



MATERIAL CULTURE IN ARCHAEOLOGY - SOME ISSUES FROM THE SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

The investigation on material culture in archaeology consists a research area of wider span of objectivity - in the sense of cultural successions of the regions but for the sake of research convenience , the objectivity of the theme has been brought within an archaeological frame work and the research area has been limited within the objectivity in the social science stream. Studies of material culture have a multidisciplinary history, and their origins can be traced to a range of theoretical literatures and research traditions, some of which have faded in their popularity and others which are burgeoning. Early studies of material culture had a relatively narrow focus and existed within anthropology to document and categorise the material expressions of diverse human cultures. The first studies of material culture catalogued and described objects, generally of non-western or, more specifically, non-European origin. These were often objects and technologies such as spears, knives or shields. The manifest goal of these studies was to use such artifacts as a means for retrospectively understanding human behavior and culture. However, the latent effect was to objectify hierarchical and marginalize the cultural expressions of non-western cultures. During the zenith period for museum collecting – the ‘museum age’, such displays of material culture performed a perverse educative role by demonstrating evolutionary stages and models of cultural development, and implicitly communicating the superiority of western culture. The phrase material culture has various meaning and deep functions and the particular term is often used by the Marxists, ethnographers, linguists and archaeologists to denote the concrete or intact physical objects left by human beings since the past years . The meaning of material culture from the archaeological point of view has been defined as the study of the concept of life in the past in which people who created livelihood environment, designed their identity, interchanged the ideas with experiences and dethroned the used objects which were out dated livelihood means and customs as they had been changed the sustainability from one generation to another. The term material is being used here to visualize the evolutionary cultural stages with the physical objects found in various countries. But each of the country which existing in the world had having utilized the privileges for its cultural identity from material objects based

on of Nationality and Nationhood. Thus, the real function of material culture has been turned from the expected task. In this way there are many issues that have been identified in the global level and some of them are very identical with the South Asian context and they are the main basic facts here for our discussion.

Key words: Nationality and Nationhood, Material culture, power politics, amateur Archaeologists, Marxists philosophers, Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism, Islamic ancestry heritage, ethnic chauvinism.

What is material culture?

The term material culture consists of a vast meaning and function connecting human activities in both past and present. However, the term 'material culture' is being used in a wide-angle disciplines, relative space and spectrum today. Because there are several disciplines owed their contributions to be embodied the meaning of material culture. Such disciplines are Sociology, Anthropology, Paleontology, Biology, Geology, Neurology, and Archaeology. Theologizers and political philosophers have often been using the term, *Material* in different ways to exercise their intuitive visions. Marxists philosophers are using this term to express their non-spiritual aspects with economic factors in material culture. Those who specialize in the origin of the language they also deal with material culture. In totally, the present day walk of life has been merged by using the evolutionary way via material culture. Thus, the study of material culture falls in a wide spectrum of investigations.

Material culture arises from the life of the human race which is the highest product of the gradual developments of the utmost stage of evolution. Material culture is an accumulated phenomenon of a long life of the human race which traveled through the glacial eras in this planet. Thus, the moving objects in life at current on the earth having been received the relative foundation from the material of the past. Therefore, the morphology of languages, tools, designs, and the superstructure of art and architecture of any region where people lived can be identified as regional or succeeding cultural wise. Thus, the material culture played very important role in the shaping of social and religious practices in view of an evolutionary theory.

Material culture is an active constitutive dimension of social practice in that it both structures human agency and is a product of that agency (Hodder 1986:74). The social practices and social structures involved in the Ethnicity and material culture production, use and consumption of material culture become embodied by it, because such processes occur within meaningful cultural contexts (see MacKenzie 1991:191–201; Miller 1985:11–12). Yet material culture may operate simultaneously in a number of social fields and its meaning is not fixed, but subject to reproduction and transformation in terms of both material curation and

