short period of 3 months.



The *stūpa* excavation in progress

After the excavation work was completed on 12 May 2020, the first brick was placed on the *stūpa* by Mr. Jagath Sumathipala to signify formally the commencement of the conservation. Long before the conservation, a group of Tamils disseminated the ideology that the Kurundi Vihāra premises was a place of Hindu worship from the moment the excavation of the *stūpa* commenced. Though they were able to spread information through social media that the *yūpa* pillar of the *stūpa* was a Śiva *līnga*, the archaeologists prevailed with evidence to prove beyond doubt that it was a *yūpa* pillar. The inspection of the archaeological evidence



The commencement of the *stūpa* conservation

in the site would undoubtedly reveal that the site as a Buddhist place of worship. Traditionally the most important task of the *stūpa* restoration was the enshrining of the relics in the relic chamber and the activity was scheduled for 12 June 2021 with the participation of the Most Venerable Mahā Nāyaka and Anu Nāyaka Theros. Arrangements were made for the relics of Lord



The *yūpa* stone discovered from the excavation of the *stūpa*



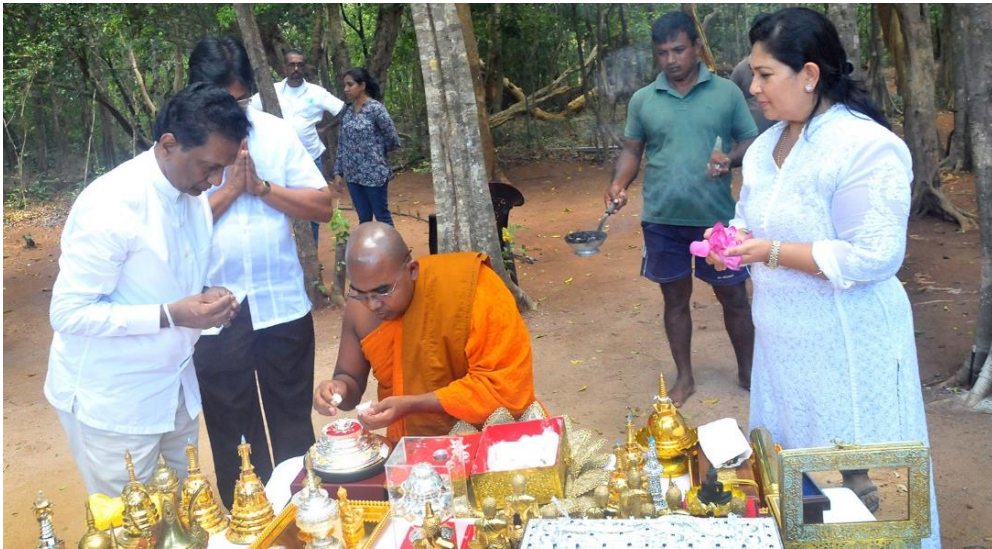
Buddha, various auspicious symbols including silver leaves of the Tripitaka and other sacred items to be brought in procession to the *stūpa*. The Sri Lanka Army, the Special Task Force (STF) and the Sri Lanka Police made arrangements to provide the necessary security. Many devotees from Colombo and other areas were arriving to witness this rare event and worship. At around 9.30 a.m. a group of Tamil politicians behaved unruly by obstructing the approach of the Mahā Saṅgha and prevented them from entering the place of worship. Some of them surrounded several monks of the Mahā Saṅgha and harassed them. The incident was partially subdued due to the intervention of the security forces.

Though the security forces in order to stem down the situation, stopped the pilgrims approaching the place of worship by turning their vehicles and sending them back, there was no obstacle for the demonstrators to approach the place. Finally, the security forces requested the postponement of the ceremony. The reason given to defer the event was that a large gathering of people was participating in a festival at a Hindu Kovil nearby in Mullaitivu. The Director General of Archaeology, who discussed the matter with the Tamil politicians present, resolved the crisis by stopping the relic enshrinement ceremony.

After this incident, on 14 July 2022, the Mullaitivu Magistrate issued a unilateral order, which was not in his ambit, to the police to remove the conserved *stūpa*. However, the police had informed the Attorney General that they could not fulfill the magisterial order without provoking the public. The matter was resolved after the Magistrate nullified his own order following an inspection visit to the Kurundi place of worship. However, the chaotic situation that prevailed at the sacred site of Kurundi was the talk of the nation. It was reported that some individuals who were not connected with the incident but with a view to build their images had collected donations, saying that they were for the *stūpa* and for legal purposes. The Department of Archaeology was fully supported by the Baudhaloka Foundation for legal and conservation expenditure. President's Counsel Mr. Manohara de Silva, Mr. Prasanthalal De Alwis and Mr. Uditha Egalahewa intervened in court issues. Mr. Samitha Kalhara, Attorney-at-Law who was fluent in Tamil did voluntary service on behalf of the Baudhaloka Foundation. Rear Admiral (Dr) Sarath Weerasekera and Professor of Medicine Channa Jayasumana as Members of Parliament speaking in

Parliament about the crisis supported the Department of Archaeology to reveal the truth of the matter to the world.

On 22 July 2022, Hariharan, a former Member of Parliament of the Tamil National Alliance attempted unsuccessfully to conduct a ceremony in Kurundi considering it as a Hindu shrine in spite of Kurundi was confirmed as a sacred Buddhist site by the excavations carried out in the premises. As it was necessary to complete the sacred relics enshrinement according to custom and seal the dome for the continuation of the conservation, the President of the Bauddhaloka Foundation and a group of its members, officials of the Department of Archaeology and members of the Sri Lanka Army enshrined the relics in the *stūpa* on 7 August 2022 while chanting of *pirith* was conducted by Ven. Galgamuwe Shantabodhi.



Enshrinment of sacred relics in the Kurundi Stūpa

In the meantime, a land survey was conducted to demarcate Kurundi and designate it as an archaeological reserve. The Director General of Archaeology to avert a crisis situation as a result of the incitement caused among the Tamils stating falsely that 600 acres of cultivable land of the Tamil people were being given to the Buddhist Temple ordered the temporary suspension of the conservation work considering the safety of his officials that caused the stoppage of conservation for the second time. However, a team of officers of the Special Survey Unit of the Survey Department completed the survey in February 2023 in the middle of various protests and hindrances.

In the case filed under AR 673/18 regarding breach of the peace, the Mullaitivu Magistrate Court was informed that there was no legal authority to proceed with cases falling under that number and that the Magistrate's Court had no legal provision to challenge the decisions of the Director General of Archaeology. The verdict on this was scheduled to be declared on 27 October 2022 was however postponed to 24 November 2022. According to the decision given on 19 July 2022, the Department of Archaeology was given permission to carry out archaeological work at the site.

Subsequent to the abandonment of the archaeological site in the past, this is the first occasion that the historic structure was being conserved. Initially the *stūpa* was excavated and conserved. Secondly the Image House was excavated. It is to be conserved in the future.



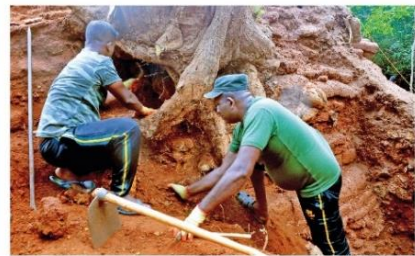
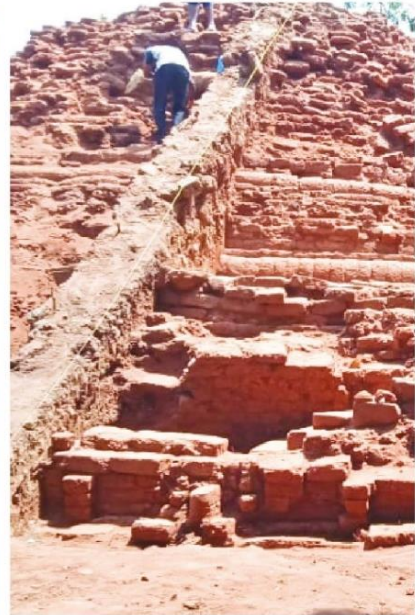
The *stūpa* conservation in progress



