

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

During the course of the present research, extensive explorations were undertaken in the island, both at its core and peripheral regions to locate the sites, record its nature and its spatio-chronological distribution. Such surveys were imperative as many sites are undergoing rapid destruction due to natural and cultural factors. A great majority of the cultural activities include rapid encroachment due to modern urbanization. In the present study, the term 'site' has been used to define the spatial units located in the area of research with a long-term or a periodic human association in the past.

Continuous tidal activity and anthropogenic activities in the islands have displaced a great majority of artefacts from the original context. Hence identifying and defining the site was one of the most important challenges in this study. Moreover, the archaeological visibility is less as the sediments in the surface had a mixture of the surface materials and the intensely weathered underlying terrain. In order to overcome these shortcomings, randomly generated transects were followed with the help of a hand held GPS (Global Positioning System) without breaking the line and at the same time visually covering approximately 10 m on either side, thereby examining a 20 m line along the main survey line. Artefact clusters and/ or Activity areas were thus identified and defined based on the minimum number of artefacts. In the present study, an approximate occurrence of 6 artefacts within a 1m square area (1 m sq. Grid) was defined as an artefact cluster / activity area. It is assumed that within the given geographical setting and spatial disturbances, identification of sites are possible only through these measures. Each randomly generated transect, had an approximate length of **500m** where in, scatters were scarce, however, representing the archaeological assemblage of the region.

By examining the artifact clusters, to a great extent it was possible to assume the function of the settlements; residential, monastic, isolated activity areas, raw material exploitation regions. In addition to this, the ecology of the region in contemporary times, suggest that the natural resources within these regions did not support the settlements. It may be assumed that the bulk of the resources were imported into the archipelago from elsewhere.

However, although it does not yield much ecological variance, it is possible to presume that the presence of smaller mounds within the islands suggests a different amicable environment in the past there, which would have attracted the early settlers to decide upon choosing a region and determining the functional dimensions of their settlements.

Thirty islands in 15 atolls were surveyed and a total number of 38 sites of archaeological potential were identified. It was interesting to note that a great majority of the activity areas were religious in nature and a majority of them are simple mounds with limited surface scatters of artefactual remains. The spatial distribution of the sites within the area replicates a definite pattern. It was also observed that these were closely located to reservoirs of coral stones and cowrie shells. The surface survey did not reveal any evidence of permanent secular structures. The details of the survey are given in the table below (Table 5.1).

Sl No	Atoll	Island	Sites	Description of finds/ Tentative Period	Geo Cordinates
1	Haa Alif atoll	Inna Finolhu island	<i>Havitha</i> Mound	Ceramics	7°4'28"N 72°48'40"E
2	Haa Alif atoll	Madulu Island	<i>Havitha</i> Mound	Ceramics	7°3'18"N 72°57'11"E
3	Haa Dhaalu atoll	Finney Island(N	Ruins of a structure	Ceramics	06°44'49"N 73°03'08"E
4	Haa Dhaalu atoll	Kumundhoo island	<i>Havitha</i> Mound(1)	Ceramics	06°34'24"N 73°02'59"E
5	Haa Dhaalu atoll	Kumundhoo island	<i>Havitha</i> Mound(2)	Ceramics	06°34'24"N 73°02'59"E
6	Haa Dhaalu atoll	Makunudhoo	Ruins of a structure	Ceramics	06°24'24"N 72°42'20"E
7	Haa Dhaalu atoll	Vaikaradhoo	<i>Havitha</i> Mound known as <i>Jaadi Valhuli Than</i>	Ceramics	06°32'52"N 72°57'10"E
8	Haa Dhaalu atoll	Vaikaradhoo	<i>Havitha</i> Mound known as Neykurendhoo Balaa Usgan 'du	Ceramics	06°32'52"N 72°57'10"E
9	Shaviyani atoll	Maaungoodhoo	<i>Havitha</i> Mound known as <i>Usgandu</i>	Ceramics	06°04'10"N 73°16'52"E
10	Noonu atoll	Landhoo	<i>Havitha</i> Mound known as Maabadhige	Ceramics	05°52'44"N 73°28'04"E
11	Noonu atoll	Lhohi	Han'guraama Fasgan'du with ruins of structures	Ceramics	05°48'50"N 73°22'39"E
12	Noonu atoll	Maafaru	<i>Havitha</i> Mound known as Galaa Akiri funi	Ceramics	05°49'55"N 73°28'49"E

