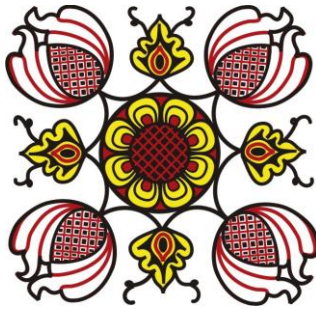


Quarterly Tours – No. 12



National Trust – Sri Lanka

28th November 2009

Compiled by Nilan Cooray

National Trust – Sri Lanka

Quarterly Tours – Saturday, 28th November 2009.

Programme

0700 hrs.	Leave PGIAR
0800 - 0830 hrs.	Visit Henaratgoda Botanical Gardens, Gampaha
0900 - 0930 hrs.	Visit Bandaranyake Memorial Library and Cultural Centre at Nittambuwa
0945 – 1030 hrs.	Visit Attanagalle Rajamaha Vihara
1100 - 1200 hrs.	Visit Meddegoda Vihara, Giriulla
1230 – 1330 hrs.	Lunch at Crown Field Hotel, Narammala
1400 – 1445 hrs.	Visit Pinwatte and Ahugoda Temples near Potuhera
1500 – 1545 hrs.	Visit Nagolla Rajamaha Vihara
1615 – 1645 hrs.	Visit Ridivihara at Ridigama
1700 – 1730 hrs.	Visit Monaragala Vihara, Rambadagalle, Ridigama
1730 hrs.	Leave for Colombo via Kurunegala
2000 hrs.	Arrive PGIAR

Henaratgoda Botanical Garden, Gampaha



Laid out in 1876 by the British colonial government to introduce Para Rubber to Sri Lanka, Henaratgoda is a 36 acre Botanical Garden situated in Gampaha. The rubber seedlings were imported from the Royal Botanical Garden, Kew. The rubber trees blossomed in 1880 and the seeds were distributed throughout the country as well as some British colonies in Asia. The roots of the first rubber tree (the trunk has collapsed in 1988), which is still alive is to be seen along with second generation of rubber trees, in this garden.



Later, the garden was developed as a standard Botanical Garden by adding and developing new plants and seeds. Most of the trees of the 19th century are still to be seen in the garden. Popularly known as Gampaha Botanical Garden, it now serves as a tropical low country Botanical Garden and has around 1500 varieties of plants, flowers and trees.

Bandaranayake Memorial Library and Cultural Centre at Nittambuwa



Designed by architect Anura Ratnavibhushana and opened in 2002 for the public, the Bandaranayake Memorial Library and Cultural Centre is located at Nittambuwa within an ancestral property of the Bandaranayake family. Its library has a collection of biographies of the members of the Bandaranayake family, paper cuttings of articles related to their political affairs, and local as well as international publications related to diverse disciplines and fields. It also provides residential facilities for visiting scholars. The building also has a mini-auditorium to cater the performing arts and other cultural activities.

Attanagalle Rajamaha Vihara

According to the tradition, the present temple of Attanagalle is the location where King Siri Sangabodhi (3rd century A.D.), the main character of the most well known historical tales of the Island, resided as an ascetic. According to the story, King Siri Sangabodhi gave up the crown after about three years as the king for the sake of his ambitious brother Gotabhaya, who waged war against him, and left Anuradhapura to take refuge in a distant forest as an ascetic. Gotabhaya, who ascended to the throne, fearing the eventual return of his brother, wanted to see the end of Siri Sangabodhi, declared that anyone who will bring the former king's head will be rewarded with one thousand gold coins. The popular belief is that Attanagalle is the location where Siri Sangabodhi donated his head to a poor traveler to be given to his brother in order to claim the gold coins. When the traveler brought the head to Anuradhapura, Gotabhaya himself and the country was shaken by the generosity and the piety of Siri Sangabodhi, that he was cremated with royal honors thereafter. Although many historians are of the view that the Haththikuchchi vihara at Rajangane is more appropriate to be identified as the ancient Attanagalle, the present site at Attanagalle is continued to be the popular location associated with this story. The natural cave and the rock out crop within the modern vihara are popularly believed to be the dwelling place and the location where Siri Sangabodhi donated his head to the traveler respectively.