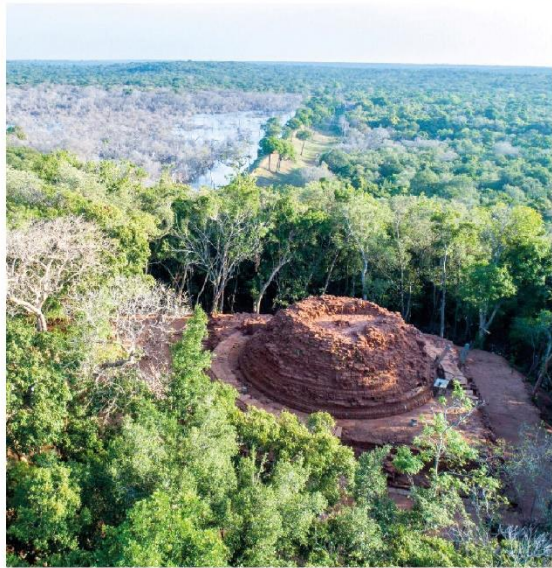
The *stūpa* conservation in progress



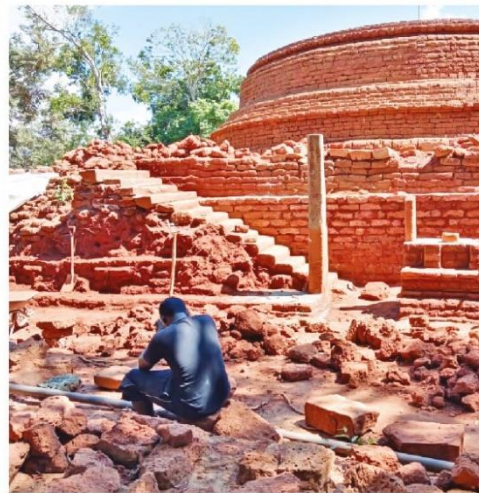
The *stūpa* after conservation



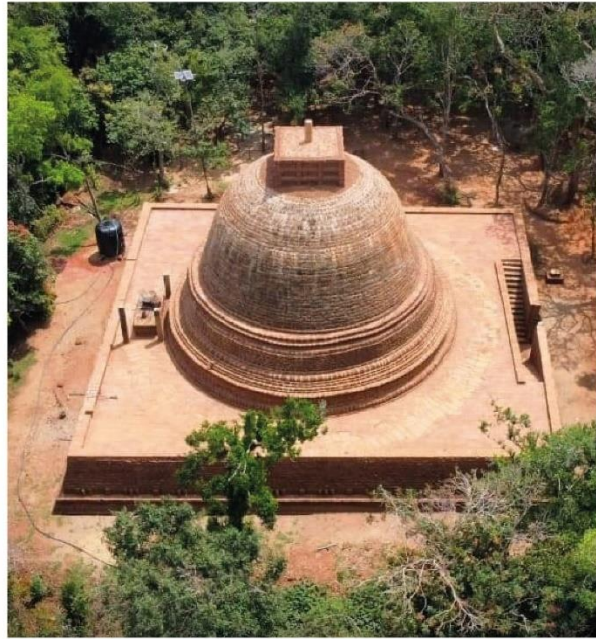
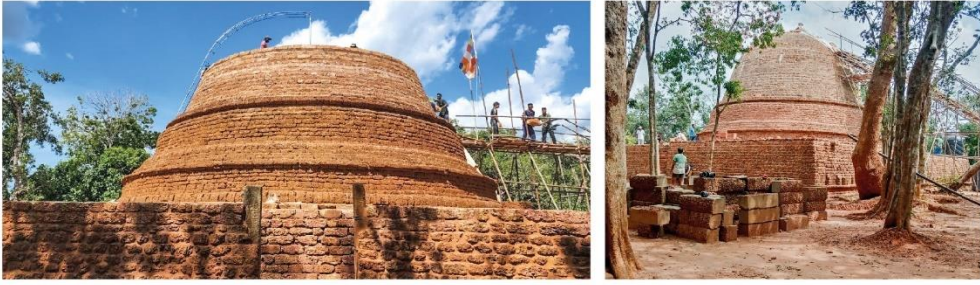
The *stupa* excavation in progress



The *stupa* excavation in progress



The *stupa* excavation in progress



The *stūpa* after conservation



The *stūpa* after conservation

Chapter Four

The Monastic Complex

Stūpa

The mountain top where the *stūpa* is located is at a height of approximately 200 feet from its base while its levelled top surface is rectangular in shape measuring 110x100 meters in length and breadth. Though this terrace not being in its entirety, a natural surface had been prepared in that manner by the construction of stone walls in some places. The *stūpa* is located at the northeast corner of the terrace on another rectangular terrace 20.5m x 18.5m built in *kabok* to a height of about 1.5m.

H. C. P. Bell in his administration report refers to this rock material as “Cut Block,” which later came to be known as *kabok* in Sinhala. However, this material is technically known as Laterite.

According to the initial exploration report published in 2010 on the identification and mapping the Archaeological sites in the Northern Province, this monument is reported to be a *stūpa* about 6m in height having circumference of about 50m. covered in a variety of vegetation (Gaveṣhana Vārtāva 2010).

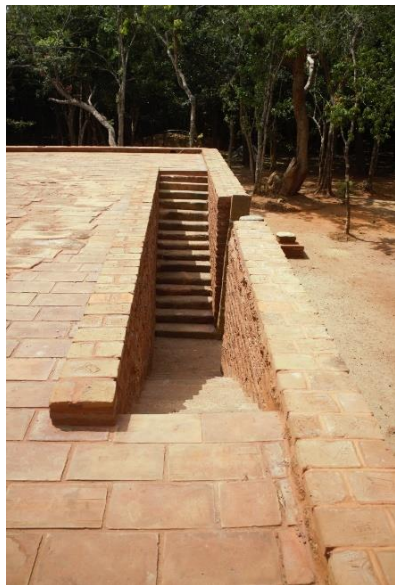
The excavation of the *stūpa* commenced on 26 January 2021. At the commencement of the excavation, the *stūpa* mound was observed to be covered with plants and bushes such as Milla, Seru, Mora, Veera and Velang. An unauthorized excavation had been performed from the top of the *stūpa* to the interior of the dome. The excavated pit had later been filled with

bricks and other materials in order to cover it (Kānīm Vyāpruti Vārtāva 2021:19).



The *stūpa* terrace

At the commencement of the excavation, ruins were seen to be scattered around the high mound to distance covering an area of 150 m². Due to the



heaping of *kabok* on the mound by treasure hunters to cover the pit had excavated on the *stupa*. It was not clear at first sight whether this mound was a *stūpa*. However, later with further investigation it was confirmed to be a *stūpa*. The report on the excavation mentions of the difficulty of the task due to the overgrowth of plants on the mound. However, the task of excavation was completed within a short period of two and a half months owing to contributions made by

The entrance to the *stūpa* terrace

the officers of the Department of Archaeology and, the soldiers of the Sri Lanka Army and the Sri Lanka Civil Security Force.

Excavations at the *stūpa* revealed that the treasure hunters have dug up the *stūpa* and looted the antiquities on several occasions. Nevertheless, plaster fragments belonging to the walls of the relic chamber (*dhāthu garbha*) and a fragment of a small gold-plated metal goblet (*mañjusā*) were found (Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra dagāba kanīm vyāpruti vārtāva 2021:38). Among ruins were bricks of different kinds including decorated bricks applied to the building wall surface, fragments of pottery, a *yūpa* stone broken into several pieces, metal coins, flat tiles, a fragment of a blue glass container and a metal bell. A flower altar made of stone and its base, *kabok* stones of various shapes and a variety of stone blocks were also found.



The stūpa platform with fragments of elephant figures

A frontal porch to enter the rectangular *stūpa* terrace from the south is found. On entering through the stone porch, two stone flights of steps in two

directions leading to *stūpa* terrace exist. At present, only one pillar remains in the above-mentioned stone porch. According to the details of the construction, it could be conjectured that the porch had a roof over it. This is further confirmed by the fragments of flat tiles found in the vicinity of the porch. It is noteworthy that such a frontal porch built for access to a *stūpa* terrace has not been found anywhere else in the country.

