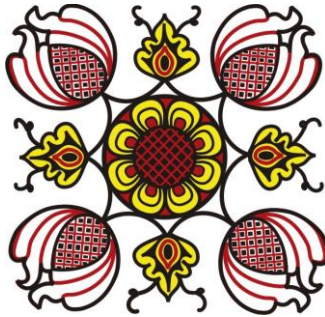


# Quarterly Tours – No. 6



**National Trust – Sri Lanka**

**25<sup>th</sup> August 2007**

**Compiled by Nilan Cooray**

## **National Trust – Sri Lanka**

*Quarterly Tours – Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2007*

### **Programme**

0700 hrs	Leave PGIAR
9000 - 9030 hrs	Kurunegala Palace
9045 – 1015 hrs	Ibbagala Temple, Kurunegala Rock
1015 – 1045 hrs	Morning Tea at the Rest House by the lake
1115 – 1145 hrs	Padeniya Temple
1215 – 1245 hrs	Yapahuwa, fourth capital of Sri Lanka
1300 – 1345 hrs	Lunch at Archaeological Circuit Bungalow
1445 – 1515 hrs	Arankele Forest Monastery
1545 – 1615 hrs	Ridivihara
1700 – 1730 hrs	Evening Tea at the Rest House, Kurunegala
1930	Arrive at the PGIAR

## Royal Precinct, Kurunegala



Kurunegala is called Hasti-Seila-Puru and Hasti-Giri-Puru, the city associated with the rock in the form of an elephant, was the fifth capital of Sri Lanka during the 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The chronicles mention that the city was fortified by an elaborate moat and a rampart and consisted of the royal palace including the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic. The archaeological records of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century indicate that much of the rampart was in existence at that time. However, due to the modern urban growth and specially the development of the modern cricket stadium, most of the historic structures have, unfortunately, disappeared. Significant remains that have survived to date are an elaborately carved stone doorway, as part of the so-called Temple of the Tooth Relic, and a few carved stone elements of the structures within and around the compound of the present Wayamba Province Chief Minister's Office. This office building formerly the residence of the Government Agent of Kurunegala, and built in early colonial style, sits on the ruins of the palace building. Part of the rubble rampart has also survived on the Elephant Rock itself, which could be the rear limits of the inner city, the front of which is still seen between the Chief Minister's Office and the cricket grounds.

Hocart provides a plan of the Inner and Outer City of Kurunegala as it existed in the 1920s. His description is as follows: “The pressure continuing, it was necessary to retire to Kurunagala. The top of the Elephant Rock must have been in use some considerable time before the capital was established in Kurunagala in the fourteenth century for there are remains on the top of which are undoubtedly older by several centuries. The Kurunagala Vistaraya gives the position of various buildings with measurements from two points of the rock; but when we come to work out its data on the ground the result is disappointing because the exact starting points are not known, nor is the exact length of the fathom and long bow. However, with the assistance of Mr. Codrington, I was able to gain a general idea of the lie of the city. The royal part lay along the west side of the Beetle Rock (*Kuruminiagala*), and the Tortoise Rock (*Ibbagala*), both parts of the Kurunagala Rock. It was roughly an oblong bounded on the north by a short rampart running down from the Rock and on the west by a long retaining wall below which lay marshy ground. On the south the boundary is not clear but it seems to have been a spur of the Elephant Rock, for the little pass between the main rock and the spur was closed by a rampart. This area is now occupied by the Residency and the provincial offices. Local tradition places the palace on the site of the residency. The temple of the Tooth must have stood in the part lying south of the Residency for there are traces of temples here and abundant temple trees near the provincial offices. The city is obscured by the modern town. Local tradition, confirmed by the remains of a high embankment called *nagarabamma*, city rampart, makes the city wall run along the north west side of Atkandavihare, which was thus just outside the walls and along the line of Rajapihilla and Sharpe’s Roads. As at Sigiriya and Yapahuva we have thus three parts, the rock citadel, the lower royal palace, and the city.”

## Ibbagala Temple



Located on the Ibbagala (the rock is in the shape of a tortoise), this temple has a history going back at least to the Kurunegala times. The most remarkable feature of this temple is the special structure that houses the foot-print of the Buddha, carved on the rock. It is said that it was carved on the orders of King Buwanekabahu II (1291-1302) who ruled from Kurunegala. The story says that the aging mother of the King wished to go on pilgrimage to Sri-Pada to venerate the sacred Foot-Print. Since she was not fit enough to climb the holy mountain, the king made a replica of the sacred foot-print on Ibbagala and took her on a journey to this rock and by climbing the holy mountain, made her wish fulfilled.

The elevated location of the temple on Ibbagala offers a stunning view of the panorama to the north side which covers the modern Kurunegala city, the historic tank, and the undulating landscape beyond, with agricultural fields. The fragment of the rubble work of the historic inner ramparts of the Kurunegala city, located on the Elephant Rock, is also visible from this temple.