interpretation throughout its social life (see Kopytoff 1986; MacKenzie 1991:26–7; Thomas 1991:28–9). Thus, material culture is polysemous, and its meanings may vary through time depending upon its particular social history, the position of particular social agents, and the immediate context of its use. Moreover, material culture is not merely a repository of accumulated meaning inscribed in it by its production and use in different social contexts and by differentially situated social agents. It plays an active role in the structuring of cultural practices, because the culturally specific meanings with which material culture is endowed as a result of former practices influence successive practices and interpretations. For instance, MacKenzie's (1991) detailed analysis of the cultural construction of Telefol string bags illustrates the dialectical relationship between the meaning of a particular item of material culture and the reproduction and transformation of social relations in the spheres of gender, age differentiation, ethnic identities, exchange, kinship relations, ritual and myth. Mackenzie has convincingly demonstrated that, through their use in everyday practice and in ritual symbolism, the meanings attributed to string bags play an active role in the construction of an individual's social and cultural identity. Moreover, through their role in the mediation and justification of social relations, such as between men and women, they are involved in the structuring of social practices and social interaction.

Proponents of the new archaeology reacted against traditional cultural history and the idea that material culture merely reflected social norms, but in doing so they imposed a functionalist conceptualization of culture, including material culture, as an epiphenomenal adaptive mechanism (Hodder 1982b:4–5; Shanks and Tilley 1987:94). Moreover, although the normative dimension of culture was not altogether dismissed, it was considered irrelevant in terms of the function of culture in most contexts of analysis, except in the case of style. The result is a pervasive dichotomy between functional utility and normative culture. However, there are problems with both a functionalist conceptualization of culture as an adaptive mechanism, and a normative or structuralist conceptualization of culture as a set of ideational rules determining behavior.

On the other hand, normative and structuralist approaches fail to provide an adequate account of the generation of social structure in the course of social action, and as a result people are represented as culturally determined dupes mechanistically obeying normative rules or structures. As in functionalist approaches, where human agency is often subordinated to environmental determinism, the role of human agency is also curtailed in structuralist approaches, where it is determined by abstract structures that lie outside the domain of individual and group history (Bourdieu 1977:72; Hodder 1982b:8–9). Moreover, as normative and structuralist approaches tend to disregard adaptive processes, and fail to develop an account of the generation of norms or social structures with relation to human agency, they do not provide an adequate framework for the analysis of processes of social change (Hodder 1982b:8). All social practices and social relations are structured

by cultural schemes of meaning which mediate social relations and social action. Such dispositions become part of an individual's sense of self at an early age, and operate largely in the domain of practical consciousness—that is, these cultural dispositions structure people's decisions and actions, but often lie beyond their ability to scribe, and thus formalize, their behavior in the realm of discursive consciousness. The structural orientations making up the *habitus* are essentially dialectical in that they both structure, and are structured by, social practice—they are both the medium and the outcome of practice. Moreover, such structural orientations do not have an existence of their own outside of human action, but rather are only manifested in the context of social practice where they are reproduced and transformed. Such an approach provides a theoretical framework which resolves the dichotomy between functionalism and structuralism. Human behavior can still be considered to achieve certain functional ends, to provide for basic needs, desires and goals; however, such needs and interests are defined and negotiated by people within a culturally structured situation, as are the functions that particular practices perform (Bourdieu 1977:76).

