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MOSAICS AT KARAGAMPITIYA SUBODHARAMA VIHARA, SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research paper is to explicate about mosaics in Sri Lanka with special reference to mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama Vihara (Buddhist Temple). The methodology of this research paper consists with field research and library survey methods. A piece of art work created by placing coloured segments of tiles, porcelain, glass, stones and coins in a pattern to create a picture is called as Mosaic art. This art tradition has a ranged historical background and in the world Mosaic art; developed in various periods according to the subject and features. This Karagampitiya Subodharama Vihara has a great significance from archaeological, historical, art historical and anthropological aspects. Karagampitiya Subodharama Vihara is located at Karagampitiya village in Dehiwala divisional secretariat which belongs to Colombo district in Western province, Sri Lanka. It has extended history from the period of king Parakramabahu VI (1412 - 1467 AD) and it underwent several changes during the colonial period of Sri Lanka. According to the collected data, it could be identified that floral figures, animal figures, geometric shapes and some other objects were created by mosaic art form at the Image house and at the Sathsathige of this temple. Apart from the main objective; cultural assimilations and special features, present situation of mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama Vihara and reasons for weathering of mosaics are also discussed in this research paper.

KEY WORDS: *Archaeology, Art History, Karagampitiya Subodharama Vihara, Mosaic*

1. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka has a rich historical background for art and crafts ranged from prehistoric period, and it's a special part of Sri Lankan culture. Art history in Sri Lanka consists with art, music, dancing and sculpture. Art history of Sri Lanka is influenced by several religions in several reign periods, and art history of Sri Lanka assimilated with several art traditions. Therefore, mosaics could be identified as a limited art historical source which was developed in Sri Lanka during the colonial period.

1.1 Mosaic

Mosaic is an art form that uses small pieces of colored stone and glass, called tesserae, to create designs or pictures set in cement. In antiquity, mosaics were created exclusively to decorate architectural surfaces such as floors, walls, and vaults, and examples have been found in a wide variety of contexts, including palaces, houses, baths, mausoleums, synagogues, and churches (Olbrantz. 2009, p.p:03). In "The New Encyclopaedia Britannica" described about the "Mosaic" as follows. In art, surface decoration of small coloured components. Such as stone, minerals, glass, tiles or shell closely set in to an adhesive ground. (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2010, p.p:345)

The Encyclopedia Americana emphasized that Mosaic is the art of decorating a surface with small, fairly regular, discrete pieces of hard material, set closely together and fixed in place by an adhesive. Further, The Encyclopedia Americana indicated that the mosaicist can draw from either natural or manufactured material, as for example, bone, ivory, shell, ceramic, stone, enamel, and metal, and most frequently uses *tesserae*, or small pieces of stone or glass (The Encyclopedia Americana. 1990, p.p:480). New Standard Encyclopedia described Mosaic as a permanent decoration formed with small pieces of such materials as glass, stone, or tile. Moreover, New Standard Encyclopedia described Mosaics as primarily architectural ornaments applied to ceilings, walls, and floors of buildings, and mosaics are formed by cementing or gluing the pieces of material, called *tesserae* to a solid surface (New Standard Encyclopedia, vol.8, p.542).

1.2 Mosaics in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka could be found limited examples related to mosaic art form. Therefore, Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara*, Maduwanwela Walawuwa, Richmond Castle, Vijayananda *Vihara* - Galle, and Rankoth *Vihara*- Panadura could be considered as the places which have mosaic art. Apart from that mosaic art can be seen at the floor of some Buddhist temples and houses, and tombs (Embuldeniya. 2017, p.p.183).

1.3 Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara*

Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara* is generally known as "Karagampitiya Temple" as it is located at Karagampitiya village. The historical background indicates, that during the Kotte period (1412 - 1467), King Parakramabahu VI, gifted the

village "Madimala" to the Natha devala at Papiliyana. According to the legends, the western section of the village Madimala was known as "Karagampitiya" and the eastern section of Madimala was known as "Nadimala". Karagampitiya village used to supply coconut and fish to the Kotte Palace (Chutiwongs & Prematilleke & Silva, 1990).

