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RETROSPECT

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RESEARCH POTENTIAL FOR STUDIES ON
THE ORIGIN OF AGRICULTURE IN SRI LANKA
A FEASIBILITY SURVEY

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Research potential for studies on the origin of agriculture in Sri Lanka: a feasibility survey

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The origin of agriculture has not yet posed a major research problem in Sri Lankan archaeology. It is widely considered to have been introduced to the Island by Indian migrants during the first millennium BC. This presumption is a result of references in the early chronicles (Dipavamsa. Ch IX; and Mahavamsa Ch. IX) and some seemingly relevant archaeological evidence (Deraniyagala 1992).

The Mesolithic hunter-gatherer stage of the Island that extends far back in time seems to have been succeeded by the Iron Age techno-culture somewhere between the 9th and 4th centuries BC (Deraniyagala 1992). The absence of, or the inadequacy of evidence of 'intermediate' Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultures in Sri Lanka is noteworthy, whereas they are prominent in neighbouring South and West India respectively. This fact may incline one to believe that Sri Lanka was still in the hunter-gatherer Mesolithic stage where agriculture was not practiced until the introduction of iron technology into the Island in the first millennium BC.

This broad generalization should be critically examined and tested vigorously as it is related to one of the crucial developments of human history and culture. In fact, it has already been questioned by Wijepala of the Archaeological Survey Department of Sri Lanka,

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