



**Nature of Prehistoric Archaeological Investigation and Research in  
Sri Lanka (1992 – 2019)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Sri Lankan prehistoric investigations can be divided into several phases. Identifying the nature of prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka between 1992 – 2018 is the research problem of this paper. The main objective of the research is to collect data and information of Prehistoric Archaeological Investigation and Research (Exploration and Excavation) in Sri Lanka between 1992 – 2018 and arrange them in chronological order. In this process data and information were collected using primary and secondary sources through library survey, Field study, web survey and interviews were conducted to obtain more quantitative data. The key research findings of the research are based on the identified several extraordinary features of this period compared to the early research periods such as systematic excavations, chronological methods, multi-disciplinary approach, researches in associated with new scientific methodologies and innovative scientific methodologies including genealogical experiments.*

## 1. Introduction

In the journey of the human race from the origin to a modern human, we find different periods which have caused to sharpen human society. Among these periods Prehistory holds an important period in the time of the development of the Human race. In this journey, our ancestors left much material evidence which is hidden and undiscovered. These hidden treasures always become a piece of a Jigsaw puzzle of the historical journey of mankind. In the same way, Prehistoric archaeological investigation and research help to draw a clear picture of prehistoric society. Sri Lanka has one of the best recorded prehistoric sequences in South Asia. A revived of prehistory is a vast subject. These reasons prove that there is a great potentiality for prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this paper explores the importance of the "Prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka between 1992 - 2018" and how they helped the development of the Sri Lankan prehistoric archaeology.

Prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka between 1992 to present had focused on various important prehistoric archaeological facts. On the other hand, many scholars have conducted many prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka between 1992 to present. But these have not been systematically collected to a single database and not arranged in chronological order.

The main objective of this research is to systematically arrange data and information of "Prehistoric archaeological investigations and researches between 1992 to 2018" into a single database in chronological order. Other objectives of this research are identifying the multidisciplinary practice of such investigation and research, enlisting publications and research papers of prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka. between 1992 - 2018,

identifying the interest and awareness about such investigation in Sri Lanka among university community and Identifying the nature of prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka (1992 - 2018).

## 2. Materials and Methods

The methodology that has been applied for this study is based on the processual archaeological perspective. In order to collect primary data from the prehistoric archaeologists, semi-structured interviews were conducted via online interviews and face-to-face interviews. Library survey, Web sites and field studies were also used to collect primary data. In the library survey, I referred to field reports, excavation reports, exploration reports, administrative reports and laboratory reports. Secondary Data were collected from textbooks, journal articles, web sites and newspapers. For web sources, web sites which published high standard academic research papers like "Academia, Research Gate, Nature, The Science and Google scholars" and website of international high ranked universities, main scientific magazines, laboratories, government and non-government offices were used.

### 2.1 Prehistory & Prehistoric Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of human cultures through the study of material and environmental remains. (Renfrew & Bahn, 2016, p.22-50). Archaeology can be further subdivided into prehistoric archaeology and historic archaeology. Prehistoric archaeology refers to cultures that did not develop writing. The term prehistory, in major dictionaries and encyclopedias, varies.

As an example, New World Encyclopedia and The Penguin Dictionary of Archaeology explain the etymology of the term Prehistory as:

"Prehistory (Greek words  $\pi\rho$  = before and  $\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$  = history) is the period before written

history became available to assist our understanding of the past. The term was introduced into English by Daniel Wilson (1816–1892), President of Toronto University College, in 1851. The term Pré-Historique had been used in France Touranal, French since the 1830s to describe the time before writing. Paul Tournal originally coined the term in describing the finds he had made in the caves of southern France.”

The Penguin Dictionary of Archaeology describes the term prehistory with more detail:

"In the strict sense, 'history' is written an account of thaw past recovered from the written record, but such as an account can be prepared from other sources, notably archaeology. The term 'prehistory' was coined to cover the sorry of man's development before the appearance of writing. it is succeeded by Protohistory, the period for which we have some records but must still really largely on archaeological evidence to give us a coherent account. (Bray & Trump, 1972, p.189).

Prehistory differs from history in many other ways. It deals with the activities of a society or culture, not of individuals; is it restricted to the material evidence, and only such of that has survived; and it is in the strictest sense anonymous since without records we cannot know the name people, people or places and are forced to invent arbitrary labels to serve instead."

