

# Traveller's MasterGuide

Polonnaruwa Kingdom

P.A. A.Kumarasinghe

Traveller's Master Guide Sri Lanka

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## Fore word



My tour of Thailand in 2003 was the main reason influenced me to prepare this explorative handbook as a guide for tourists. I realized that there is a well organized tourists industry in Thailand. Most of the erections there have been created recently to win the attraction of the tourists. When comparing Sri Lanka with it our heredity goes back to thousands of years in the past, a country of having a higher civilization with so many valuable historical monuments and also with natural beautiful resources, environment, a coastal line and also a country with a good climatic condition for a long period in the year for tourists. Though it is a small island - enjoyable prevailing environment will attract the tourists. As it is what we should do is managing the necessities with a responsible manner carefully.

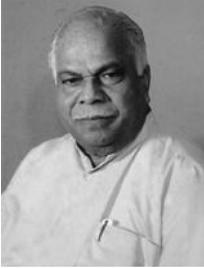
I did my part very carefully and thoughtfully with utmost effort. During our young days in a technologically under developed environment, we were brought up without facilities like television etc. Our elders were in the habit of relating praiseworthy interesting stories belonged to our ancient legends, was a normal tradition. When we reached adolescence we had a thorough knowledge of legends belonged to our historical kings. As such what I realized was to prepare a tourists guide book containing archaeological research based on our ancient monuments and explorations. As there are so many facts it is a difficult task to include all of them in a booklet like this. Therefore I have mentioned here only the very specific informations only. I tried my best, to include these facts very impartially. If there is anything hurting or annoying I apologise.

I very respectfully commemorate everybody who contributed to build these monuments, from the very inception Rev. Arahath Mahinda Thero (250BC) King Devanampiyatissa (250-210BC) very respectful monks and all the kings and our fore fathers are honorably remembered. The idea of preparing a booklet like this came to me due to the participation of my beloved friend Mr. K. H. S. A. Kasthuriarachchi and crowd in the tour in Thailand, my thanks to him too. Though you get this book for a small

sum of rupees, the enormous endeavour, time, labour and money spent by me is very high. A big amount of wealth I gained from the parents too had to spend. By spending so much of money and going all over the country in search and accumulating the informations, at the beginning there were objections from my wife. But after explaining the facts, very humbly accepting them, she did all her duties to my aged father and three of my daughters and me, as well. Mr. A. M. Karunarathna, a skilful writer, former G. A. Kurunegala, Retired Chairman of the western province public service commission, became a teacher of mine, in finding historical informations. I learned from him about stabilizing the facts find in books, by going to archaeological sites. In preparing this booklet, I had to go through a very large number of books. Therefore I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the undermentioned persons. The educated editors of the associated books, the translators of those books, Anuradhapura Librarian and the working staff, H. C. P. Bel, a British, treated as the father of archaeology and all the archaeological commissioners, who rendered an inestimable service for archaeology of Sri Lanka, the curators incharge of archaeological sites, who did not do any obstruction, when I visited the sites to observe them, the photographers who supplied, photographs of archaeological importance and those who protected them. Last of all I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Somapala Wijesundara, Retired Director, Education incharge of ART, (Kala Bhooshana-Kalakeerthi) N.C.P. for doing a very responsible, strenuous and inestimable work in translating this book to English.

**P. A. A. Kumarasingha**

## Preface



This booklet written by Mr.P.A.A.Kumarasingha about the ancient ruins, paintings, decayed buildings and holy places etc of our country, after a thorough study is very interesting I found him to be a person devotes much of his time in archaeology, though he is not either an archaeologist or an Artist. But anyway as he has mentioned in his foreword, that he was inspired to write a book like this by the tour in Thailand in 2003. Amidst many obstacles, he has travelled in many places of interest, spending much of his time and money in search of facts for this book. He expresses his views as well along with the facts he accumulated. Those views cannot be rejected easily.

The way how he is presenting the facts are interesting. This fascinating subject is a vast one, not easily to be compressed in to a few pages. In his analysis of Sigiriya Frescoes mentioning about the two types of prevailing techniques and the historical facts will be very useful for those who study art and archaeology. In translating these articles, it is not an easy task, as certain terms used only in Asian countries, as it is difficult to find English Terms. However I thank him for his determination in preparing this book.

Kala Bhushana, Kala Keerthi

**Somapala Wijesundara**

Retired Director Education/ Art NCP



**The Bathing House or the Bath.**



**Nissankamalla's Palace**



**Cold Palace.**



**Council Chamber of Nissankamalla.**



pillar carrying an inscription indicating the position occupied by the councillors and the designations of the chiefs.