The vatadage located on the upper most terrace is undoubtedly the most interesting building within the vihara. It consists of a central stupa of modest proportion, which is enclosed within a circular building. The wall that encloses the stupa is circular in plan and has entrance doorways placed at its four cardinal directions. The plinth of the building is considerably raised above the ground level and each entrance doorway is approached by a flight of steps. Octagonal in plan, the eight faceted tile roof of the vatadage is supported by three concentric rows of pillars. The vatadage is attributed in the Mahavamsa to Gotabhaya and according to the tradition the stupa was built to commemorate Siri Sangabodhi. Parakramabahu II in the 14th century has also restored the shrine. The stone work associated with the plinth and the two inner most rows of pillars suggest

that they are datable to the latter part of Anuradhapura period (8th – 10th centuries A.D.). The pillars of the outer row, which are of masonry construction and the roof structure, are relatively new. These suggest that the present shrine was built upon the remains of an older structure.



Prof. Senake Bandaranayake suggests that the modern shrine dates from the early 20th century. However the paintings on the interior wall of the shrine show similarities to the paintings of the last phase of the Kandyan period.

Despite its modernity, the vatadage at Attanagalle is unique in that it preserves some memory of a long lost traditional architectural form and gives the glimpse of once popular practice of religious worship centered upon the stupa.

The image house next to the vatadage is relatively a modern construction, but it is interesting to find that among paintings on the inner walls that are of religious nature, the Governor Edward Barnes has also been portrayed above one of its side doorway.

Meddegoda Vihara at Giriulla



Located at Giriulla, the Meddegoda Vihara's main attraction is its cave shrine, which is positioned at the highest elevation of the complex, overlooking the surrounding landscape. It is approached by a series of flight of granite steps. The inscription in the Brahmi script just below the drip ledge of the cave (now covered

under the present roof structure) suggests that it was a monastery of the cave dwelling monks during the pre-Christian era. The present cave shrine, which dates from the first half of the 20th century, is an image house with several Buddha images. It consists of the earliest and intermediate phases of the Master Artist Solius Mendis' painting style, before his final undertaking at the Kelaniya Rajamaha Vihara.



The paintings of the central chamber belong to the earliest phase, and were executed before his departure to India for his formal training at Shanthi Nikethan in Culcutta. Those at the side chamber belong to the intermediate phase, and were undertaken after his sojourn in India.

Although the paintings of the side chamber are not as refined as those at Kelaniya, they show a distinctive change to that of his earlier style and technique.

Pinwatte and Ahugoda Viharas near Potuhera



In contrast to the vatadage at Attanagalle, the sheltered stupas at Pinwatte and Ahugoda Viharas, both located off the Polgahawela – Potuhera Road, showcase a later development of this type of structures. Dr. Roland Silva identifies such structures as a separate group and terms it as *Kuludage*. He comments thus:

“It is likely that small stupas with elaborate painting require shelter. The vatadage can be regarded as the fore-runner of the Kuludage, but the latter growth represents a declining phase after the former ceased to be in vogue after the 12th century. It is also possible that the Kuludage evolved as an inexpensive alternate shelter to the small painted stupa, which was normally built under cover”.



In contrast to the roof of Vatadage (which is generally circular in plan), that of the Kuludage is square in plan and supported by pillars at four corners. Pinwatte and Ahugoda however represent examples of kuludages of simplest design, while Nissankalata Mandapa at Polonnaruwa and Vijayotpaya at Gadaladeniya are of elaborate nature.

Nagolla Rajamaha Vihara at Potuhera

Located at Potuhera, the Nagolla Rajamaha Vihara has a numerous collection of ancient Ola leaf books and artefacts. The vihara is located at a higher elevation on a mountain slope and is reached by a series of flight of granite steps. Among its collection is a painted wooden *pettagama* of unique design.