Therefore, prehistoric archaeology is the reconstruction of mankind's most distant past before the invention of writing. Instead of beginning history with 'Our ancestors the Gauls', or dating our origins back to the Homeric age, Mahawamsha, Depawansha age or the Biblical fourth millennium, the prehistorian plunges into the bewildering depths of the geological past. This is still part of history, however, and in the absence of written evidence, the prehistorian has to make use of many more sources of

information He also has to collect together all the clues which are independent of writing to compile a valid restoration of the past and extend the boundaries of history, for his basic objective in the history of the human race.

In this way, prehistoric archaeology is both a physical activity out on the field, either for exploration work or excavation process or both. It is also an intellectual pursuit, analyzing the collected materials in the laboratory and writing reports. It is an exciting quest that is the quest for knowledge about early man who existed in the distant past. The most challenging task for a prehistoric archaeologist is to know how to interpret the past material culture in human terms. Many questions confront a prehistoric archaeologist or prehistorian.

Who were they?

What did they eat?

How did they make stone, bone? Antler and conch shell tools?

How were these tools and pots used?

How were societies organized?

What did the environment look like?

What contacts did they have?

What did they think?

How did things change?

To address all these questions, prehistoric archaeologists study the material culture left by the forerunners in different angles using or applying the methods of natural and physical sciences such as Zooarchaeology, Paleobotany, Paleoclimatology, Paleoecology, Palynology, Paleontology, Biological Anthropology, Archaeogenetic, Ethnoarchaeology, Geoarchaeology, Pedology, Speleology, Radiometric dating methods, geology, geography, Climatology, and Archaeological chemistry etc.

During the last fifty years, prehistoric archaeology has developed with extraordinary rapidity into a firmly established branch of science. A system has been constructed, the frontiers of several cultural phenomena have been laid down, and the outlines of prehistoric chronology have been formed. Hypotheses and assertions have been made concerning the ethnographical groups of prehistoric times, and lengthy 'prehistoric' periods have been transformed into 'historic' ones.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

Sri Lanka holds an important place in prehistoric societies that existed in the Indian subcontinent. It is a tropical island that lies approximately halfway between Africa and Australia along the northern rim of the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, Sri Lanka has one of the best recorded prehistoric sequences in South Asia. A revived of prehistory is a vast subject. These reasons prove that there is a great potentiality for prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka. The present study investigates the Island hunter-gatherer archaeology between the Late Pleistocene and the Middle Holocene Prehistory of Sri Lanka.

Humans first inhabited Sri Lanka during the Pleistocene period. (Deraniyagala, 1958, p.57) The history of inhabitation of the human in Sri Lanka has been revealed through the stone tool evidence from excavations which date from 125,000 BP. (Dharaniyagala, 1992, 686), (Perera, 2010, p. 25). Chronologically, the human osteological remains found in Sri Lanka could be dated from ca. 48000 yBP to present; Fahien cave 48000, Batadombalena 37000, Kitulgala Belilena 16000, Ravana Ella 6500, Sigiri Potana 6000, Mantota 3800 yBP. Some of the other Sri Lankan protohistoric sites too represent the human osteological remains belonging to the above sequence. (Manamendra-Arachchi & Wikramasinghe, 2014 p. 19) Human remains were also found in shell middens at Hungama and Pallemallala

in the South. These were dated to 6000 yBP. (Somadeva, 2006) According to S.U. Deraniyagala, Kenneth Kennedy and Diane Hawkey the Veddahs are a race with genes coming from a diverse collection of immigrants to the island. They assume that only 5% of the Veddah genes are from the Balangoda Man. (Hawkey, 2002) Hawkey's examination of morphological characteristics of teeth of the prehistoric, iron-age, early historic, tribal and recent man in South Asia revealed that the Sri Lankan hunter-gatherer is closely related to the Sri Lankan Iron-Age man. These two are completely isolated in the clade. (Hawkey, 1997)

