SRI LANKA
AND THE
SILK ROAD
OF THE SEA

Editors
Senake Bandaranayake
Lorna Dewaraja
Roland Silva
K.D.G. Wimalaratne

THE SRI LANKA NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO
and THE CENTRAL CULTURAL FUND
COLOMBO 1990
Front Cover: The Jetavana terracotta jars, Anuradhapura, circa 2nd-3rd century AC.
The selection of terracotta jars, illustrated on the front cover, is from the excavations at the Jetavana Vihara, Anuradhapura. These jars, between 10 and 20cm in height, were found deeply buried at the foot of the colossal Jetavana stupa, built in the last quarter of the 3rd century AC. They are a part of the ‘Jetavana Treasure’, discussed in this volume. These jars and other related ceramic materials are thought to be of Sri Lankan origin, but are based on Western Asian and Chinese pottery forms, indicating very early contacts between Sri Lanka and distant lands to the north, east and west. Being essentially containers for precious liquids, and serving in their present context as offerings, the jars reflect a close connection between trade, technology and religion.

These jars – and associated finds, of precious imported objects and locally-produced artefacts – are contextually and stylistically dated between the 1st century BC and the 3rd century AC. Their deposition in the present context can be definitely connected with the construction of the stupa by King Mahasen (276-303 AC).

Mahasen was a great innovator, pioneering new ideas in Buddhist tradition and practice and in constructional and irrigation technology. His most ambitious monument, the Jetavana stupa, is the largest of the colossal Sri Lankan stupas or dagabas and is thought to be the largest brick building in the world. Its platform measures 95 metres square the diameter and circumference at the base of the dome are 112 metres and 352 metres, respectively. The foundations of the dome go down to bedrock, more than 10 metres below the level of the upper basal platform. The stupa originally rose to a height of nearly 135 metres above ground level.

The jars represented here link one of the world’s largest monuments with distant countries to the north, east and west of Sri Lanka.

This painting, 86 x 56cm, is by the Sri Lankan painter Ivan Peries (1921-1988), well-known for his highly evocative paintings of the island’s coastal landscape.

Back Cover: Map of Taprobane (i.e. Sri Lanka) from a late 15th or early 16th century edition of Ptolemy’s Geography, Department of National Archives, Colombo.
Although Ptolemy’s Geography dates from circa 150 AC no extant map or drawing exists from that time. The earliest versions of Ptolemaic maps are found in Greek manuscripts from Byzantine contexts, dating between the 12th and 14th centuries.
The first engraved (copperplate) version of Ptolemy’s Geographia was printed in Bologna circa 1477 and can be considered the first engraved atlas in the world. Scholars are divided in their opinion whether the Medieval and ‘Renaissance Ptolemy maps are derived from Ptolemaic originals or are creations of the early map makers, the latter being the more likely situation. The present map is probably a woodcut print by the German cartographer Martin Waldseemuller (c. 1470-1518), editions of whose work were produced in Strassburg and later in Lyon and Vienne.

Design: Albert Dharmasiri and Senake Bandaranayake.
Cover photograph and all colour photographs: I. S. Madanayake – Photodocumentation Unit, Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology (PGIAR), University of Kelaniya.
Artwork, cartography and word-processing: PGIAR Cartographic and Computer Units.
Inquiries to:
The Director-General, Central Cultural Fund, P.O. Box 1531, 212, Baudhhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7.
ISBN 955-9043-02-1
Typeset and printed by Gunaratne Offset Ltd., Colombo 10.
CONTENTS

Introductory Note: Sri Lanka and the ‘Silk Road’ of the sea
Senake Bandaranayake 9

✓ Sri Lanka’s Role in the Maritime Silk Route
W.J.M. Lokubandara 21

PART ONE

✓ Seaways to Siediba: Changing Patterns of Navigation in the Indian Ocean and their Impact on Precolonial Sri Lanka
R.A.L.H. Gunawardana 25

✓ The Jetavana Treasure
Hema Ratnayake 45

✓ Durable Goods: The Archaeological Evidence of Sri Lanka’s Role in the Indian Ocean Trade
Martha Pickett-Fernando 61

✓ Tracing the Silk Road of the Sea: Ceramic and Other Evidence from the Partner Ports of the Western Indian Ocean (8th–10th c. A.D.)
Moira Tampoe 85

✓ The World Map and Sri Lanka in Ancient and Mediaeval Cartography
Kanthi Vitharana 105

✓ Mantai–Mahatittha: The Great Port and Entrepot in the Indian Trade
Martha Pickett–Fernando 115

✓ Mantai – A second Arikamedu: A Note on Roman Finds
Roland Silva and Jan Bouzek 123

✓ Precolonial Sri Lanka’s Maritime Commerce with Special Reference to its Ports
W.I. Siriweera 125
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Contacts between India and Sri Lanka through Bhikkhus, Scholars and Pilgrims</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunapala Senadheera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journeys to the Diamond Throne: Sri Lankan Buddhist Monks and Pilgrims at Buddhagaya</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.V.B. Karunatilaka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanka’s Cosmography Down the Ages</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Harrigan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Indian Mercantile Communities in Ceylon circa 950–1250</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Indrapala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka through Greek and Roman Eyes</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.P.M. Weerakkody</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Relations between Sri Lanka and Iran</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.A. Imam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims and the Trade of the Arabian Sea with Special Reference to Sri Lanka from the Birth of Islam to the Fifteenth Century</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirima Kiribamune</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim Merchants and Pilgrims in Sarandib c. 900–1500 A.D.</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorna Dewaraja</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic (Kufic) Inscriptions in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A.M. Shukri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Light on Some Arabic Lithic Records in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somasiri Devendra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART THREE

The Galle Tri-Lingual Slab Inscription 217

Sino-Sri Lankan Relations During the Precolonial Times 221
Mahinda Werake

Chinese Ceramics Discovered in Sri Lanka – an Overview 233
P.L. Prematilleke

The Sri Lankan Factor in the Development of the Art of Sukhothai and Lanna Tai 245
Ananda W.P. Guruge

Thailand Repays Her Debt to Sri Lanka: A Study of the Cultural Contact between the Two Countries from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries 253
Lorna Dewaraja

PART FOUR

Traditional Indian Ocean Shipping Technologies 261
Kenneth McPherson

Premodern Ships and Watercraft of Sri Lanka 265
Somasiri Devendra

The North-West Passage between Ceylon and India 271
C.W. Nicholas

Sri Lankan Ships in China 277
R.A.L.H. Gunawardana and Yumio Sakurai

Sinhalese Naval Power 281
C.W. Nicholas

Contributors 290