Pothgul Viharaya - Statue of Ascetic Kapila Takshila - (School)



**Kapila Takshila - (School)**



**The Palace Complex of the king Maha Parakrama bahu**



**Maha Parakrama bahu's Royal Council Hall (Raja vesya – bhujanga Mandapaya)**



**Royal Bath – Kumara Pokuna (Pond)**

12th c. and most of the antiques placed here belonged to that period. After touring in Anuradhapura, if you visit here having this guide book in hand, you are keen enough to identify them belonged to 9, 10, 11 centuries. Sometimes the periods to which they belong would have named, considering polonnaruwa alone, ignoring chronological survey.

## **2, Dvipa Udyana, The Island Garden**

To:- DD MMYYYY TIMEAM/PM

Found to the North of the Museum adjoining the vehicle park. The original person, who prepared this as a Royal garden was king Parakramabahu 1153 - 1186 AD. This was named as Deepa udyana in the past, because it was projecting out as an island attached to the reservoir. As mentioned in the chronicles, out of the works he had done only the bathing house can be seen now. Most of the erections seen now are done by the king Nissankamalla 1187 - 1196 AD. As the king Nissankamalla was fond of this garden, chose as his residence. There would have been beautiful planted flower trees, different trees belonged to vivid categories and also medicinal plants as well.

### **1. The Bathing House or the Bath.**

Originally this was built by the king Parakramabahu. This is very well

decorated with stone carvings and as the water flows through a conduit, anybody could managed to bathe from head to the whole body after bathing, the polluted water flows and collected in a defensive moat cut around the inner city. To get the needed extra water for the moat was taken from the adjoining sluice. The tank alone was used to store the extra water.

### **2. The Tomb**

This building found close to the king Nissankamalla's palace, had not yet been identified as to what purpose, it had been used. Though the archaeologists had expressed contradictory different opinions, they are not so important. As there are no doors and windows, many people regard it as a place used for burying the dead. (A grave) This is built with bricks and plaster with a good finishing and shine. In addition to that it had been painted in Red and white.

### **3. Nissankamalla's Palace**

At the time of Nissankamalla became the king, there was a fully equipped palace complex already built by Maha Parakramabahu. When compared with that palace complex Nissankamalla. Nissankamalla's palace is a small one and with less facilities' As such we must try to find out the reason. Why he built a new palace, neglecting that complex. From

the beginning of the kingdoms, the kings emphasized the importance of defence. Even the king Pandukabhaya 380 - 318 B.C built a city wall and stabilized his protection. Along with the death of Maha Parakramabahu in 1186, Nissankamalla too had a good understanding about the conspiracies and revolts occurred for the kingship. He too captured power as a result of such a conspiracy. Because of that he would have felt the necessity for a place with more safety. According to the inscription of the Heta Dage, to build this palace had spent a short period of only 45 days, which is an evidence to show the emergency that he had to come to this place.

When we look at the surrounding environment, it is obvious, that he could escape across the adjoining tank (reservoir) to a safer place, (Google map)

When examining carefully about the foundation it is clear, using big wooden pillars he had built the palace, with a number of storeys. according to the inscription of the Heta Dage, it was consisted of seven storeys, but the archaeologists express their doubts about it. It is true that the inscription of Nissankamalla is full of exaggerations. But as the inscription is found within a walking distance, there would have been seven storeys and the top most one being a small one. The top most storeys would

have been separated as the bed room of the king and the queens and the Royal family, as well as to look around the environment for pleasure. The back side of the ground floor consists of remnants of two rooms and ruins of remnants of a stairway. The back side of the ground floor consists of remnants of two rooms and ruins of a stairway. The hall in front would have been used to discuss with visitors and the regional rulers and for treating them. According to an inscription his triumphs in war, privileges given to the people, singing and dancing performances of the royal artistes, and now he entertained the sports activities are written in them. According to the archaeologists, there are certain remnants belonged to several periods, we can imagine that the king would have added certain parts and used as his palace.

#### **4. Cold Palace**

This is found inside the reservoir to the west of the king Nissankamalla's audience Hall, within a distance of about 10 metres. We can imagine this would have been done by the king Nissankamalla. Presently it is decayed and covered with wild plants. It is dangerous as there can be serpents in the palace premises and at the nearby elephant fence. When examining the foundation on a quadrangular stage, saving two rooms, all the others are connected to each other, which

According to the chronicles, this palace consisted of 1000 rooms and seven storeys. However, there is no problem about the seven storeys, but a suspicion arises about the 1000 rooms. But many archaeologists accept that. Even now remnants of three storeys can be seen of this ruined palace. The height of the central part of the building seen now is 95 metres. The thickness of a wall in the palace is about 1.60metres. In building the upstairs, the wooden pillars and rafters used, still the holes can be seen in those walls. The lime plaster and colour patches and fragments of murals on walls also can be seen of this palace and in small rooms as well. The front portion of the ground floor of the palace would have been used for discussions and the visitors and the envoys and treating them and also to enjoy the singing, dancing performances of dancing women. The small rooms consist of thick walls was the state treasury. There is no doubt that they had been filled with local and foreign, gold, silver, gems, pearls and money.