The material culture and the stone tool tradition of Sri Lanka are highlighted in the late Pleistocene and early Holocene. These can be categorized according to the type of stone (lithic) tools used. The Lower Paleolithic has not been reliably documented in Sri Lanka. The alluvial (gem - bearing) gravels of the Ratnapura district referred, to as the Ratnapura beds, have yielded man-made chopping and cutting tools (Ratnapura Industry), in association with a fossil fauna (Ratnapura fauna), which could tentatively be assigned to the Paleolithic (Deraniyagala, 1958, p. 56-65) (Manamendra-Arachchi & Wikramasinghe, 2014 p. 20). Tools found associated with high-level coastal deposits in the north and south-east of the island (Iranamadu formation) and recent findings from Jaffna can also be assigned tentatively to the Lower Paleolithic pending scientific dating of these occurrences (Manamendra-Arachchi & Wikramasinghe, 2014 p. 20). The Middle Paleolithic has been recorded in Sri Lanka. A few sites in the coastal gravels of the Iranamadu formation have been dated to between 125,000 and 75,000 BP (Deraniyagala 1992, p.82 -104) (Manamendra-Arachchi & Wikramasinghe, 2014 p. 20). There are numerous occurrences on the surface of the Iranamadu formation and some in the Ratnapura beds, which are likely to have been of this phase of technology. According to tool technology, it is difficult to clearly distinguish between the

Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic phases. As a result, speculation exists as to the existence of an upper Palaeolithic phase in Sri Lanka.

The Mesolithic period in Sri Lanka (Balangoda culture) has been dated from approximately 48,000 – 3,800 yBP. (Manamendra-Arachchi & Wikramasinghe, 2014 p. 20) The prehistoric record is much more complete. The stone tools made of chert and quartz displays the highest degree of workmanship, notably the geometric microlith and the exquisite pressure-flaked Balangoda points which resemble arrowheads. Some pitted pebbles used for producing fire and grinding purposes have been made from granitic rocks. (Deraniyagala 1992, p.512) Bovine and cervix incisor teeth have been sharpened and used as tools; these tools and beads made of seashells and Shark teeth occur from 50,000 years onwards. Animals (perhaps cattle) may have been herded and the domestication of plants could have reached an incipient stage. Pottery seems to have been produced in the final stages. The human of Mesolithic Sri Lanka was an anatomically modern Homo sapien, popularly known as the Balangoda man (Manamendra-Arachchi & Wikramasinghe, 2014 p. 19 - 25).

Some Sri Lankan archaeologists envisage the beginning of animal husbandry and the incipient domestication of oats and barley to as early as 17,000 yBP in Sri Lanka's montane grasslands (Premathilake, 2013, p.219-228). These prehistorians believe these early experimentations evolved into a matured phase of cultivated oats and barley by 10,000 yBP. Pottery has been found in association with Mesolithic tools at cave habitation sites, and a few stone axes with grinding on their faces have also been discovered. It is not feasible as yet to separate the numerous Mesolithic sites characterized by microliths into pre-farming and farming (Neolithic) phases. Dr. Premathilake indicates the presence of a pre-farming/pastoral culture from 14,000 - 10,000 yBP at Horton Plains. (Premathilake, 2003, p.1525-1541)

(Premathilake, 2012) (Premathilake, 2006, p.468-496) (Premathilake, 2015, p.118-156) (Adhikari & Thanthilage, 2007).

To understand prehistoric archaeological research investigations in Sri Lanka, one should start with the beginnings of archaeological survey in Sri Lanka and beginning of prehistoric archaeological research investigations in India. Prehistoric archaeological research investigations including anthropological and ethnological investigations also began in the late 19th Century. The beginning of prehistoric archaeological research in India could be stated as having begun from 1863 after the discovery of a Paleolithic tool from a rock crater. On the 31st of May 1863, Robert Bruce Foote, of the Geological Survey of India discovered and identified the first Paleolithic tools at Pallavaram in the Chingleput District of Madras. (Penniman, Sen & Ghosh, 1967) (Pappu, 91) (Perera, 2010, p.20) Influenced by these discoveries, various western scholars initiated prehistoric archaeological research investigations in Sri Lanka. An investigation into the prehistory of Sri Lanka commenced in the 1890s and became established by 1908. Thereafter, it progressed fruitfully until the late 1930s when it became steadier. (Perera, 2010)

According to the Former Deputy Director-General of Department of Archaeology, Dr. Nimal Perera, the "History of Prehistoric Archaeological Investigation and research" in Sri Lanka can be broadly divided into 3 periods. (Perera, 2010, p.20)

- I. Incipient research during the pre-independence period (1885 – 1930)
- II. Research during the late pre-independence period (1930 – 1968)
- III. Research during the post-pre-independence period (1968- 1990)

