

AB06

Categories of Dance in Sri Lanka during Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa Periods: An Archaeological Study Based on Dancing Figures

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Literary sources from the 3rd century BC and archaeological sources from the 2nd century AD provide adequate evidence about ancient dances in Sri Lanka. Through investigations of both sources of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods, religious or semi-religious dances and the dances performed for the king and the royal court can be identified. Categories of dance represented by the dancing figures which are found particularly in Buddhist and Hindu architectural premises as well as unrecorded venues have not been substantially examined yet. Literary sources make repetitive indications towards the practice of dance in ancient Sri Lanka, rather than demonstrating the categories of dance specifically. Thus the main objective of this research was to discover the categories of dance in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods. Features of dancing depicted by the dancing figures were thoroughly examined to achieve the research objective. In attempting to distinguish dancing events from other human figures, the postures of the figures, surroundings and the purpose of creation were analyzed, adhering to standard theoretical frameworks. Through methods of detailed and comparative analysis the categories were recognized. It has been drawn as the conclusion that there had been categories of dance as solo/group dances, female/male and mix gender dances, religious dances and celestial dances as a conceptual dance type during the periods concerned.

Key words: *dance categories, dancing figures, literary sources, archaeological sources, Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods*

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