

## **2.27 Do Terracotta Figurines Suggest a Burial Pattern?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Terracotta figurines were discovered extensively in the northern, north central and eastern dry zones of Sri Lanka. The discovered sites indicate that they are closely connected with river basins, canals, tanks and agricultural landscapes (Deraniyagala, 1972). The fact that many of the sites were located in agricultural areas suggests terracotta figurines might have served as cult images due to their significance in the agricultural society. These figurines may be the offerings of the rural people who could not afford to dedicate more valuable items to the Gods. Possibly they may have acted as cult images of fertility in small shrines.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the results of the excavation at Waragoda in Anuradhapura. This privately owned land is located 100 meters away from the Yoda-ela left bank that flows into the Nuwara-weva in the Anuradhapura city centre. This site was identified by the Upper Malwatu Oya archaeological exploration project in 2007. In the same year a 1x4 metre trench excavation was conducted adjoining the house as an archaeological rescue operation due to settler's decision to expand the house. The most common type of female and animal figurines found there represents a popular artistic form. The five female figurines which are sitting on the ship seem to have been made as two halves then joined together.

Perhaps the heads were designed separately and connected to the figure showing classic techniques of production significant to this culture. The hairstyle and dress of the female figurines express the popular fashion and designs which may have existed in this culture. In addition to that the six vessels which were placed in a central position towards the north south direction plays a key role among the findings. Significantly male and female rock art faces engraved at Budugala in Ratnapura District also show a similar facial expression in terracotta.

Most of the figurines were discovered on the surface level of the site. One of the main objectives of this excavation was to attempt to establish the chronological sequence of this culture. The figurines found from the site are in fragments as the objects were probably broken before the God after prayers. Then the figurines were accumulated in the shrine and carefully deposited into the grave beside the shrine.

### **Reference**

Deraniyagala, S.U 1972. The age of the Terracotta objects of the Mradanmaduw a Phalillic Cult, *Ancient*