Research during the late pre-independence period, which saw the inceptions of

systematics prehistoric archaeological investigations in Sri Lanka. During this period, most of the archaeological investigation was undertaken by the National Museum in Colombo under the directorship of Dr.P.E.P Deraniyagala. During the Last Period, most of the archaeological investigations were undertaken by the Excavation Section of the Archaeological department, under the directorship of Dr. Siran Upendra Deraniyagala. (Perera, 2010, p.20-230

Although these 3 periods lasted till 1990, there were many other prehistoric archaeological investigation and research which had been done in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it provides a gap in the research history of prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka. According to my perspective, prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka can be divided to one more period which can be dated between 1992 to present (2018). The main objective of my research is to define that period (1992 – 2018) and examine the nature of the prehistoric archaeological investigation and research in Sri Lanka in this period. I am titling the period as "Research during the contemporary period". The reason for this titling lays on publication of Dr. Siran Deraniyagala's doctoral thesis at the Harvard University in the USA titled as "Prehistory of Sri Lanka: an ecological perspective". "Prehistory of Sri Lanka: an ecological perspective memorial volume 08 of Archaeology Survey of Sri Lanka is the first comprehensive in-depth account to have been written on the subject. It is the definitive text on the prehistoric archaeology of the Island. (Deraniyagala, 1992)

The most significant scholar of the post-independence period of prehistoric research in the island, Dr. Siran Deraniyagala has worked over 40 years on the study and investigations of prehistory and continue to assist in the study of prehistory as a consultant and resource person. His major work, his doctoral thesis at the Harvard

University in the USA titled as "Prehistory of Sri Lanka: an ecological perspective". is the first comprehensive in-depth account to have been written on the subject. (Deraniyagala, 1992) (Perera, 2010, p.23) It is the definitive text on the prehistoric archaeology of the Island. On the other hand, Dr. Siran Deraniyagala's main contribution to the Sri Lankan prehistoric archaeological investigation and research was a group of well-trained young scholars working under his instructions who were his students. This group of scholars did many prehistoric investigations and research which enhanced Sri Lankan prehistoric archaeological investigation and research of the contemporary period. Most of Sri Lankan prehistoric archaeological investigations and research of this contemporary period were done by these followers of Dr. Siran Deraniyagala. This chapter provides an account of details of prehistoric archaeological investigations and research of the followers of Dr. Siran Deraniyagala.

Another important event of this period was the establishment of the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology (PGIAR) of the University of Kelaniya, specially dedicated to advanced research in Prehistoric archaeology. The PGIAR has acted as Sri Lanka's convener of the Sigiriya Dambulla region Settlement Archaeology Project, which has recovered important evidence on the prehistory of "Cultural Triangle" as well as cultural developments during the Iron Age. Other archaeologists from the University of Kelaniya, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, University of Rajarata, University of Ruhuna and University of Peradeniya are actively collaborating in the research as well as the teaching prehistory. (Perera, 2010)

Chronology of research during the contemporary period is also an important area in the research. An excavation was conducted between 1990 and 1991 by the Post Graduate Institute of Archaeology, Colombo near Sigiriya Rock Fortress, Aligala cave by Prof. Gamini Adhikari (Karunarathne

& Adhikari, 1994) (Bandaranayake et al, 1990) (Bandaranayake & Mogren, 1994) Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya. Moreover, in the year of 1991 an Excavation was done at Dhorawak-Kanda Cave by Dr.W.D Wijeyapala; (Deraniyagala, 1991, p.34) Department of Archaeology and another at Pothana Cave by Prof Gamini Adhikari., Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya. (Bandaranayake et al, 1990) (Bandaranayake & Mogren, 1994) (Adhikari, 1998) (Adhikari, 2007). And also an emergency exploration and excavation in and around Samanala wewa hydroelectric scheme was conducted in 1988-1992 under the Director of Dr.S.U. Deraniyagala and Miss Gill Julef of the Institute of Archaeology, University of London. (Deraniyagala, 1991, p.32-34)

