

## The 'Maradanmaduva-Tabbova' Culture Terracottas found at Manavava in the vicinity of Inamaluva

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This paper is a preliminary discussion of the terracottas belonging to the Manavava-Inamaluva culture which were found in 1983, in the teak grove at Manavava in the Inamaluva korale of the Matale district. Manavava lies between Inamaluva and Digampataha on the Colombo-Trinco main route. To reach the site where the terracottas were found one must turn eastwards at the 100th mile post, and walk about 1km into the forest.

The site is on flat gravelly barren land. The finds were scattered over an area of about 10m radius. The artefacts were distributed in mounds of soil which seemed to have been dug out from one place. No architectural remains such as stones, brick or tiles were found at this site. To the north of the site there is a flat outcrop of rock, and about 1km to the south is a small abandoned tank. Among the samples collected are human figurines, phallic objects, animal figures and other types of pottery artefacts. The figure that commands greatest interest is a small male figurine of which the arms have been broken. The feet of this figure are not well defined. Where the feet should have been, the figurine has been flattened horizontally, thus giving the impression of a yogi posture.

Among the human figurines is another male figure, of which only the head and chest remain. Four others represent the head portions of the human form whose sex cannot be accurately determined. There are five figures that are distinctly feminine. On the basis of method of production they can be divided into two classes: hollow, rounded figures, and the bas-relief sculpture on a flat base. Three figures fall into the first category. In these the feet have not been delineated and the heads are broken. The arms of all the figures have been broken, except for one arm in one figurine. The torsos which broaden gradually from top to bottom show prominent breasts. The lower end seems to have been fixed to a base of some sort, from which it has come apart. These three figures are roughly of the same size. The best-preserved of them is 6cm high, and 2.5cm broad at the top and 3.5cm at the bottom. While it is 3.5cm thick at the lower end, the thickness at the top is 1.5cm.

The female figures in bas-relief are smaller than the rounded ones. Only the torsos of these figures remain. One of these shows a slim waist with very prominent breasts. The base of this relief is a 3cm square, 5mm

in thickness. The other bas-relief figure is not as artistically executed as the first.

The two semi-erect figurines are smaller than the round ones. In these, too, only the torsos remain. In one of these, the breasts are prominently featured while the waist is slim. The slab bearing this figurine measures about 3cm in length and about 5mm in thickness. The other figurine is not so artistically finished as the previously mentioned one. The breasts in this figurine are flat and round. The torso is geometrically straight. The straight arms extend sideways at shoulder level. The only slab bearing this figurine measures about 4cm in length and about 3mm in thickness. These incomplete figurines may have been a part of a clay vessel or similar object.

The above mentioned figurines display characteristics of primitive folk art. All figurines are hand-made, crude works of art. Lumps of clay have been transformed into different likenesses through the pressure of fingers and fingernails.

Besides the human figurines, there were among these samples three objects that could be classified as phallic. These were each about 10cm long and 3cm thick, which makes it certain that these phalli did not belong to the above-mentioned human figurines. They may have fallen off much larger figures.

A small three-headed cobra hood was also found at this place. It measured 4.5cm in height and 3.5cm in breadth. Another figurine found at the site may have been an image of an elephant. If it is not an image of an elephant it may be a vessel of a similar shape.

Another figurine carried a triangular face featuring the svastika symbol. Apart from these items, large amounts of wheel-made pottery were also found at the site. They appear to be vessels used for the purpose of making ritual offerings rather than for cooking or eating in. Of special interest is a vessel with a three-legged base and a lid with a handle.

On the basis of these few items alone, it is difficult to speculate even broadly on the society which used these objects. But a preliminary study of this nature might help to formulate a basic idea of the site and its social context and provide a basis for more elaborate studies in the future.

On the basis of the objects found at Manavava it can be assumed that it may have been a site of folk-offering

to invoke fertility. The use of clay vessels, their characteristics and the close proximity to a tank suggests that the society concerned was based on agriculture. These people were familiar with the use of the potter's wheel and the elephant. They were aware of the svastika and were also in possession of some notions of cobra-worship or some ritual or cult connected with the cobra.

The first recorded findings of similar clay objects were in Puttalam in 1921 (Hocart 1922). This was followed by a discovery at Arippu in 1924 (Hocart 1924 : 10). In 1940 terracotta objects were found at Tabbova and in 1953 at Maradanmaduva (Deraniyagala 1960, 1961) followed by a discovery at Illukvava close to Sigiriya (Deraniyagala 1958 : 22-25).

P.E.P. Deraniyagala who studied these objects called the culture to which they belonged 'The Maradanmaduva-Tabbova Culture' (1960). Since then a large number of sites have been reported. For example, terracotta objects belonging to this culture have been discovered at Urutirupuram close to Killinochchi, Vauniya near the Tavva Adampan Vava (Deraniyagala 91-94, Godakumbura 1980 pt. 3,5,6). Similar objects were also reported from Rajangana and Ampara in 1970-71 (Deraniyagala, S. 1972 : 164).

All the sites reported are in the Dry Zone. They are also located close to one or more irrigation tanks. The soil in these places is barren gravel for the most part. Although the objects discovered at different places display minor variations, generally they may all be assumed to belong to one culture.

To which period do the terracotta objects from Manavava belong? What type of people were responsible for them? Where did these people live? These questions seek answers. Although there is no settlement at the site at present the abandoned tank in the vicinity is evidence that a settlement existed in this area at some time in the past. Inamaluva and Nagalavava, located about 3km to the southwest and northeast respectively, are two *purana* villages in the area. A point of interest is that Nagala vava is located between Manavava and llukvava and that it is a village of the people of the Nakati caste. The villagers have been engaged in weaving for at least about 150 years (Ariyapala 1956:301).

Three monasteries with early Brahmi inscriptions are located within a 5km radius of this site: Enderagala in the South (Paranavitana 1970 Nos. 861-865), Digamapataha in the north (No.866) and Kibissa in the east (Epigraphical notes 1974, 8).

The Manavava terracotta figurines cannot be assigned to the period to which the settlements in the vicinity belong merely because these settlements are located close to the site, nor can these objects be related to the

period assigned to similar objects from other sites simply on the basis of morphological similarities. The periods assigned to terracotta cultures are only relative. According to P.E.P. Dearaniyagala this culture existed from 3000 BC-200 AC, and possibly even up to 10th century AC.

Siran Deraniyagala, basing his views on the objects from Rajangana and Ampara has assigned a date around the 3rd century AD or a little later (1972 : 165). While these assumptions should form a basis for reckoning, a definite date for the Manavava objects can be assigned only after the date recovered from the site have been subjected to a stratigraphical study.

### Remarks

We visited the site on 11.11.1983. Mr. Siyambalavava Ratnayake, a labourer attached to the Cultural Triangle related the story of the discovery of the objects. According to him they had been found when a mound was being levelled to enable a lorry carrying a load of teak logs from the Manavava jungle to pass. Mr. Senerath Dissanayake a Research Officer of the Sigiriya Project, and Mr. Sarath Athulathmudali, the Project photographer accompanied me to the site along with Mr. Ratnayake and two other labourers.

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