

# Contributions of Professor Sudharshan Seneviratne to the Department of Archaeology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

**R.M.M. Chandraratne**

Department of Archaeology, University of Peradeniya

[m.chandraratne@arts.pdn.ac.lk](mailto:m.chandraratne@arts.pdn.ac.lk)

## Introduction

Archaeology was introduced as a subject in the Buddhist Educational institutions in the early decades of the 20th century. In the 1950s, the Department of History, University of Ceylon included archaeology as a sub-discipline for the Degree Programme in Sinhala, History and Buddhist Civilization. The University of Ceylon recruited Senarat Paranavitana, the retired Commissioner of Archaeology, as Research Professor of Archaeology in 1957, appointed him Professor of Archaeology in 1958, and formulated the sub-department of archaeology under the Department of History in 1960, which included one lecturer - P.L. Prematilleke. From 1960 to 1964, Paranavitana undertook the essential administrative functions of this sub-Department. Besides the period between 1966 and 1969 when this sub-Department was under the Dean/Faculty of Arts, H.A. de S. Gunasekara, P.L. Prematilleke assumed these duties until 1979, (Annual Report, 1960; University Calendar, 1964; Annual Report, 1970).

An independent Department of Archaeology was created, abolishing the Sub-Department in 1979, so that P.L. Prematilleke, then newly appointed the Head of the Department, wanted to develop the Department by recruiting young and energetic academicians. Therefore, the university recruited several academics such as Sudharshan Seneviratne, W.H. Wijepala, and K.H. Jayatilleke to the Department of Archaeology in 1979. The Department continued the Bachelor of Arts (special) degree in Archaeology, which was introduced by the Sub-Department of Archaeology in 1976. (Annual Report, 1979). After employing Sudharshan Seneviratne to the Department, the



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curriculum of Archaeology was revised, referring to the international standards for the consideration of graduates for domestic requirements because he had an Indian exposure (University of Peradeniya, 1980). Before joining the academic staff, he obtained a Merit Fellowship from the Indian Council of Historical Research (1976-1980), and completed his PhD degree titled: “Social Base of Early Buddhism in South East India Sri Lanka, B.C. 3rd Century B.C. - 3rd Century A.D” under the guidance of an eminent historian, professor Romila Thapar at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in (Seneviratne, 1986).

### **Department of Archaeology 1979-2017**

Sudharshan Seneviratne held acting headship on several occasions and was appointed as Head of the Department of Archaeology in 1987 (Annual Report, 1989). After the retirement of Former Professor P.L. Prematilleke, whose service was admirable to the Department of Archaeology. Therefore, Sudharshan Seneviratne and his staff have published a felicitation Volume: Perspectives in Archaeology in 1990. As I understand, Sudharshan Seneviratne has taken the whole burden of the publication. Meanwhile, the Departmental Museum was slightly rearranged and entitled as the ‘Senarat Paranavitana Research and Teaching Museum’, considering the centenary celebration of the State Department of Archaeology (Seneviratne, et al., 1990). He was re-appointed twice as the Head of the Department in 1993 and 2000 (Annual Report, 1990). Considering his academic and research career, and national and international contribution, he was promoted to professor of Archaeology in 1996 (Annual Report, 1996). During his headship, the University recruited three persons to the Department, namely R.M.M. Chandraratne (Lecturer), D.K. Jayaratne, and M.W.C.N.K. Rambukwella (Assistant Lecturers). As the Head of the Department, he always encouraged the junior staff to complete their postgraduate studies. ( Annual Report, 1990). Furthermore, strengthening the research environment, the Department was able to recruit a draftsperson, A.G.C.H. Aluvihare in 1995 (Annual Report 1995). During his academic career, two Lecturers (probationary), A.S.T. Rajapaksha and A.G.D.N. Karunaratna, were appointed by the University for the Department of Archaeology in 2002 and 2006, respectively (Annual Report, 2002; Annual Report, 2006).

Seneviratne continued his research on the protohistoric period because it is believed that the written historical culture in Sri Lanka began after the arrival of Buddhism at the courtesy of the Emperor Ashoka. What happened before the 3rd Century BC? In this regard, he contributed a number of publications and led a Co-director for the Citadel of Anuradhapura Excavation project along with the Project Director, S.U. Deraniyagala. This project was one of the junctures in Sri Lankan Proto and Historical Archaeology.

