

# Terracotta figurines found on the *Diyabate* Rock belonging to the *Thabbowa- Maradanmaduwa* culture

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## ***Abstract***

*Terracotta figurines were discovered throughout Sri Lanka especially in the Northern, North Central and Eastern dry zones, have been traditionally assigned to the Thabbowa-Maradanmaduwe culture the discovered sites indicate that they are closely connected with river basins, canals, tanks and agricultural landscapes. Terracotta figurines found from Diyabete rock in the Wannu Hathpaththu was the subject of this research and it is a place where archaeological evidence dating back to many ages. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the Terracotta figurines found during the survey of Diyabete rock. Diyabete rock is located in the village of Kattabuwawa in the Maho divisional secretariat in the Kurunegala district of the Northwestern province. It belongs to the dry zone of Sri Lanka. The research problem of this study is, to find out If the Terracotta figurines found during the survey is similar to the Thabbowa Maradanmaduwa culture. The hypothetical-deductive method was used during the research and based on the hypothesis that these terracotta figurines are belonging to the Thabbowa- Maradanmaduwa culture. The data record was created by the non-structural field survey, library survey, taking photographs, drawing, studying 1:50000 metric maps and by taking measurements. Terracotta figurines are found throughout South Asia including Sri Lanka and range in date from the Neolithic Period, through the Early Historic Period and into the present. Accordingly, the geographical features similar to other places in the island where elements of the Thabbowa Maradanmaduwa culture are found can be seen in this place as well. During the study, this makes it possible to believed that the features of this terracotta belong to Thabbowa-Maradanmaduwa culture. However, the data obtained from the surface survey carried out here is not sufficient to come to an accurate conclusion and it is necessary to study this site extensively.*

**Keywords:** *Dry Zone, Ritual practice, Terracotta figurines, Thabbowa-Maradanmaduwa culture, Folk art*

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## Introduction

The monadnocks found in the dry zone of Sri Lanka are of great archaeological importance. That dry zone remains of the monadnocks are a major influence on settlements. During the historical period of the country, most of the administrative centres, cities and religious centres were built based on the monadnocks such as *Sigiriya* and *Ritigala*. Most of the tank villages in the dry zone were created based on the monadnocks. This is due to the small tank system created based on the currents flowing from the monadnock. Many of these monadnocks have archaeological evidence from the early historical period to the Kandiyian period. It is feature of some monadnocks to find prehistoric evidence. (yapahuwa,2001)



*Figure 1. Out side view of caves on the Diyabate mountain*



Figure 2. *Diyabate*

Terracotta figurines found from *Diyabate* rock in the *Wanni Hathpaththu* was the subject of this research and it is a place where archaeological evidence dating back to many ages. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the Terracotta figurines found during the survey of *Diyabate* rock. *Diyabate* rock is located in the village of *Kattabuwawa* in the *Maho* divisional secretariat in the Kurunegala district of the Northwestern province. It belongs to the dry zone of Sri Lanka. The research problem of this study is, to find out if the Terracotta figurines found during the survey is similar to the *Thabbowa Maradanmaduwa* culture.

In the study of Terracotta in Sri Lanka, A.M Horcart first reported on the Terracotta found in the lake “*Thalgas wewa*” in 1924(Horkat, 1922, 23). P.E.P Deraniyagala studied further about Thabbowa- Maradanmaduwa culture based on the areas where they were found. Considered to belong to this culture Terracotta is found in several places on the island (Deraniyagala, 1953), all of which belong to the Northern dry zone of the island. Thus found in Sri Lanka several preliminary studies on terracotta have been conducted by P.E.P Deraniyagala, Shiran Deraniyagala, Nandadewa Wijesekara, Anura Manathunga, Prishantha Gunawardhana (Coningham and Gunawardhana, 2012, 2). So these interpretations of Terracotta culture as well as ideas about chronology a number have been submitted. Terracotta and clay were

found during the survey of the monadnock of the study and reporting of container fragments are based on some research is expected.