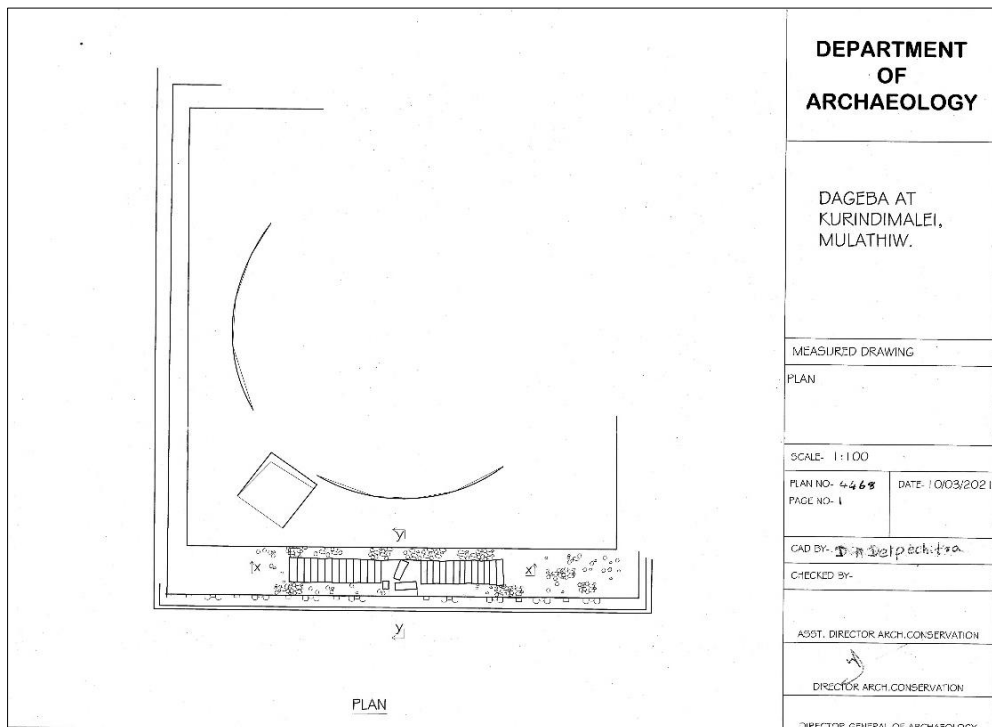
On the outer face of the *stūpa* platform, there are traces of standing elephant figures carved out of *kabok*. They are about 60cm tall and located at a distance of about 60cm from each other. A bas relief concave column is located between two figures. It seems that this outer face of the *stūpa* platform with elephant figures was built later than the time of construction of the base of the *stupa*, as it has been pushed down in many places. It does not appear to have been built in contact with the old wall. There were also traces of the old plaster belonging to the outer face of the *stūpa* platform stuck to the platform with elephant figures.

Around the base of the *stūpa* located on the platform, a 2m wide stone terrace is constructed. As the stone slabs belonging to the stone terrace has not seen to be spread haphazardly all around the entire *stūpa*, it could be assumed that the stone slabs had been placed at a later period.

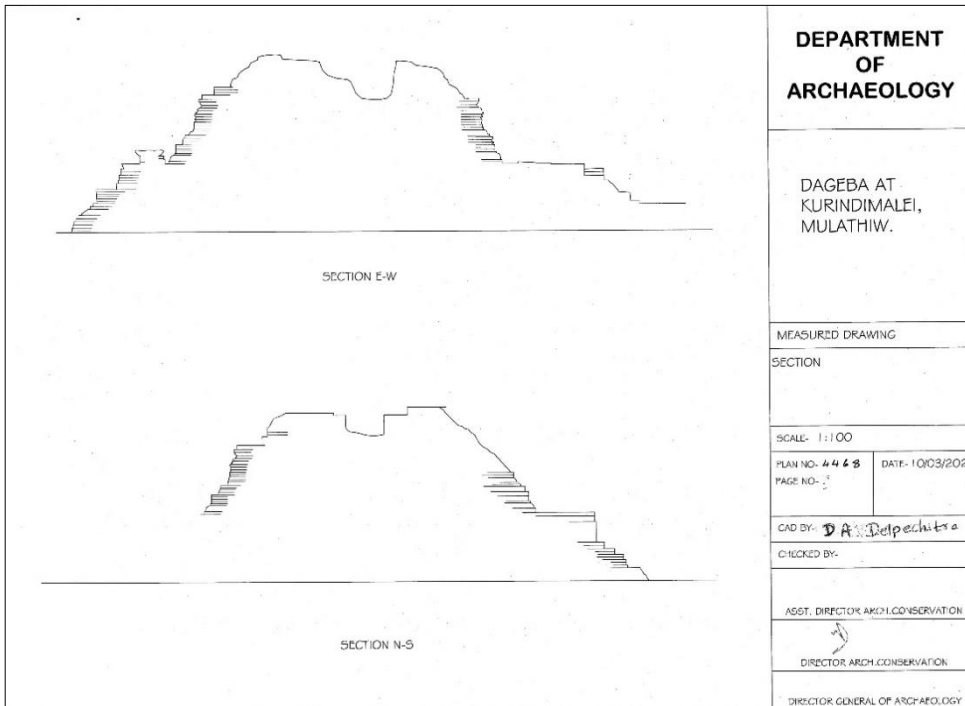
The *stūpa* structure commences with a lotus moulding from the stone terrace built entirely out of *kabok* that have been shaped as required for the moulding. The basal ring of the *stūpa* has been formed slightly above the lotus moulding by placing layers of bricks and protruding stones. Above the basal ring, another lotus moulding and brick layers are laid in a special manner to give the appearance of lotus petals folded down with its extremity bent towards the dome. There after by laying two layers of bricks, a moulded edge is formed to protrude from the dome. Prof. Malinga Amarasinghe says

that this *stūpa* has clearly the shape of a large lotus, and that such characteristics are not found in any other *stūpa* in the country. According to him, this is the only lotus-shaped *stūpa* found in the country. Amarasinghe also mentions that the *stūpas* considered as lotus-shaped by Prof. Senarat Paranavitana do not consist of such characteristics. He further states that a *stūpa* does not become a lotus-shaped *stūpa* merely due to small-scale lotus-petal mouldings at its base. Amarasinghe assumes that the shape of the dome of this *stūpa* may have corresponded to the shape of a lotus and he surmises the *stūpa* belongs to the 7th-9th centuries according to its design style and its features.

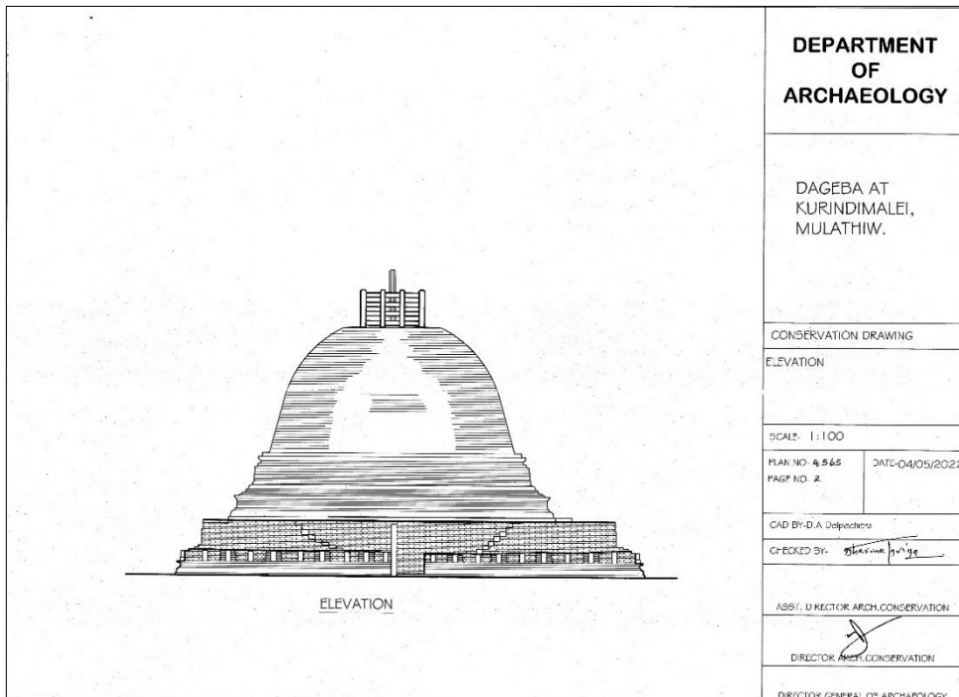
The *stūpa* was restored to its original form, using old *kabok* stones as well as manufactured *kabok* stones of similar specifications. According to archeological conservation methodology, the *stūpa* was conserved using a replica of the *yūpa* stone similar to that found in other *stūpas*.



Ground Plan – Kurundi Stūpa



Cross Section – Kurundi Stūpa (after excavation)



Elevation - Kurundi Stūpa (after excavation)

Image House



The commencement of excavation of the image house

The building which can be considered as the image house is found at a distance of about 65m from the southwest of the *stūpa*. Bell in his report has also mentioned that the building could be an image house. The image house is built on a 1m high platform having its entrance facing the east. It is 25m in length and 5m in width consisting of a pavilion, a vestibule and an inner chamber each having a pavilion gradually elevated at their entrances. The flight of steps leading to the image house is embellished with stone balustrades and a moonstone. When Bell made his report on this image house, there were no mention of the existence of guard-stones. At the entrance to the image house an unauthorized excavation had damaged the stone balustrades, the moonstone and the flight of steps. Nearly 3m deep pit exists at this spot while the stone balustrades and the moonstone had been damaged. The flight of steps had been unearthed and removed. The Department of Archaeology reports that in 2010 the moonstone had been untouched but the flight of steps had been removed by. The moonstone is decorated only with

a moulding of a lotus petal and a single lotus flower. This moonstone belongs to the period of Anurādhapura. It



The image house in 2010

had been broken into several pieces and the size of the pit, dug at the place was 1.8m x1.6m x 2.6m. The upper parts of the stone balustrades have been broken. Four steps out of five of the stairway had also been broken. The border of steps is adorned with a magnificent *arimbuva* border motif.