## **Archaeological Research and Training after 1979**

Sudharshan Senaviratne led the Science and Technology programme at the Institute of Fundamental Studies (IFS) between the late 1980s and early contributing a new trend in the study of iron technology (Annual Report, 1990). He was a Co-Director of the Pinwewa-Galsohonkanatta Megalithic Archaeology Project along with W.H. Wijepala, then Director of Excavations, National Department of Archaeology, and was guided to conduct an excavation in 1996. Consequently, a research seminar was held concerning the unearthed material culture of the Pinwewa-Galsohonkanatta excavation (Annual Report, 1998). In relation to the project, a palynological analysis was conducted and revealed the protohistoric ritual practices (Premathilake, 2015).

Afterwards, he was assigned as the Archaeological Director for the Jetavana UNESCO Central Cultural Fund (CCF) Project in 1999, facilitating archeological research for the academic staff and training for the undergraduates of the University of Peradeniya. (Annual Report, 1999). Sudharshan Senaviratne, who served the Jetavana Project, undertook the Vessagiriya Excavations in Anuradhapura, providing multidisciplinary research and supported undergraduates and postgraduate researchers between 2005 and 2007 (Annual Report, 2008).

## **Postgraduate Supervision**

During his career at the Department, he supervised three PhD researchers, like late A.M.P. Senanayake (Former professor), late W.H. Wijepala (former Director General of Archaeology: 2001-2004), and A. Lagamuwa (Senior professor at the Rajarata University). Rev. Wetara Mahinda and M.W.C.N.K. Rambukwella obtained their Masters from the University of Peradeniya in 1995 and 1998, respectively. (Table 3). A.G.D.N. Karunaratne obtained her M.Phil. from the University of Peradeniya in 2008 (Table 1). Those postgraduate research completion exhibits the expanding research intensity of the Department during his tenure. It is important that a number of researchers, who did not belong to the Departmental staff, have completed doctoral and masters' degrees (Table 1).

Degree	Title of thesis	Author	Supervisor/Co-supervisor
PhD	A Preliminary Analytical Study of the Historical Archaeology of Inscriptions Located in the Middle and Upper Valleys of <i>Deduru Oya</i> System: B.C. 3 Century A.D. in 1997	A.M.P. Senanayake	Sudharshan Senaviratne
	New Light on the Prehistory of Sri Lanka in the Context of Recent Investigations at Cave Sites in 1997	W.H. Wijepala	S.U. Deraniyagala and Sudharshan Senaviratne
	The Historical Archaeology of Palm Leaf Manuscript Art in Sri Lanka in 2004	A. Lagamuwa	P.E.E. Fernando, Ananda Kulasooriya and Sudharshan Senaviratne
MPhil	Stone as a Resource Medium in the Protohistoric to late historic built environment in 2004	H.D.T.L. Wagalawatta	Sudharshan Senaviratne
	The Female in Art Representation in Historical Sri Lanka, 1 <sup>st</sup> Century A.C. to 12 <sup>th</sup> Century: A Social Archaeological Study in 2008.	A.G.D.N. Karunarathna	Sudharshan Senaviratne
	A Study of Trade and Commerce at Anuradhapura and its Hinterland Based on Early Historic Coins Excavated at the <i>Jetawana</i> Archaeological Site (3 <sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Century A.D.) in 2015	I. D. Balasuriya	Sudharshan Senaviratne
MA	<i>Mahanuvara Yugaye Mati Karmanthaya</i> in 1987	W. M. Chandra Weerabahu	P.L. Prematillake and Sudharshan Senaviratne
	Medical and Psychological Treatment in the Buddhist Monastic Tradition in Sri Lanka: A Study of Archaeological, Textual and Epigraphic Evidence up to the 12 <sup>th</sup> Century AD in 1994	Rev. Wetara Mahinda	M.R. Tampoe, N. Kasturiarachchi and Sudharshan Senaviratne
	The Distribution Pattern of Proto and Early Historic Sites in the Montane Region of Sri Lanka: A Study of the Middle and Upper <i>Maha-Oya</i> River Systems in 1998.	M.W.C.N.K Rambukwella	Sudharshan Senaviratne

**Table 1.** Research Degrees Completed Under the Supervision of Sudharshan Senaviratne (Alahakoon, 2011; Weerasinghe, 2017).

