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Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa

Reflections on the
Chola Naval Expeditions
to Southeast Asia

E D I T O R S

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SRI LANKA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA DURING THE PERIOD OF THE POLONNARUVA KINGDOM

Anura Manatunga

Polonnaruva was the capital city of Sri Lanka for about two and half centuries from the late tenth century AD to the mid-thirteenth century AD. It was the centre of the Chola administration of the governors of King Rajaraja I (AD 985–1014) and his successors for over seventy years after which it became the centre of the second Sinhalese kingdom under King Vijayabahu I (AD 1055–10). It was then ruled by seventeen kings and queens including the Great Parakramabahu (AD 1153–86) and Nissankamalla (AD 1187–96), until it was usurped by Magha of Kalinga in AD 1215 who ruled for twenty-one years. Though the city was restored and reoccupied for some time in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it was gradually abandoned and forgotten (pp. 54–90; *UCHC* 1959, pp. 392–580). It was rediscovered in the early nineteenth century by a British military officer, and at that time, was only a ruined city in a forest area (Ievers 1899, p. 213; Forbes 1994, p. 391).

Polonnaruva contains both Hindu and Buddhist monuments and they have been preserved in fairly good condition. The largest collection of inscriptions in Sinhala or Tamil from Sri Lanka was found in Polonnaruva. The history of Polonnaruva has been relatively well documented in the *Mahavamsa*, the Pali chronicle of the Island. The large-scale archaeological investigations of the site started at the beginning of the last century and