By climbing this stairway, the vestibule of the image house could be reached. From the vestibule, the inner chamber could be reached through another flight of steps. The flight of steps, flanked by a pair of balustrades, two identical guard-stones standing in front of the balustrades and an uncarved plain moonstone centrally placed at the foot of the lowest step, provide access to the inner chamber from the vestibule. The upper parts of the two guard-stones had been broken and the lower parts could be seen at ground

level. The pair of balustrades had been broken and the balustrades have the dragon motif and the carved creepers flow out from its mouth. There had been a stone door frame at the entrance to the inner chamber with an exquisitely carved lintel, which



The flight of steps in 2010



The unerthed flight of steps at the entrance to the image house

now lies on the floor of the vestibule. It has a rare set of carvings. Bell had mentioned in his report. that there are two rows of carvings. The upper row consists of several sets of male figures and female couples coming out of the mouth of the dragon and a bahirava (gnome) gazing at them. A similar carving is found among the carvings used to decorate the base of outer wall of a mansion in the Vijayārāma monastic complex. The male and the female figures are shown in full relief and their heads are covered with a head dress or a turban. According to Bell, these headdresses appear to be brimless tall hats, where the male and female duo are identified by him as a *bahirava* (gnome) couple.



Stone doorframe of the image house

Quite recently inside the Image House, it appears that rituals had taken place to worship some deities. The Department of Archaeology mentions in their report that a fragment of a stone balustrade that had been vandalized by



Lintel carvings over the doorframe of the inner chamber of the image house

treasure hunters had been used as an object of worship at this ritual. (Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra piḷimageya kñnīm vyāpruti vārtāva 2022).

Excavations reveal that the rectangular platform, on which the temple complex is built is retained by a *kabok* wall and the inner area of the platform is filled with gravel while structures on the platform were built with baked bricks and stone pillars. The flat tiles seen inside and outside the image house provide evidence that its roof may have been fabricated with the use of stone pillars, timber and flat tiles. In addition, 500 or more blacksmiths iron nails had been found during the excavation conducted by the Department of Archaeology. It could be surmised that these nails may have been used for fabrication of the roof (Mullaitivu Kurundi Vihara Image House excavation report 2022.)

It is reported that the surfaces of brick walls built centering the stone columns were treated with lime wash. (Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra piḷimageya kñnīm vyāpruti vārtāva 2022). Stone slabs, which have no specific size or shape are used for the floor of the vestibule. There is also a door that gives access to the northern side of the building. (Mullaitivu Kurundi Vihāra piḷimageya kñnīm vyāpruti vārtāva 2022).



The excavation in progress

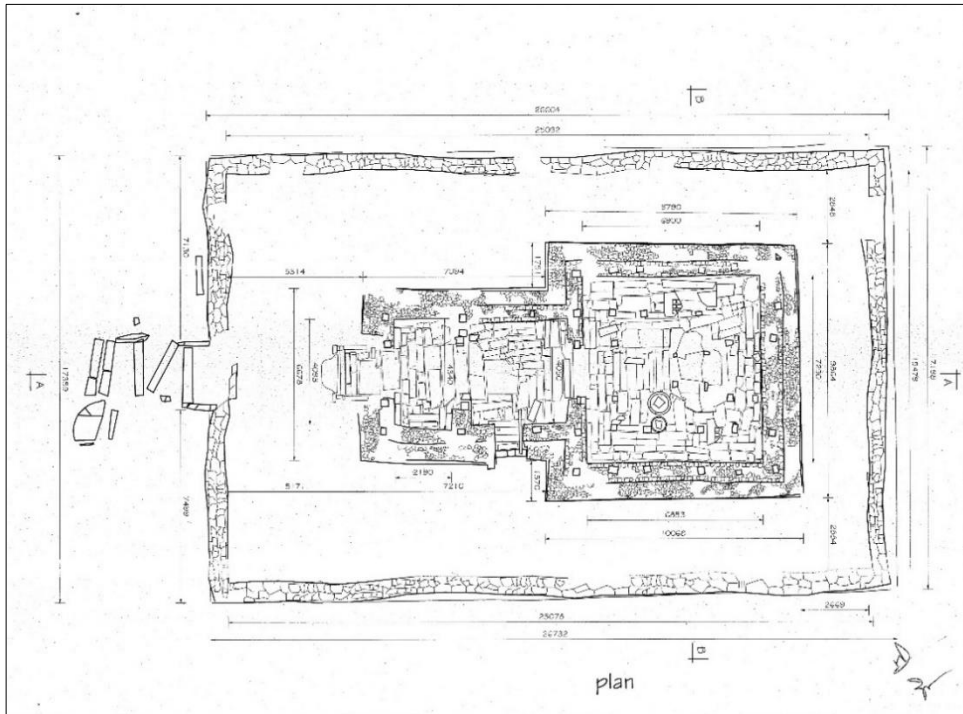
The inner chamber is a square like structure measuring 9.8m x 9.6m. To walk within the chamber a circumambulatory path had been laid in its periphery. The Department of Archeology was able to identify that the floor of the chamber had been paved with slabs of assorted sizes, over which mortar had been laid. (Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra piḷimageya kānīm vyāpruti vārtāva 2022).

Based on the presently available archaeological evidence, it can be concluded that the image house to be that of the Anurādhapura period.

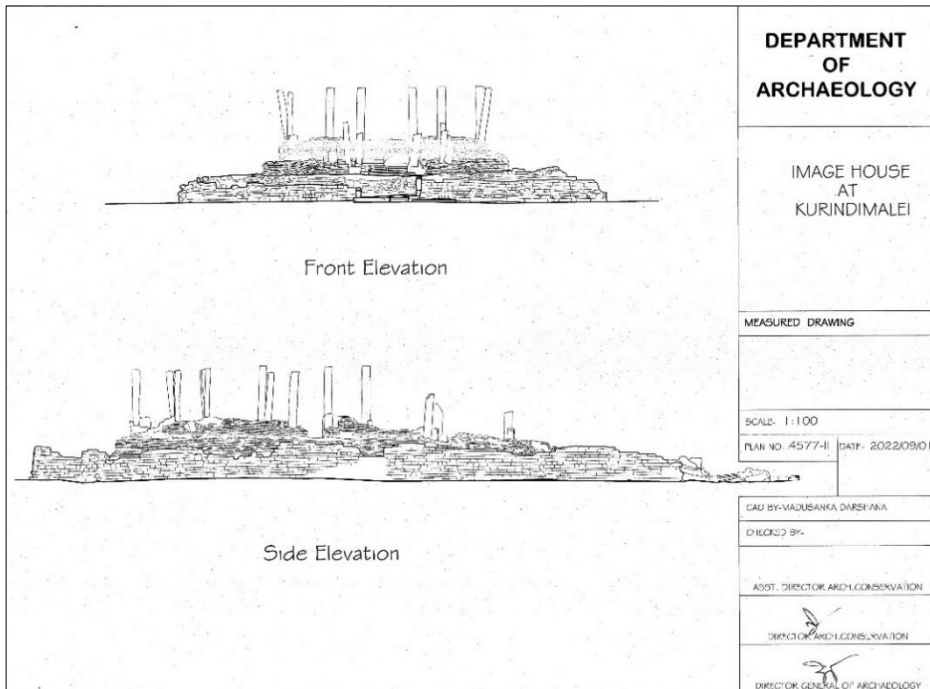
According to the report on the excavations of the Image House and the research done in the past, three Buddha images and two Bodhisattva images have been found in the Image House.