That is because of the fact that the king Maha Parakrama bahu's period was the climax of our economy. Behind the palace, to the left side of the treasury, there is the stairway to the upper storeys. The upper storey would have been used as the king's sleeping room, written work, reading

books, planning the development projects in the country and for resting as well as to exert his mind for the welfare of the country. This palace complex was fully equipped for a luxurious life and to show the Royal pride of the king's. From the far ancient times up to now, there had been conspiracies in almost all the countries, in the king's palace or the chief ruler's house, and so it would have been here as well, The king Vijayabahu II and the king Mahinda III who came to power, after Maha Parakramabahu, would have been killed here. The two buildings behind the palace, named Bisomaligawa by the archaeologists. The accompanying 1000 buildings would have been used by the women in the harem, chief officers of the state, the security officers and soldiers and other employees in the palace and also as kitchens. In 1215A.D.Polonnaruwa was invaded by Kalinga Maga, a South Indian invader and looted the whole wealth. In addition, those invaders set fire to the palace complex and harmed severely, and certain remnants could be seen even today.

### **5, Maha Parakrama bahu's Royal Council Hall (Raja vesya – bhujanga Mandapaya)**

A pavilion like building about 75 meters a head of the palace is the Royal Palace of the king Maha

Parakramabahu, where the noble decisions were taken in his kingdom. This building consists of very valuable architectural features, is the most attractive erection in this site. Being a very valuable erection had decayed along with the span of time. Under the supervision of Archaeologists A.M. Hocart and Prof. S. Paranavithana, it was restored again. According to a report of Prof. S. Paranavithana, as there was an inscription on a stone slab on the top of the stairway named "Raja Vesya Bhujanga Mandapaya" and hence it was identified easily. But today that inscription is not to be seen. The meaning of it is the ruling place, as well as the palace where the decisions were taken, about the trade after discussions. This building is built in a methodical way, with a high base in three tiers. The lowest tier ornamented with friezes of elephants carved in different postures. The second tier is decorated with Lion figure being the state symbol and the third tier with figures of "Vamana" (dwarfs) At the foot of the entrance of the stairway and the centre is decorated with two moonstones. The moonstones were used only in the Buddhist holy places in the past, but during the Polonnaruwa period, it was used in king's palaces as well. The chief entrance to the palace is decorated with two stylised lion figures made of stone. The stone pillars supporting the roof are

elaborated with beautiful carvings, even the wooden beams and rafters too would have been nicely decorated. The throne and the seats of the king's councillors, would have been made of wood, as such, no remnants to be seen. The decisions taken by the king Maha Parakramabahu and the councillors, who were in the council were so important, the country was shined in economic development. That development contributed a lot in nation's economical, agricultural and tourism even now. As such even today Sri Lanka's are indebted to the King Maha Parakramabahu and his councillors.

## **6, Royal Bath – Kumara Pokuna (Pond)**

We come across an entrance at the citadel wall behind the Royal Council Hall. The flight of steps leads down to the Royal bath known as "Kumara Pokuna". This was identified as the "Sila Pokuna" built by the King Maha Parakramabahu. This was the Pool where he king Maha Parakramabahu bathed. His two chief Queens named Rupawathi and Leelawathi too would have used this. This site where the pond is found was known as "Nandana Uyana" That time. In an ancient Royal Park, the most essential feature was bathing pool. That time, there were beautiful flowers and trees had been planted. While all the Royal buildings were situated

seen only a few. There can be seen the remnants of the stairway to the upper floor. The upper floor would have been made of wood and the roof covered with tiles. Upper floor had been used as Relic House and the lower floor as the Image House. However, whether it is 60 hours or not when carefully examining this, around here it is obvious that it was done in a hurry. Hence there is an inadequacy in the artistic value.

