



AN INQUIRY OF THE DRAMA IN THE ANCIENT ROHANA KINGDOM BASED ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES (BASED ON ANURADHAPURA AND POLONNARUWA ERAS)

Chandrasekara, C. M. R. P.

Temporary Assistant Lecturer, University of Kelaniya - Sri Lanka

ramithpreshal04@gmail.com

Category – (Student)

Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 17 th August 2021 Accepted: 17 th September 2021 Published: 20 th October 2021	Rohana was an important administrative unit in the history of Sri Lanka during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa period. Source studies show that this area sometimes functioned as a sub-state of Sri Lanka and other times as an independent state. There has been an advanced culture based on these areas. Literary sources indicate that drama and the performing arts, which were part of the culture, also flourished in the area. The problem with this observation is whether archeological sources can examine the drama that existed in Rohana during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods. Primary and secondary sources were used for the methodology of this research. Inscriptions, ruins, paintings and scrolls found in the areas bordering the Rohana kingdom during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods were studied under primary sources. Information was gathered from books, magazines and the Internet under secondary sources. Analysis of the data revealed that archeological evidence found in the Rohana area during the Polonnaruwa period in Anuradhapura reveals information about the Director of Drama, Arts of Drama, Actors of Drama, Actress of Drama and theatrical performances. Accordingly, it can be concluded from this that there was a tradition of Drama and Performing Arts in Rohana during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa period.

Keywords: Anuradhapura, Archeology, Drama, Performing Arts, Polonnaruwa

INTRODUCTION

The Rohana area was administratively important during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods in the history of Sri Lanka. The kingdom of Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura was ruled by the chief king of the country and Rohana was ruled by the vice king. In some cases, history has shown that Rohana was built independently. Furthermore, in the study of history we find that there were generations of kingdoms centered on the areas of Kataragama, Magama, Mahanagahula and Mahiyangana in Rohana. Accordingly, we can see in the study of sources that Rohana was very advanced economically, politically, socially and religiously. The study of literary sources also shows that there was an advanced drama and performing arts in this Rohana area. The main purpose of this research is to explore whether these facts can also be investigated by archaeological sources. Sri Lanka has been characterized by the great Indian tradition based on its relations with Indians from ancient times. Accordingly, a play based on the "Natyashastra" written by Bharatha Puthra who lived in India has been gifted to Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to investigate whether the drama and performing arts existed in Rohana which was under the Deputy King of Sri Lanka.

MATERIALS & METHODOLOGY

Literary and archaeological sources were used for the methodology of this research. Primary and secondary sources were used here under literary sources. Sources of genealogy and Indian literature were examined under primary sources, while archeological books containing inscriptions and ruins were examined under secondary sources, as well as books on drama and the performing arts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

It is possible to study the drama tradition of Rohana under the Archaeological Source. Inscriptions are a very important source there. During the period 1 - 3 BC several inscriptions refer to a number of government officials who were in charge of the administration at that time, such as Asha Adeka, Ati Adeka, Pakara Adeka, Nacha Adeka, Pana Adeka, Sivaka Adaka. Senarath Paranavithana points out that the word 'Adeka' or 'Adaka' mentioned in this inscription

is similar to the directorial posts in Kautilya Arthashastra. Nacha Adaka here refers to the choreographer or director of drama.

An inscription found at Nachchiyaramalai in the present-day Eastern Province which belonged to the Rohana kingdom in the past mentions "Abagamaya Nachadaka - Adi Sagasa". The letter means 'To the Ela Sangha of the Drama Director of Abagama'. Accordingly, it is confirmed that there were posts of drama directors in the Rohana area during the period 1 - 3 BC. The fact that an irrigation industry owned a canal in the name of this director shows that he was a high-ranking official in the society. Analyzing the meaning of this post, it is clear that this officer was assigned the task of directing the play. Accordingly, it can be concluded that Bharatamuni's drama was also practically used in these areas during this period. Accordingly, if the drama production activities took place through the positions of drama directors in these areas, it would be confirmed that a very advanced drama tradition existed in this area.

The Sithulpawwa and Korawakgala inscriptions also contain information about the Rangana traditional dance performed by Rohana. These inscriptions refer to alms given by a playwright to the monks.

"thotagamiya gapathi-ogha-thisha-putha upashaka-nata-thishasha dane shagasha patidine"

(Son of Thotagamiya householder Ojakatissa, devotional playwright Tissa's alms offered to monks)

The reference to "Nata-Tissa" in this article means the playwright Tissa. The mention of the playwright Tissa in this inscription confirms that there was a drama tradition associated with these areas in the past.

It is said that Shabda Pooja was also held at the head of the Piyangalu Vihara, Uva.

"...during the reign of King Saddhatissa, after the Chief Minister Tissa was sent to complete the work on the temple and send letters, he placed fifteen thousand gold and other offerings for the temple offering. And from the north to the south, and to the mountains of the west..." is referred to as.