13	Noonu atoll	Miladhoo	Redinge Gaufuni site with ruins	Ceramics	05°47'26"N 73°21'45"E
14	Noonu atoll	Miladhoo	<i>Havitha</i> Mound	Ceramics	05°47'26"N 73°21'45"E
15	Raa Atoll	Un'gulu	Ruins of a settlement known as Usgandu	Ceramics	05°41'26"N 73°1'34"E
16	Baa Atoll	Dharavandhoo	<i>Havitha</i> Mound known as Kaffalhu Gaufuni	Ceramics	05°09'30"N 73°07'50"E
17	Baa Atoll	Dharavandhoo	<i>Havitha</i> Mound	Ceramics	04°52'25"N 72°59'59"E
18	Baa Atoll	Horubandhoo	Site from where three Statues were discovered	Ceramics	05°09'46"N 73°03'11"E
19	Baa Atoll	Maalhos	Ruins of a <i>Havitha</i> Mound known as Isthoofaa egge Tharaha	Ceramics	05°08'04"N 73°06'39"E
20	Baa Atoll	Dhigu gau	Ruins of a <i>Havitha</i> Mound	Ceramics	05°08'00"N 73°06'34"E
21	Lhaviyani atoll	Huruvalhi	Ruins of an ancient structure known as Huruvalhee Tharaa Gan 'du	Ceramics	05°31'14"N 73°26'32"E
22	Lhaviyani atoll	Kurendhu	Ruins called Tharaagan 'du	Ceramics	05°20'02"N 73°27'50"E
23	North Ari atoll	Kuramathi	Ruins of a <i>Havitha</i> Mound	Ceramics	04°15'32"N 72°58'55"E
24	West Ari atoll	Fenfushi	Remains of a tank	Ceramics	3°29'23.35"N 72°47'0.56"E
25	Meemu atoll	Mulah	Ruins of a <i>Havitha</i> Mound known as Usgandeh	Ceramics	02°56'50"N 73°35'05"E
26	Faafu atoll	Biledhoo	Old mosque Masjidul Zukuraa built on an old Buddhist monastery site.	Ceramics	03°07'05"N 72°59'10"E

27	Dhaalu atoll	Hulhudheli	Ruins of a <i>Havitha</i> Mound	Ceramics	02°51'30"N 72°50'55"E
28	Dhaalu atoll	Maadheli	Ruins of a <i>Havitha</i> Mound	Ceramics	2° 52' 57" N, 72° 50' 16" E
29	Dhaalu atoll	Maaenboodhoo	Ruins of a <i>Havitha</i> Mound	Ceramics	02°41'45"N 72°57'45"E
30	Thaa atoll	Hiriladhoo	Ancient ruins known as Athiree Munnaaru	Ceramics	02°16'20"N 72°55'50"E
31	Laamu atoll	Dhan'bidhoo	Ruins of Havitha	Ceramics	02°05'40"N 73°32'45"E
32	Laamu atoll	Hithadhoo	Havitha Ruins called "Maru Beenaa Usgan 'du	Ceramics	01°48'00"N 73°23'18"E
33	Gaaf Alif atoll	Dhevvadhoo	Ruins of Havitha known as Dhevvadhoo Usgan 'du on the north-east of the island,	Ceramics	00°33'32"N 73°14'37"E
34	Gaaf Alif atoll	Dhevvadhoo	Ruins of Havitha mound no:1 on the north- west of the island	Ceramics	00°33'32"N 73°14'37"E
35	Gaaf Alif atoll	Dhevvadhoo	Ruins of Havitha mound no:2 on the north- west of the island	Ceramics	00°33'32"N 73°14'37"E
36	Gaaf Alif atoll	Dhevvadhoo	Ruins of Havitha mound no:3 on the north- west of the island	Ceramics	00°33'32"N 73°14'37"E
37	Gaaf Alif atoll	Kondey	Ruins of Havitha known as Kon 'dey Haviththa	Ceramics	00°29'55"N 73°32'55"E
38	Gaaf Alif atoll	Kondey	Ruins of Havitha on the south-west of the island	Ceramics	00°29'55"N 73°32'55"E

Table 5.1 Details of the Survey carried out in Maldives islands.