Various function of material culture

Generally viewing in archaeology, the term material culture denotes to the life of an ancient society for which their efforts of making tools and artifacts enhanced to fulfill of that society's needs. Thus, the day today needs of the food of ancient society were collected with the aids of implements made by human beings. This types of human life on the Earth were traced by archacologists from 2.5 million years onwards. To date, the earliest archaeological traces are stone tools from sediments that are approximately 2.5 million years old and are found at Gona, Ethiopia (Semaw 2000; Stout et al. 2005). All human groups as well as many other primate populations, such as chimpanzees, use tools composed of organic materials such as wood that rarely preserve more than a few years (McGrew 1992), unlike stone, which is a very durable material. But some chimpanzee groups use stone to make and use crude tools for nut-cracking (Mercader et al. 2007), and bone tools presumably made by *Paranthropus robustus* show signs of being used for digging into termite mounds (Backwell and d' Errico 2001). As these examples show, the earliest stone artifacts likely underestimate the true age of tool use and perhaps reliance upon tools by hominins, as there may have been a time lag between when stone tools were being made and when we can detect them in the record. The Gona artifacts show that by 2.5 million years ago, some hominins had learned to consistently select high quality rocks from local streambeds, fracture these stones using cobbles as hammer stones in order to produce sharp-edged splinters called "flakes," and to use these flakes as knives for removing skin or meat from animal carcasses. Much like the marks on a kitchen cutting board, the direct evidence for this occurs on the bones themselves in the form of distinct cut marks, as well as unique patterning of bone breakage distinctive of hominins determined through

experimentation (Lyman 1994). The first studies of material culture catalogued and described objects, generally of non-western or, more specifically, non-European origin. These were often objects and technologies such as spears, knives or shields. The manifest goal of these studies was to use such artifacts as a means for retrospectively understanding human behavior and culture. These artifacts are being called as material remains which are very helpful to read the evolution and antiquity of human past.

The term material culture consists of a vast meaning and function connecting human's activities in both past and present. The term, material culture is used in a wide angle disciplines, relative space and spectrum. Because, there are several disciplines owed their contributions to be embodied the meaning of material culture. Such disciplines are Sociology, Anthropology, Paleontology, Biology, Geology, Neurology, and Archaeology. Theologizers and political philosophers have often been using the term, Material in different ways to exercise their intuitive visions. Marxists philosophers are using this term to express their non-spiritual aspects with economic factors in material culture. Those who are specializing in the origin of language they also deal with material culture. In total, the present day walk of life has been merged by using the evolutionary way via material culture. Thus, the study of material culture falls in a wide spectrum of investigations.

Material culture is the study through artifacts of the beliefs or values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of a particular community or society at a given time. The term *material culture* is also frequently used to refer to artifacts themselves, to the body of material available for such study. Material culture is singular as a mode of cultural investigation in its use of objects as primary data, but in its scholarly purposes, it can be considered a branch of cultural history or cultural anthropology. It is a means rather than an end, a discipline rather than a field. From this, material culture differs like subject from art history, for example, which both a discipline in its study of history through art and a field in its study of the history of art itself. Material culture is comparable to art history as a discipline in its study of culture through artifacts. As such it provides a scholarly approach to artifacts that can be utilized by investigators in a variety of fields. But the material of material culture is too diverse to constitute a single field. In practice it consists of subfields investigated by specialists, cultural geographers, or history of art, architecture, decorative arts, science, and technology (David 1982:01).

Material culture implies indirectly or directly with prehistoric framework to grasp the activities of human's past. On the one side, the studies of material culture plays very important role in the writings of enlightening the prehistoric past, and on the another side, the field yields very fruitful information regarding the evolution of whole present society of the modern world. The social and religious practices of the primitive societies could be interpreted and reviewed with the help of material culture in which the people lived.

Material culture arises from the life of the human race which is the highest product of the gradual developments of the utmost stage of evolution. Material culture is an accumulated phenomenon of long life of human race which travelled through the glacial eras in this planet. Thus, the moving objects in the life at current on the earth have received the relative foundation from the material of the past. Therefore, the morphology of languages, tools, designs, and the superstructure of art and architecture of any region where people lived can be identified as regional or succeeding cultural wise. Thus, the material culture played very important role in shaping of social and religious practices in view of an evolutionary theory.

Social and religious practices of the primitive societies can be viewed and interpreted with the help of material culture which the people adopted. The materials are the guide in interpreting fragmentary archaeological evidences. The fragmentary archaeological evidences were left behind the life of human passed through the ages. Because, man has travelled a long way of evolution as not only a social being but also as biological species; his appearance and evolution are linked not only with the development of culture but also with the protracted alteration and perfecting of biological organization that created the preconditions for every functional development, and for the duration of every level (Alexeev 1986: 52-53).