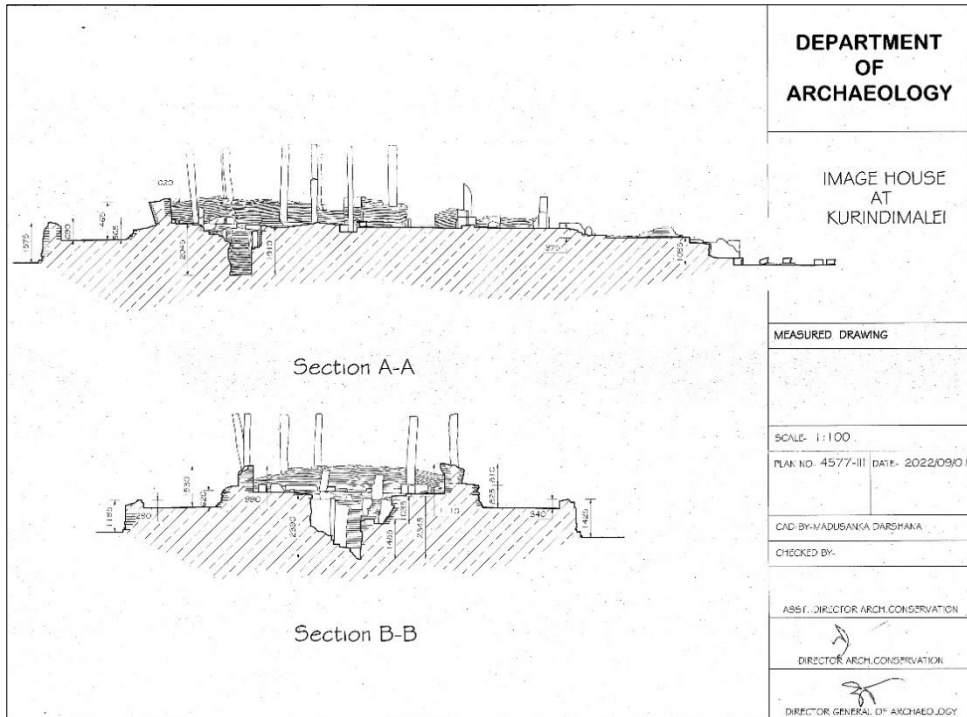
The image house after excavation



Ground Plan – Image House



Front and Side Elevations – Image House



Cross Section – Image House



The image house excavation in progress



The image house after excavation

Standing Buddha Image



Fragment of Buddha image found during excavation

There is a standing Buddha image made of Andhra hard limestone also known as ‘Andhra marble’. There is a lotus platform made of the same rock material as the base for the image. According to the excavation report, it is conjectured that the rock material may have been brought to Sri Lanka from Andhra Pradesh, India or some other country to sculpt the Buddha image in Sri Lanka (Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra piḷimageya kāmim vyāpruti vārtāva 2022)

However, it is also possible to assume that the Buddha image was sculpted in another country and brought to Sri Lanka or the craftsmen with foreign influence sculpted the image in Sri Lanka using the material brought to the island. Images sculpted from this type of rock material have not yet been found in Sri Lanka. The section of the feet, a section of the area above

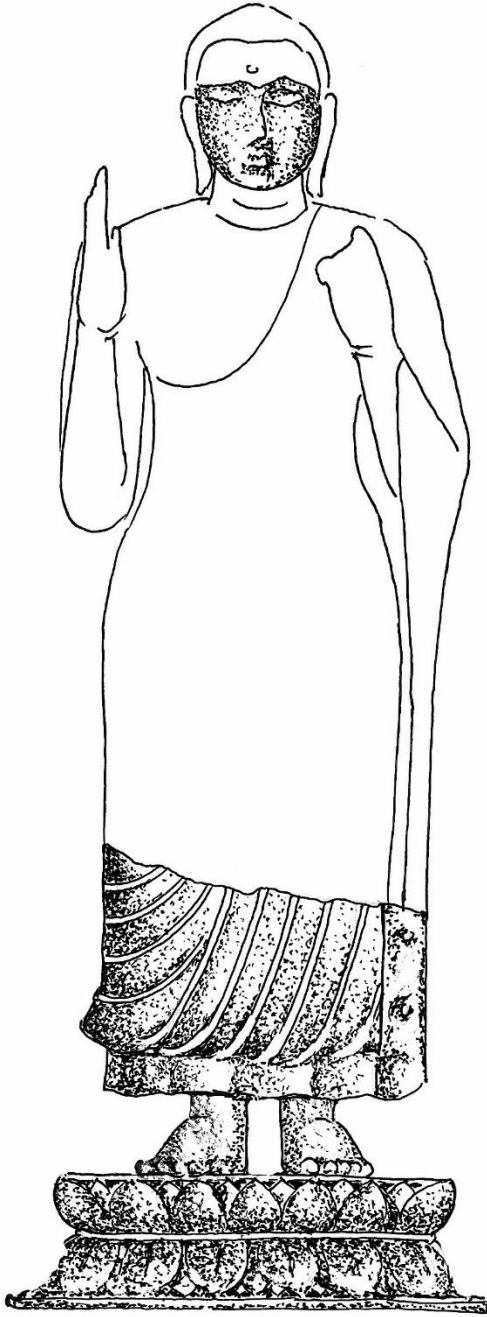


Fragment of Buddha face found during excavation

the feet, and the section of the face of the damaged Buddha image had been discovered during the excavation. The sections of the image provide evidence that there had been a 5ft. tall Buddha statue. (*Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra piḷimageya kānīm vyāpruti vārtāva 2022*). From the appearance of the face of the image, it could be confirmed that its eyes might have been embedded with precious stones. As the main item of the Image House, this image represents the features of the design created in the 3rd- 4th centuries (*Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra piḷimageya kānīm vyāpruti vārtāva 2022*) The base of the image had been decorated with a floral design. There is a hole in the base for positioning the legs of the image and a circular hole behind it, perhaps to retain an umbrella.



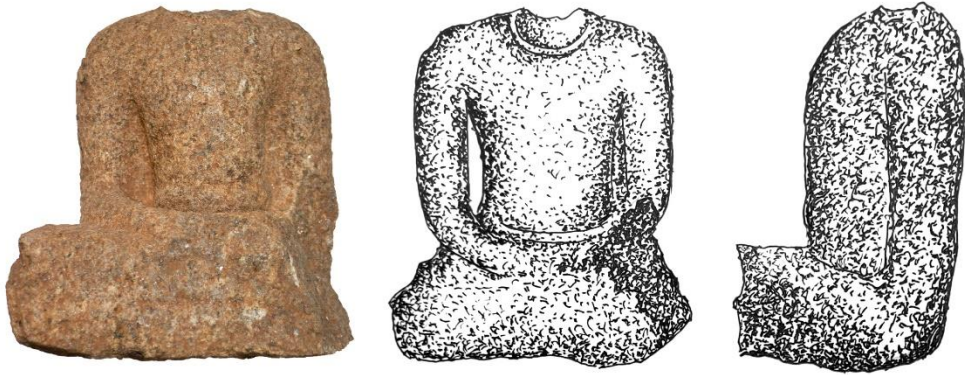
The unauthorized excavation pit at the centre of image house



Fragments of the damaged standing Buddha image and recreated Buddha image

Seated Buddha Image

A 11/2 ft. tall headless Buddha image carved from granite had been found in the image house. This image could be considered a Samādhi Buddha image, carved outside Sri Lanka.



Seated Buddha image found during excavation



Buddha image found in Kurundanmalai reproduced from *Administration Report 1970-77*

Two Bodhisattva Images

Two Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva images carved in limestone, identified as Kumāra Avalokiteśvara and Yogī Avalokiteśvara dating to the 8th and 9th centuries hewn in crystalline limestone had been found. Hara, keyura, kankana, nūpura and karṇakuṇḍala are among the royal costumes and ornaments worn by the Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattvas. The Yogī Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva images were carved in the *yogī* style while a headdress, a skin of a beast, a tiger or leopard wrapped around the waist fastening the *dhōti* had been other identification features. Two tresses of hair of the *yogī* Avalokiteśvara has fallen on the shoulder. On the skin of a leopard, tiger or of another beast wrapped round the Yogī Avalokiteśvara, the face of the animal is clearly seen. They are generally similar to the same type images found in Sri Lanka. The upper part of the body of the Avalokiteśvara is bereft of ornaments. The sacred thread lies diagonally across the chest. The difference between Yogī Avalokiteśvara without ornaments and Kumāra Avalokiteśvara with ornaments can be clearly identified. Of the two Bodhisattva images, the archaeological excavation has unearthed only the head of the Kumāra Avalokiteśvara. Although, the Yogī Avalokiteśvara image is broken into pieces, the complete image was discovered. Among the parts of images found here broken parts of hands, legs associated with the base of the images had been found. The pedestals of the two Bodhisattva images decorated with lotuses are among the sculpture fragments found.



Two Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva images had placed on either side of the Buddha image. A few examples of this is found in Sri Lanka in the sites such

as Muhudu Mahā Vihāra, Situlpavva and Tissamahārāma. (Bopearachchi, 2014, p. 171-8). In the opinion of Prof. Osmund Bopearachchi, the two images belonging to the 8th and 9th centuries, the main Buddha image had been removed from its original location and reinstalled with the two Bodhisattva images kept on either side of it. This is confirmed by the discovery of symbols of the *dharma cakra* (Wheel of Dharma), the *samkha* (Konch) and the *dhvaja* (Banner) of the eight auspicious symbols deposited in *yantra gala*, found in the excavation of the place where *yantra gala* was originally placed. Bopearachchi believes that *yantra gala* together with a set of new eight auspicious symbols had been subsequently placed in the Image House as a new addition in the 8th and 9th centuries. Accordingly, the image house has had a modernization during that period.