5.1 Ceramic Repertoire

The ceramic assemblage from Maldives included imported wares from the Mediterranean world and also probably from the immediate neighbouring regions (Probably from Sri Lanka and Southern India). The ceramics were cleaned, sorted out and labeled. Based on the similarities and differences these were first categorised. The common attributes taken into consideration for the categorization include surface features, texture and forms. The overall definition of these led to classification and generation of wares. To begin with, ceramics were sorted into diagnostic and non-diagnostic; the diagnostic shapes were recorded using photography (Figs 5.1.1 to 5.1.36) drawings (Figs 5.2.1 to 5.2.4), along with describing their identifiable or dominant attributes. The non-diagnostic ones were discarded after quantification. The texture of the local ceramics ranged from fine to coarse, the medium wares falling in between. Most of the ceramics found were red-brown in colour, ranging from fine to coarse texture.

These appear to be from the immediate vicinity, as its quantity was relatively higher. The South Asian varieties may have come either from Sri Lanka or/and South India for which Maldives would have acted as a cultural annexe due to its geographic proximity. The other imported ceramics that occur in limited quantities include Red Polished Ware, Rouletted Ware (?), Turquoise Glazed Ware, Chinese Celadon variety, and Chinese Porcelains (Litster 2016)



Figure 5.1.1 Ceramics from *havitha* Mound at Inna Finolhu Island in Haa Alif Atoll



Figure 5.1.2 Ceramics from ruins near Finey Island in Haa Dhaalu Atoll



Figure 5.1.3 Ceramics from a *havitha* mound at Kumundhoo Island in Haa Dhaalu Atoll



Figure 5.1.4 Ceramics from a *havitha* mound at Makunudhoo Island in Haa Dhaalu Atoll



Figure 5.1.5 Ceramics from ruins of a structure at Makunudhoo Island in Haa Dhaalu Atoll



Figure 5.1.6 Ceramics from *havitha* mound known as *Jaadi Valhuli Than* at Vaikaradhoo Island in Haa Dhaalu Atoll



Figure 5.1.7 Ceramics from *Havitha* Mound known as *Neykurendhoo Balaa Usgan 'du* at Vaikharadhoo island, Haa Dhaalu atoll



Figure 5.1.8 Ceramics from *Havitha* mound known as *Usgandu* at Maaungoodhoo island in Shaviyani atoll



Figure 5.1.9 Ceramics from *Havitha* mound known as *Maabadhige* at Landhoo island in Noonu atoll



Figure 5.1.10 Ceramics from *Han'guraama Fasgan'du* site at Lhohi island in Noonu atoll



Figure 5.1.11 Ceramics from *havitha* Mound known as *Galaa Akiri funiat* Maafaru island in Noonu atoll



Figure 5.1.12 Ceramics from *Redinge Gaufuni* site Miladhoo island in Noonu atoll



Figure 5.1.13 Ceramics from *havitha* Mound at Miladhoo island in Noonu atoll



Figure 5.1.14 Ceramics from Ruins of a settlement known as *Usgandu* at Un'gulu island in Raa atoll



Figure 5.1.15 Ceramics from *havitha* mound known as *Kaffalhu Gaufuni* at Dharavandhoo island in Baa atoll



Figure 5.1.16 Ceramics from Horubandhoo island in Baa atoll



Figure 5.1.17 Ceramics from ruins of a *havitha* Mound known as *Isthoofaa egge Tharaha* at Malhos island in Baa atoll



Figure 5.1.18 Ceramics from ruins of a *havitha* Mound at Dhigu gau island in Baa atoll



Figure 5.1.19 Ceramics from ruins of a site known as *Huruvalhee Tharaa Gan 'duat* Hurulvahi island in Lhaviyani atoll

