

# **Transport systems in the ancient society revealed through the Sri Lankan paintings**

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It is possible to understand about the old societies by studying Sri Lankan paintings. It provides insight about the means of transport used in the society at that time. Prehistoric paintings prove that animals used to transport since prehistoric era.

Often there are paintings on the back of animals such as elephants. There are similar paintings in places like Pansal Kanda (fig.01), Maila Kanda (fig.02). In addition, such paintings can be found in other places like Kiripokunu Hela (fig.03 & fig.04) and Tharulengala (fig.05). Prehistoric paintings by Pihillegodacave were excerpted by the Seligman couple in 1911. Clearly, there is a way for people to go on the animals (fig.06). Accordingly, it is clear that the beginning of the use of animals for transitory movements ran to the prehistoric era. Painting studies have made it clear that animals such as elephants were often used for this purpose.

## **Bullock carts**

In addition, subsequent paintings from the Vihara Aramaya can also be used to understand the usage patterns of ancient society. Old paintings in the Kathaluva Purwarama Viharaya in the Southern Province include some frescoes which depict bullock carts. In painting the Maha Sutasoma Jathaka, depicted in a painting that king Suthasoma departure for ceremonial bath and some bullock carts are demonstrate in background of the painting (fig.07).

## **Riding on the elephants**

Among the paintings depicting the occasion on riding elephants are found in the temple mentioned above. One of the paintings depicted that Soreiyabaron has been departing for a bath with a friend. This painting depicts the king riding on the white tusker, and the tusker decorated with ornamental jewelry and jacket (fig.08). The painting in the same temple depicted the royal procession it has the king on a decorative white tusker (fig.09).

Among the paintings found in the Thelwatte Raja Maha Viharaya in the Southern Province, the prince of Wessanthara also portrayed the visit to the alms hall beautifully. Among the paintings in the Paramakanda Rajamaha Viharaya in Anamaduwa area of the north-west province, when the ordinary people demanding elephants from the king of Wessanthara, at that occasion the King Wessanthara was depicted as riding on a white tusker.

The king and the queen on the back of a white tusker depict the Thelapaththa Jathakaya in the paintings of the Dova Raja MahaViharaya in the Uva Province (fig.10). In displaying the Thelapaththa Jathakaya of the Kelaniya Raja MahaViharaya, that Painting depicts the king rides on a white tusker. The same jathaka story is depicted in the Haguranketha Pothgul Viharaya as the king aid to get off his queen on a white tusker (fig.11).

Among the paintings found in the Hindagala Raja MahaViharaya in the Central Province are the elephants used to represent some occasions of Jathaka stories and the Buddha's character. A white elephant was used to portray the Wessanthara Jathakaya and For the future Buddha's, the battle for attack by the evil one (maraya) and his army is on the elephant, shown in black (fig.12). In the presentation of Chulla Dharmapala Jathaka story Prince Dharmapala travels on an elephant that depicts black.

In addition to travel, there is evidence that elephants were used to make war. Murals of the Hanguranketha Pothugul Viharaya are examples for that (fig.13).

### **Riding on the horses**

Seen in paintings among the animals used in transport, there is evidence that horses were using in addition to the elephants. Among the paintings found in the Dambulla Raja Maha Viharaya, the prince Vijaya is portrayed as a horse riding for annihilate demons. Among the paintings found in the wallalgoda TempitaVihara, the king of kasee depicts beautifully riding a horse (fig.14).

### **Horse cart**

The Wessanthara jathakasotry in the mural of the Thelwatte Raja Maha Viharaya depicted the king of Wessanthara in a manner of traveling a horse cart. In the same temple, a paintings depict the God of Yama is in a chariot and that horse cartis vividly created (fig.15). The other notable mural among the murals of the Hindagala RajamahaViharaya, had showing the prince of Siddhartha Gauthama traveling a horse cart.

In the painting of the Suriyagoda RajamahaVihara, depicted the prince of Siddhartha appears go to the royal garden at a horse cart (fig.16). Among the paintings of the Pothgul Rajamaha Viharaya of Hanguranketha, one of the paintings depicts the prince of Wessanthara and his family in a beautiful horse cart.

