

# Animal Figures found from Mosaic designs at *Karagampitiya Subodharamaya*

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**Abstract**— *The main objective of this research paper is to explicate about animal figures found in Sri Lankan mosaic designs with special reference to mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharamaya. The methodology of this research paper consists with field research and library survey methods; field research method was highly emphasized to collect data. This temple has a great significance in terms of archaeological, anthropological, historical and art historical aspects. Karagampitiya Subodharamaya is located at Karagampitiya village in Dehiwala divisional secretariat which belongs to Colombo district in Western province. It has an extended history from the period of king Parakramabahu VI (1412 - 1467 AD) and it underwent several changes during the colonial period of Sri Lanka. 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 history from BC and in the world Mosaic art, developed in various periods according to the subject and features. Floral figures, animal figures, geometric shapes and some other objects which were created with mosaic art tradition could be seen at the Image house and at the Sathsathige. Among these mosaic designs at the image house; animal figures can be considered as a limited art historical source due to the used features, structures, colours and shapes. According to the collected data, it could be identified that both real and mythical animal figures; such as Tusker, Horse, Lion, Bull, Rabbit, Goat, Unicorn, Fish, Peacock, Parrot, Hen and Snake were designed using mosaic designs. These animal figures could be categorized as birds, quadruped, reptiles and fish. As per the main objective; foreign influences and special features of created animal figures, reasons for designed animal figures, present situation and reasons for weathering of mosaic designs are also discussed in this research paper.*

**Keywords**— Art History, Karagampitiya Subodharamaya, Mosaic

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to the main objective of this research paper animal figures found from mosaic designs at Karagampitiya Subodharamaya, are analysed in detail. In this research; field research and library survey methods were used to collect data. However, as the methodology of this research; field research method was highly emphasized. This research paper discusses about the historical background of Karagampitiya Subodharamaya, historical background and development of mosaic art, mosaic designs at Karagampitiya Subodharamaya, animal figures found in mosaic designs at Karagampitiya Subodharamaya and special features of these animal figures.

Karagampitiya Subodharamaya is generally known as “Karagampitiya Temple” because 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, 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 temple. The remaining constructions were completed in 1795 during the period of King Rajadhi Rajasinghe (Chutiwongs, 1990).

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 *Perehara* ceremony. At present the temple has a *Stupa*, image house, Bodhi tree, *devale*, 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.

Mosaic is the art of creating images with an assemblage of small pieces of coloured glass, stone or other materials. It may be a technique of decorative art, an aspect of interior decoration, or of cultural and spiritual significance (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic>,2013.09.20).

"The New Encyclopaedia Britannica" defines about the "Mosaic" as "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).

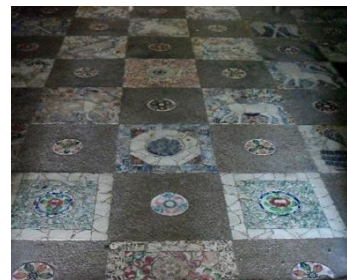
Mosaic art tradition has extended history from BC and in the world it is developed in various periods according to the subject and features. Hence; the historical background of mosaic could categorized as Greek and Roman mosaic, Christian mosaic, Jewish mosaic, Middle Eastern and Western Asian mosaic Art, Modern mosaic (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica,2010; (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic>,2013.09.20).

In Sri Lanka, there could be found only limited examples related to Mosaic art tradition. Maduwanwela *Walawuwa*, Karagampitiya Subodharamaya and some other temples in down south could be considered as the places with mosaic designs.

## II. MOSAIC DESIGNS AT KARAGAMPITIYA SUBODHARAMAYA

Mosaic designs at Karagampitiya Subodharamaya can be seen in the image house and in the *sathsathige*. Porcelain products, tiles and coins were used as materials to create mosaic designs. Most of these porcelain products and tiles were imported from England, Holland, China and Japan.

Mosaic designs could be seen in the sanctum and corridor of the image house (eg. Fig 1). The floor of the sanctum is separated into squares and mosaic designs of floral figures such as coconut tree, banana tree, flower tree, lotus flowers and some other trees are created on these squares. Further, there are figures of umbrella, flag, *sesath*, *chamara* and *punkalasa*. Apart from that, there are figures of clock and flower pot. Further there could be seen some designs created with mosaic art tradition at the corridor of the image house. The animal figures found in the mosaic designs of this image house will be examined later on this Paper.



**Figure 1. Mosaic designs at the sanctum of image house**

Inside the *sathsathige* and outer corridor of the *sathsathige*; contains with mosaic designs. Inside the *sathsathige*, decorated with geometrical shapes (Circle, Square, Diamond, Octagon and Pentagon) created by the Mosaic art tradition (eg. Fig 2).



**Figure 2. Mosaic designs at the Sathsathige**

A rectangular area of two feet in width and thirty five feet in length at the corridor of *Sathsathige* is decorated with mosaics. The Gothic style pandal of the *Sathsathige* is also decorated with mosaic art tradition (eg. Fig 3).