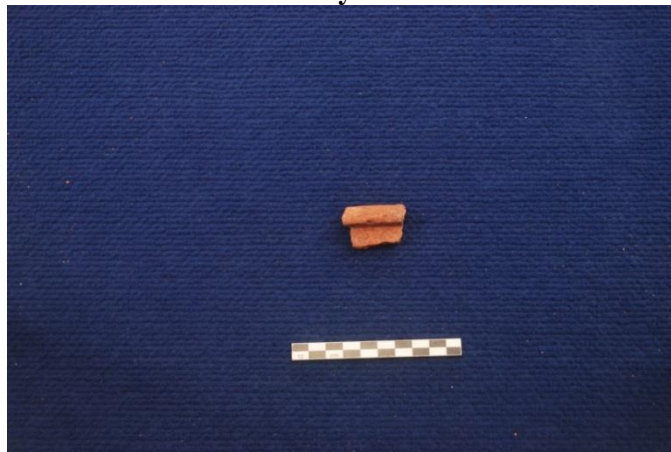


Figure 5.1.20 Ceramics from site called *Tharaagan 'du* at Kurendhu island in Lhaviyani atoll



Figure 5.1.21 Ceramics from Ruins of a *havitha* Mound at Kuramathi island in North Ari atoll



Figure 5.1.22 Ceramic from the premises of remains of a tank at Fenfushi island in West Ari Atoll



Figure 5.1.23 Ceramics from ruins of a *havitha* Mound known as *Usgandeh* at Mulah island in Meemu atoll



Figure 5.1.24 Ceramics from Biledhoo island in Faafu atoll



Figure 5.1.25 Ceramics from ruins of a *havitha* mound at Hulhudheli island in Dhaalu atoll



Figure 5.1.26 Ceramics from ruins of a *havitha* mound at Madheli island in Dhaalu atoll



Figure 5.1.27 Ceramics from ruins of a *havitha* at Maaenboodhoo island in Dhaalu atoll



Figure 5.1.28 Ceramics from Ancient ruins known as *Athiree Munnaaru* at Hirilandhoo island in Thaa atoll



Figure 5.1.29 Ceramics from ruins of a *havitha* mound at Dhan'bidhoo island in Laamu atoll



Figure 5.1.30 Ceramics from *havitha* ruins called *Maru Beenaa Usgan 'du* in Hithadoo island in Laamu atoll



Figure 5.1.31 Ceramics from ruins of *havitha* known as *Dhevvadhoo Usgan 'du* on the north-east of the Dhevvadhoo island in Gaaf Alif atoll



Figure 5.1.32 Ceramics from Ruins of *havitha* mound no: 1 on the north- west of the Dhevvadhoo Island in Gaaf Alif atoll



Figure 5.1.33 Ceramics from Ruins of *havitha* mound no:2 on the north- west of the Dhevvadhoo Island in Gaaf Alif atoll



Figure 5.1.34 Ceramics from Ruins of *havitha* mound no:3 on the north- west of the Dhevvdhoo Island in Gaaf Alif atoll



Figure 5.1.35 Ceramics from Ruins of *havitha* known as *Kon 'dey* at Kondey island in Gaaf Alif atoll



Figure 5.1.36 Ceramic from ruins of *havitha* on the south-west of the Kondey island in Gaaf Alif atoll