### **Methodology**

The hypothetical- deductive method was used during the research and based on the hypothesis that these terracotta figurines are belonging to the *Thabbowa-Maradanmaduwa* culture. The data record was created by the non-structural field survey, library survey, photographing, drawing, studying 1:50000 metric maps and by taking measurements. We did this survey as a team.

A Library survey was done to build an idea of the historical background of the area and to study other previous research on this subject. Studied 1:50000 metric maps and other maps to understand the location and geographical features of the *Diyabate* rock site. The non-structural field survey was used to collect archaeological data on pottery and Terracotta found on the rock and to identify other historical evidence of human activities on the rock. To record the data we used photographing, drawing and taking measurements. It is worth mentioning that the caves we identified on the rock were called Diyabate Rock Cave (DRC) and we named them from DRC 1 to onwards in the order in which they were found. And also we called Terracotta found during the survey as Diyabate Rock cave Terracotta figurines (DRC/TF) and named them as DRC00/TF/00.

## Location

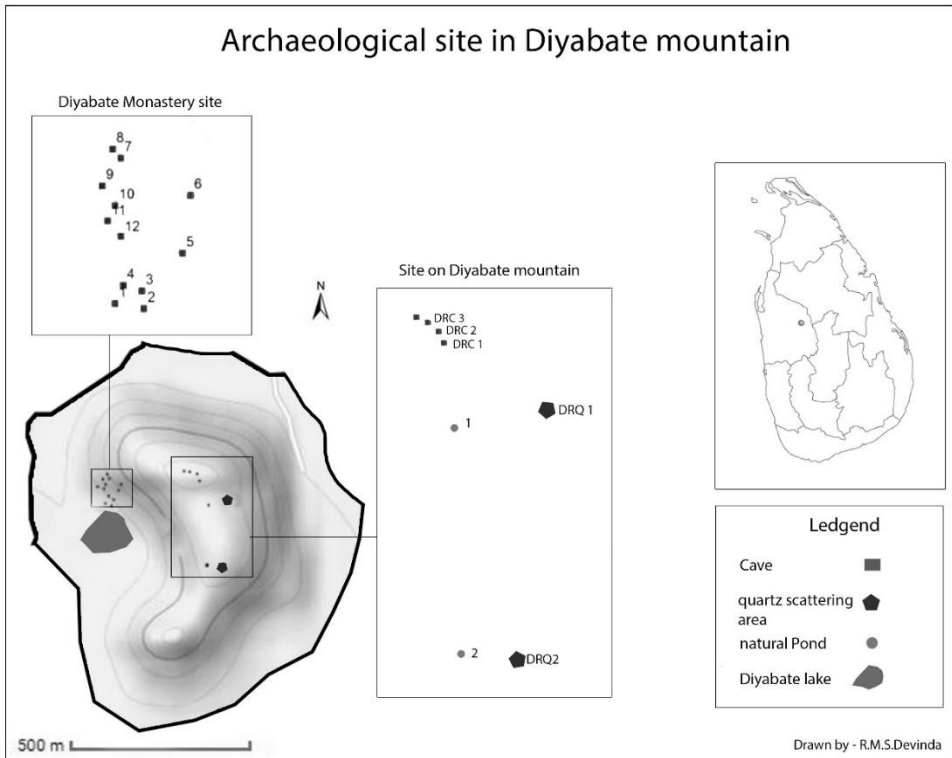


Figure 3. Map of site

The *Diyabate* rock is located in the *Mahawa* Divisional Secretariat division in the *Kurunegala* district of the North-Western province, in Sri Lanka (Latitude  $7^{\circ} 50' 13''$ , Longitude  $80^{\circ} 20' 45''$ ). This place is about 145km toward *Kurunegala* from the capital city of Colombo and approximately 6km to *Maho* town located on the Southeast side.