## Padeniya Temple



Located at the turn off point towards Anuradhapura via Galgamuwa, from the Kurunegala-Puttalam highway, the temple at Padeniya is famous for the historic library that is built using wattle – and – daub technology. The carvings of the timber columns and the figures of lion moulded on the outer wall of the image house are among the other interesting features. The image house also contains paintings of the Kandyan period. The temple also has a valuable collection of artefacts and ola-leaf manuscripts, which are worth seeing.

According to tradition, the original foundation of the monastery goes back to the period of king Devanampiyatissa (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), when a Bodhi shoot from Anuradhapura was planted at this spot, at the inauguration of the *padhanaghara vihara* by the king. Tradition also associates the monastery with the time of Dutthagamani (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC), for Theraputtbhaya, one of the ten soldiers of the king, is said to have lived here as a monk. The monastery is supposed to have been located on the ancient central highway, *Ratamadapara* that traversed through rocky outcrops such as Atugala, Ibbagala, Andagala, etc. and this road is said to be the route followed by Devanampiyatissa in establishing the *padhanagara viharas* mentioned above.

The historicity of the tradition connected with Padeniya appears to provide credibility when compared with other surrounding monasteries such as Paramakanda, Nuvarakanda, Budumuttava, etc., where vestiges of the Anuradhapura period are found to this day, in the form of Brahmi inscriptions and limestone Buddha figures. Excavations at the temple of Padeniya have revealed bricks, moonstones, ablution stones and Sri Pada slabs datable to the time of Anuradhapura.

This monastery is said to have been subject to the sacrileges committed during the Portuguese occupation of the island. The remains of the present day, however, date from the Kandyan period, beginning with king Kirtisirajasimha as attested by an ola-leaf manuscript in the possession of the temple. According to this record, Migastenne adigar, together with his assistants at the time of Kirtisirajasimha, were responsible for the building of a two-storeyed image-house, a preaching hall and a library. All three of these edifices remain to this day. The library is said to have contained boxes filled with commentarial literature including the Abhidhamma Pitaka, which were brought from Ruvangirikanda nearby for safety. The account given in the manuscript covering the building and the maintenance of a library is noteworthy as it speaks of the presence of a group of scholar monks at this monastery. The manuscript also refers to building activities during the time of king Sri Vikramarajasimha, when the chief Adigar Ehalepola attended the inauguration of the shrine with the eye-opening ceremony of the image.

A second manuscript refers to the request made to the British Government by monks in 1824 for the restoration and the development of the monastery, which was in a deteriorated condition. The present generation of monks begins with this period, with Venerable Pahamune Devamitta *thera* as the first to hold the incumbency.

The historicity of the monastic edifices as belonging to Kandyan times is also attested by the wooden pillar carvings that simulate those of Ambakke Devale and the Audience Hall of the Kandy Palace, as well as by the style of paintings inside the building. The distinctive lion figures sculpted on top of the walls speak of a regional style adopted by the artists in this area.

## Yapahuwa



The fourth capital of Sri Lanka, Yapahuwa is located off Daladagama along the Padeniya-Anuradhapura Road and very much close to the Maho railway junction. It was king Buwanekabahu I (1273-1284 AD) who established Yapahuwa as the island's capital by shifting the seat of administration from Dambadeniya.

Much of the elements of the historic city have still survived to understand the layout of this once capital city. The most dominating feature of the layout is its vertical rock of gigantic proportions. The moats and ramparts that are laid-out in rough concentric rings and extending from the base of the rocks divide the fortified area into a citadel and an outer city. The royal palace is located at a plateau halfway up on the rock, and only the basement of which is surviving to date.



The most interesting feature at Yapahuwa is, of course, the Lion Staircase leading from the plain below the palace plateau, which makes this site in par with the famous Sigiriya. The lion figures in this staircase is strangely identical to those of the Chinese tradition.



The city had a well laid-out street system consisting of shops and stalls on either side of the streets. There are remains of historic structures on top of the rock too, but their state of preservation does not provide any clue to their functions. As at Sigiriya, the summit of the rock provides a 360 degree visual panorama of the undulating landscape. Beyond the outer city is the monastic area, where most of the ritual buildings and cells of monks are found in a ruined state. The cave shrine within this area has paintings of the Kandyan period.