According to the headline of this section Piyangalu Vihara, there were a hundred blowers and the sound poojas at that time and the mention of a teacher named Wimala confirms that there was a leader in that group. Accordingly, it is clear that during this period, sound offerings such as Bheri Nada was used in these areas at a very advanced level and it is clear from the mention of a teacher named Wimala that there were also chiefs associated with Bari Nada who lived here.

Ancient paintings can be seen in an ancient cave near the Kotmale colony in the Gonagolla area of Ampara. These paintings belong to the period of 3-4 AD. Among the paintings is a painting of a young woman performing in front of a glorious man. The male figure carries a flower on the left, and the authors use yellow, green, and white for the paintings. Paranavithana states that it is a maiden who performs for the god of rain, and mentions that it represents the sacrifice of the goddess

Archaeological excavations carried out by the Archaeological Department at Raja gala in 1963-1964 have uncovered a number of sculptures depicting dancing postures. Meanwhile, a sculpture of a couple dancing is a sculpture of a dancer and a sculpture of a dancer. Archaeologists have described the sculpture as a pair of dances.

"...made of clay, it has two human figures. A female figure on the left and another human figure on the right. Its head is heavy on the left side. The left elbow rests on the navel. The jata crown is slightly different. Woolrich mentions that they can be described as a couple dancing on stage, a work that dates back to the period of 6-8 AD..."

Sculptures depicting dancers have also been found in the area

Archaeologists working on the sculptures say:

"...the two statues found during the excavations at the Raja gala Archaeological site are 15 cm and 14.5 cm high respectively. These are male figures made of clay brick short face? The head of the first sculpture appears to be bent to the right. The right shoulder is short in nature. The right arm is seen running around the body to the left side above the chest. The left hand is raised above the elbow and held on the left shoulder. The left foot is placed on the floor, the body is balanced, and the right foot is raised close to the body with the right leg raised. The tops here are naked. The lower body is adorned with a torch and a cloak is attached to the garment. Woolrich, who studied this, mentions that she was a dancer. But there is nothing wrong with introducing this as a dancer that reflects a rhythmic dance posture. Two other statues similar to this one has been found during excavations at Raja gala. One of these statues is depicted with a body gesture that is very similar to this statue. It is believed to date back to the 6-8 AD. There is a slight difference in the second statue. These differences include the fact that the statue's head is tilted to the left, representing an occasion when the feet are shifted to the same dance position, and the earrings, jewelry, and dotiya decorations are preserved to a recognizable level. Another sculpture depicting a dancer is 14.5 cm long. This is also the case with the above sculptures and contemporaries."

Excavations in the Raja gala area have uncovered statues depicting other architects. Archaeologists note the statue:

"...the height of this statue is 20 centimeters and it is kept in the Archaeological Museum. This male figure is created on the short face of a clay brick. The hair on the head of this statue is not clearly identifiable. The face is slightly larger than the body. The facial organs are clearly identifiable. It is slightly heavier on the left slope. The eyebrows are open and the eyes are closed. Lips wide. The mouth is not open. The upper body is naked. The left leg was raised. The underside is decorated with a torch. This head is a semi-conical jata crown. The savannah is a circular earring with a three-stranded

strap running from the shoulder to the groin area. It is believed to be a dance form dating back to the period of 6-8 AD."

"...the face of the other sculptor is also slightly larger than the body. It depicts the eyebrows widening and the eyes widening, and the lips wide open and the mouth slightly open without a smile. Two earrings in the ear. The hairline on the head is thinly spread. The lower body is covered with a short cloth. Neri thread on both sides of the waist is well highlighted. An abdominal ligament is placed between the abdomen and the abdomen..."

Archaeologists are still struggling to gather enough evidence before reaching the final conclusions about the whereabouts of the dancer.

"... The helmet of this statue, which is 13.2 cm high, can be identified. It is semi-conical. The face takes on a slightly elongated shape and the eyes, nose and mouth are worn out. The head was tilted slightly to the right and he was standing in a triangular position. The full breasts of the naked woman are well highlighted. The lower body is adorned with a loose robe. The right hand is bent forward near the elbow and can be seen holding an unrecognizable object on the palm. This female figure is simple at first glance. This makes you look forward to the opportunity. This is believed to date back to the period of 6-8 AD. Woolrich introduced May as a dancer."

These sculptural observations show that an advanced theatrical tradition was used in the Raja gala area during the period of 6-8 AD. The Indian influences can be seen in the consideration of the features that these sculptures represent the Indian influences. The way in which the eyebrows are opened and the eyes are closed, and the way in which the eyebrows are opened and the eyes are enlarged, illustrate the differences of opinion included in drama. It is called illuminated and triplet, respectively. The statues also include earrings, necklaces, jata makuta, use of thali, and thorns with three strands up to the head of the shoulder. The costumes are similar to the costumes used in Indian dance traditions.

An inscription from the Raja gala area mentions the use of theaters and the sale of ration cards.

*nataka sagehi lahag ka maha
palalu daham mahasen wathimiya
yan wana dun ran kaladinadi aih pe
len buduwethwa*

"Maha Palalu (Name Place Advantage), the leader who issues the rations (or permits) in the theater house, is the gold bowl given by Dharmasena Thero. May you become a Buddha as a result of this..."