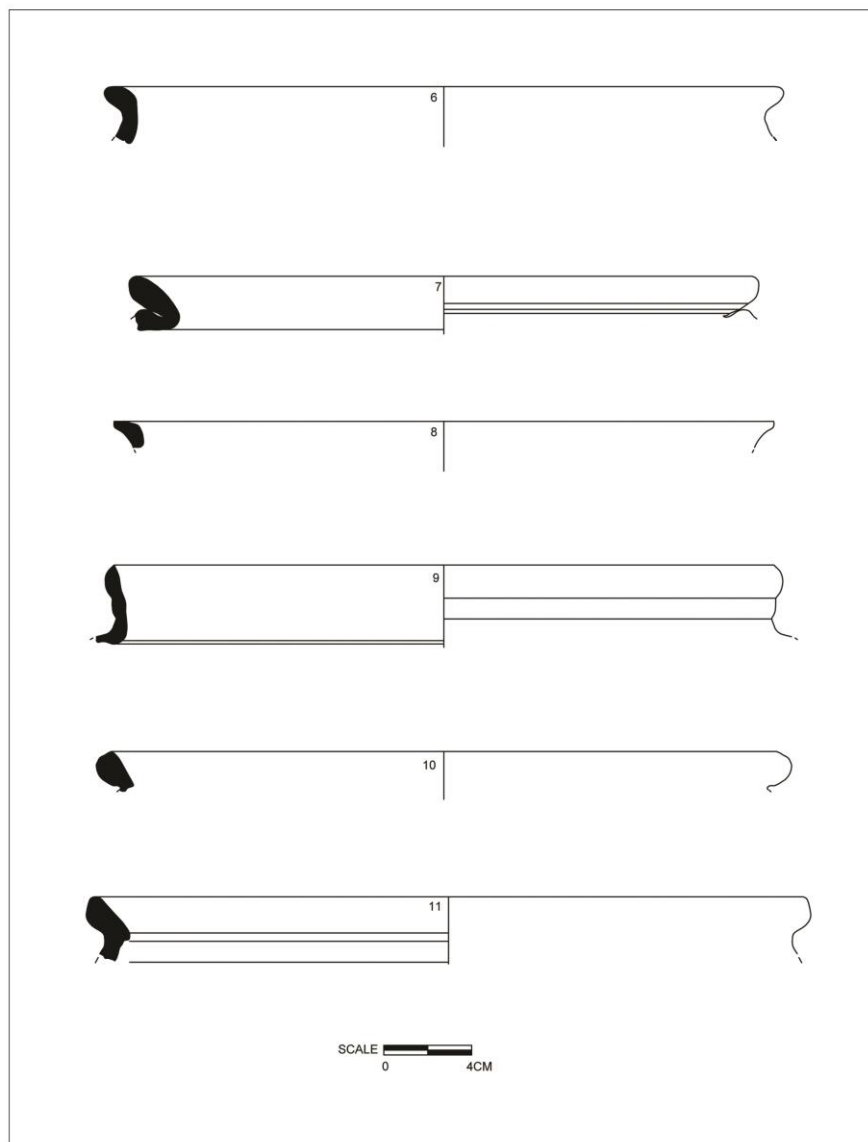


Figure 5.2.1 Illustration of Ceramics from the field survey

1. Roughly vertical, nail headed and collared rim.
2. Out-Turned, thickened and internally beveled rim with set of two parallel line on body.
3. Out-Turned, slightly drooping and roughly flattened.
4. Flaring out featureless rim.
5. In-turned, collared and obliquely thickened rim.

