

**Identification of the Statue near Potgul Vihara at Polonnaruva as *Amoghapasa Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva***

**ANURA MANATUNGA**

**Department of Archaeology**

**UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA**

**SRI LANKA**

Email Address: [am@kln.ac.lk](mailto:am@kln.ac.lk)

**Abstract:** The statue near the Potgul Vihara at Polonnaruva has been considered as an excellent work of art. However, the identification of the statue has hitherto been ambiguous though it has been attempted to identify either as a king or a sage by various scholars with different perspectives. The traditional belief is that the statue is a depiction of the king Parakramabahu the Great who ruled the Island from the Polonnaruva kingdom. The object held on both hands of the statue has been considered as an ola book and the name assigned to the nearby monastery, Potgul Vihara (Monastic Library) is taken to reinforce this popular belief. Paranavitana argued in length in support of the popular belief, but interpreted the object held on hands as an ‘inverted yoke’ to symbolize the sovereignty. Some other scholars attempted to identify the statue as sages Pulasthi, Agasthi, Kapila and Karuvar Thevar with different arguments. The present writer understood that the statue must be understood in its Buddhist context and identified the statue as Amogapasa Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva. The main point of this identification is that the object on the hand as a representation of the ‘Pasa’( Lasso) which is the principal symbol of the particular Bodhisattva. The miniature statue found at Panduvas Nuvara having a rope on both hands and later period statue at Urulevewatta Temple have been taken to support this identification. The mark behind the left shoulder of the statue is also identified as the lotus stroke which is a distinct mark of this Bodhisattva. The nearby monastery, Pothgul Vihara has been identified as a Mahayana Mandala with its unique plan and it possibly symbolizes the Pothalaka mountain where Avalokitheshvara abodes. Oral traditions related to Polonnaruva as a place associated with serpents has also been considered here as reminiscent of popular stories associated with Amogapasa .