## Geographical Background

When focusing on the landscape of the area, it can be referred to as the main plain and consist of various physical features. We can identify *Diyabate* archaeological site as a monadnock. Monadnock means an isolated hill of bedrock standing conspicuously above the general level of the surrounding area and this is about 840 feet above the surrounding plain. There are several other similar monadnocks located in the vicinity of this such as *Yapahuwa*, *Thalapath* mountain and *Degodathurawa*. This land has a micro valley nature and small village tanks are being based on such

valleys. Most of these villages are formed at the foot of small hills of the above type. In addition to the main and inter-monsoon winds, the region receives about 1524 mm of annual rainfall from hurricanes. With non-loamy brown soil, a paddy field is found in the vicinity of every small village lake. (Abevikrama, 2008, 17-43)

### **Historical background**

A study of the historical background reveals that it dates back to prehistoric times. Charcoal fragments found during excavations at the Yapahuwa remnant mountain D13 cave near *Diyabate* rock are about 5000 years old according to carbon dating (Pallethana, 2015, 46). In addition, the *Yapahuwa* rock and *Monarakanda* between *Yapahuwa* and *Diyabete* rock in three places, the remains of *Kayikawala* to *Yapahuwa* rock have also been found with and microlithic stone tools made of chert and quartz (Yapahuwa, 2001, 11). Their relatives chronologically it is concluded to belong to the Mesolithic period (Deraniyagala, 1992, 433). The survey by the Central Cultural Fund Yapahuwa project has uncovered microlithic stone tools on *Diyabate* rock and nearby areas (Pallethana, 2015, 46). In that survey, four uncut natural caves at the top of the rock and the surrounding area were explored. Several stone tools and several debris were found among the soil middle of the cave. Near the cave DRC 1 scattering of quartz fragments can be in an area of 300 × 500 M. During this study, several stone tools were found. Others are discarded pieces in stone tool design. The natural caves here allow several families to live without the hassle of weather. Like a stream of water that forms with rain, two natural ponds have also been created near the cave. Also, the small lake presently in the lower temple seems to have been created naturally. The water coming from that monadnock crosses a small rocky plateau, forming a natural path. It was later converted into an organized structure using a small tank bund. The natural causes suitable for human settlement can also

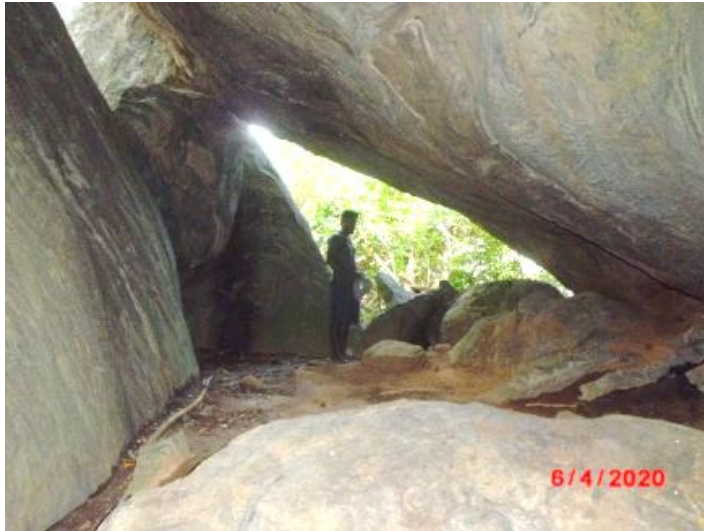
be deduced from the fact that the historicity of human activities on the *Diyabate* rock seems to date back to prehistoric times.



Figure 4. DRC 1

The second historical background of the Diyatabe mountain is the early historical period. There is a temple complex with 11 drip-lined caves. Here we can see the inscriptions related to the offering of 7 caves (Paranavithana,1970,99). These cave inscriptions mention the cave offering of the parumakas known as ‘daraka thisa’, and ‘amara’ and the cave offerings of ‘parumaka majjima’, the son of ‘brahmana moggali’. These are from 3 BC it belongs to the period between 3 AD. Two of the inscriptions at this site are pre-brahmi inscriptions (Dhiranandha,2004,154). One of the other inscriptions mentions a pooja in a monastery by a monk named ‘Pussa’ is a cave inscription. Also, in the small tank of the temple on the other hand there is a rock inscription written on the rock in the small lake in the temple. It refers to the donation of the ‘Punokodaka’ tank to the temple by a maharaja named ‘Naka’(Ilangasinha,2008,352). The king mentioned here is believed to be the

‘mahallaka naga’ king who ruled the kingdom of Anuradhapura (Mahanwanshaya, 2012, 152).