Earth samples were obtained in 1993 from prehistoric sites in Sri Lanka for research in OSL (Optically Stimulated Luminescence) dating, one of the latest methods of dating in the world. (Deraniyagala, 1993, p.61-62) This was treated as a prime research project of the excavation section. This work was conducted jointly by the Department of Archaeology and the Quaternary Dating Centre of the Australian National University (ANU). In this project, two scientists of the ANU and Mr. Mohan Abeyratne of the Central Cultural Fund collaborated. To confirm the scientific validity of the geological and radiometric chronology already obtained for the prehistoric sites of Sri Lanka, nearly 100 soil samples for OSL dating were obtained from the prehistoric caves at Kuruwita Batadombalena, Kitulgala Belilena, Fahien Cave in Bulatsinhala and Dorawaka-Lena as well as from the open-air prehistoric sites at Embilipitiya, Bundala, Patirajawela, Ussangoda and Minihagal-Kanda in Yala. (Dharaniyagala,1993, p61-62), (Abeyratne, 1994, p585-588) (Abeyrathna et al,1997, p243-255)

Later in 1994, a prehistoric excavation was done at Bandarawela Church Hill, by

Department of Archaeology, Dr.Nimal Perera (Deraniyagala, 1994, p.50-51) and in 1995, an exploration in Ussangoda, by Department of Archaeology (Deraniyagala, 1995, p.14) and a Research project in Horton Plains, by Dr.T.R.Premathilake; Post Graduate Institute of Archaeology. The latter project has collaborated with D.S.Epitawatta, Department of Geography, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka, Prof. Urve Miller and Ass. Prof. Jan Risbergthe, Department of Quaternary Research, Stockholm University and the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University financed by the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation (SAREC), to study environmental changes on the Horton Plains in the central part of Sri Lanka. (Premathilake, 2003, p.1525-1541) (Premathilake, 2012) (Premathilake, 2006, p.468-496) (Premathilake, 2015, p.118-156).

In 1997 a rescue excavation in Pallemalala was done by Prof. Raj Somadewa, Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya. (Somadeva & Ranasinghe, 2006, p.14-24) There is an extensive (over 2 sq. km) deposit of lagoon shells in this area, which is being quarried by local villagers on contract to suppliers of lime. The site occurs as an ancient midden within this 25 sq. km area. Besides, an inspection, exploration and documentation of Prehistoric artefact in the gem mines of Supiritmat Village in the Ambalangoda Division, was conducted by Department of Archaeology. (Dharaniyagala,1997, p.37) in the same year

In the year of 1998, a Prehistoric Exploration near the Sigiriya, Thammangala, Kanduwagala, Unalugala, Malasna, Ramakale and North Section of Sigiriya was done by Sigiriya Project – Central Cultural Fund (CCF) (CCF, 1998) and an Exploration in the Caves in Kegalle by Department of Archaeology. Certain caves in the Kegalle district were endangered by development activities. Some of these were surveyed in 6th – 13th January by Nimal Perera, Archaeological Officer, excavation under W.H.Wijeyapala's

supervision. (Deraniyagala, 1998, p.59). The caves explored were Indurana cave, Ruwanwella, Caves in Asmadala, Aranayake Division, Ada-Lena, 85/B Pitaden&a Wasama, Warakapola Division, Koti-gallena, Morley Oya Estate, Magalla, Ruwanwella Division. Another exploration in Meemure, Udu dhumbara division, was done by Department of Archaeology in 1998 and a significant discovery of a prehistoric cave habitation known as Alu Lena was found. (Deraniyagala, 1998, p.59).

Prehistoric Exploration in Ritigala, Sigiriya and Gallinda-Kanda was done by Sigiriya Project - Central Cultural Fund (CCF)(CCF,2000) in 2000 and in 2005, an excavation in Kuruwita batadombalena and Bellan-bandi-palassa, was directed by Dr. Nimal Perera, Department of Archaeology. The excavation was assisted by L.A. de Mel, S.J. Sunil, Susantha Nihal, P.G. Gunadasa and Jude Perera, and the survey of the study area was undertaken by A.P. Asoka, S.J. Sunil and Nissanka. The field season was from 31 August 2005. Bellan-bandi Palossa charcoal samples were dated through AMS by the University of Waikato Radiocarbon Laboratory in New Zealand. (Perera,2010) The main phase of habitation at Bellan-bandi Palassa is accordingly dated to between 11,000 and 12,000 years Cal BR. Climatically it would have been a humid phase as indicated by the presence of *Acavus arboreal* snails in this stratum. Another Excavation was done in Varana Cave by Prof.Gamini Adhikari. (Department of Archaeology, 2009).