Every level of walks of life of the man's past will be framed on the basis of technology he used, economy of subsistence he adopted, social and religious practices he furnished and art & design he created by means of their technology, men wrest from their habitat the foodstuffs, the shelter, the clothing and the implements which they have if they are to survive. The objects they make and use for those purposes are generally classified under the material culture.

Material culture is the primary source for the cultural classification and deviation for the modern scientists. The studies of origin of material culture need the help from various scientific knowledges. Generally, human knowledge is changing due to the acquiring of experiences which indicates through the materials. Lewis H. Morgan in his book, *Ancient Society*, states that 'this knowledge changes materially the views which have prevailed respecting the relations of savages to barbarians and of barbarians to civilized men.....The history of the human race is one in source, one in experience, one in progress (Morgan 1877, n.d. : v-vi). Thus, the progress of life i.e. evolution of life can be seen by the material objects which appeared through the eras on the earth planet.

The term material culture is a result of the studies of theoretical orientation in post-processual archaeology and their relationship to archaeological science. Post-processualism was formulated as a critique of processual models of the past, which tended to view material culture as a passive outcome of the economic and adaptive concerns of passed social groups. As an alternative, early post-processual

accounts of the past acknowledged that material culture was both meaningful and active in the constitution and creation of social relations (Hodder 1986:26-38). But, how we could study the material culture? The early post-processual writers borrowed a linguistic metaphor for material culture from structuralist and post-structuralist thinking in anthropology and sociology. This metaphor led archaeologists to treat artifacts as if they communicated meaning like language. Thus, the sequences of designs on pots or, the layout of households, villages, burials and cemeteries were all in their turn treated as a form of material culture (Tilly 2002 : 23-24).

The material world, and the social practices that take place in that world, bring each other being and are therefore analytically indivisible (Miller 1987:85-108). This does not mean that the material environment as determine human behavior—materials both constrain and enable human activity. The notion of the material world has an influence upon human has elsewhere been described as a form of material agency. Acknowledgement of the materiality of material culture has a dual function. It promotes the view that the material qualities of the environment actively affect how they are perceived, used and symbolized, and, importantly, it emphasizes how those material properties are enrolled in the life projects of humans. Furthermore, it promotes a historical perspective to the processes of interaction between person and environment (Jones 2004: 330).

Material culture And Indian experiences

Material Cultural Objects may have multiple functions—some more obvious than others. The primary function of an object is that for which it was originally made and used. Additional uses, however, may have been invented. A chair made for sitting could be used to reach a high object. A chair could also have a symbolic value, such as a throne. In the chair's use as furniture, its design could have social significance in the interior decoration of a house. When meeting a new object, we often try to establish its function based on our own experiences and often such analogies are accurate. These experiences may be misleading, though, especially when the object comes from a culture far removed in place and time from our own or was found in an environment far removed from its place of origin. The function of a coin may seem obvious--it is used in financial transactions. Coins, however, also have symbolic value connected with national identity. Coins have images of presidents or rulers, national monuments, and inscriptions have the patronage of such dynasties or courts during the Historical periods and, some coins were more important as symbols than for their monetary value, especially if the latter was so high that few circulated or were used for commerce. Cultures that do not use coins in trade may value them as symbols of social status--for example, as jewelry. Sometimes clues about such usage are found in the coins themselves, for example a hole at the top of a coin worn as a necklace. Close observation of an object and its context can help to establish function. Studying wear patterns, for example,

may show if a knife was used or decorative, how it was held, and whether the user was left-handed or right-handed. Observing the context in which the object found is also important. A complex around a hearth with *bones* of domesticated animals and implements related to the activities of preparing and consuming food may help to identify the reasons behind otherwise “anonymous” objects as being connected with the same activity. It is always possible that an object is not in its “natural” environment, so looking for patterns or multiple examples of the same object can help to determine normal use. Such examples may reveal subtle differences over time and space for drawing conclusions about societal change and interaction.