*Figure 5. DRC*

Accordingly, by this time the Diyabate Mountain belongs to it is possible that an area is densely populated. Yapahuwa the 4<sup>th</sup> kingdom of Srilanka in the middle ages is located 5 km from Diyabate Mountain. Therefore, it is not possible that the land belonging to Diyabate mountain was uninhabited even in the middle age (Disanayake,2011). According to archaeological evidence, the Diyabate temple has been recognized even during the Kandy period. Two small cave temple houses were built during that period. One of them is finished and has a dragon pantheon and sleeping statue and two statues of gods about the art features of the Kandy period. There is also a cave temple with unfinished clay walls. Inside the cave, it is made of clay there are two unpainted Samadhi statues, a standing statue and two deva statues. According to their artistic features, it can be concluded that this unfinished temple also belongs to the Kandy era.

The present Kattabuwawa village which is formed around Diyabate hill was formed during the last period of the British period (Athapaththu,2019,39). Based on the



streams coming from the mountain, three small village tanks have been built around the mountain and the present human settlement has been built based on it. It is a way a continuous human history can be built based on the remnant mountain of Diyabate. As well as it is also clear that several humans activities have taken place based on the Diyabate Mountain.

### **Previous Research**

Clay sculpture has been practised by humans since ancient times. This is mostly used for religious culture. Clay statues were used in primitive witchcraft long before organized religion. (Godakumbura, 1982,5) Originally hand-made, sun-dried clay figurines were used later like clay pots. The images were burned. The clay figurines created at a temperature of 800C<sup>0</sup> degrees are called Terracotta. (Nishanthi, 2016,232)

Terracotta figurines were discovered throughout Sri Lanka especially in the Northern, North Central and Eastern and Northern dry zones. As examples Mamaduwa, Ilukwewa, Manawewa, Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, Thalgaswewa, Rajanganaya, Padeniya, Paduwasnuwara, Ampara, Mihinthale and Thabbowamaradanmaduwa. The distribution is limited to the North Central, North Western and Eastern provinces. The other common factor is the existence of similar geographical background factors. Such as daily weather, agro-economy, reddish-brown Soil Zone. Also, the majority of these terracotta encounters are found in rural lakes or agricultural backgrounds. (Nishanthi, 2016,232)

The first report on Terracotta statues in this way was made in 1921 by A.M Hockett. It is about some Terracotta found in the Thalgaswewa area in Puttalam district (Horkat, 1922, 23) P.E.P Deraniyagala has reported about the statues found later in Thabbowa. Several statues of elephants have also been found among these Terracottas (Deraniyagala, 1953, 133-134) Statues with similar features have been found in Maradanmaduwa Culture. During the Sigiri- Dambulu settlement archaeological research project, Prof. Anura Manatunge reported on terracotta found at Inamaluva and Mnaveva in the Sigiriya area. Among them are animal figures and simple human figures. (Manatunge,1990) Clay images such as female figures, male

figures, animal figures and gender symbols have been found in places belonging to this culture. (Cunningham and Gunawardhana, 2012,2) Many images of elephants have been found among the Terracotta figurines belonging to the Thabbowa Maradanmaduwa culture. (Nishanthi, 2016, .232) There is no mention of this art in the historical sources of the Terracotta culture and their art history is more primitive than other classical iconic features. Due to this, it is believed that it was developed as rural folk art and may have been used for some religious purpose. (Gunawardhana, Coningham 2007, 76)

### **Terracotta figurines of the *Diyabete* rock**



*Figure.6 A Terracotta statue found in the Anuradhapura Nikawewa belonging to the Thabbowa Maradanmaduwa culture*