An excavation in Godawaya, by Department of Archaeology and an excavation in Mini athiliya, by Dr Nimal Perera, Department of Archaeology took place in 2007. (Perera 2010) (Kulathilake, 2014, p.1-08}). The latter was accompanied by Dr. Samantha Kulathilake who was its consulting biological anthropologist, as well as Priyantha Costa, Nuwan Abeywardana, U.W. Karunasena, S.S. Garusingha, Tharangi Dissanayaka, Oshan Fernando, Anusha Kasthuri, M.M. Susantha

Nihal, S.P. Chandana, W.M.T. Janapriya, as well as many individuals in the Sri Lanka Department of Archaeology. (Kulathilake, 2014, p.1.08) (Kulathilake, 2018, p51-82). In 2008, an excavation in Alavala Potgul-Lena Cave was led by Prof. Gamini Adhikari, Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology to seek new information and create awareness about prehistoric culture. Excavations were done in two phases at the end and at the beginning of the years 2008 and 2009 respectively. (De Silva, 2009)

The 2010-2011 fieldwork included an extensive ground reconnaissance survey program and two excavations were conducted in the higher elevations (800-3000 feet MSL) of the southern slope of the central mountains. The main focus of the ground reconnaissance survey conducted by Raj Somadeva was the geographical area extending from Opanayake to Haputale, which is approximately 50km apart. Several archaeological sites were located, scattered on the mountain slopes (3000-5000 feet MSL) from the Horton Plains down to the Haputale Plateau on the southern gradient of the central mountains. The number of identified sites, at first glance, does not suggest a thick density of sites. All the caves excavated have very shallow soil deposits. (Rassagala, Lunugalge, Udupiyangalge, Alugalge). (Somadeva et al, 2018, p225-252). Another Excavation in Fa-Hien Cave was also done in 2010. (Perera 2010).

In the year 2012, Dr. Nimal Perera and Mr. Oshan Wedage directed an excavation in Fa-Hien Cave. Excavation has yielded a very large archaeological assemblage including organic remains from initiate habitation to the mid-Holocene. This assemblage was studied by Jude Perera of the Department of Archaeology and Dr.T.R.Premathilake of the PGIAR. Bio anthropophagy studies on the human remain recovered from the excavation of Fa Hien cave in 2011 is currently being conducted by Prof. Jay stock of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

(Perera, 2012) (Roberts et al, 2017, p102-118) (Roberts et al, 2015, p.1246-1249).

A prehistoric exploration in Nagolla Magal-Lena division by Sigiriya Project – Central Cultural Fund (CCF) and an Excavation in Kuragala by Dr Nimal Perera was carried out in 2013.(CCF, 2013) Several specific objectives set for the excavation at Kuragala. (Perera ,2013) included follows; investigate prehistoric cultural sequence of the site, an examination of the functional aspect of the site which could demonstrate the degree of diversity within dry zone and wet zone, the establishment of a chronological framework based radiocarbon dating and establishment of substance strategies and techniques.

Adding to the aforesaid, an excavation in Hunugalagala Limestone Cave was done headed by Prof Raj Somadewa in the year of 2013. In 2014, an excavation of D13 Cave, Yapahuwa excavation were done by Yapahuwa Project – Central Cultural Fund (CCF). Burnt Cranium celanicus, thel kakuna was found in this excavation and it's dated by Radiocarbon date in 5090 Cal BP. Emergency exploration in Kuragala was carried out in 2015 which is a very important exploration, conducted by Exploration Section, Regional Archaeology Office, Seetahawaka – Awissawella region. (Department of Archaeology, 2015). The second season of the Hunters in Transition project was initiated between 22nd July and 4th September 2016 by Prof. Raj Somadeva. Two excavations have been carried out in Illukkumbura of Balangoda. (Somadeva et al, 2018, p225-252) The first cave excavated was Paragahamaditta Galge alias Bandukanda Galge in Panana which has revealed a rich assemblage of prehistoric stone implements. The second cave excavated was Alu Galge. Environmental samples were analyzed through AMS dating method by Beta Analytic Inc. in the USA. Excavation of the prehistoric cave of Alugalge is conducted by the Field Archaeology Unit of the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology (PGIAR) led by Professor Raj Somadeva and a team of

researchers from the PGIAR and University students. (Perera, 2013)