Time and space are the core factors of elucidation of material culture and thus the relative theory is an applicable criterion for the testimony of material culture in Archaeology. The terms like culture, civilization, Barbarianism, Pastoralist, Sedentism etc. have their meaning when material objects are interpreted on the basis of their relativism. The identification of an ethnicity and linguistic groups could be determined as the particular objects was born or originated from whereabouts. Therefore, the relative theory is playing very important role to elucidate of the periodization of society and politicization of theoretical matters of material culture.

Through preservation, reconstruction and presentation of prehistoric material culture like artifacts, monuments and cultural landscapes, selected aspects of the past are commemorated, revitalized and repossessed or otherwise they might be hidden, forgotten and temporarily lost. The political use of archaeological monuments in South Asia is another example of the intimate relationship between archaeology and the contemporary ideological context. It is the best example in India that of the Ayodhya and the Babar Masjid problems. “Identity is the tendency for human beings, individually and in groups, to establish, maintain and protect a sense of self-meaning, predictability and purpose. It encompasses a sense of self-definition at multiple levels” (Coningham & Lewer, 2000: 664). A historical Mosque was built by the Moghul Emperor, Babar at the *Rama Janmabhumi* (Ajodhya) in 1548 and it was destroyed by a group of *Vishwa Hindu Parshath* in 1990. The most obvious aspects of the Babari Mosque / *Rama Janmabhumi* which has been obscured by the recent controversy are Ayodhya’s profound importance as an Early Historic city site. When an additional excavation is clearly required, the earliest archaeological level was identified in the mounds surrounding the *Janmabhumi* and was dated as 7th century B.C. The brick wall which runs to the west of the *Janmabhumi* is believed by archaeologists to belong to the city wall of the 3rd century B.C. (Annual Report of the Archaeology Survey of India, 1973, 1980, & 1983). However, it also frames the western side of the structure now known as ‘Rama’s fort’ or Ramkot. This forms the pivotal point of the sacred traces from Rama’s numinous city. Since the credibility of Ayodhya’s *Ramaite*

geography has drawn heavily from its alleged antiquity, the city's archaeological prominence has been important for providing such claims with material –based legitimacy (Julia, 2000: 696). Many of these wider dimensions of Ayodhya's archaeological arena had been overlooked in the recent literature, largely because the *Janmabhumi* dispute had been presented as an isolated field of enquiry. It was partly this lack of contextual meaning which had made the archaeological data so susceptible to political manipulation. A second major factor has been that the stream of deep-seated polarities underlying the entire dispute had largely been informed, and to a certain extent reinstated, by an unreflexive archaeological rhetoric whose own limitations have played directly into the hands of the *Vishva Hindu Parshath* (Julia 2000: 697).

The archaeological materials pertaining to the *Rama Janmabhumi* unearthed from the bottom most layer of the foundation of the Baber Masjid are few pillars and few sculptures only. An archaeologist who had done excavation under the Masjid (Mosque) was pointing out that he had found a small chamber with pillars at the excavated trench. But those of polarities of Rama-*Janmabhumi* were fundamentally opposing the views which were forwarded by the supporters of Babar Masjid, by the knowledge systems based on conflicting notion of the time, and the associated set of oppositions between objectivity-subjectivity and fact – myth. The credibility of Ayodhya's *Ramaite* biography in the mind of 'believers' stems largely from the prevalence of 'ritual' or 'cyclical' time which blurs the boundaries, between past and present, or myth and reality, upon which historical or linear time depends (Julia, 2000: 697).

Politicizing or manipulation of the past to gain political control of the construction of present realities is carried out by activating collective processes of "remembering" and "forgetting". In the Freudian model of the mind, all memories are potentially intact, and forgetting is never really about loss but merely distortion. Forgetfulness becomes essentially a *failure* of remembering. The predominant view of the relationship between material culture and processes of remembering and forgetting sees objects as supplements or substitutes for memory. Memory is a reproduction or copy of an original event or experience, and mementoes such as material monuments are mere copies of copies. But perceiving material culture as a supplement to our memory, materiality fulfills a basic lack in our experiences. The relationship between remembering and forgetting is not a linear process; it is a struggle or a tension between what is present and what is absent. Material culture shoulders a large responsibility for our personal and collective memory, and materialization or dematerialization of events can act to forge memory or to facilitate forgetting. Material culture not only recalls memories, it also *produces* them (Buchli and Lucas 2001: 79 – 80).

