

## **Begging or cooking: a study on the monastic life of the Anuradhapura hinterland**

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The definition of the word, 'bhikkhu' according to Buddhist texts is that of a person who begs alms and is a monk, his life is similar to a 'flying bird'. A bhikkhu should be burdened only with the weight of the begging bowl. The mention of the begging bowl here is interesting as it is the only 'artifact', in addition to the yellow robe, that a bhikkhu is supposed to have had, as this 'artifact' is the tool that was central to the subsistence of Buddhist monks. This definition also represents a core belief in Buddhist practice. However, the large amounts of domestic pottery shards and pottery types that came to light from the archaeological excavations at Anuradhapura suburb monastic sites do not seem to conform to this 'ideal'. There are, in fact, very few begging bowls which is difficult to take into account given, the accepted norms of subsistence practices of Buddhist monks. This situation poses two important questions (1) were the bhikkhus at Anuradhapura suburb monastic begging or cooking and (2) were they of a different sect?

This paper discusses this situation in relation to the archaeological studies at Pidurangala.

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