**Figure 3. Gothic style Pandal of the Sathsathige**

The animal figures inside the sanctum can be categorized as quadruped, birds, reptiles and fish. According to that classification; 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.

Apart from the unicorn; all the other animals could be considered as real world animals. Unicorn could be considered as a mythical animal. The unicorn is a legendary animal that has been described since antiquity as a beast with a large, pointed, spiralling horn projecting from its forehead (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unicorn>, 18.06.2014). Further, unicorn is described as a mythical animal resembling a small horse but with a long, straight horn growing out of its forehead. Often it was described as having the legs of a deer and the tail of a lion

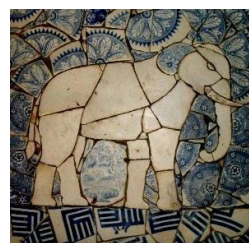
(<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Unicorn>, 18.06.2014).

The unicorn figure created with mosaic art tradition at the Karagampitiya Subodharamaya, shows special features of the mythical animal (eg. Fig 4). Moreover, with reference to the legends; the body of horse, tail of lion, legs of deer and the horn; formed with white colour could also be seen. Mane of the horse is white in colour. The figure indicates a riding position. But four legs of the unicorn are directed to the front. Hence, we could identify an abnormal posture. Further, the back two legs have been created using blue colour fragments. This might have happened later as a result of weathering.



**Figure 4. Unicorn**

The tuskers' figure at this temple is also formed with white colour fragments (eg. Fig 5). Blue colour fragment with floral design have been used to create the ear of the tusker. The tusks are formed with white colour. The horse figure is also white in colour. The mane and hair of the tail, have been created using small fragments (eg. Fig 6). The horse figure consists of a riding position.



**Figure 5. Tusker**



**Figure 6. Horse**

The figure of lion has been created with white colour fragments. The hair around the neck and the tail are created using small fragments (eg. Fig 7). The figure of bull is also formed with white colour fragments and indicates two horns and the hump (eg. Fig 8).





Figure 7. Lion

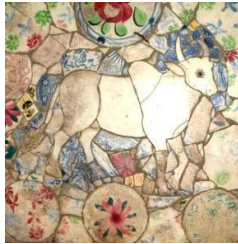


Figure 8. Bull

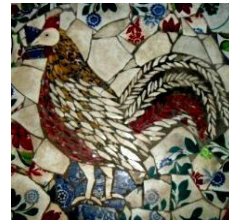


Figure 13. Cock

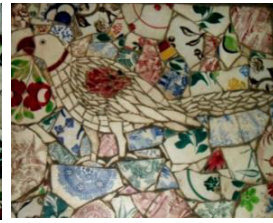


Figure 14. Parrot

The figure of goat is created with white colour fragments. The horn and the hair under the chin could also be witnessed in this figure (eg. Fig 9). The figure belongs to animal of deer family; formed with white colour and indicates the horn on its' head (eg. Fig 10).

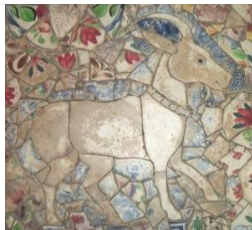


Figure 9. Goat

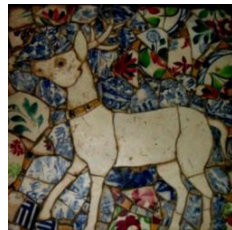


Figure 10. Animal of deer family

The figure of leopard is formed with white, yellow and black colour fragments. White, yellow and black colour round fragments are used to create spots on leopards' skin (eg. Fig 11). The rabbit figure is formed with white colour fragments (eg. Fig 12). This mosaic design of the rabbit indicates the flexibility of the long ear.

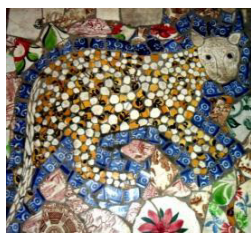


Figure 11. Leopard



Figure 12. Rabbit

Ten figures of birds could also be found. The figure of cock formed with white, yellow and red colour fragments (eg. Fig 13). Those colours are used to indicate wings, feathers and comb of cock. Moreover the figure of parrot is formed with white colour and red colour used to indicate some feathers, beak and neckless (eg. Fig 14).

A duck and a peacock formed with white colour could also be witnessed (eg. Fig 15). The figure of duck can be identified due to the shape of beak and shape of foot. The figure of peacock is created with long feathers and crest (eg. Fig 16). Several sizes of fragments have been used to create wings, feathers and crest.

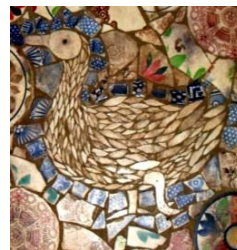


Figure 15. Duck

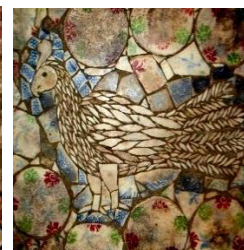


Figure 16. Peacock

Furthermore, based on the shapes of beak, neck, body, wings, feathers, leg and foot; can be recognized bird figures of cormorant (eg. Fig 17), turkey (eg. Fig 18), goose (eg. Fig 19), hen (eg. Fig 20), peahen (eg. Fig 21), and pigeon (eg. Fig 22).