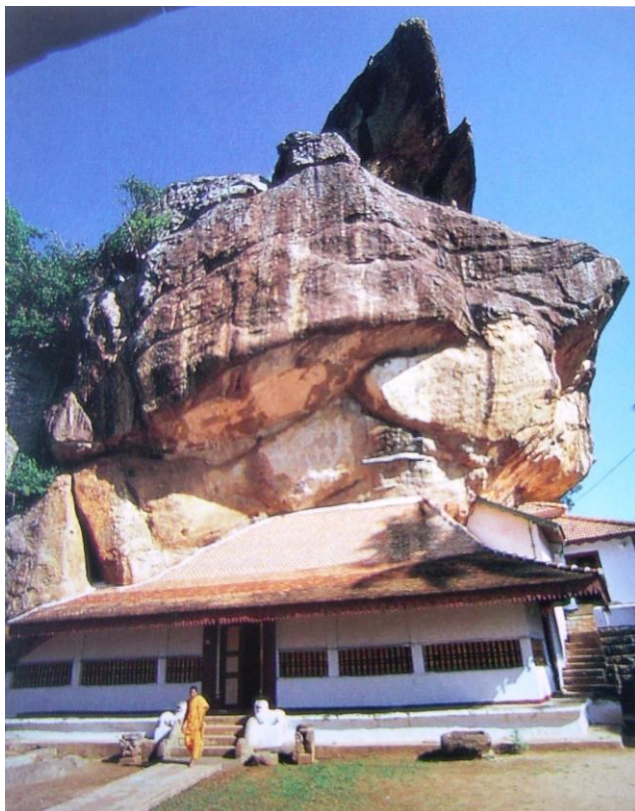
Not far from Yapahuwa is the megalithic cemetery which had both the sist burials of stone slabs as well as the pot burials of large urns as at Pomparippu.

## Arankele



Arankele was a forest monastery or *tapovana* for the meditating Buddhist monks. It consists of the usual ‘double platform’ type of monks units as found at other similar monasteries, *Chankamanaghara* or roofed meditative walk, refectory, *jantaghara* or hot-water bath house, bathing ponds and other adjuncts that are necessary for such a monastery. All these buildings are interconnected by superbly laid-out winding pathways. The location of the buildings and the use of natural landscape features provide a serene atmosphere for one to relax from the mundane activities of the world around. A striking feature at these forest monasteries is the over-decorated urinal slabs and lavatory stones, which is an artistic statement to indicate resentment to ornamentation, which is metaphorically associated with riches.

## Ridivihara



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, in the North-Western Province. 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 Bodhisatta image datable from the seventh-eighth century AD, and a stone Buddha figure of about the same period which has been renovated several times. In addition, there is a fourteenth century stone shrine displaying architectural and decorative styles similar to those at Yapahuva, which are again stylistically related to the art of Vijayanagara in India. During the time of Kirtisirirajasimha, 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 corporeal remains of Buddharakkhita *thera* are said to be enshrined in a *stupa* at the site, which is now in ruins. A fairly long description of the pious works of Kirtisirirajasimha is recorded in the Culavamsa. According to this account, in the year 2301 BE the king prepared a long hall with the images of the Buddha in recumbent, seated and upright postures. He also excavated an upper shrine and adorned the interiors of these with paintings. Then he built a *cetiya* above the image-houses enshrining relics, and had the figures of the Buddha and his 500 disciples painted on the rock surface above the caves. Moreover, the king built many other structures including a hall for monks to assemble to recite the *suttas*, and also repaired the old edifices.

The shrine complex consists of structures built on the summits of two hillocks. On the lower ridge are the ancient Bodhi tree, an old preaching hall, two rock caves with images as mentioned in the Culavamsa, a *stupa*, a boulder converted to a stone shrine and the two dwelling quarters of the monks. The main ascent to this temple is by a regular pilgrim's path to the east, formed by a series of terraces and flights of steps. On the upper hillock is *sarasun-gala*, with the old *stupa* and an ancient chapter house which could be linked with the "upper-hall" mentioned in the Culavamsa.

The cave shrines, described in the chronicle 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 as mentioned in the Culavamsa. These consist of a colossal recumbent image, two seated figures and one standing statue placed against the different walls. Figures of Ananda, Maitri Bodhisatta, 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, occupying the centre of the shrine, is also referred to in the Culavamsa. The Buddha images standing in a row along the eastern wall are probably of later additions.

The inner shrine is approached by a corridor on the southern and eastern sides. On the upper part of the outer wall, there are figures of Devas and Brahmas carrying flowers in their hands, a detail referred to in the chronicle. On the southern side there is a *makaratorana* at the main entrance, which is likewise, mentioned in the text. There is also a subsidiary door placed to the east. The northern extremity of the eastern corridor has subsequently been blocked with a wall containing a door decorated with beautiful ivory-carvings. To the west of this shrine, between the rock and the wall of the image room, runs a tunnel.

On the eastern side of the shrine is a terrace reached by two flights of steps. On the terrace stands the “fair, large and excellent image-house pleasant to the sight”, as described in the chronicle. This shrine, facing east, 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. This group of sculptures is also described in the chronicle as belonging to the time of Kirtisirajasimha.