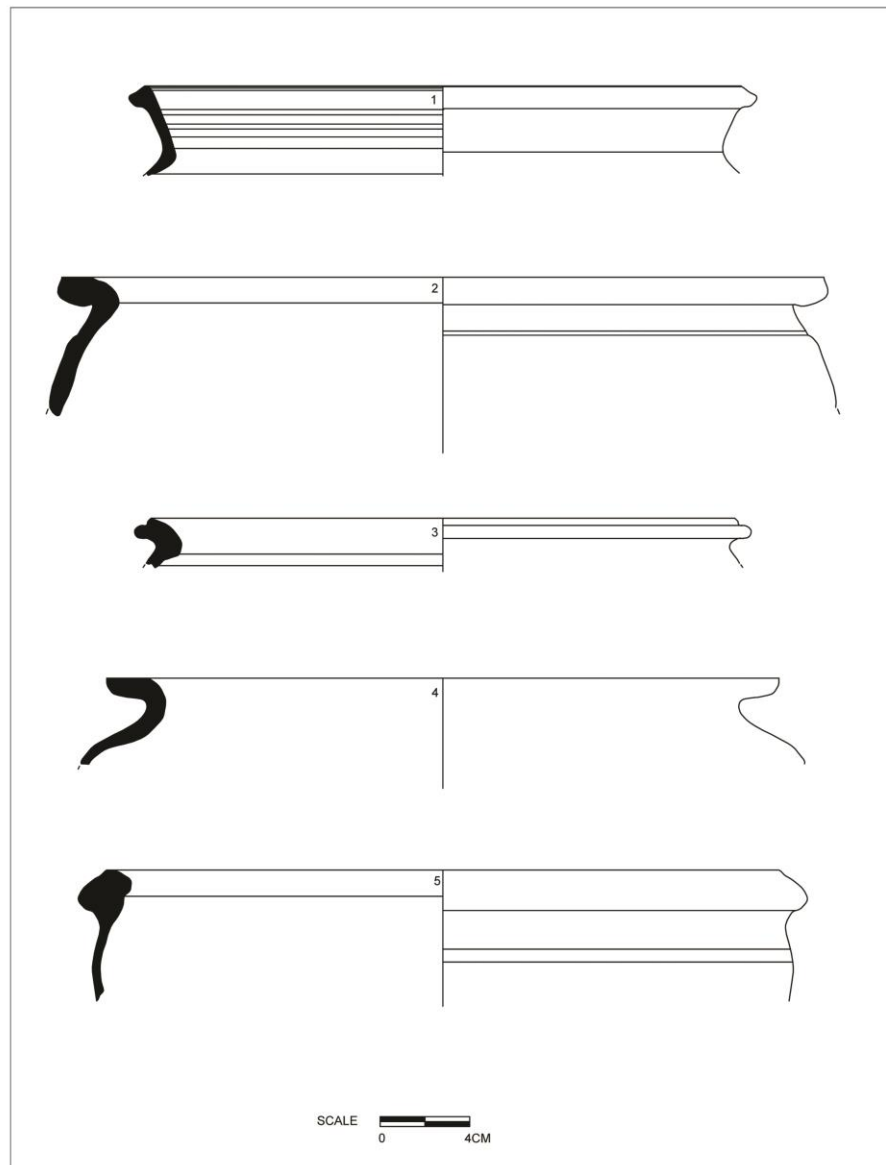


Figure 5.2.2 Illustration of Ceramics from the field survey

6. Out-turned featureless rim.
7. Elliptically collared rim.
8. Out curved featureless rim.
9. Oval collared and externally thickened rim.
10. Out turned and externally clubbed rim.
11. Slightly projecting , thickened externally and having depression internally

