

## Social approach in prehistoric researches in Sri Lanka

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### **Introduction**

In the early Age, the man used the symbols to explain ideas. We identify this period as the prehistoric Age (Daniel and Renfrew 1986, 3). In 1851, Daniel Wilson (Daniel Wilson, 1851 Site in Daniel and Renfrew 1981, 1) wrote a book titled, "The Archaeology and Prehistory Annuals of Scotland" he used the word "Prehistoric Age", "Prehistory" in the field of Archaeology for the first time. Sri Lankan Prehistoric researches dating back to 1885. The aim of this paper is to explain the importance of the social approach and its contribution to the prehistoric research in Sri Lanka.

### **Social Approach**

Social approach is a more valuable method than other two methods (Systematic / formal approach and Antiquarian approach). The primary aim of the social approach is to provide interpretations based on present day social facts. This does not entail discarding the old facts but interpreting the old facts in modern contexts (i.e. in relation to the present day environment, society etc). This method is used in almost all modern archaeological research, especially in prehistoric research.

P.E.P. Deraniyagala (1980, 165-167) is an eminent personality in the field of Sri Lankan prehistory. His first research was not based on the social approach we see that he followed this approach in his later research. In 1930 he worked as a Deputy Director in the Zoology section of the Colombo National Museum. During this time he examined Fossils discovered from gem pits in the Pelmadulla area, this can be considered the beginning of his prehistoric research. He examined fossils such as extinct Elephants, Hippopotamus, Rhinoceros and also some living animals found in Ratnapura and the surrounding areas. As these fossils were discovered in the Ratnapura area he named them 'Rathnaputra Fauna', his research was related to

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Sri Lanka's Pleistocene epoch. The Pleistocene faunal and floral fossils discovered at Ratnapura, were sent to India (Tata and Birbalsahni Institution) and reassessed. As a result the Ratnapura Pleistocene age was named "Ratnapura Industry", "Ratnapura culture" and "Ratnapura beds" (Deraniyagala 1980, 165-167).

In 1939 excavations were conducted in Gallen-Kanda in Thuduwa, in 1940 some caves between Diyawinna and Ukgalkalthota near Balangoda (Udupiyan Galge, Lunugala, Beligala) 1940-41 Batadombalena and Batathotalena in Kuruvita were excavated. Between 1943-45 Beligala, and also Nerawana-Galge near Kukulegama sites were excavated and lithic implements were discovered (fig.1). An Indian specialist assisted in the research of the lithic implements and human osteological remains from Batadombalena. In addition the Lenawa cave complex, Siyambalinduwa-Mandagalge was excavated whilst Minihagalkanda was explored, lithic implements were recovered from all these sites. In the period between 1950 to 1953 the excavations close to Ravana-ella cave near Bandarawela revealed a red painted human forehead bone. The edges were ground down and also had small circular perforations. The periods between 1953 to 1955, Yakgiri-lena near Matugama, Peimadulla, Puwakwatta lena, Kabara-lena, Telulla Alugalge, Kalukoladeniya-lena were excavated. From the excavation at Kalukoladeniya cave an "Adze" was discovered for first time in Sri Lanka.



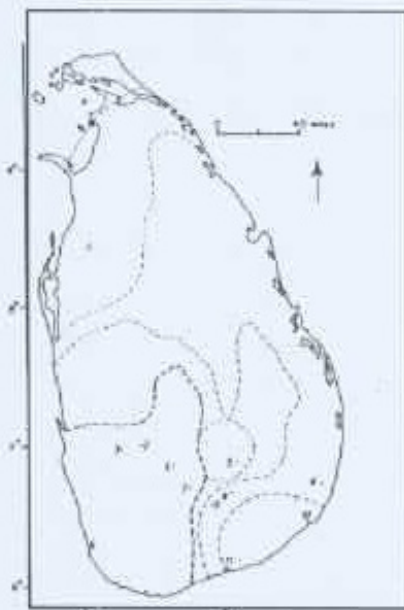
01. Gatahattha
02. Adams Peak
03. Batathotalena
04. Kuruvita
05. Batadombalena
06. Rthnapura
07. Ukgalkalthota
08. Balangoda
09. Palmadulla
10. Diyawinna
11. Rakwana
12. Kukulegama
13. Kalawana

*fig.1 Some Sites Explored and Excavated by P.E.P.Deraniyagala (1971)*

The period 1956-1962, P.E.P.Deraniyagala (1971, 1-47) joined the Bellanbandi-pelessa exploration and research team. The human remains discovered at the Bellanbandi-

pelessa excavations provided the highest evidence of prehistoric humans in Sri Lanka up to now. The remains of 12 individuals belonging to the Mesolithic Age were discovered here. In 1957 he explored and excavated many areas in Sri Lanka, from the lowland arid, semi-arid zones and highland wet zone.