Political commemoration of material culture

Historians and archaeologists also point out that the cities of the Indus Valley civilisation were not governed by an overarching state but run as city-states with localised governments. The age of empires, at least in ancient India, had still not taken root. There is, therefore, much to appreciate in these ancient cities. In India, it sometimes feels as if this appreciation has been amplified to an absurd level. In recent years, with the rise of the mythological and historical fiction genres, popular writers have crafted narratives about an ancient India that was “pure” from the “corrupting” influences of Muslims. This is imagined to be a time when India was technologically advanced with its indigenously developed helicopters, surgeries and even bombs. In these myths, the ingenuity of the simple innovations, such as a sewage system that truly transformed the world, is lost. On this side of the border, the situation is reversed. India is projected to be an “impure,” “uncivilised” land that first saw “light” with the arrival of the Muslims. This narrative is created particularly through school textbooks, which rarely focus on the pre-Islamic history of the land.

Even when there is mention of this pre-Islamic history, it is in a certain context, to highlight the ultimate ascendancy of the Muslim civilisation. Thus, on both sides of the border, it seems children are educated with mirror opposite images of each other. The situation worsened in Pakistan in the 1970s under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. In 1971, Pakistan had lost East Pakistan, which before Partition had served as the vanguard of the Pakistan Movement. It was being asserted that the two-nation theory, Pakistan’s *raison d’être*, was dead and dusted. The new populist state emerging under Bhutto, instead of being reflective of changing circumstances, adhered to a reactionary approach.

History as a subject — which included stories of Ram, Buddha, Ashoka and Kanishka along with Mahmoud Ghaznavi and the Mughals — was abolished and Pakistan Studies was introduced, with the sole purpose of instilling a Pakistani identity. The course seemed to shout out loud that the two-nation theory was not dead but rather, it had lived on for thousands of years and would live on forever. All traces of pre-Islamic history were removed as Arab commander Muhammad Bin Qasim became the “first Pakistani”. As a new breed of leaders emerged after Bhutto, even those who defined themselves in complete opposition to him continued promoting the historical framework bequeathed to them.

Political tool

In this new order that emerged, the Indus Valley civilisation acquired a unique significance, for this was not as “Hindu” as some of the other historical sites and buildings in the country. At the time of the Indus Valley civilisation, Brahminism, popularly associated with Hinduism, had still not emerged. There is, in fact, a

popular theory, rejected by several experts of the Indus Valley civilisation, that its cities were destroyed by the Aryans of Central Asia, who eventually laid the foundation of Brahminism. Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were, therefore, not “Hindu” cities. Divorced from their Hindu influence, these cities became acceptable. Their archaeological digging continued while the museum at these sites remained open.

In 1996, Aitzaz Ahsan, a Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senator, wrote a book, *The Indus Saga and the Making of Pakistan*, in which the implication is that the Indus Valley Civilization was always separate from the Gangetic Valley Civilization that was to emerge in north India later — thus, in a way, Pakistan was always destined to be separate from India. The most recent appropriation of this history was in 2014 when PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari decided to use Mohenjo-Daro as the site of the Sindh Festival, an Islamic cultural event. This message is clearly indicating that Pakistan’s pre-Islamic history is acceptable as long as it is separated from its Hindu influence and forefathers of the land emerged from the Indus Valley Cities of which material culture were turned now to re-write the history of Pakistan with the antecedents’ forefathers of the land with not less than 5000 years back.