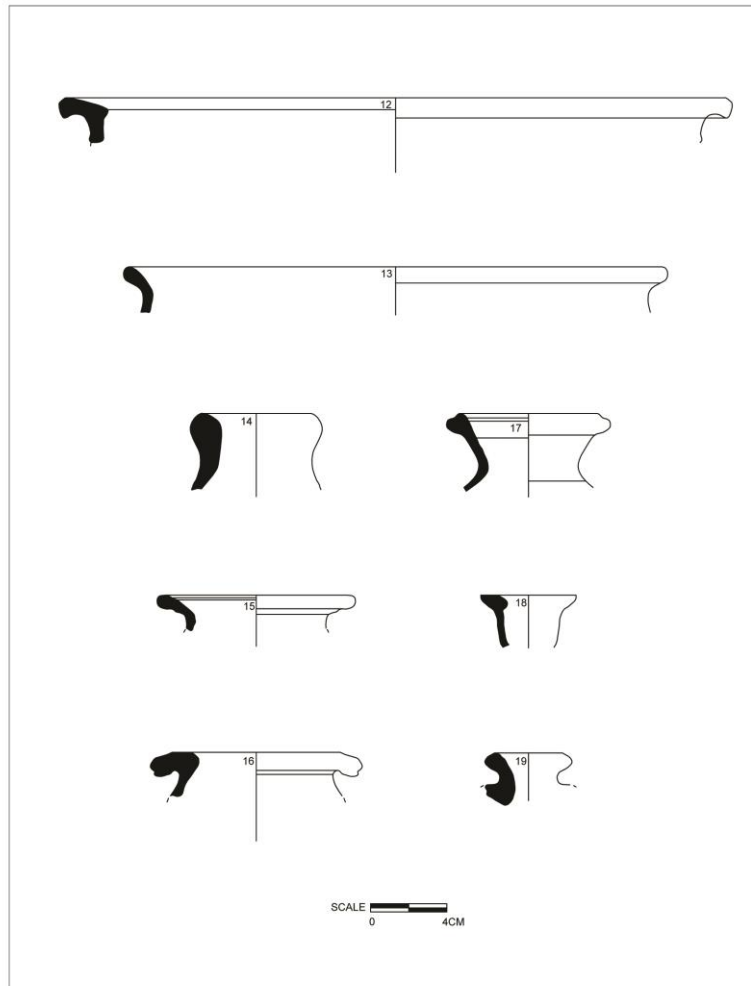


Figure 5.2.3 Illustration of Ceramics from the field survey

- 12. Flaring featureless rim.
- 13. Out- Turned, concave neck, kened and rounded.
- 14. Slightly flaring and thickened externally.
- 15. Out-Turned externally clubbed rim.
- 16. Drooping rim
- 17. Out-turned nail headed beveled rim with high neck and convex holder.
- 18. Flaring featureless with externally thickened rim.
- 19. Flaring featureless rim.