King Parakramabahu VI, built a *devala* at the bottom of a Nā tree (*Mesua ferrea*) on the hillock of Karagampitiya; to protect the fishermen from foreign attacks and to have blessings of God. During the Portuguese period, the *devala* was destroyed and its stone pillars were used to build St. Anthony's Church at Mt. Lavinia. During the Dutch period, a Dutch Church and a Resting place (*Ambalama*) were built at Karagampitiya. The Methodist Church of Mt. Lavinia was built using the old stone pillars of the Dutch Church during the British period (1818). However, as at now, the stone pillars have been returned to the Karagampitiya *Vihara*. The remaining constructions were completed in 1795 during the period of King Rajadhi Rajasinghe (Chutiwongs & Prematilleke & Silva, 1990). Furthermore, the execution of a series of wall paintings and mosaics are related to 1890s (Banadaranayake. 2006, p.p.213).

The historical Paintings at this temple were important to study the history and traditions of Sri Lankan Paintings. There are Painting series in the image house and in the *sathsathige*. In the chanting hall (*Pirith Mandapaya*) which is located inside the preaching hall is indicating the paintings of Pehara ceremony. At present the temple has a stupa, image house, bodhi tree, *devala*, preaching hall, chanting hall, library, bell tower, monastic residencies, *sathsathige* and *sri padage*. These principal buildings were built according to the nature of the land.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research paper is to explicate about mosaics in Sri Lanka with special reference to mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara*. Apart from the main objective; cultural assimilations and special features, present situation of mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara* and reasons for weathering of mosaics are also discussed in this research paper.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research paper consists with field research method and library survey method. Therefore, field research method was highly emphasized for collect data on mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara*.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara*

Mosaic art at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara* could be seen in the image house and in the *sathsathige*. Porcelain products and coins were used as materials to create mosaics.

4.2 Mosaics at Image house

There could be seen mosaics of image house at sanctum and outer chamber (in front of the two entrances of sanctum) (Plan 01). The floor of the sanctum is separated into squares and mosaics of floral figures such as tree of palm species (coconut tree?) (Figure 01), banana tree (Figure 02), flower tree, lotus flowers (Figure 03) and some other trees are created on these squares. Further, there are figures of auspicious objects (Figure 04, Figure 05, Figure 06, Figure 07). Apart from that, there are figures of clock (Figure 08), and flower pot. Further there could be seen some designs created with mosaic art form at the outer chamber of the image house.

Therefore, mosaics at image house of Karagampitiya Subodharama temple could be categorized as follows.

01. Animal figures (Figure 09 - Figure 18)
02. Floral figures (Figure 01 - Figure 03)
03. Figures of auspicious objects (Figure 04 - Figure 07)
04. Figures of other objects (Figure 08)

The animal figures that found in the mosaics of this image house are tusker (Figure 09), horse (Figure 10), lion (Figure 11), bull (Figure 12), leopard (Figure 14), rabbit, goat, animal from deer family, unicorn (Figure 13), cock, hen (Figure 15), peacock, peahen, parrot, duck (Figure 16), goose, pigeon, cormorant and turkey, fish (Figure 18) and, snake (Figure 17). According to the above mentioned classification of mosaics at image house; tusker, horse, lion, bull, rabbit, goat, animal from deer family and unicorn can be categorized as quadruped. Cock, hen, peacock, peahen, parrot, duck, goose, pigeon, cormorant and turkey; could be categorized as Birds. The snakes' figure could be categorized as Reptile. There is only one figure of fish. Furthermore, these animal figures could be categorized as real world animals and mythical animals (Embuldeniya. 2015 a, p.p. 162).