Later in 2016 an excavation in Udupiyangallena cave, conducted by Prof. Raj Somadewa and an Exploration in Rathnapura Verse were done by Rathnapura Project – Central Cultural Fund (CCF). The archaeological heritage of the Ratnapura district belonging to the wet zone of Sri Lanka represents those of the pre-historic age to historic age. In research into the pre-historic age, this region has been confirmed as a significant zone where evidence is available up to the Pleistocene age. (Somadeva et al, 2018, p225-252) The heritage management of the Ratnapura district was begun by the Central Cultural Fund in 2016 centred on Sri Lanka's pre-historic heritage. Dr. Nimal Perera conducted a four-year, four-step exploration project in Rathnapura District centred on prehistoric heritage in Sri Lanka with the supervision of Dr. Siran Deraniyagala. This Exploration project activates as follows: This project helps to discover caves, rock shelters and open-air habitation which contain a prehistoric context. Few examples of the places are, Divisional Secretarial Area Kuruwita; Batadomaba-Lena, Dahaiya-Lena, Batathota-Lena, Sthreepura cave, Miyanadeniya cave, Kalupahana cave, Lenagalu Lena cave, Yaya-gallena cave, Andirigane cave, Erathna open-air habitation area. Divisional Secretarial Area Rathnapura; Divi-gallena cave, Walagamba temple. Divisional Secretarial Area Kalawana; Nerawana-gallena cave. Divisional Secretarial Area Alapatha; Kukululena. Divisional Secretarial Area Palmadulla; Nugelen cave, Divi-gallena cave, Mawuddaluwaththa cave. Divisional Secretarial Area Niwithigala; Shiwankara-Lena cave and Divisional Secretarial Area Ahaliyagoda; Ambanwela cave, Pareyigala cave, Sudem Lena/Maduruwalena cave. These findings of the research will lead to the later discussion of the topic. (CCF Rathnapura, 2016) (CCF Rathnapura, 2017) (CCF Rathnapura, 2018)

Prehistoric archaeology occupied a major place in the archaeology of Sri Lanka. Thus, it can be observed that since the beginning of archaeological investigations in South Asia, the foundation for the Sri Lankan prehistoric archaeological investigations has been laid. These researchers were able to discover evidence encompassing almost all the fields which describe the prehistoric man of Sri Lanka and technology, culture, settlements, cults, social information, subsistence etc. which are interconnected with his life. Along with the contribution of archaeologists who are involved in this field, it can help derive a complete idea about the prehistory in Sri Lanka,

When we look into the incipient research during the pre-independence period, we can notice several significant features as follows; All research was done by foreigners, explorations were conducted by non-archaeologists and professionals of different other fields, attention has been paid to the stone implements and anthropological factors and most of these excavations were conducted in the central hills of the country.

However, when comparing world prehistoric archaeology, Sri Lanka has amassed a great deal of data and created a firm base for the syllabus of prehistoric archaeology. Accordingly, we could say that modern prehistoric archaeology has a firm foundation and a formal point of view. The 2nd phase of early prehistoric researches can be identified as the late pre-independence period. The most important aspect of this period is the feature of transition in every aspect. When observing this period, one could see the buildup of the theoretical features of the early period as well as the formation of a solid foundation for the modern period. The other most important aspect of this period is the emergence of local scholars at the forefront of prehistoric studies of the country, unlike the early period where foreign scholars dominated the stage. This period saw systematic, organized expeditions taking place on a much larger scale than before; and

also the involvement of Government institutes such as the Department of Museums in prehistoric research is a notable feature.

In addition to that, the conducting of expeditions throughout the entire island and also conducting studies about geology, zoology, anthropology and art, and the participation of new expeditors in this field are some other significant features. Research during the post-pre-independence period (1968- 1992) is the 3rd phase of early Sri Lankan prehistoric researches. The archaeological excavations and analysis methods were revolutionized by Dr. Siran Deraniyagala in 1969 with the excavations of the near Image house (Gedige) of the Citadel area of Anuradhapura, which could be seen as the inaugural step into this modern period. (Deraniyagala, 1972, p48-169) (Deraniyagala, 1992). The contributions made by the scholars who came through the free education system in the country could be seen during this period, and the most important resource person being Dr. Siran Upendra Deraniyagala. At the beginning of the modern period, all research on the prehistory of the country was done through the Department of Archaeology under the leadership of Dr. Siran Deraniyagala. Also during this period could be observed the contributions of foreign scholars invited by the Department or in collaboration with them. From the 1990s, prehistoric research was being centred on the Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology (PGIAR) of the University of Kelaniya.