Figure 7. DRC1/TF/001 and DRC/TF/002

These Terracotta images and pottery fragments are associated with the caves at the top of the *Diyabate* rock. Caves are located at the top of the hill above the *Diyabate* temple. These are some of the caves identified during the survey and named as DRC 1, DRC 2, DRC 3, DRC 4. And also these caves are natural crevices without drips and faced to the west. They are large enough to easily protect a few people from the rain. Through these four caves, the most important one is DRC 1. Near the first cave which is named DRC 1 can find most pottery fragments. Comparatively to it, can't find pottery fragments from the other cave surfaces. When searching carefully during the exploration could find terracotta images from places where the water washed away. By studying the washed place, we can conclude that, under the surface layer of the cave, there can be a lot of pottery and terracotta parts.

Two human-shaped terracotta, two gender-symbol terracotta and some unidentifiable broken terracotta figures were found from this context. A pair of Cylindrical shape terracotta are hand-crafted. Fingerprints can be identified from those. This is DRC/TF/001, DRC/TF/002 also cylindrical shaped and meanwhile, the hand-crafted markers are visible. Its base is fat and is slightly thinner when going up. When observed we can see these two images made with clay-sand mixture course. That and these are handmade and baked. No other code is included and as a male gender symbol Can be concluded. Charles Godakumbura had recorded Many gender type terracotta symbols found from some other places (Godakumbura,1982,7). According

to Godakumbura's opinion, the oldest terracotta type is male gender symbols (Godakumbura, 1982, 7). The other terracotta figure (DRC/TF/003) found here is a human figure and it was created around the rim of a clay pot. Bottom of the pottery rim, there is a pattern of two lines and a dotted line. Below is the terracotta figures that have been created. The figures are first made of clay and then pasted in a clay pot. It is possible that the pot was burnt later along with the clay figures. Clay figures are made by hand. Now can be seen only, the upper part of the figure from the arm. The figure depicts how the arms are designed to be on either side. Even the fingers of its hand are drawn. One hand is drawn like four fingers and the other hand has three lines. It also creates a small bangle at the end of both hands. The head and body may have been made of the same clay ball. Both hands appear to have been designed and pasted separately.



Figure 8. DRC/TF/004



DRC1/TF/004  
SCALE - 1:1  
DRAWN BY - Athapththu

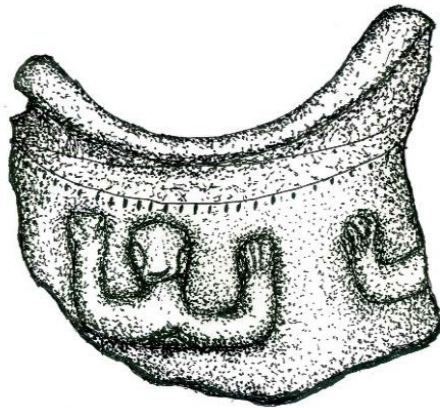
Figure 9

The nose and eyes are designed to be visible when designing the head. Its eyes are made of two small clay balls. The nose is represented by a pointed face. Also with these clay figures, the whole clay pot is painted black. On the right side of the clay pot can see the arm part of another clay figure. These are also the features of the DRC/TF/004 clay figure. Below its arms can be seen another part left. Here, too, the

four fingers and the bangle are clearly designed. According to these features, this clay figure can be thought of as a broken part of the above clay pot.



Figure 10. DRC/TF/003



DRC1/TF/003  
SCALE - 1:1  
DRAWN BY - Athaphthu

Figure 11

Terracotta piece with a similar look has also been received from the Nikawewa area in Anuradhapura (Coningham, Gunawardhana, 2012, 7). Around the pottery, human-shaped clay figurines may have appeared. A complete clay pot depicting a group of similar women holding up their hands has been discovered by the Department of Archeology, the University of Kelaniya and the Department of Archeology, University of Durham, England.

Identifiable terracotta parts are the ones mentioned above, in addition to several unidentified terracottas found. One of them is DRC/TF/005 Terracotta figurine. This is semi-circular. This is designed by placing two semi-circular sections one on top of the other. In addition, several hand-made conical sections are found. Small holes can be seen in the middle of these. Also found are two pieces of terracotta that are suspected to belong to elephant statues.

