

**DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST MONASTERIES
TOWARDS URBANISM IN THE
TISSAMAHARAMA REGION**

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This thesis is submitted as a requirement for the doctoral degree of the
Postgraduate institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

2003

TH 063A

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Abstract

The study of the Buddhist monastic architecture is one of the significant spheres on the subject of archaeology. The development of the Buddhist monasteries towards urbanism from the proto-historic period to the Polonnaaruwa period will be discussed in the study area of Lower Kirindioya basin in Tissamaharama or ancient Magama. For the research methodology of this study, we chose the synthesis of qualitative style. The basic strategy adopted was on the surface survey of the ground method theory then thematic and discourse analyses were used to reconstruct the reality in the study area. Observing the cultural evolution, we have identified seven monastic phases in the Kirindioya system. It would be true to say that the pre-polity and primary urban form emerged in Magama from 900 BC. This period is a very important one as village and tank base settlements, agriculture and megalithic burial monument sites which seems to have functioned in the study area. It is worthy to note that a considerable urban form, political structure, agricultural development and the emergence of the commercial guild, long distance foreign trade in the KO system which might have been acquired during the Proto-historic and early historic interface (500BC-300BC) possibly under the auspices of *Kataragama Kshatriyas*. The inscriptional evidence shows that the precursors of this clan might have dominated the trade emporium. It can be identified that the Thambarawa megalithic site had close relationship with the early Brahmi rock shelter site of the Uddakandara (*phase- 1*). Nevertheless, it can be argued that the members of the *Kataragama Kshatriyas* might have dominated the socio-economic and religious authority until the king Mahanaga, the representative of the Anuradhapura kingdom had captured the hegemony in Ruhuna from this clan during the third century BC. It is evident that the primary urban and polity along with the commercial guild and the long distance foreign trade emerged during the Third century BC to 200 century BC. Five rock shelter monasteries (*phase-2*) might have been activated during this Period.

However, the situation of the pre polity and pre urban form rapidly changed due to the fact of the climax development of the international trade during the second century BC to the fourth century AD. This resulted in to emerge the mature urban form along with the technological monasteries. We have identified that the four Hub, Centric or urban monasteries i.e Tissamaharama, Yatala, Sandagiri and Menik which have been indicated as monastic *phase-3*. We have made the hypothesis that the centre-peripheral strategic situation

might have been implemented by the political rulers during this period to safeguard the hegemony of the trade power from the internal and the external factors. Moreover, the developed urbanism trade, polity, Mahayanism can be identified during the fourth century AD to 700 century AD which had appeared as focal monasteries (*phase-4*). Furthermore, the developed urbanism, trade, Mahayanism and disputations emerged from 700 century AD to 1000 century AD. In this period, we have identified the pabbata vihara monasteries (*phase-5*). In this context, we suggest that the city complex along with the royal palace might have appeared in the centre while Hub or Centric monasteries were located in the semi periphery. Significantly, Focal and Pabbata vihara monastic belts had been located in the periphery. We suggest that this kind of strategy caused several differences and inequalities.

It is almost certain that the centre-peripheral strategic situation of the Anuradhapura period might have collapsed due to the fact that the emergence of the trade communities in South India in 11 th century AD. These trade communities might have impacted on Magama. Therefore, under developed rock shelters, emergence of the image houses in the hub monasteries (*phase-6*) and the under developed pabbata vihara monasteries (*phase-7*) might have activated during the Polonnaruwa period in the study area.