Tree of palm species (coconut tree?) (Figure 01), banana tree (Figure 02), flower tree, lotus flowers (Figure 03) and some other trees which are created by mosaic art, could be considered as floral figures. Further, there are figures of umbrella (*Chathra*), flag (Figure 04), *sesath* (Figure 05), *chamara* (Figure 06) and prosperity pot (Figure 07) which could be categorized as figures of auspicious objects. Apart from that, the figures of clock (Figure 8) and flower pot could be considered as figures of other objects among mosaics at image house. Furthermore, there could be seen two special components of mosaics at the outer chamber of the image house (In front of the two entrances of sanctum). One is consisting with two lion figures and a figure of flower pot. Other one consisting with two unicorn figures and figure of a flower pot (Embuldeniya. 2017, p.p.186). Moreover, there could be seen the marks of coins that used for mosaics.

4.3 Mosaics at Sathsathige

Mosaics of *sathsathige* could be seen at inner chamber and veranda (Plan 02). Inner chamber of the *sathsathige* decorated with geometrical shapes (Circle, Square, Diamond, Octagon and Pentagon) created by the Mosaic art form (Figure 19, Figure 20, Figure 21, Figure 22). Triangular and petal shaped fragments were used to create the mosaics by associating the frames of above mentioned geometrical shapes. A rectangular area of two feet in width and thirty-five feet in length at the veranda of *sathsathige* is decorated by mosaics. The pandal of the *sathsathige* is also decorated by mosaics.

4.4 Special features of mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama Vihara

According to the mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara*, that could be identified porcelain products and coins were used as materials to create mosaics. Especially, fragments of porcelain table ware such as, saucer, plates, and bowls are mostly used for mosaics. Also, red, blue, yellow, white, green, and black colour fragments were used to create mosaics.

Apart from that, circular, triangular, and some other shaped fragments are used to make mosaics. Therefore, mosaic artist used full space of porcelain product and tracked it according to the structure of figure; to illustrate the features of specific figures. Further, there could be seen an outline around the figures to highlight the figure from background. Ex:- There is an outline around the mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara* which created from blue colour fragments. Likewise, different shapes and different size of fragments are used to form the shape and structures. Another, special feature is all the animal figures have been created with white colour and the fragments consist with shapes of animal body, such as; legs, heads and horns (Embuldeniya, 2015 a, 160-165, Embuldeniya, 2017, p.p.185).

Moreover, special features of figures are indicated from engraving the porcelain fragments. Further, the figures of animals, trees and objects created with their identical features Ex:- Lions' and horse hairs (Figure 10, Figure 11), bulls' hump (Figure 12), leopards' skin (Figure 14), various shapes of legs and feet, ears, eyes, mouths and tails, various types of beaks, wings and feathers, comb, and crest of animal figures, leaves of banana tree (Figure 02), tree of palm species (coconut tree?) (Figure 01), prosperity pot (Figure 07), clock with roman digits (Figure 08) illustrated by mosaics (Embuldeniya, 2015 a, p.p.160-165, Embuldeniya, 2017, p.p. 185). Concerning the trademarks that indicated at porcelain fragments which used for mosaics could be identified the names of England, Holland, STAFFORDSHIRE, STOKE UPON TRENT. Therefore, the trademarks of porcelain products exposed the trade relationships.

Apart from that Mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara* provides information on

contemporary society of colonial period in Sri Lanka, and socio- economic relationships of Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka; Mosaic artist assimilated features of foreign traditions, and created mosaics with combination of foreign and Sri Lankan cultural features. Ex:- Auspicious objects (*Chathra*, Flag, *Sesath*, *Chamara* and Prosperity pot), clock with roman Digits, two special components of mosaic at the two entrances of sanctum of the image house of Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara* (Two lion figures and a figure of flower pot, two unicorn figures and a figure of a flower pot).

5. SUGGESTIONS

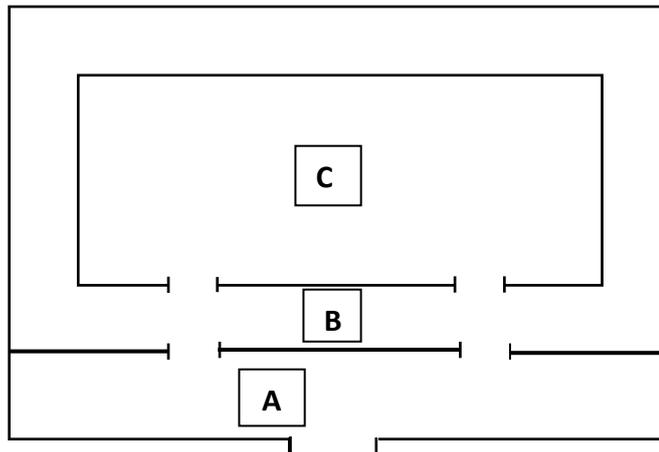
According to the collected data that could be revealed mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara* has developed with foreign and Sri Lanka cultural assimilations. At present mosaics are weathering due to lightning of oil lamps,

