A PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE JATIKA NAMAL UYANA

W. MAHINDA

Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya

The Jatika Namal Uyana (hereafter JNU), situated 158 km from Colombo, is about 6 km west of Madatugama. The entire forest area in which JNU is situated covers about 1200 ha. Within this forest, the area of primary interest includes the famous rose quartz outcrops and extends it approximately over an area of 105 ha. Of this, an area of 24.111 ha. was declared an archaeological reserve on 12th November, 2001 (Gazette Notification Number LDB 277/40). The JNU is located within the Highland Series of crystalline rocks close to the Vijayan / Highland Boundary. The quartz outcrop is estimated to be over five hundred million years old. The Na, botanically known as Mesua ferrea, is indigenous to the wetter part of India and Sri Lanka. However, this area belongs to the Tropical Lowland Seasonal Rain Forest.

This research was carried out as an exploration of the archaeological site of the JNU. The importance of the archaeological site of the JNU lies in the fact that it:

a) is associated with an important mineral resource i.e. Rose Quartz Deposites (This mineral has been found at some archaeological sites for bead making),
b) is situated in a natural forest habitat of Na trees, presumably grown as a park in antiquity,
c) represents archaeological remains belonging to several phases of the Historical Period (BC and AC period),
d) is in close proximity to several other important archaeological sites eg. Ibbankattuwa and Anakatawa Proto Historic Megalithic sites and early Brahmi-inscription bearing drip-ledge cave sites eg. Budugehinna, Digampathaha and Vanasinghavihara,
e) is located in an area where most of the old names of both villages and natural tanks are retained in their near original forms.

The archaeological structures and artifacts found at the site are as follows:

Cluster I. Stupa, Bodhighara, and Stone pillars of a foundation (presumably an Uposathaghara).

The above structures are at the south west boundary of the outcrops.

Cluster II. Ruins of foundations of buildings (presumably two linked to each other)

Steps (72 in number) are cut leading to the top of the rock.

Attani kanu (a pillar inscription) located at Ranawa is in close proximity to the above mentioned archaeological sites.

The need for a thorough exploration followed by excavation in the area is strongly recommended prior to arriving at a definite conclusion regarding the nature of the site. The JNU can be developed as a unique Sri Lankan site representing a conglomerate of both cultural and natural heritage, and may consequently prove to be an ideal location for cultural tourism.