The excavation of the site had led to the revelation of a number of artefacts. Among them, a small image considered as *Brahma* or a *Yogī* or a *Bodhisattva* had been identified. A *dhvajaya* (flag) one of eight auspicious symbols had been identified. Only the flag pole of the symbol, which is totally made of metal is available while its flag portion had been destroyed. The symbol may have had been deposited in the *yantra gala*. In addition, another metal item in the form of a plate, which also could be considered as a begging bowl had been discovered. This item called *bhadrapīṭha* is one of the eight auspicious symbols. A *cakra* (wheel) a metallic object belonging to eight auspicious symbols had been found during the excavation of the image house. The *cakra* having 15 spokes had been exquisitely crafted. An umbrella like semi spherical contraption a *chatraya*, which had been the upper portion of a lamp had been discovered in two fragments.

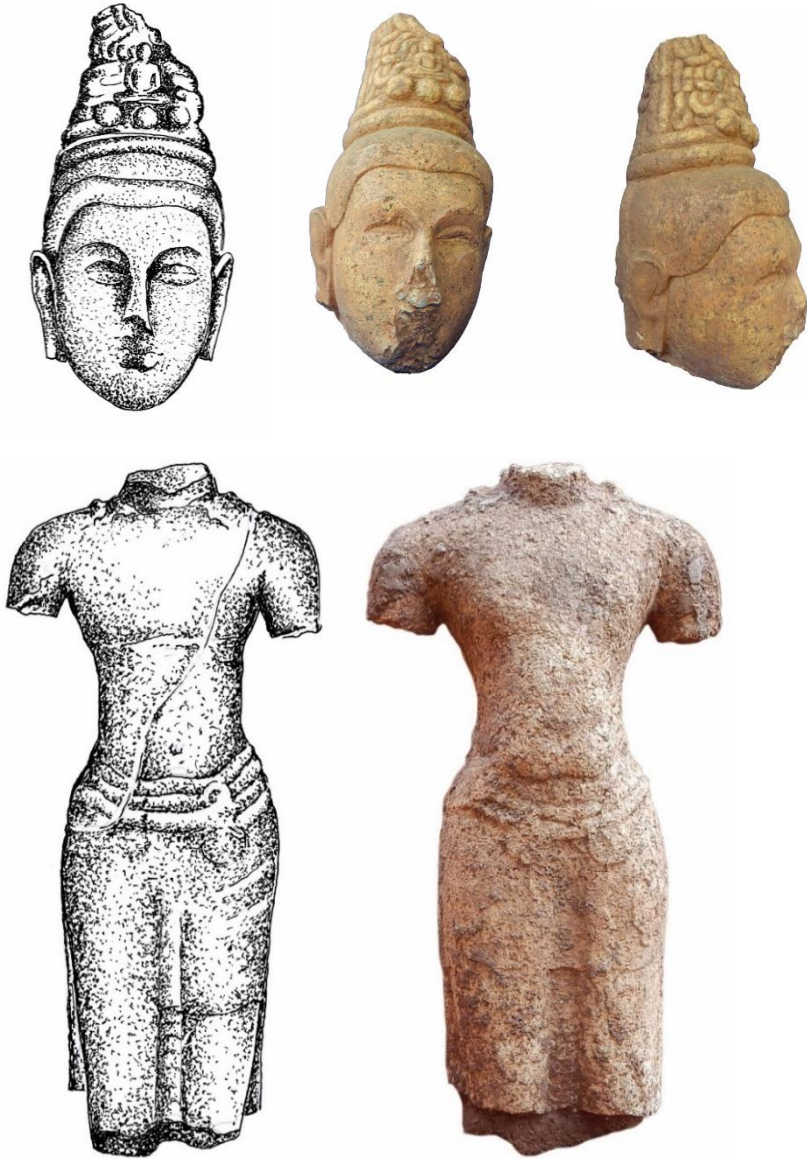
Another statuette depicting *Kuvera* or *Brahma* had been discovered. The image made of metal is either Demon *Kuvera* or *Lord Brahma*, regarded to be the lord of the North.

The headless image could represent *Indra*, the lord of the four directions or a Bodhisattva. It is possible to assume that the image is a representation of Vajrapānī Bodhisattva (Interview with Prof. Osmund Bopearachchi).

According to the excavation report, the images in the image house had been destroyed due to an invasion. Since then due to prolonged disuse, it had gone in to ruins. This is further confirmed by the deposition of naturally crumbling material upon the destroyed material layer that had covered the floor at the time of the invasion. (Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra piḷimageya kñnīm vyāpruti vārtāva 2022).

If that is plausible, then the excavation of the image house is the first of its kind of excavation of monuments to be executed in Sri Lanka after a foreign invasion. According to the excavation report, the collapsed layer inside the inner chamber had been later re-excavated. It is reported that this unauthorized excavation was carried out deep in to the interior of the center of the inner chamber floor by removing its paved stones simultaneously pulling out the two lotus pedestals (*padmapīthas*) of the images. Subsequently during the excavation conducted by the Department of Archaeology, the 1 1/2 ft. tall headless torso of a seated Samadhi Buddha image was found in the layer that had been disturbed by the above-mentioned unauthorized excavation (*Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra piḷimageya kñnīm vyāpruti vārtāva 2022*)

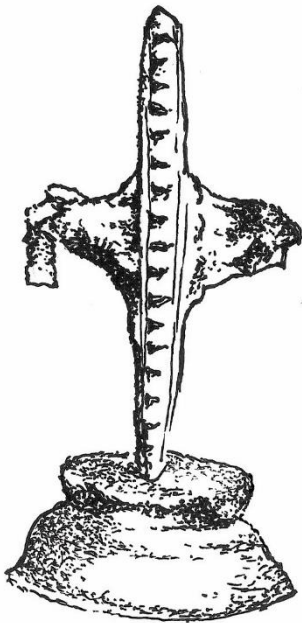
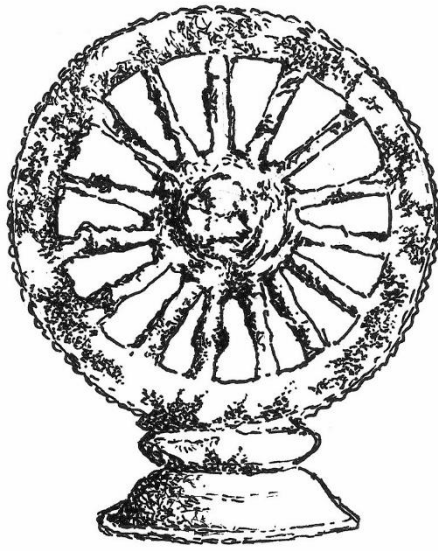
After the removal of the debris from the pit, which had been arbitrarily dug, it was revealed that this excavation had taken place some time ago. However, this excavation revealed that the bottom of stone slabs of the Image House had been lined with bricks confirming that the Image House had been paved with bricks in the ancient times (Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra piḷimageya kāṇim vyāpruti vārtāva 2022).



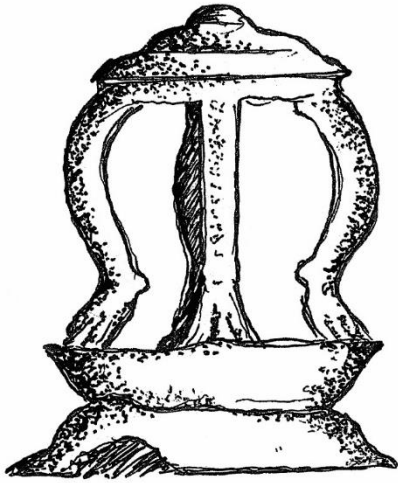
Fragments of a damaged Avalakithesvara Bodhisttva