Some of these places are Ochehappuwa, Herassa-galge in Ranahinna, Budugallena, Diggal-lena, Anakalla in the north-western province, Manela-golge, Gawaragiriya, Kukulegama, Rakwana, Buthkanda, Itthakanda, Bagawalena, in Adams Peak, Hungama, Thunmodara, Labugama, and Palhorukanda-lena (Deraniyagala 1939, 351-373). These sites were excavated carefully and the implements which were discovered were sent for dating to India and USA. Much research was conducted in Ratnapura the surrounding area. A large number of lithic and human remains were discovered here. P. E. P. Deraniyagala (1980, 172-183) succeeded in identifying important aspects of Sri Lanka's prehistoric Age (i.e. the identification of "Balangoda Man" and "Balangoda Culture"). He was especially examined Sri Lanka's extinct Pleistocene fauna. Deraniyagala's research on the Pleistocene fauna of Sri Lanka is the best research in this area up to the present day.



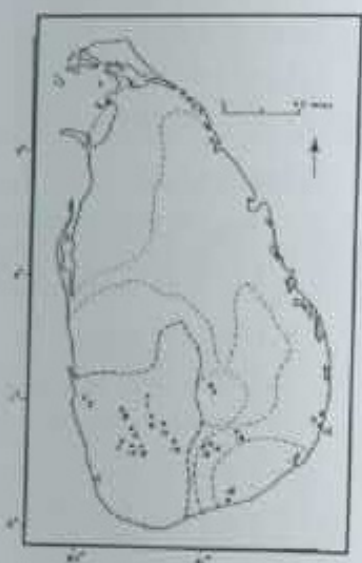
01. Vilpatthuwa
02. Kithulgala-Belilena
03. Maniyangama Belilena Athula
04. Norwood
05. Rawanaella
06. Lenama
07. Balangoda
08. Thelulla-Alugalge
09. Bellanbandipalassa
10. Menihagalkanda
11. Hungama

fig.2 Some Sites Explored and Excavated by K.A.R. Kennedy (1971)

K. A. R. Kennedy, (1971, 25-60) who was an American researcher (fig. 2) also worked with P.E.P. Deraniyagala. He was part of the research team at Bellanbandipalassa, and analysed the human skeletal remains discovered here. He also conducted

research on Veddas. His study about Veddas can be considered more important than those of the Sarasins (1907, 188-190). Through his research he discovered that the Veddas were the biological continuum of Sri Lanka's Mesolithic man (Deraniyagala 1980, 175-176).

A charcoal sample from the Mesolithic stratum was examined for the first time during P.E.P. Deraniyagala's (1980, 179-180) research period. The sample from Bellanbandi-pelessa was scientifically examined in the Natural History Museum, America in 1956. Bridget Allchin assisted the research of Deraniyagala and prepared a classification for the lithic implements discovered at Bellanbendi-pelessa.



01. Kithulga-Belilena
02. Kelamiya
03. Gatahattha
04. Samanalkanda
05. Batathota-lena
06. Eheliyagoda
07. Kudumbigala
08. Horton Place
09. Batadomba-lena
10. Kuruwita
11. Ellawala 2 Okanda
13. Thelulla-Alugalge
14. Bambarabotuwa-Beligalge
15. Diyavinna
16. Kukulegama
17. Minihagalkanda
18. Valipatanvila

*Fig. 3 Some Site Explored and Excavated by S.U. Deraniyagala (1991)*

After 1969 Sri Lankan prehistoric research took a different turn. Until this time prehistoric research was conducted by the Colombo National Museum. After the establishment of an excavation unit by the Department of Archaeology, prehistoric excavations were conducted by Siran Deraniyagala. Only the excavation at Athulalena in Beligalge was conducted by the Museum. Bellanbendi-pelessa, (Deraniyagala 1971, 47-89) Nalanda-Gedige at Anuradhapura were the main excavated sites. In the Gedige excavation they strove to find the transition period between the Prehistoric Age and Proto-historic Age (Deraniyagala 1980, 183). Codrington helped Deraniyagala in this research. Okanda, Kumana, Nachchiyar, Wellachchimalei,

Sankankuli, Kudimbigala, Bambaragasthalawa and Kandakadu, Thrikonamadu, near the Mahaveli river, Horton Plains were explored (fig. 3). Prehistoric sites in the dry zone and wet zone areas like Bundala Pathirajawela, Kithulgala- Belilena, Batadombalena, Alulena, Fahienlana, Ravanaella were examined (Deraniyagala, 1991, 16-18). Siran Deraniyagala's contribution to the prehistoric research in Sri Lanka spans over two decades. And he provided valuable hypotheses regarding the prehistory of Sri Lanka.