### **1. Galpotha (Stone Book)**

To the eastern side of Hetadage it is situated. A creation of king Nissankamalla. This stone slab 8.20 metres in length and 1.40 metres in breadth and around this, decorated with beautiful swan figures and at the two ends there are figures of elephants and gods. This consist of 72 rows and there are about 2300 letters and composed in three sections. As mentioned in the inscription, this colossal slab of stone had been brought from Mihinthale of Anuradhapura District. It is a thing that, special attention should be made for bringing such a huge slab, from such a long long distance. Similar stones with natural features pertaining to this type of stones, can be found in Polonnaruwa as well as in Anuradhapura and Mihinthale. Similarly, king Nissankamalla would not have thought that in future anybody would examine the

inscription by spending a big amount of money and labour, similarly, at the time of his enthronement due to the prevailed perplexity in Royal Council, the king ship was a post dedicated to death. When examining the facts found in the inscription, it is clear that it had been done, for his safety as well as in his post. Hence it had been brought from such a long distance, to show his political power and strength to his political enemies and to weaken their mentality. It is a difficult task not only during that time, even now it is so. As it is there is no doubt it is a miracle.

As usual he has entered exaggerated facts about him and his Kalinga Clan. At the same time there are many unbelievable facts. Moreover he has included certain works done by the king Maha Parakramabahu, as his works, to gain the credit for him, some of his inclusions in brief as follows.

The permanent heridity for the king ship in Sri Lanka belongs only to his Kalinga Clan. To prove that he pointed out, many actions taken for the welfare of the people, and for the development of Buddhism. In addition, he points out, not only the Kalinga kings, but also Kalinga princesses too have rendered services, and had won the hearts of the people. As it is, it is a necessity having people of Kalinga clan for the

At the time of passing away of the Buddha, Rev. Ananda Thero was shown in lamenting position at the foot of the Buddha. When observing carefully of the statues and the nearby and the dying Buddha statue, we can see, there had been two separate Image Houses. Because of these reasons definitely it represents the Buddha. In recent time the scholars have shown about another feature delineated by the statue. That is, before passing away, that the Buddha had moved to the ecstasy of great compassion and looking forward to rescue the suffering people.

### **During Buddha Statue**

There are different arguments about the dying Buddha statue 14 metres in length at the southern end.

In the Culavamsa it is mentioned as a sleeping Buddha statue. As it is, most of the scholars are reluctant to challenge this idea. At the same time most of the scholars too had express it as a sleeping or recumbent Buddha. Similarly this argument, if it represents a dying Buddha would have included withered trees and Rev. Ananda Thero also. It is doubtful, whether the Rev. Dhammakitthi Thero, considered to be the author of the Culavamsa, who had reported about this statue paid this attention to the sculptural features of this statue. Similarly, there is not enough space to sculpture the withered trees as well as the figure of Rev. Ananda Thero, here. There are seven features from which can identify the differences separately, between a



**Thiwanka Pilimage (Jethavanaramaya – Image House)**

sleeping Buddha Statue and a dying Buddha Statue. At the time of death, due to the reactions taking place inside the body the sculptor would not create the feet in equal position. As such the left foot of the Buddha has shown as resting on the right and is slightly drawn back. After the death as the balance of the body vanishes, the sculptors had sculptured in a very skilful manner. As a result the seven (7) symptoms of the dead Buddha's head shown as drooping down, pillow had been pressed inside, the left ear fallen lifelessly, left hand being lifelessly bent towards the body, the chest lowered and the closed eyes can be indentified easily. Hence it is clear that this statue resembles the Parinibbana or the Death.

## **20, Thiwanka Pilimage (Jethavanaramaya – Image House)**

To:- DD MMYYYY TIMEAM/PM

Coming to the main road from the Demala Maha seya and proceeding towards North, meet the Thiwanka Pilimage. The king Maha Parakramabahu, giving prominence to the Tiwanka pilimage in the Jethavanarama site had built number of buildings exceeding 520 according to the chronicles. But at present can see only the Tiwanka Pilimage and the decayed round building find to the right side of it and the two ponds, which led to the amazement

of the archaeologists were reluctant to accept it as the Jethavanaramaya. As such, they searched for the Jethavanaramaya site in other places. Professor Paranavithana had pointed out, that it was clearly stated in the Culavamsa that the Thivanka pilimage is situated in the site of Jethavanaramaya and as it is definitely this was same site. But yet had not come to a definite decision as to what had happened to the number of buildings. But hypothetically can guess that at the invasion of Kalinga Magha (1215 – 1236 A.D) and at the time of his reigning, that they had been smashed or else this area, had been rapidly inhabited that they had taken as building Materials. As the Buddha statue in the Image House is bent in three places, (Thribanga-Thivanka) the name Tiwanka Statue would have come to use. When observing carefully, the symptoms that it had been painted earlier can be seen. Considering that it is bent in three places (thribanga) we can imagine hypothetically that it would have been in the same “Mudra” as in the standing Buddha in Galviharaya. Earlier this building would have been in the shape of a Gedige. The plan of this is very much similar to the Thuparamaya find in the Tooth Relic Terrace. As it is can see that, when building this, had taken Thuparamaya as the model. At the same time adding new features had