### Pottery

A number of pottery fragments are also found in the DRC 1 cave. They are also found in the washed-out layers of the cave along the waterway. There are a few pieces of black and red ware (BRW), a few pieces of red colour painted ware and pieces of pottery decorated with small lines. Suitable rim parts for getting data were not found and only small pottery fragments were found during the survey. It can be seen that some of the pottery fragments found here have a cement-like substance embedded in them. Mr Charles Godakumbura has reported a terracotta figure with a cement-like substance found in Abethota at Udawala (Godakumbura, 1982, 12). The following is a statistical analysis of the pottery fragments found there.

<i>Parts of pottery</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>painted</i>	<i>non painted</i>	<i>total</i>
Rim	R	5	20	25
Body shape	R	No	NO	13
sherd	BR	NO	9	9
		<i>painted</i>	<i>non painted</i>	<i>total</i>
Parts of terracotta figure		1	6	7

*Figure 12. Received pottery fragments*

## Conclusion

According to the interpretation of Tabbowa-Maradanmaduwa culture, the Terracotta figurines may have been used for some ritual practice. A.M Hokart believed that this was created with the worship of Shiva (Horkat,1922,23). P.E.P Deraniyagala also agrees that these were remnants of pre-Buddhist religious features (Deraniyagala,1953.133). The basic idea of this terracotta is as a primitive ritual element with folk religious and artistic features that are not found anywhere with Buddhist religious features (Coningham and Gunawardhana, 2012,12). Robert Knox also reports on rural ritual practice using clay figures during the Kandyan period (Knox.2000,153). In Gammadu Shanthikarma, a similar ritual practice, clay idols were not only created but also demolished (Coningham and Gunawardhana, 2012, 12). Many terracotta interpretations mean that the fracture is due to an event like this. It is possible that the terracotta images found on the *Diyabate rock* were used for some religious purpose. It is doubtful whether these natural caves at the top of *Diyabate rock* could have been made a permanent habitat in historical times. Therefore, these caves may have been used for temporary human activities. This is also because the terracotta and pottery fragments are found only in the DRC 1 cave. Also, gender symbols are often used for ritual practices and this may be a remnant of such ritual practices. There are various opinions about the chronology of the Thabbowa Maradanmaduwa culture. According to P.E.P Deraniyagala, these belong to the 2nd century AD (Deraniyagala,1953). It is clear from the fact that the lake was sacrificed at that time that the human settlements were still in good condition by the second century AD. However, Mr. H. Jayathilake believes that these terracotta artefacts belong to the post-Polonaruwa period as they are found in the vicinity of ancient lakes and are not buried so deeply. Agreeing with this, P. Nandadeva expresses the views of this culture as an ideological element created after the Polonnaruwa period based on isolated rural societies(Nandadeva,1990,221). The other chronology of this terracotta is believed to date from the 7th - 11th century AD. However, it can be concluded that this terracotta also belongs to the Maradamaduwa culture by comparing it with the data of other places where

terracotta is found. This is because the clay idols with similar features to these images are found in other places belonging to the Maradanmaduwa culture. Also, almost all other sources of this culture are farmland, such as lakes or dams. This place is different because it was found in a cave on a hilltop about 250 meters high. But below these caves, it can be seen that a water tank has been created by crossing the water flowing from the monadnock and restricting a boulder. It is clear from the inscription on the lake that it was offered to the temple by King Mahallakanaga (Ilangasinha, 2008, 352). Although the lake is now flooded due to silt, there is evidence that the lake was spread near the mountain at that time. Also, since there is a paddy field fed by this tank today, it may have been a major water supply requirement used by the people of this area since historical times. Accordingly, the geographical features similar to other places in the island where elements of the Thabbowa Maradanmaduwa culture are found can be seen in this place as well. This makes it possible to believe that this terracotta belongs to the same culture. However, the data obtained from the surface exploration carried out here is not sufficient to come to an accurate conclusion and it is necessary to study this site extensively.

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