He also conducted research on the pedology of Sri Lanka (Deraniyagala 1992, 44-126), and also conducted comparative studies on world prehistory and Sri Lankan prehistory. Siran Deraniyagala classified lithic implements discovered at excavations and explorations (1984, 105-108). He specifically researched on prehistoric society (i.e. how it would have been?) (Deraniyagala 1991, 18 -22) and researched early environmental patterns, lithic technology and climate pattern (Deraniyagala 1992, 145-177).

Before the construction of the Samanla-wewa project in 1988 an extensive archaeological exploration was conducted. Siran Deraniyagala, W.H. Wijayapala and other archaeologists, and researchers (Deraniyagala 1980, 179-180) took part in this project. Ancient iron technology and more prehistoric data was discovered at this exploration. Mesolithic open air sites and lithic implements were also discovered at this exploration. This lithic implements were dated to 20,000 to 10,000 BP. (Manatunga 2001, 20-21). This project revealed much information about Prehistoric settlement patterns as well as information of their daily life.

Sri Lankan prehistoric research was primarily restricted to wet zone area up to now. But this tendency changed after 1988. Institutes apart from the Archaeology Department such as the Post Graduate Institute of Archaeology (PGIAR) University of Kelaniya played an important role in this regard. Excavations and explorations held Sigiriya - Dambulla region (1990-1991) headed by Senaka Bandaranayake (1990-1994) who was the head of the PGIAR at that time.

Pidurangala, Mapagala, Thammannagala, Dambulla, Pothana, Aligala and Dehigahalela sites researches in this project. Gamini Adikari and Priyantha Karunaratne (1994) excavated Sigiriya Aligala and Kimbissa near Pothana. Two human skeletons were found at Potana cave site. These remains provide important evidence about prehistoric

age in this area (Adikari 1994, 50). Researchers found the remains of different species of snails, lithic implements and also debitage from the Pothana cave.

Open prehistoric sites at Millagala, Thammannagala, Mapagala and prehistoric cave sites at Aligala, (Sigiriya), Pidurangala, Dambulla were discovered. Mesolithic stone implements created using quartz, chert and bones were found in the Aligala excavation. The excavation at Pidurangala also revealed implements, but not so many from Aligala. In the test pit excavated at Dambulla some chert and quartz implements were found in the third layer, and also explorations revealed many prehistoric implements (Adikari 1994, 45 -50, 349).

Geometric implements, lunate implements, bone, quartz and point tools was found from the Aligala excavation (Adikari and Karunaratne 1994, 56-57) These dry zone sites situated close to each other reveal important evidence about the prehistoric age. Senake Bandaranayake stated that Veddas live in this area in prehistoric Age. He obtained some specimens from Pidurangala area (Bandaranayake, 1990, 21-23) and he provided new explanation of about the Stone Age.

T. R. Premathilaka's exploration (Manatunga 2001, 23) of Horton Plains was sponsored by the PGIAR in 1995. The main aim of this study was to reveal new information about prehistoric environmental pattern. He collected micro fossils Thalkote-wewa in Sigiriya and Puttlam lagoon attempted to provide groundbreaking research regarding this field (Manatunga 2001, 23). The data from Horton plains was dated to 16000 - 21000 BP and provided important dates for the upper range in Neolithic Age.

Raj Somadeva, Prishanta Gunwardhana, Arjuna Thanthilage and the team also conducted an excavation in Pallemalala in Southern Province, Sri Lanka, he found human fragments and lithic implements (Adikari 2005, 16-25) (Ranaweera 2002, 5-15).

Hakbelikanda exploration was held by Department of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya in 2003. Through this exploration three caves and several caves in suburb was researched. In the main caves, some lithic implements were discovered, and

other two caves deposited dust. But that cave had rock art which could be dated to ca 30000 years old. Zig - zag marks is reason that inference.

Prehistoric research held again in December 2005 from Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology (PGIAR) university of Kelaniya. That research held in Varana Rajamaha Viharaya. Gamini Adikari, Senior lecturer in PGIAR is head of this excavation project. Stone implements together with potsherds were found in this cave.

### Conclusion

We obvious that researchers like Wijesekara and Senarathne. In recreating past, prehistoric period is more important for that. In social approach, we raised some question on present fact like How was past living? How was past environment? What were there technical method? .We can give some example researchers of social approach, are P.E.P.Deraniyagala, S. U. Deraniyagala, W.H.Wijayapala, Gamini Adikari. In world Archaeology, some hypothesis and conclusions which come through system are accepted most successful.

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