## **Palanquin**

In addition to horse-drawn carts, there are evidences of the use of palanquin(a covered litter carried on poles on the shoulders of multiple bearers) for transport. Among the paintings of the Dhabawa RajamahaViharaya, there is a painting depicting the way queen of Mahamaya goes to her palace on a palanquin. At the occasion mentioned above, the painting of Suriyagoda RajamahaViharaya also shows how the queen of Mahamaya traveled by a palanquin (fig.17). Among the paintings of the Walalagoda Tempita Viharaya, in depicting the Wessanthara jathaka story, shown the chief consort of the king of Sivi travelling on a palanquin.

Each of these murals portrays the common people as the way they walk. For example, paintings of the Kottimbulla Rajamaha Vihara can be shown (fig.18).

The study of these paintings made it clear that people have begun traveling on animals since prehistoric era, and later the elite people of society have begun to travelling on horses and elephants. In addition, kings, ministers and elites in the society have used the “palanquin ”, etc., to travel. Similarly, horse-drawn carts have also been used by elite people, and cattle carts have been used for trade purposes.

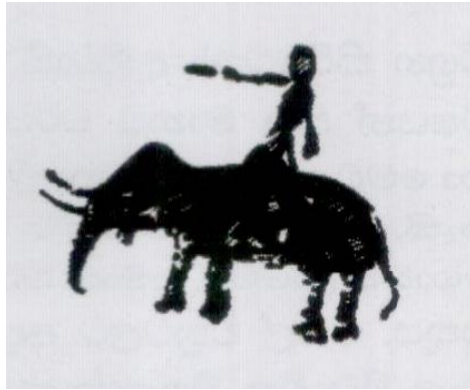
Clearly, since the past, the ordinary people have enjoyed very poor transport facilities, making it possible for artists to create the most comfortable modes of transport used by society at that time for the accepted elite.

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Figures



(fig.01)



(fig.02)



(fig.03)



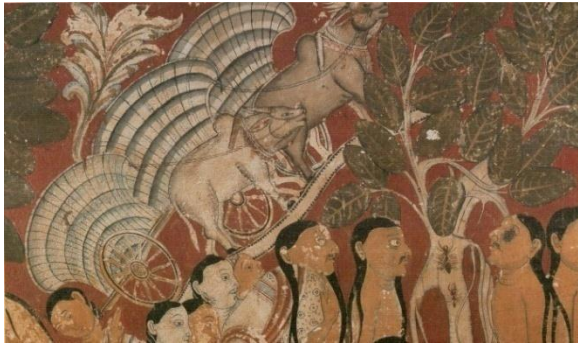
(fig.04)



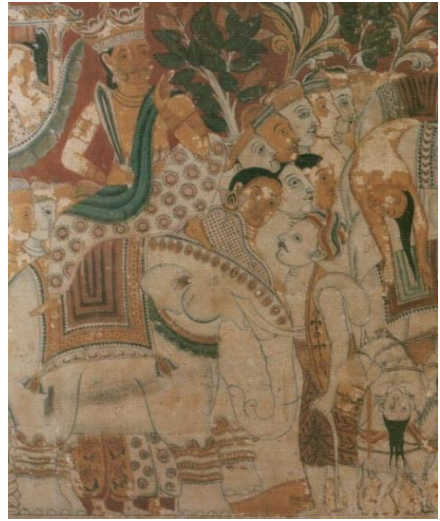
(fig.05)



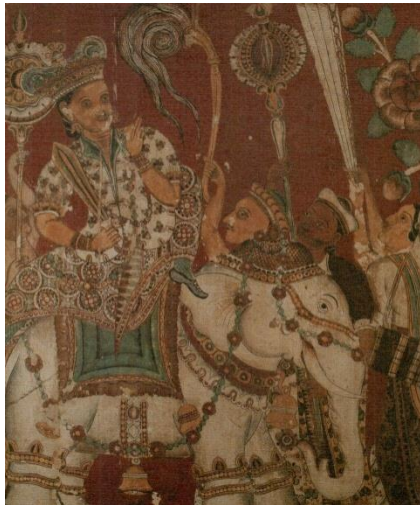
(fig.06)