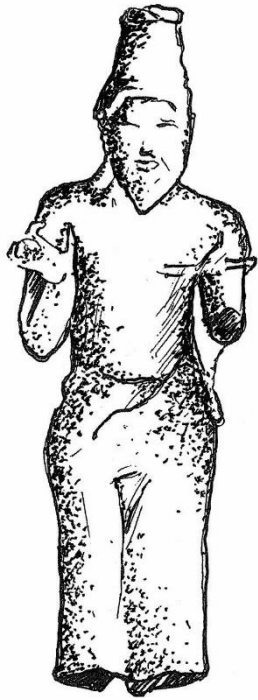
A bronze Kuvera or Brahma image



The bronzes of eight auspicious signs found during excavation at the image house



The bronzes of eight auspicious signs found during excavation at the image house



A bronze found during excavation at the image house



A bronze probably a bodhisattva found during excavation at the image house

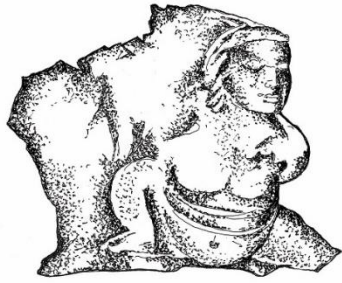


A line drawing of the Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva plaque

This relief is one of the earliest representations of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and his consort Tārā. The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, dressed in princely garments, stands frontally and probably holds a lotus flower in his raised right hand. His left hand is held at the waist. The two female figures on either side of Avalokiteśvara are probably two aspects of his consort Tārā, like Shyama Tārā (Green Tara) attended by Sita Tārā (White Tara). One standing to his left, is looking at the Bodhisattva, turning towards him with three-quarter view. She holds a blooming lotus flower in her right hand while the left is held against her left waist. Tārā standing to right hand side of the Bodhisattva also holds a blooming lotus flower in her left hand while her right hand is held against her left waist. Although it is not clear at all, it is possible that there are two flying figures above the Bodhisattva triad (Avalokiteśvara in the middle and two Tārās on either side) throwing flowers in veneration.



The Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva plaque



The terracottas found during the excavation at the image house

Chapter House

At a distance of about 45m to the west of the *stūpa* is a relatively large and tall building made of stone columns. Although it is not easy to fathom the use of this building, it could be surmised to be a Chapter House. The building is constructed to cover an area of length 14.30m and width 8.20m with stone pillars arranged in a few rows. The size of stone columns differs to each other marginally. Of the columns erected, seven of them had perished and their remnants are strewn about the place. Of the currently recognized monuments, this construction had used the largest stone pillars of size 33cm x 37cm to a height of 278cm. Bell has reported this building to be the *Vihāra*.



The Chapter House

Ruined Building No. 1

On this terrace, the remains of a building with two stone pillars can be seen in front of the image house (on the southern part of the plain). Its utility

cannot be easily fathomed. The two stone pillars are arranged in the east-west direction at a distance of 1.95m between them. The roughly cut pillars are 20cm x 25cm and 45cm in height.

Ruined Building No. 2

In front of the Ruined Building No 01 (on the southern part of the plain) the remains of a building with four stone pillars could be seen. The shape of the remaining stone pillars resembles the letter L. Its utility cannot be easily fathomed. It is a construction of finely polished pillars of varying heights. The size of a stone pillar is 16cm. x 24cm. with a height of about 64cm.

Old Pond

A large pond could be seen at a distance of about 10m outside the western wall behind the image house. The size of the pond is approximately 40m². The depth of the pond is about 10m. This pond may have been used for water



requirements of the upper terrace. The pond had been filled with soil and gradually it had been washed away. This pond can be identified as the largest structure built on the second terrace. In addition, there are remains of buildings including stone pillars. However, the use of these constructions is difficult to discern from the remains. While constructing the wall of the upper terrace, a few stone channels could be seen to have been constructed on the upper terrace to drain the rain water collected on the terrace.

Bodhighara

In addition to the *stūpa*, there are several other ancient monuments on the flat terrace on top of the hill. Ten stone pillars are arranged in a circle at a distance of 65m from the *stūpa* mound. It is presumed that this construction had been a *bōdhighara* (Mullaitivu kurundi vihāra piḷimageya kām̃m vyāpruti vārtāva 2022) Stone pillars had been erected on the circumference of the circle at a fix distance. Few of the pillars are broken and a *kabok* wall



Bodhighara

exists around the circular mound which has a diameter of about 10.6m. Some broken pillars bonded with the wall are about 22cm x31cm. The entrance to the mound had been from the north and the three stone steps at the entrance are yet preserved. The size of a step is 40cm X 25cm. The mound visibly high on the plain has three stone pillars in the middle. Bell had identified this construction as a *vaṭadāge*, literally a pillared relic house or a shelter of a *stūpa*.

Flights of Steps

Evidence confirming the access from north and the east to reach the Monastic Complex is visible. A flight of steps exists to reach the summit of the rock along the northern slope. Evidence exists to confirm the flight of steps to have commenced near the bund of the Kurundumalaya tank. a flight of steps is terraced at two points to this approach and at the bottom of the hill a pair of guard stones had been placed to indicate its path. Although the two pairs of guard stones had been covered with debris, their tops are visible with



Guardstones located at the foot of the flight of steps in eastern direction

8 cm jutting out of the debris. Bell too has mentioned about the flight of steps in the 1905 Administration Report. The pair of guard stones could be seen one at the bottom level of the slope and at a level midway up the slope. The gap between the two guard-stones at the commencement point of the flight of steps is 4.5m. Their width being 40cm. the height of the visible portion of the guard-

stones above the debris is 17cm. It is believed that the steps lay buried to a depth of 50cm to 70cm. At a distance of about 15 meters more towards its central part of the slope, the other pair of guard-stones and about 15m further up the slope from here another pair guard-stones are visible. At this point the distance between the two guard-stones is 3.9m. The width of a guard-stone is 45cm. The height of the visible portion of the guard-stone is about 18cm. At a certain spot the steps above the debris confirms the flight of steps remains being buried underground.



Guardstones located at the foot of the flight of steps in northern direction

Having climbed to the top of the flight of steps to the building is the entrance portal (*dvāra maṇḍapa*) of the temple complex comprising of several erected stone pillars. The size of a semi polished stone pillar of the 8 pillared portal is 38cm X 25cm. The height of a pillar is 130cm.

Only 2 to 3 steps of the flight of steps of the access to the hill top along the eastern slope are visible. A good number of steps of this flight of steps either remain buried under the debris or believed to have been pilfered. Of the remaining steps, some had been prized out owing to them being entwined with the roots of massive trees. However, there are no guard-stones on the eastern access. Only a few of the steps, either in whole or part could be presently seen with a likely length of 165cm.

Of the two access ways, the flight of steps from North could be considered to be the main access entrance to the monastic complex as the entrances to all the buildings of the complex had been constructed facing the north.

Tank

This tank is located to the north of the Kurundi monastic complex. The flight of steps with two guard-stones on either side of it leading to the Temple



Complex on the upper most terrace starts from the tank bund. The tank had been renovated recently. Information regarding the existence of the tank in the past is not available. The tank bund extending in the north-south direction has at its centre portion several ancient stone pillars brought from or toppled from the frontal area of the tank embankment.

Monastic Complex

A platform about 3m below runs round the rectangular terrace having the sacred buildings of the monastic complex. This platform runs uniformly around the ridge of the terrace with equal width in the north, south and east sides terrace with the platform becoming slightly wider in the west than on the other sides. It can be assumed that this platform had been designed to be used for the constructional needs of the monastic complex. In this second terrace, the stone pillars that could be considered as building ruins could be seen.



The Monastic Buildings

Mound with a Stone Bridge

construction clearly identifiable is a stone bridge over a stream at the end of the embankment of the tank, built in the east-west direction of eight pillars in rows of two. There is a large number of overturned stone pillars and stone slabs at the site. Three toppled stone pillars are seen near the waterway in close proximity to the stone bridge. At one end of the bridge, a mound that



could be conjectured as a building exists.

Kurundi Slab Inscription

Substantial information about a monastery in the Northern Province could be gleaned from Kurundi slab inscription. J. P. Lewis who visited Kurundi Vihara in 1889 and having seen the inscription reports thus: - King Mihindu III (801-804) (Suraweera 1976:114)²⁷ had visited Kurungama with his mother and daughter in his eighth year of reign. According to the report the inscription is one of the large slab inscriptions found in Sri Lanka and that many parts of the inscription have faded. The inscription stating generally

the rules that appear in the Mihintale Slab Inscription, applicable to the monks in a general way were told to adhere by the monks who were stationed here. It had been inscribed on the stone by the King personally and commands that these rules shall continue to be in force irrespective of any errors in the inscription and without any amendments till the Sun and the Moon last. Lewis who had seen the inscription in three pieces says that the letters on it are engraved on horizontal lines cut as straight as if they had been done with a ruler with a line carved round the inscription as a boarder. (Lewis 1895:314) ²⁸. Nicholas assumes that this had been a result of a conflict that had arisen due to a dispute over the use of water of the tank Kurunduveva or Thanimuruppu.

According to the description given here, this inscription was not found at the archaeological site on top of the mountain, but at the archaeological site closer to the tank. However, Bell reports in the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report 1905 that he was unable to find the inscription (Bell 1905:19).