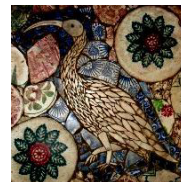


Figure 17. Cormorant

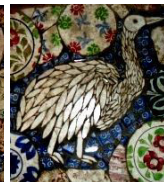


Figure 18. Turkey

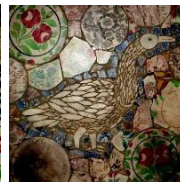


Figure 19. Goose

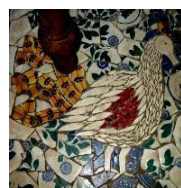


Figure 20. Hen

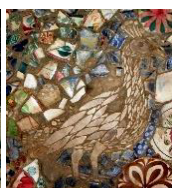


Figure 21. Peahen

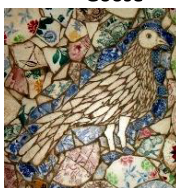


Figure 22. Pigeon

The figure of snake represents the category of reptiles. Blue, yellow and white colour fragments have been used to form the snake figure in mosaic art tradition (eg. Fig 23). The body of the snake has been formed with dotted blue colour fragments, to illustrate the texture of the real snake skin. Further, it indicates the features of the snake head. Moreover, a figure of fish has been formed with white colour fragments (eg. Fig 24) and it indicates the features of a real fish. Such as scales on skin, operculum (gill cover), dorsal fin, pectoral fins, anal fin, pelvic fins and caudal fin.



Figure 23. Snake



Figure 24. Fish

Therefore, based on these animal figures, we could assume that they have unique features. All the animal figures have been created with white colour and the fragments consists with shapes of animal body. Such as legs, heads and horns. Having analyzed the animal figures in Art historical aspects can be recognizes that the Artist used white colour for animal body and used particular colours to indicate special features of animals. Eg: - Parrots' necklace (eg. Fig 14), Leopards' skin (eg. Fig 11), feathers of birds (eg. Fig 13, 14, 20).

When concerning the figures of quadruped; it could be witnessed that the artist has included lions' and horse hairs (eg. Fig 6, 7), bulls' hump (eg. Fig 8), leopards' skin (eg. Fig 11), various shapes of legs and feet, ears, eyes, mouths and tails, tuskers' tusk, bulls', goats' horn. Having analyzed the figures of

birds we could identified various types of beaks, wings and feathers, various shapes of eyes, mouths, legs, feet, comb (eg. Fig 13, 20), and crest (eg. Fig 16, 20). Including the particular features of animals in these mosaic designs, were important in art historical aspect. Generally the mosaic artist created an outline around the animal figures by using blue colour fragments (eg. Fig 5-12, 15-22, 24). Because of that the animal figures were highlighted from the background. Further, we could see different shapes and different sizes of fragments used to form the shape of quadrupeds' body structures and feathers of birds. Moreover, can be seen the features of animal faces by engraving the porcelain products (eg. Fig 6, 7, 11, 12, 17, 20, 23, 24). The mosaic artist has included a belt around the necks of horse, goat and animal of deer family (eg. Fig 6, 9, 10). That may indication of domestication. However, could be seen a belt around the neck of the unicorn (eg. Fig 4).

Apart from that, can be seen two special components of mosaic design could be seen at the two entrances of sanctum at the Image house. One is consists of two lion figures and a figure of flower pot (eg. Fig 25). Other one consists of two unicorn figures and figure of a flower pot (eg. Fig 26). These two components illustrates a combination of Sri Lankan and foreign culture.



Figure 25. Mosaic design at the entrance of sanctum



Figure 26. Mosaic design at the entrance of sanctum

At present; the floor mosaics at Karagampitiya Subodharamaya have been destroyed due to

lightning of oil lamps, carelessness, lack of proper cleaning, new constructions and some human activities. Thus, it is a paramount importance that we implement proper methods to protect this limited source. Commencing awareness programs could be one solution to this problem. Further, as a conservation method can be fixed a hard glass cover could be fixed on the floor which is decorated with mosaic art tradition.

### III. CONCLUSION

Havin studied the animal figures at Karagampitiya Subodharamaya; it could be identified there is a great significance of these figures due to the uniqueness of forming special features of animals, managing various shapes, limited colours and difference size fragments to create figures and the limitation of animal figures formed by mosaic art tradition in Sri Lanka. In my point of view there is a combination of Sri Lankan and foreign cultures which is confirmed by the figure of unicorn, which mostly belongs to the legends in foreign cultures. Apart from that, the animal figures formed at this image house; can be considered as a continuous process of using animal figures in Sri Lankan art history. Furthermore, it could be assumed these animal figures were used for fill the space at the floor of image house. Moreover, mosaic designs at Karagampitiya Subodharamaya have great significance of art historical, archaeological and historical aspects. Because of that, should have to protect these limited art historical Source.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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