Ridivihara at Ridigama

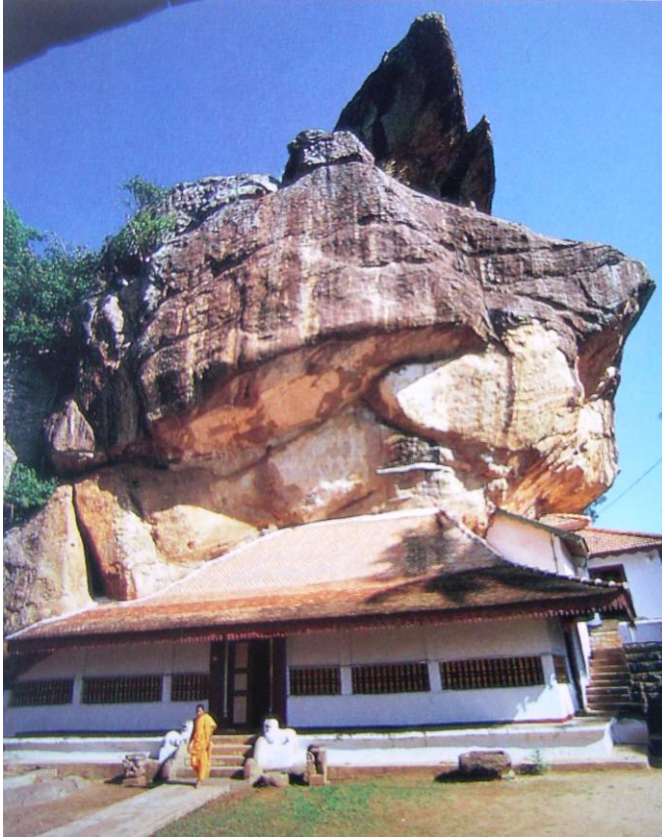
The Ridivihara complex is situated in the village of Ridigama about 14 km from the turn-off at Mawatagama on the Kandy-Kurunegala Road and 19 km from Kurunegala. The complex consists of several structures and caves situated upon many hillocks.

The history of the site goes back to at least the second century BC as is evidenced by the numerous Brahmi inscriptions in the caves on the range. It is also said to be the site which had provided silver in connection with the building of the Mahathupa by king Dutthagamini in the second century BC, hence the name Ridigama. According to the Culavamsa, Dutthagamini founded a *vihara* and installed a golden image of the Buddha there. Apparently, it had remained a significant monastic site until the Kandyan period, as is indicated by the ancient remains including a stone Bodhisattva image datable from the seventh-eighth century AD, and a stone Buddha

figure of about the same period which has been renovated several times. During the time of Kirtisirajasimha, the temple came into prominence again. It became the residence of the first Mahanayake of the Malwatta Chapter, Tibbotuvave Sri Siddhartha Buddharakkhita *thera* appointed to that position under the patronage of Valivita Sangharaja.

The most interesting shrines within the complex are the cave shrines. The cave shrine associated with stone work is a fourteenth century monument displaying architectural and decorative styles similar to those at Yapahuva, which are again stylistically related to the art of Vijayanagara in India.





The cave shrines are situated under an overhanging rock at the northern extremity of the lower ridge. The most important unit of the shrine-complex is the larger rock-shelter which has been turned into the main shrine, containing the Buddha images. These consist of a colossal recumbent image, two seated figures and one standing statue placed against the different walls. It is interesting to find the Delft ceramic wall tiles that are

laid on the pedestal of this image. Figures of Ananda, Maitri Bodhisattva, Nathadeva and king Dutthagamini are also mentioned in the text, and two of these are in a poor state, where these are possibly on displays as the stone core of a Bodhisatta image of the seventh-eighth century. The standing gilt image of the Buddha, occupies the centre of the shrine. The Buddha images standing in a row along the eastern wall are probably of later additions. On the eastern side of the shrine is a terrace reached by two flights of steps.



On the terrace stands another cave shrine. Facing east, it also has a verandah providing access to a small room with murals. This upper shrine has also been the work of Kirtisirajasimha. The main image inside, is of colossal size. It is a seated Buddha figure flanked by two more in upright posture. In addition, there are two attending figures of Uppalavanna and Maitri Bodhisatta.

Monaragala Vihara at Rambadagalle



Situated on a splendid rock out crop, Monaragala Vihara at Rambadagalle is five kilometers from Ridigama. The popularity of the vihara is principally because it will be the location of Sri Lanka's tallest and largest rock cut image of the Samadhi Buddha, which is at present being sculptured on a living rock.

The total height of the image from the base of the lotus pedestal is 67.5 feet, while the lotus pedestal on which the image rests is 60 feet long. The project was started in 2002 and it is expected to complete the work around 2012. Ven. Egodamulle Amaramoli Thero, the chief

incumbent of the vihara is the initiator of this gigantic undertaking. The total estimate of the project is Rs. 25 million. A team of eleven sculptors from South India, headed by master sculptor Muttiah Stapati have been employed to carry out this project.