Responsibility of material culture

Archaeological work unfolds in successive stages of both prehistoric and historic human lives. Firstly, it is the excitement of discovery, followed by excavation and later by academic work of synthesis and interpretation. Secondly, it is the creation of a site for presentation and for the public to come and visit, in the form of a museum or a reconstruction or arrangement of a monument. In both stages, archaeology has explicated the pressures which emanate from its political and ideological surroundings of the society. “Those who do not read historical texts and inscriptions in the originals and unfamiliar with ancient material culture retrieved through scientific studies, tend to be enmeshed in notions of misunderstood and romanticized histories. As against this, specialists must present the public with scientifically retrieved facts, enabling people themselves to form a critical evaluation reading the past. Synergy between ideology and production as a critical change agent is studied less in contemporary South Asian archaeological and historical research except for those who read the past from the perspective of historical materialism (Jairus Banaji 2011). The Past often is read along the lines of cultural studies with various intellectual disciplines. Archaeological view point, the ancient past is visible with of material evidences, environmental factors, its influences on social base and cognitive values. Ideological basis is also embedded in contemporary sub conscious mind-set inherited from pre-Colonial, Colonial, Orientalist and Post-Colonial perceptions”(Senevirane, 2019).

Material culture – Sri Lankan context

As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, the defining and handling of archaeological materials persist with and accessible only through the Department of Archaeology of Sri Lanka. The naming, changing location and interpreting of material remains are only the sole rights with the Department of Archaeology; if others happened to interpret or naming and listing them, then soon after being ready for an inquiry or arrest under the police custody. Having considered the concept of viewing local materials as means of production of the Buddhism and its influences in Sri Lanka it is very difficult to reach the original function of material culture. The following fact of archaeological environment in Sri Lanka highlights the conditions of handling of material culture.

The study of antiquity of material culture in Sri Lanka goes back to the Dutch period but the same study with management skill and persistence for preservation and conservation for archaeology and the material of cultural sites in Sri Lanka have an antiquity dating to the British Colonial period. The Archaeological Survey Department of Ceylon and the National Museums Department were constituted in the mid-19th century for this purpose. It necessarily had a bias towards land-based monuments with special reference to better-known centers of culture associated with the Classical texts. Prioritization of the archaeological agenda based on classical studies was set in motion by those who read the past through the eyes of Orientals and Colonialism and it ran well into the early phase of the post-Colonial period as well. During the post - independence period, especially after the decade of 1970, there has been a slow but a definitive change in the priority and agenda of archaeological studies in Sri Lanka (Seneviratne 2009: 14-15).

Viewing as an introductory part of material culture in Sri Lanka, it is appropriate to assessing that of literatures written on the Island's culture and archaeology. Up to 1960s in Sri Lanka the written and published the cultural and archaeological materials fold into two main categories as follows: 1). The British model literatures relating to archaeological reports and synthesis, and 2).The cultural literatures emerged under the Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism. After 1960s the intellectual thinking pertain to neo-colonialism, post-modernism and relativism had flourished and an intellectual change took place in each country on the basis of neo- social well-wisher's views so that views on ethnicity and social identity played very important role into the literature writings too. 'This indicated a positive shift at the conscious level with special reference to new adaptations, state-of-the-art technologies and techniques, the need to train resource persons and above all institutional planning. While the first stratified archaeological excavation was undertaken at the Anuradhapura Citadel in 1969, a new structural change was introduced to the sphere of heritage management with the inauguration of the *UNESCO-SRI LANKA CENTRAL CULTURAL FUND*. The *CCF* founded