In the 1949 Archaeological Administrative Report Prof. Paranavitana has also given his opinion about the Kurundi Slab Inscription. He reveals that the Manual of the Vanni Districts by J.P.Lewis (p.314), contains an interesting account by Parker, of the inscription being an archaeological artifact which licensed tourist guides show the tourist who visit ancient cities of Sri Lanka. As stated in the report a search was made (by the Department of Archaeology) for this inscribed stone slab when the ancient site at Kurundankulam was explored in 1931 for the purpose of proclaiming it as an Archaeological Reserve. The inscription mentioned by both Lewis and Parker eluded the department's officers who searched for it then, but information was received during the year under review of the existence of a

stone bearing ancient writing in the vicinity of Kurundankulam. Dr. C. E. Godakumbura, who had visited the site with the intension of locating the inscription having failed in the quest, later engaged on an inspection tour of the site had reported that vandals with the intension of finding treasure had damaged the artifacts during the recent years and that he had seen the inscription itself being broken into a number of fragments. (ASCAR 1949:33).

Paranavitana had shown in his report that he does not believe when Parker and Lewis mention that the King had engraved the inscription admitting that he may have made mistakes while engraving and seeking pardon for his follies. Paranavitana further says that during the King's regnal period there was no shortage of literati. However, Paranavitana having inspected the inscription identifies the Kurundi Slab Inscription as an inscription that belongs to the medieval period and agrees with the Parker's view that the Kurundi Slab Inscription is also a set of regulations similar to Mihintale Slab Inscription. (ASCAR 1949:33).

It is confirmed that the Kurundi inscription had been partially or completely fragmented when Paranavitana and Godakumbure visited the site separately, an eye copy or an estampage being not available. However, another inscription had been discovered in the forest surrounding the monastic complex, which had been published by Prof. Sirimal Ranawella in 2004 in the Inscriptions of Ceylon Vol. V, Part II, a publication of the Department of Archaeology.

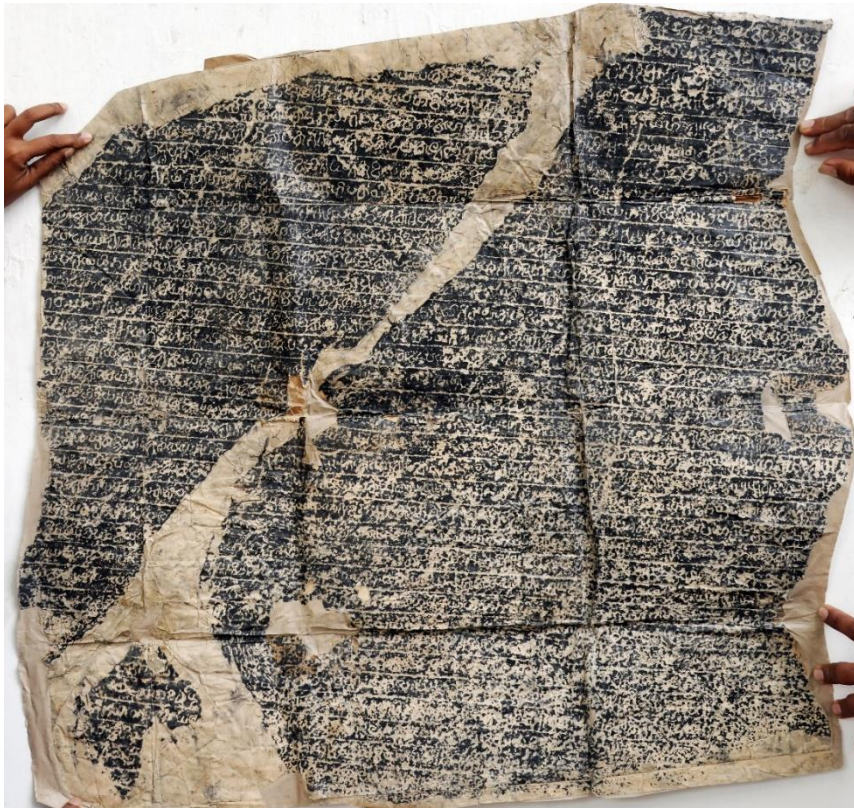
Reign: King Udaya IV (946-954)
Period: 10th century
Script: Medieval Sinhala
Language: Medieval Sinhala

Transcript of the Kurundi Slab Inscription

1.yasa tedin dasa athi pätirä raja kaļa Abhā Salamevan Maharadhu put
2. mañdul rañdanā rajliye hi miñi vuṭunuyen siya muñdun pähäyū Lakdiv po/o yona parapu-
3. ren himi vū tumā saraṇa niya rasin an raja muñdun bises vū tik tedin hiru pa/ä kevin Mehesuru daļa dāpin Uviñdu raja viritin Suriñdu pabada denen dinisuru sat
4. setin Kitisuru päṇa sarin Suraguru somi gunen nisayuru nin sarin kapturu rū sarin Kadap ku/ūṇu resen Bosatu meruvan suva sarin sama.....
5. hun Abhā Salamevan Maharaj-hu tumā sat längū pa/amuvana havuruduyehi Äsala pun sand avap mashi dasavak dava-
6. s.....Saṅga-aram Sirisaṅbo Rajmaha veherhi vat sirit visinā siya tan saha sasañdā tun nakāhi maha saṅg vathimiyan.....
7.pasa evun vana sirit visinā siyatā saha.....sasapate potahi ärū seyin akar vanu isā ... si hadava siṭa pavatnā koṭ me silālekha
8. Sirisaṅbo Abhaya Maharaj Aga-Su(da)m nam vū Saṅgbaḍ apa māñiyan isā sirit sañdahā niyāmakin isā Varad-devu pareyā
9.katu isāyā Rakranugama yurehi Abhayagiri nakā pi/ibādi koṭ sa Kārū Saṅgram Sirisaṅbo Rajmaha veherä
10.nu koṭ arvanuyehi Navayā sand avap masa dasavak davas Daḷadāgehi me raṭ me Abhaya-Isiripavi Piyangala ka kāmīyan
11. nissan hl sasañdā me Veheraṭ Piyangalaṭ tābu sirit isā vivaruṇen ek se koṭ tan uvatakā arvayi kami sāmiyan kaļa visi-ek
12. ek päkak Abhayagiri veherä isā ek päkak me veherhi Mahapahāhi isā tabanu koṭ vadāḷaha vimi kusal kami tabaya satu
13.gahanehi seyin me nisagin saniṭhan vū sirit isā meyaṭ dun kábali kaṭayutu se isahiya kaṭayutuya isā minisnaṭ kam

14. naṭ labanuva yutuse isā ek se koṭ arvayi me veherā tabanu koṭ vadā/ā sirit pothi sirit liyi Satdevāmi me veherā sirit me veherhi vehe-
15. r kāmīyan Kāmīyan pi/īmagehi sirit pot-hi kī seyin bud bataṭ gata yutu isā pi/īmagehi ema puda sirit seyimā karānu isā Anañḍa Piyangalhi aṭin do/osa
16. pasā āvū vathimiyan vāsi vathimiyan visiyā
17.
18.
19.

(Inscriptions of Ceylon, Volume V, Part II, 221-224) ³¹.



Estampage of the Kurundi Slab Inscription

Study of this inscription reveals that Parker and Lewis have read some other inscription. The above-mentioned inscription was discovered recently by the Department of Archaeology.

As mentioned in the inscription this monastic complex, known as Sanghārāma Sirisangabo Raja maha Vihāra was affiliated to the Abhayagiri monastery. The inscription that could be described as a *Katikāvata* contains a set of rules and regulations laid down by the King with the consent of the monks who have been residing there. There is mention of a *Padhānaghara* or a Meditation Hall as well. This inscription inscribed by a person named Satdev reveals that the image house was an important place where special rituals were held. However, the facts mentioned *in* this inscription must be further studied.

This inscription, which had been hidden in the forest for some time, was discovered during an exploration conducted by the Regional Archaeological Office (Vavuniya/Mullaitivu/ Mannar) of the Department of Archaeology in 2020. It had been broken into pieces. It was discovered due to the dedication of officials of the Regional Archaeological Office. It is seriously damaged.



Discovery of the Kurundi Slab Inscription

Ranawella says,

“Had this inscription been completely preserved, it would have been one of the most important records of the tenth century discovered from the Northern Province. As this epigraph, though very fragmentary, its publication is still worth, as it is one of the few inscriptions so far discovered from the northern part of the Island. However, as the text of this record is not coherent, we do not intend to follow it with an English translation.”

This inscription has to be further researched, revised and published in the *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, the Journal on Inscriptions of the Department of Archaeology.



Fragments of Kurundi Slab Inscription

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