

Terra Cotta Elephant Figures used in Sri Lanka for Rituals and Beliefs

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ABSTRACT

The motive in humans to employ various creations for his needs run through the inception of the human civilization. Such creations have been used for day to day chores as well in various rituals, rites and sacraments. There is proof that even during the pre-historic periods humans have followed various religious rituals and rites to achieve their desired needs. The civilization of man in groups is known as the peak of the civilization. It is proved with archeological as well as inscribed factors that all civilizations of the world in the past have performed various religious rituals and rites to accomplish numerous objectives.

In the rituals and sacramental beliefs of the humans in various civilizational eras, it has been established through numerous sources that among the creations terra cotta figures have been used as the foremost item. Archeological and inscribed factors prove that in Sri Lanka, as has been in the world, various religious rituals and sacraments have been performed, aimed at prosperity. Terra cotta figures that might have been used for those rituals are found from dry zones in Sri Lanka.

Among those many are elephant figures. A mixture of sand and clay has been used to form these figures. These terra cotta figures with a historical and archeological significance shows a unique geographical characteristic in relation to the places where they were found, way of the spreading out, geographical areas, pattern of laying and the soil condition. Spreading out of these terra cotta figures in Northern, North Central, Eastern and North Western areas is significant. As most are found close to rural tanks, irrigation canals, river valleys and paddy fields these elephant figures must have been used for sacrificial rites on water supply for agriculture, prosperity of agriculture and protection of harvest from wild animals.

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