

A New Approach to Typological Classification of Pottery: A Case Study of Lower Kirindi oya Basin in Southern Sri Lanka

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This is an analytical study of ancient pottery recovered from the Lower Kirindi oya Basin (LKB) in Hambantota district of the Southern Province. In the period between 1999 and 2002, an area of 300 km² around the Tissamaharama town were surveyed as a part of a project designed to research urban origins of Southern Sri Lanka. 128 hitherto unknown archaeological sites comprising a dense surface scattering of ancient potsherds have been discovered as a result of the survey. Eight locations among them were selected for excavation. Present study is based on an assemblage of archaeological pottery obtained through excavations.

This paper seeks to present the new typological classification, which derived from the analysis. The methodology of the new classification can be discussed under two headings i.e., the practical aspect interpretative approach of the analysis.

The data derived from an ethnographic survey conducted in the lower Kirindi Oya basin was used assuming the probable vessel function and their technology. Identification of the shape of a vessel was considered as the major requirement for interpretation. The physical appearance of vessel including surface treatment and the design elaborated might have been inspired by the potter's psyche and with number of other factors. This leads us to understand the significance of having a polythetic approach in typological classification considering both aspects of utilitarian and collective social psychology and their governing factors, of pottery manufacture in the past.

Key Words: Kirindi Oya Basin; Technology; Southern Province; Vessel

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