## National and International Contribution

Sudharshan Senaviratne, who was the professor of Archaeology at the University of Peradeniya, contributed nationally as well as internationally in the field of Archaeology. Consequently, he was selected for a number of visiting Professorships in the USA and India. For example, as a distinguished scholar, he was granted a Fulbright-Hays Senior Research Fellowship (1990-1991) and obtained a position at Cornell University. Afterwards, he served as a Visiting Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University in 1996. Moreover, he obtained positions at Carleton College (1998 and 2000, January-June), Bowdoin College (2000, July-Dec), Swarthmore College (2010-2011), and Whitman College (2012-2013) in the USA (Chandraratne, 2017). Likewise, he served as Director General of the Central Cultural Fund from 2007 to 2010, in addition to holding the post of Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India between 2014 and 2015 (Annual Report, 2016).

Concerning the contribution by Sudharshan Senaviratne to the international Research under the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) funded Landscape Archaeology Programme, the University of Peradeniya and the Department of Geology of Freie University, Berlin signed a Subaward Agreement in 2014, a joint research project aiming at academic exchange, training and developing a Master Curriculum in relation to the Departments of Archaeology and Geology (University of Peradeniya, 2014). Consequently, both institutions conducted several workshops about the field and laboratory training. The first summer workshop was conducted in Anuradhapura in 2016, with the participation of students from both Universities (University of Peradeniya, 2016). Later, five archaeology undergraduates from the University of Peradeniya had an opportunity to participate in a Summer School in the Federal State of Brandenburg, in Germany (Annual Report, 2015).

In connection with my experience with Sudharshan Senaviratne, as an undergraduate, I entered the university in 1979, although I enrolled as a Bachelor of Honours in Arts in Archaeology in 1980 after completing my first-year studies. I met a young, friendly lecturer, Sudharshan Seneviratne, who conducted a course on Social Economic History of South Asia and a series of lectures on archaeological methodology and some lectures in English, supporting the assigned English instructor for special students in Archaeology. Six undergraduates who were in our special batch came from a Sinhalese medium education background. The lecturer, Sudharshan Seneviratne, has always encouraged us to educate and improve our English. Out of those students, three of them, me, late A.M.P. Senanayake, and D.K. Jayaratne, were recruited by the Department of Archaeology, University of Peradeniya (Chandraratne, 2017). After completing our first degrees at the University, Sudharshan Seneviratne further encouraged us to pursue education in archaeology; consequently, we joined the Alahana Parivena Project, Polonnaruwa, Cultural Triangle Central Cultural Fund, headed by the late Professor P.L. Prematilleke.

After joining the Department, I had an opportunity to work with him as a colleague, especially when he often told us, "You have academic freedom, you can develop your research areas". During his tenure as the Head of the Department of Archaeology, he has played a key role in developing the junior lecturers' research degree programmes, curriculum development, and multidisciplinary activities for the undergraduates.

The research strength of the Department is reflected in the multi- and inter-disciplinary publications on protohistory and early history, ancient built environment, heritage management, and museology, among other things. For example, his prominent publications are *Kalinga and Andhra: The Process of Secondary State Formation* (Seneviratne, 1981), *The archaeology of the megalithic black and red ware complex in Sri Lanka* (Seneviratne, 1984), *Situating world heritage sites in a multicultural society: The ideology of presentation at the Sacred City of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka* (2008), and the conservation project of the Jetavana Chaitya, which was completed under the direct supervision of Seneviratne in 2009. During his tenure, joint research work was conducted with prominent scholars from India, Japan, the USA, Germany, and the Netherlands. Considering his academic contribution, the university granted the Emeritus status in 2016 (University Calendar, 2018). In conclusion, he served the University of Peradeniya as a lecturer, Senior lecturer, and the professor of Archaeology, performing as a leading intellectual, an archaeologist, a historian, and a diplomat during his career at the university until his retirement in 2015.

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