carelessness, lack of proper cleaning, new constructions, some human activities, and lack of awareness on mosaic art form. Therefore, should be taken a proper conservation programme to preserve mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara*.

6. CONCLUSION

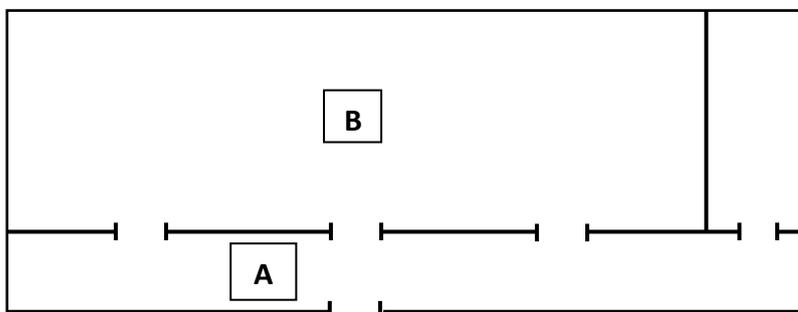
Corresponding to the above mentioned facts that could be realized mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara*, Sri Lanka has potentials to emphasize trade names of porcelain products, trade relationships, contemporary society of 19th century and early part of 20th century, symbolism, cognitive pattern, cultural assimilations, artistic features and creating technology. Therefore, Mosaics can be recognized as a limited source in Sri Lanka which has greater significance on archaeological and art historical aspects.

7. PLANS AND FIGURES



- A - Veranda
- B - Outer Chamber
- C - Sanctum

Plan 01
Ground Plan of Image house - Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara*, Sri Lanka



- A - Veranda
- B - Inner Chamber

Plan 02
Ground Plan of *Sathsathige* - Karagampitiya Subodharama *Vihara*, Sri Lanka



Figure 01
Figure of tree - Plam species (Coconut tree?)



Figure 02
Figure of Banana trees



Figure 03
Figure of Lotus Flowers



Figure 04
Figure of Flags



Figure 05
Figure of *Sesath*



Figure 06
Figure of *Chamara*



Figure 07
Figure of Prosperity Pot



Figure 08
Figure of Clock



Figure No. 09
Figure of Tusker



Figure No. 10
Figure of Horse



Figure 11
Figure of Lion



Figure 12
Figure of Bull



Figure 13
Figure of Unicorn

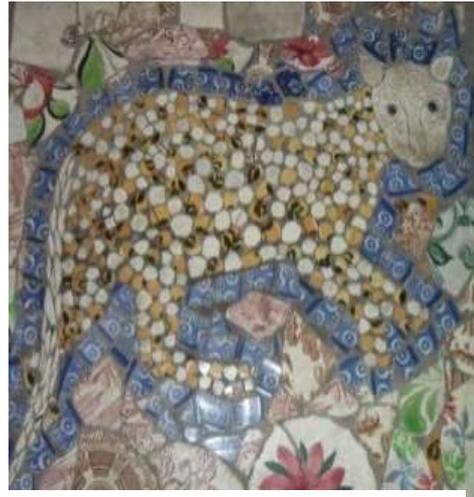


Figure 14
Figure of Leopard



Figure 15
Figure of Hen



Figure 16
Figure of Duck



Figure 17
Figure of Snake



Figure 18
Figure of Fish



Figure 19
Mosaics at Sathsathige



Figure 20
Mosaics at Sathsathige



Figure 21
Mosaics at Sathsathige



Figure 22
Mosaics at Sathsathige

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