

GROUP OF MAHAYANA BODHISATTVA PAINTING: CAUSE STUDY ABOUT KOTIYAGĀLA WALL PAINTING

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Introduction

The research history of ancient Sri Lankan wall paintings goes to the beginning of last century. But most of researches have been limited for very few places. So that some of important & rare places with paintings are continuously isolated from researchers. Kotiyagāla is a kind of place with rarely identified paintings. Though there are two sites with ancient wall paintings, it will be expected to pay attention to the bodhisattva image on the rock lebensraum at the north side of the Kotiyagala mountain.

De Silva & Manju Sri have done some researches about the wall painting in Kotiyagala also Bandaranayake & Somathilake have extracted above reported information for some of their studies. Though De Silva has reported these wall paintings in 1970 decade, he didn't state about the objectives of the paintings. Manju Sri mentioned that male configuration at the middle of the paint demonstrates '*padmapani bodhisattva*'. But we can present an alternative idea about the objective of this configuration. Also previous researchers didn't pay attention for the chronology, craft technology or artistic characteristics of the painting. So, it will be expected to do a basic study to emphasis the contextual value of this painting with the concentrating above manners.

Methodology

Firstly we paid attention to reported information & previous researches about this wall painting with the library referring. Later we continued this study to a fully documentation field survey with photography, sketches, written document with the usage of modern technical methods. Then there will be a comparative study with previous research recognitions

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and painting demonstrations through Mahayana sources. Finally, expect to come to the conclusion through this comparative study.

Findings & results

Kotiyagala mountain is located in a jungle, 6 miles in the north of Battegama - Kotiyagala colony in Siyabalanduwa regional sectarian, Monaragala district, Uva province. Certain wall painting can be seen inside of the left wall which has been built to cover the rock lebensraum. There is a male configuration with a right handed lotus in the middle of the 10 × 12 feet context. It is difficult to identify detailed information because of the removing of colour plaster & discolored with the time. Whatever it is clear that he bears a simple cowl & a necklace. He is with nude bust & covers lower part of the body with a *jothi*. There is a female figure at the left side of that male figure. Though previous researches have not been reported, she seems to have been touching a creeper with a lotus with a left hand. She wears a crown or high bund. There is an imagined upper part portrait of 'vimana' in the middle of those above mentioned figures. Two human figures also can be identified at the right side of the main male figure. Though de Silva has recognized both as female figures, according to this survey we could be able to identify the small figure that has been portrayed very close to the main male figure is not a female figure but a male figure. It seems that he is bearing a crown. Female figure next to the small male figure is concentrating her attention to main male figure. Her head has decorated with flowers & a headdress. She is wearing a necklace also. There is a beautiful flower decoration in the middle upper side of the certain female figure & main male figure. It may be assumed as a symbol. All of these human figures have been portrayed in a reddish brown colour context that makes us to assume this as one group.

According to Manju Sri, main male figure demonstrates '*padmapani bodhisattva*'. Lotus with right hand of it might be the key point for this statement. But he failed to identify other human figures. But we should memorize that *padmapani bodhisattva* is included into *avalokiteshvara*

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category according to the morphology of bodhisattva. According to some of researchers padmapani is one of avatar of avalokiteshvara bodhisattva. Except *padmapani*, *rajakumara avalokiteshvara* & *potalakāvalokiteshvara* are bearing lotuses. Sometimes *arapachana manju sri bodhisattva* also bears a lotus with hand. So, it is seemed to be difficult to approach to a final conclusion that this figure is demonstrating the *padmapani bodhisattva*. Also, it should be concentrated more attention that none of those bodhisattva doesn't bear lotus with right hand but also this male figure is bearing a lotus with right hand. It can be identified as a specific characteristic of this painting.

Conclusion

Whatever, we can mention that certain figure demonstrates as *avalokiteshvara bodhisattva*. We can be able to come to this conclusion with considering of middle figure, other human figures also adjunct environment of this painting. Tārā goddess is considered as the strength of *avalokiteshvara bodhisattva*. But later she has been portrayed as two avatārs. They have been recognized as 'sitatārā' & 'haritatārā'. *Sitatārā* demonstrates *varada mudra* in left hand & *vitarka mudra* also a lotus in right hand and wearing a similar dress like bodhisattva. *Haritatārā* also wears that kind of similar dress but she is different from *sitatārā* with bearing a crown & messy hair. Though these evidences it can be able to assume these figures as avatārs of Tārā goddess. Because the female figure at the left side of bodhisattva configuration seems to have been bearing a kind of thing that similar to creeper with a lotus & the female figure in right side is with a crown or that kind of thing. Due to the destruction of the painting, it is difficult to identify the hand postures of *sitatārā* or *haritatārā* through these female figures.

The misunderstood male figure that can be seen in the right lower side of bodhisattva by De Silva as a female figure can able to be prince of sudhana. He has been demonstrated in small scale because he is recognized as the son of bodhisattva. Also, the *vimāna* at the right side of the

bodhisattva may demonstrate the *sukhāvatiya. Amithaba*, dhayani Buddhist of *avalokiteshvara* resides inside of it. So, it can be able to assume that this painting portraits *avalokiteshvara bodhisattva* & his associates. Historical context that connected with the painting guides us to approach that conclusion.

With the considering of literary & archaeological evidences, comparatively *padmapani bodhisattva* was not popular as *avalokiteshvara bodhisattva*. Also it seems to have been a folk worship that connected to Mahayana which spread in Kotiyagala area. As the final conclusion, we can assume that *avalokiteshvara bodhisattva* was the objective for this wall painting.

Keyword: *Kotiyagala, wall paintings, avalokitheshvara, mahayana*

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