in 1981, was in many ways a timely catalyst that brought about a convergence of the two main archaeology-related bodies in Sri Lanka – the government Department of Archaeology and the University departments of archaeology into a working relationship. University departments responded quickly by altering and structurally adjusting the syllabi and the level of professionalism sustaining this new concerted effort. It was within this situation that the first Marine Archaeology program came to be launched in Sri Lanka during the late 1980's primarily due to the dedicated efforts of Commodore Somasiri Devendra who pioneered this effort along with a few others. As a consequence of their efforts, the purview of Marine Archaeology was legitimized for the first time in the history of archaeology of this island' (Seneviratne 2009: 15). Sudharshan Seneviratne has presented recently a valuable research paper on 'Dialectics of Social and Material Formation in early South – Central Asia' at the Global Studies Seminar in America (see the Link https://www.socialaffairsjournal.com/images/Journal_Downloads/Archives/2018_Fall/2_Sudharshan_Seneviratne_SAJI_9_pdf?type=file). and the full paper was reproduced by The Island , a daily media in Sri Lanka(The Island 23rd,24th, 25th&26th of May,2018). This research article is very useful to define the material culture of Labour, Production and Ideology in Pre- State Societies and their Evolution.

This island produced one of the most spectacular hydraulic civilizations with some of the best water management systems in antiquity with a high degree of control maintained over large reservoirs and grand canals. Settlement archaeology studies indicate that most of the settlements in the pre modern period, from the Pre Historic to Colonial, were situated near rivers and natural or human made water bodies. In addition, recent environmental and geological studies on landscape evolution patterns in antiquity strongly established the change of river courses and the expansion of reservoir system that had inundated preexisting settlements and industrial sites in Sri Lanka.'(Seneviratne 2009: 18). There are also other water-borne situations that merit our attention for marine archaeology. Internal marshlands created both by tectonic activities and river changes have inundated several major habitation and religious sites of the historical period. The Somawathi complex, some areas in the Lower Mahaweli system and the lower plains of some Southern rivers are excellent study areas. Somawathi complex may have had an inland port that connected it to the eastern seaboard through the Mahaweli River (Chandraratne, R.M.M. and Dilan Ranaweera, 2017).

Material culture and under water archaeology in Sri Lanka

An immediate implementation of plotting the under water surface sites and their locations for archaeological material remains in the Northern Sri Lanka have to be launched. The water surface which stretched between the small islands such as Kaarai Tivu, Eluvai Tivu, Mandai Tivu, NedunTivu, Analai Tivu and Punkudu

Tivu have very fruitful means for expert divers. Thus the material cultural studies along with harbor views in the Jaffna Peninsula have to interact with more feasibility with under water archaeological survey immediately. The city of Jaffna was the center of marine culture which was largely influenced by the South Indian maritime activities. Jaffna was the regional administrative center of the North from the 17th century onwards. The Kayts harbour in the Jaffna Peninsula was believed to be the center of the trade activities and the Tamil inscription of King Parakramabahu the Great of the 12th century, found at Nainathivu provides evidence of harbor facilities of the country during that period. During the European hegemony in the Jaffna Peninsula remarkable numbers of sea forts were built and the ancient and medieval harbors were redesigned. The navigation networks of Indian Ocean were developed and Oceanic trades were carried out with goods like Pearls, Elephants, Fish, Cattle and Textiles. Thus, the Jaffna Peninsula has appropriate locations for marine archaeological survey for maritime materials. The maritime material remains of Jaffna will help to have filled the gap of material cultural continuity of this region in future.

Conclusion

The scientific study of material culture in South Asian context is an industrious task. On one hand the core material of archaeological interpretation has faced very severe threatening when their real functional documentation has wincingly got plotted as we see at present day interpretation of archaeological material of the Indus Valley Civilization in Pakistan where archaeological material is being disclosed as the fundamental element of the Islamic ancestry heritage as aroused from Indus valley Civilization. The protestant movement of Islamic people against the existing religious institutions in South Asia has now taken a new dimension as they wanted their heritage in this region as old as the native religious institutions evolved and comprised the hoary past. Thus, the interpretation of material culture now have been used merely for power politics of each ethnic chauvinism in this region. The *Rama-Janma Bhumi* and the Babar –Masjidh issues in India are still prevailing as unsolved problems because of the handling of spade of archaeology of material culture has not yet paved the way to its real function. Sri Lanka's situation also has the same root as we have seen nowadays on the Carbon dating of excavated numerous skeletal material from Mantai in Mannar District very recently in 2019.

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