4th period can be identified as the research during the contemporary period (1992 to present). This period includes the incidents which occurred with the publishing of Dr. Shiran Deraniyagala's doctoral thesis. During this period, researches by Department of Archaeology co-related with Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology (PGIAR) of the University of Kelaniya and also researches of independent expeditors can be seen. Scholars such as Dr. Nimal Perera and skilled

excavators including De Mel have engaged in the researches. In addition, foreign scholars and institutions have worked with local personals and institutions. Most of these researches are published and more than 500 research papers, books included. Publishing of innovative ideas and researches about the post-Mesolithic period, transitional prehistoric period and Neolithic period is one of the special features during this period, Other archaeologists at various local universities have also been active in the research as well as teaching of prehistory.

New scientifically chronological methods and scientific studies such as thin section have been used in prehistoric data analysis along with the development of early ideas about chronology and stratigraphy. The development of a multi-disciplinary approach compared to the early periods is also another special feature. Among them, zooarchaeology, palynology were prominent. According to that, it can be identified that the prehistoric investigations are conducted in various aspects within the present-day context.

Of them, archaeozoology has reached an advanced stage. Dr. P.E.P.Deraniyagala who was a zoologist has laid the foundation for this subject and it was further extended by Mr. P.B. Karunaratne; an entomologist. Today, it has been further improved by his student MR. Kelum Nalindra Manamendra Arachchi; a zoologist. Mr Jude Perera of Department of Archaeology; one of his students has been skilled in this field. This subject is included in the syllabus of Post Graduate Institute of Archaeology under the direction of Mr. Manamendra Archchi with the guidance of Prof. Gamini Adhikari. Within this subject scope, the study of various animal kinds which were included in the early subsistence and cultural context of prehistoric man is done.

Geoarchaeology can be pointed out as another subject which supports the upliftment of prehistoric investigations along

with the interest of both local and foreign geo archaeologists including specialists such as Prof. Jinadasa Katupotha. It was able to identify early climate by using Paleobiodiversity and palynology and analysis of pollen and phytolith and identification of evidence of fauna domestication and climatic changes during the period of Pleistocene to middle Holocene periods. One of the prominent researchers who involve this field is Prof. T.R. Premathilake and Horton plains and Fa- Hien cave is his research fields. And also researches regarding early DNA and the interest to gain data from human remains can be observed. Among them, Dr. Lanka Ranaweera, Dr..Chandimal, Dr. Samanthi Kulathilake are prominent researchers.

The continuity of the guidance and direction of Dr..Shiran Deraniyagala in the field of prehistoric researches can be identified as a special feature during this period. Moreover, stone tools analysis, bone tool analysis and the topics such as recreation of food pattern of early man were subjected to discussion.

The expansion of early historic researches than prehistoric researches can be noticed during this period. The researchers have pointed out that the early historic period of Sri Lanka has begun and evolved since 2400 BC. Among the personals who contributed in these researches Dr..Shiran Deranyagala, Prof. Senaka Badaranayke Dr. Nimal Perera, Mr Priyantha Karunaratne, Prof. Raj Somadeva, Prof. Gamini Adikari, Mr. Ranjith Bandara Dissanayake, Mr. Thusitha Mendis, Dr. Mangala Katugampola, Mr Oshan Wedage can be highlighted.

As mentioned above, it can be identified that the prehistoric researches in Sri Lanka and their nature and scope during the contemporary period (1992 to present). However, there are so many problems of prehistory in the island that a lifetime's research would not suffice to solve all. "The history Ceylon and its Peoples, Past and Present, cannot be represented by a volume,

but only by a Library". So, it is still an unresolved mystery to the Prehistoric archaeologists which could be resolved with more and more systematic and effective researches and investigations along with the innovative technological advancements.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the findings of the research, prehistoric research investigation of the contemporary period (1992 to present) is wide and scientific. Most importantly, because of this research, information about this period was collected from many other different sources of different institutions and researches, into one source. Collecting much information of different sources into one source is the main contribution of this research to the field of archaeological research.

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