According to the above article, the contributor here is Daham Seth Waththimi. That is Dharmasena Thero or the aristocrat. The term wath thera has been used in the past to refer to lords, kings or nobles. Paranavithana points out that in an inscription No. 52 (Veerankura) the monks use the word 'Wath Thera' to refer to the Duke. The area where he lives is known as the Great Wide. His career in inscription is described as Sagahi Lagah Ka. In the Pali language, the word dance means dance and the drama is used to mean drama. In this inscription, the word drama is used as a literal word meaning drama. The word sagehi is a Pali word meaning sala or hall house. The term Lahagna mentioned in the article is worth inquiring about. It can be seen that the word Lahagna is formed by the combination of the words Laha Agna. Agna means chief leader. The term profit is used in this article to refer to rations or permits. Accordingly, the aristocrat named Dharmasena can be identified as the chief issuing officer of a theater house. Early Brahminical inscriptions indicate that professional playwrights were still present in Sri Lanka as early as the second century BC. The theater mentioned in this article was not located in the Raja gala monastery premises but may have been located somewhere in the urban area. The officer in charge of this post mentioned in the letter is only a donation made to the Raja gala Monastery.

The statue of the dancing couple found during the Raja gala excavations has a rectangular platform. Rectangular platforms are square shaped platforms.

If the period of 6-8 AD square shaped stage was used, it is confirmed that the rules of theatrics were followed in the stage design of that period. These stage shapes are mentioned in the second chapter, called The Variety of the Audience Auditorium.

It is called [Drama] Forum Ugly, Square or Triangular [may be], Susata [Riyana] and Two hundred [Riyana].

Thus, the creation of stages using the rules of theatrical sciences, and the use of those stages for theatrical performances, confirms that there was an advanced theatrical tradition associated with the Raja gala area at that time.

It is said that on the day of King Wattagamini Abhaya, during a ritual of offering the temple at Kottimbulwala, a pious man was asked to play a bronze tambourine and offer the amount of land to the temple. The village also donated the Ridivita Galhengoda temple built by King Wattagamini Abhaya. According to the cover, it is referred to as the deniye depale of the hewisikara. Accordingly, these evidences prove the existence of hewisi art of playing at that time.

The Mahavamsa states that King Vijayabahu I used Kataragama as his capital for several years and then chose Mahanagahula or Mana Ulupura as his capital.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the culture that existed in the Kataragama area in the early period was later developed in association with the Manaulu Ramba Vihara. Evidence of the dances associated with Rohana can be

found in the carvings of the Ramba Vihara. The dancing nature of an artist with his hands raised and the carvings of a couple performing have also been found in the vicinity of the temple. In this carving you can see one person playing a drum and the other performing a play. Theatrical ornaments used at that time are also associated with these carvings. Although the kingdoms migrated from region to region, the cultures and arts used remained the same. Accordingly, it is confirmed here that the art tradition that existed in the Kataragama area is known by the carvings in Manaulu Pura.

CONCLUSION

From the above information it is clear that there was a drama tradition centered on the Rohana area. The use of the positions of playwrights, references to the sculptures and connections of theatrical actors and actresses and the existence of theater halls can be inferred from the existence of an advanced drama and musical tradition in Rohana during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

According to the above archeological evidences, it is confirmed that there was an advanced tradition of drama and music centered on Rohana during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa periods.

REFERENCES

1. Amarawansa thero, A., & Disanayake, H. (2001). *Wansattappakasiniya*. Colombo: S. Godage Brothers Private (Ltd).
2. Dhammananda thero, N. (1945). *History of Uva*. Colombo: M. D. Gunasena and Company.
3. *Gonagolla Viharaha* <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki>. (n.d.). Retrieved from Gonagolla Viharaha <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki> IC., V. (n.d.).
4. Karunathilaka, W. S. (2016). *Tamil Sinhala Alphabet*. Colombo: S. Godage Brothers Private (Ltd).
5. Nadeesha Sharmalee Gunawardana (Ed:). (2016). *Deepawansha*. Colombo: S. Godage Brothers Private (Ltd).
6. Nandasena, M. (2016). *Code of Sinhala Inscriptions*. Colombo 10: S. Godage Brothers Private (Ltd).
7. Paranawithana, S., & Dias, M. (2001). *Inspiration of Ceylon*. Colombo: Archaeological Survey Department
8. *Raja gala Archeological Researches*. (2018). Colombo 7: Department of Archeology, Sri Lanka.
9. Ranawella, S. (2004). *Alphabet of Sinhala Inscription*. Colombo 7: Archeological Department.
10. Ranawella, S. (2016). *History of the Rohana Kingdom*. Colombo: S. Godage Brothers Private (Ltd).
11. Soratha thero, W. (1999). *Sri Sumangala Vocabulary Dictionary First, Second Part*. Colombo: S. Godage Brothers Private (Ltd).
12. V.Wa.Mu. Thilakasiri Bandara (Ed,). (1991). *Chronicle of Uva*. Uva Provincial Council.