Current burning issues

Noolaham Foundation

Noolaham Foundation is a non-profit, charitable organization (GA 2390) founded to provide enhanced access to information sources and foster knowledge-based development in Sri Lanka. It maintains an online digital library, facilitates information preservation programmes, provides financial assistance and technical guidance for digitization initiatives, and actively participates in awareness-raising campaigns.It also co-ordinates a range of fund-raising activities and collaborates with other organizations and individuals. The free Internet library [www.noolaham.org] and Archive [www.noolaham.media] maintained by the Foundation serves as a learning center incorporating local knowledge and enabling social interaction with a view to achieving constructive social outcomes. It functions as a repository for various institutions, and fulfills the information needs of students, researchers, historians, activists and the public. Volunteers of Noolaham Foundation participate in the activities of Noolaham globally and have established Noolaham chapters in their respective countries to achieve the mission of the Foundation.

Project background

Sri Lanka has a long history of social and political development. It has a continuous record of human settlement for more than two millennia, and its civilization has been heavily influenced by the Indian subcontinent. It is a multicultural and multireligious South Asian nation. The Constitution of Sri Lanka offers Buddhism the most place. Nearly 70.2 percent of the population identify themselves as Buddhists. 12.6 percent of the remaining Sri Lankan population is Hindu, 9.7 percent is Muslim, and 6.1 percent is Christian (Census Report of Sri Lanka, 2012).

Religious freedom is guaranteed in the Sri Lankan Constitution for all religious communities, although Buddhism is given prominence constitutionally (Sulaiman Lebbe Refai, 2020). Buddhisization is one of the primary causes of the ethnic conflict in the recent decades in Sri Lanka.

All Sri Lankans have the right and freedom to secure their own archaeological sources. Minority people in Sri Lanka face discrimination and unequal opportunities to preserve their religious heritage. Archaeological politics activities are destroying valuable archaeological heritages of minorities and marginalized communities. Archaeology politics are important in Sri Lanka's racism politics. It has a negative impact on the cultural identity and social history of marginalized and minority people.

In Sri Lanka, there is a need to document the religious archaeological sites of minority people. Because racist thinkers in Sri Lanka promoted Sinhala Buddhism throughout the country by hiding and claiming the religious archaeological identities of minorities via injustice-archeological involvement with military assistance.The Archeological Department, as well as some racist organizations, declare and claim minority religious sites as Buddhist sites, linking them to ancient Buddhist worship and Sinhala settlement locations. They destroy the social history and heritage of minorities and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. By strengthening the archeological evidence of the majority while casting aspersions on the identities and history of minority populations, they alienate minorities.

Polarizing archeological politics lead to exclusion and alienation from minorities' history. Majoritarianism at work here. There is an attempt to erase and claim the cultural and religious practices and places associated with the minority communities. The hegemonic archaeological process creates tensions between different communities that inhabit the island. It poses a threat to the cultural, religious lives of the minorities and undermines pluralistic coexistence of cultures, faiths and traditions. Minority groups require aid in protecting key religious archaeological sites in order to protect their living rights and identities both inside and outside the North-East.

Religious minorities, their places of worship and their cultural and political existence is under threat due to the weaponization of Archaeology in Sri Lanka's politics. It encourages conflict among religious groups and disrupts social cohesion. It has an impact on minority people's rights and alienates them from Sri Lanka. It heightened social panic among religious minorities, as well as many social and political issues across the country. There is a need to provide equal concern for documenting all religious archaeological properties, both intellectual and non-intellectual, because this will increase the cultural tourism sector and expose the nation's cultural wealth to the world.By documenting the evidence, this project will assist in preserving the religious archaeological sites of minorities and marginalized social groups.

OBJECTIVE

- To identify the Hindu temples, indigenous shrines and Christian and Muslim places of worship in the Northern and Eastern Provinces earmarked by the Department of Archaeology and allied bodies for archaeological excavation and historical inquiry
- To document, by way of gathering print and electronic documents and oral narratives, the archeological and related activities that are being conducted by the Department of Archeology, the Sri Lankan military and allied groups on these sites and in their neighborhood
- To document with openness the histories of these sites in all their complexities including instances of cultural coexistence and ethno-religious overlaps

Activities

01.Conduct mapping to identify historical religious sites in Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern province.

The Noolaham project team will identify historical religious sites in Northern and Eastern Provinces earmarked by the Department of Archaeology through scientific mapping based on a review of fair and balanced historical literature review, Media reports, court reports and reports of active social organizations and key informant interviews and discussions. The mapping document will provide background data and specifics about previous archeological interventions relating to specific locations, which will make it easier to carry out project activities based on mapping documents efficiently. It is one of the most important and primary activities of this project because it will serve as a guideline for the project's direction.

02.Collect and Document the written sources of historical religious places of the Northern and Eastern province.

Based on the mapping document, the Noolaham Foundation's field researchers will carry out their work. They will collect written sources that reflect and expose archaeological evidence of specific historical religious sites, such as ancient books, ancient notes, diaries, manuscripts, olai chuvadi, folk songs, and other Archival Materials and tables publications. It will bring religious sites' archeological value to society's attention.

03.Collect and Document the non written sources related historical religious places in Northern and Eastern Province,

This project focused on the archeology of religious sites of minority and marginalized social groups, particularly those earmarked by the Department of Archaeology.There is a need to collect non-written sources to document the religious archeological values of their religious sites. Field researchers will also collect religious historical data through oral history, folk songs, and ancient photos, which will be documented in order to expose their archeological religious sites.

04. Share knowledge to society through Conducting virtual discussions sessions and seminars related to social histories of religious sites.

The Noolaham Foundation promotes intellectual development in society by documenting and disseminating knowledge. These discussions and other activities will assist in exposing the values and histories of minorities' religious sites, native worshipers, worship rituals and beliefs, how religious sites create community identity and social status, and other interesting human interactions from the past.

These discussions and seminars will take place on a virtual platform. It can be a place for learning about and exchanging intelligence about religious sites in minority and marginalized communities. It will open up new research areas for researchers and help those who are already working in these areas.

Outcomes

- The project will protect minorities and marginalized social groups' cultural identity as well as their right to live.
- It will continue to support research in the fields of community archaeology, minority archaeology, and religious archaeology, among others.
- The project will help to reduce archaeology's political activities and explain real historical events with evidence.
- Project will highlight the archaeological value and social histories of religious sites of minorities in the northern and eastern provinces.
- It will expose different cultural beliefs and practices of religious minorities, and it will aid in understanding cultural pluralism in both provinces.
- It allows marginalized people to contribute their ideas and knowledge to a digitized library platform.
- Project will support for those conducting study and academic works on religious archaeology
- It will provide scholarly criticism on the country's polarized archeological operations

Expect Budget
LKR 13,127,040.00

For more details

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1GZGvzoM2tGpU471RNMMXxiVkmVJCHMwGiRoV3-XIzYw/edit?gid=0#gid=0