(fig.07)



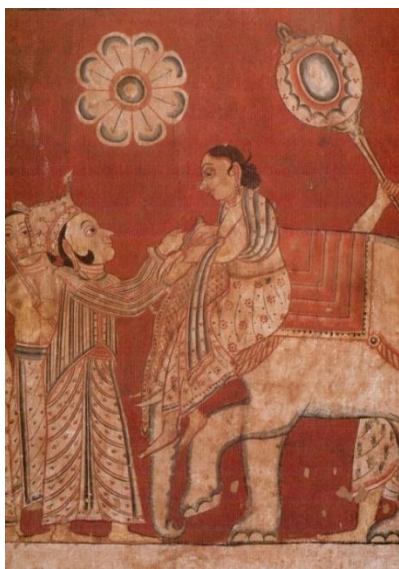
(fig.08)



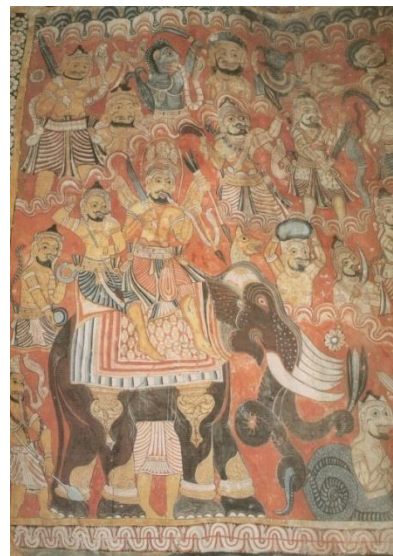
(fig.09)



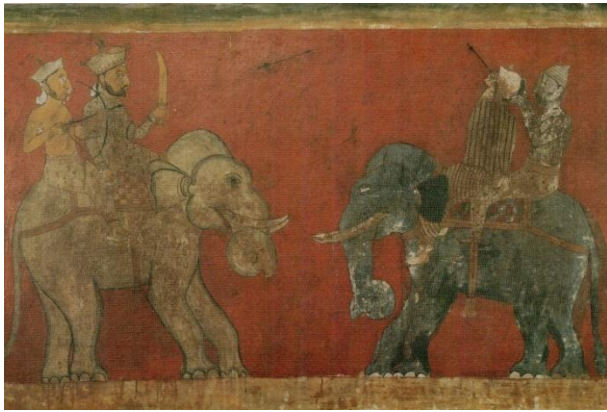
(fig.10)



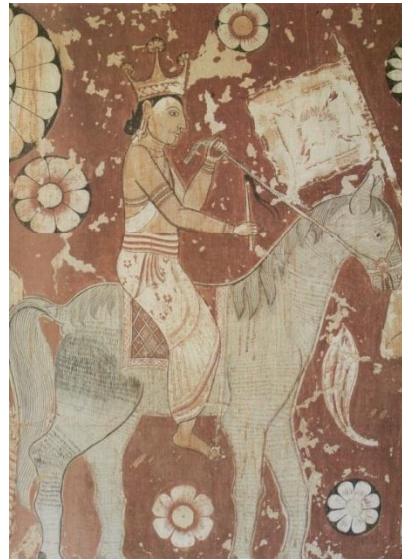
(fig.11)



(fig.12)



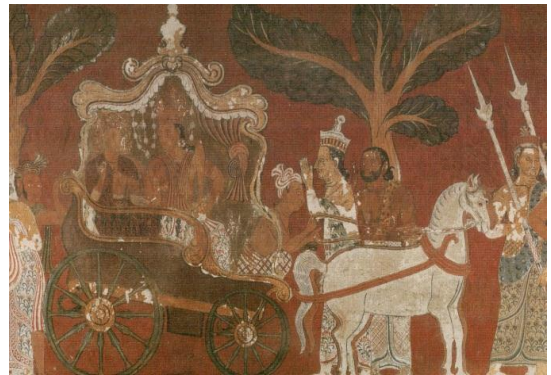
(fig.13)



(fig.14)



(fig.15)



(fig.16)



(fig.17)



(fig.18)

