

A Note from the Guest Editors

A volume felicitating the achievements of Dr. Siran Deraniyagala was conceived in 2020 by Anura Manatunga and pitched to his friend and colleague Nimal Perera, who was the first mentee of Dr. Deraniyagala. Penning this guest editorial is bittersweet for us as the idea for a felicitation volume celebrating the life of late Dr. Siran Deraniyagala was put forward when he was still among us and well aware of it. It was initially planned as a publication of the National Department of Archaeology, Sri Lanka, together with three other felicitation volumes honouring the legacies of other distinguished archaeologists.

The “Siran Deraniyagala Felicitation Volume” sought to include original research papers of high academic standard from academics both local and international. Nimal Perera was tasked with inviting scholars who had worked closely with Dr. Deraniyagala to submit papers, while a “call for papers” was published by the Department of Archaeology, by Anura Manatunga in early February of 2020. When informed of this project by Nimal Perera, Dr. Deraniyagala humbly declined the honour, but came on board soon after with some gentle persuasion. The initial editorial team comprised Anura Manatunga and Nimal Perera, with Chryshane Mendis joining later. The team received dozens of papers from both local and international scholars on various themes, from the prehistoric to the early 20th century. In Sri Lankan archaeological academia, Dr. Deraniyagala ushered in a period of high-grade academic research and therefore with the bar set high, selecting suitable papers to the standard of Dr. Deraniyagala was a major challenge to the initial editorial team. Nonetheless, the selection was narrowed down to about a dozen papers of high standard. It is still heartening to know that Dr. Deraniyagala himself read and affirmed these papers, albeit in pre-editorial stage, which now form the core of this volume.

It was amidst the initial editing stages that we were woken to the sad news on October 5, 2021, of the passing of Dr. Siran Deraniyagala. While his passing was a terrible loss to the whole country, his demise was felt more profoundly by us as we were constantly in touch with him on this project. On the one hand it is mildly comforting, to say the least, that Dr. Deraniyagala knew of a publication that would honour his legacy. On the other hand, his death gave us more resolve, to complete this volume as a proper send-off to the person considered the father of modern Sri Lankan archaeology. With renewed vigour we set about transforming the ‘Felicitation Volume’ to that of a ‘Commemoration Volume’ where apart from the selected papers, we decided to add appreciations on the life of the late Dr. Deraniyagala. As such, we invited close colleagues of Dr. Deraniyagala to write short appreciations covering memories and experiences. We were especially sorrowful when Nimal Perera had to change the tense from present to past when finalising his biographical chapter on Dr. Deraniyagala. As for the other scholarly papers that refer to him, we have offered the flexibility to authors to use the present or the past tense.

Amid unsettling conditions in Sri Lanka in 2021-2022, work on the volume slowed down. In July of 2022 Anura Manatunga invited Samanti Kulatilake to follow up and undertake the editorial guidance of the volume to see this project come into fruition. Under her direction, the editorial process was brought to a professional standard from which this present volume stems. Given the current economic crisis in the country, the restructured editorial team decided to proceed with the volume in two phases. The first phase would be publication via an Online Journal System hosted by Mount Royal University as an open access resource. For the second phase it is anticipated that a limited print run of the “Siran Deraniyagala Commemoration Volume” will be published in Sri Lanka. To meet these goals, a new journal named *Ancient Lanka* was launched by Samanti Kulatilake where the ‘Siran Deraniyagala Commemoration Volume’ would be its first volume. We are happy to be the Guest Editorial Committee for this inaugural volume. We appreciate the time and efforts of Kulatilake who took over communications and the workflow to complete collaborative peer-review of the selected submissions. We also acknowledge the work of the Editorial Board of *Ancient Lanka*.

Several distinguished archaeologists pay fitting tribute to an erstwhile colleague by virtue of their contributions to the present volume, as do others from their respective fields. The editors extend their warmest thanks to those scholars for their prompt response to the call for articles and for their understanding and patience with publication delays. We further extend our thanks to Reshani Dharmawardhana of the Department of Archaeology for her work in the initial stages of this project. Last, but certainly not least, were it not for the encouragement of Mrs. Eranya Deraniyagala, Ayiana (daughter), Dhrona (son) and Dr. Siran Deraniyagala’s close family members, the present work could never have reached its conclusion. We hope this compilation will honour the legacy of Siran Deraniyagala for many years to come.

Anura Manatunga

Director General, Department of Archaeology, Government of Sri Lanka;
Senior Professor, Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.
am@kln.ac.lk

Nimal Perera

Former Deputy Director, Department of Archaeology, Government of Sri Lanka;
Honorary Associate, Department of Archaeology, School of Philosophical and History Inquiry,
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Sydney.
nimalperera@sydney.edu.au

Chryshane Mendis

Independent Archaeologist affiliated with the Department of Archaeology, Government of Sri Lanka;
Member, ICOMOS Sri Lanka, Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka, and The National Trust Sri Lanka.
mendis.hmc@gmail.com