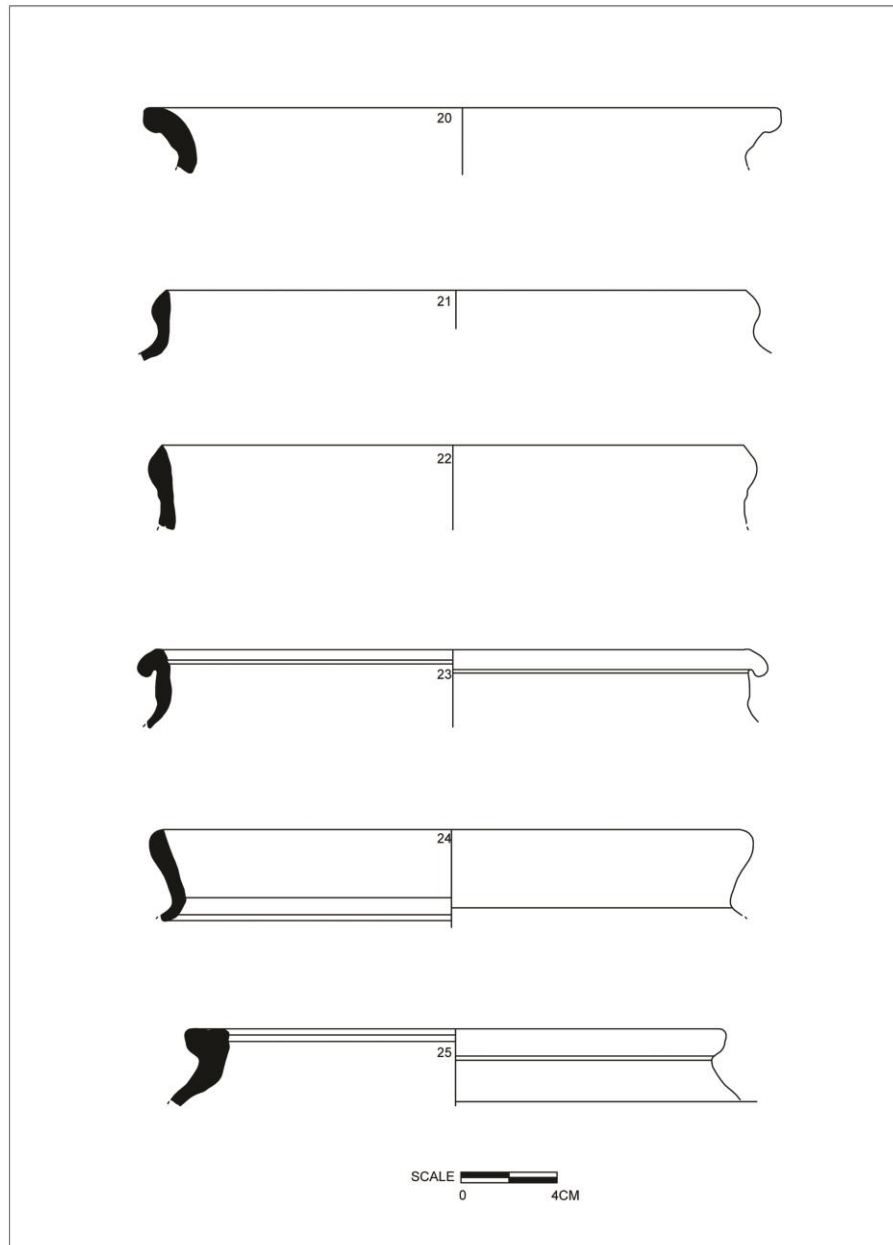


Figure 5.2.4 Illustration of Ceramics from the field survey

- 20. Out-turned and oval collared (if there is no rim line then it is a featureless rim).
- 21. Slightly flaring out with almost flattened top, externally thickened rim.
- 22. Slightly flaring out with almost flattened top, externally thickened rim.
- 23. Drooping rim.
- 24. Flaring mouth with featureless rim.
- 25. Nail headed rim with an under cut and gradually expanding neck.

5.2 Sculptural Art

A Survey of the museum collections revealed 37 sculptures, and architectural fragments. These included anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms, ritual objects and architectural fragments. The material used for manufacturing them is coral stone. Most of them appear crude, whilst a few reveal high degree of craftsmanship. Owing to the small size of the finds, the anatomical details of the iconic forms could not be observed.

The earliest expression of art, architecture and religion in the Maldives can be seen with the arrival of Buddhism to the archipelago. The ancient stone sculptures and the inscriptions discovered from the islands undoubtedly reveal that the practice of Buddhism as a religion evolved over a period of time.

5.2.1 Anthropomorphic figures

The anthropomorphic figures recovered include Buddha sculptures, Bodhisattva figures, sculptures with demonic heads and *Gana* figures.

Buddha figures:

Two Buddha figures were displayed in the National Museum of Maldives which are made of Coral stone. Their current status following the mob attack in 2012 is unknown. The first sculpture is a Buddha head discovered from the ruins of a Buddhist settlement in Thoddu in 1959 (fig 5.3). At the time of its discovery it was a full figure, but was destroyed by the local people and only the head has survived. Since the sculpture is made of soft coral stone not much features are clear through which we can compare it with the South Asian parallels.



Figure 5.3 Buddha head from Thoddu Island

The second Buddhist sculpture is that of a coral votive plaque of a seated Buddha (fig 5.4). This sculpture is more refined than the previous and exhibits clear features. Terracotta votive plaques of Buddha were prevalent in India especially in Amravati school of Art and Pala school of Art. However, the features of the Buddha image under study shows similarities with that of the Buddha sculptures of Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka on the basis of the execution of the style of the drapery.



Figure 5.4 Coral votive plaque of a seated Buddha

Bodhisattva figures

Several *Bodhisattva* images were found from Maldives which include an image of *Avalokiteswara*. The most important sculpture among them is that of Bodhisattva *Avalokiteswara* who embodies the compassion of all Buddhas (fig 5.5). This image is adorned with a decorated head gear and two feathers can be seen on either side of the crown and stylistically similar to the *Avalokiteswara* sculptures prevalent in Orissa during 10th century CE.

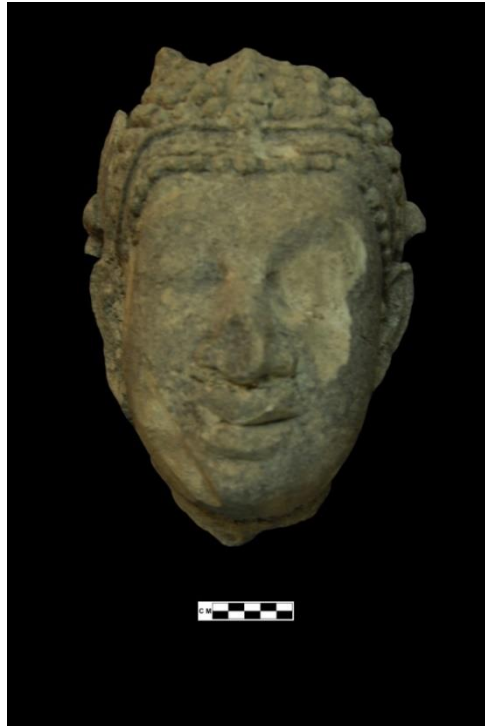


Figure 5.5 **Bodhisattva *Avalokiteswara* from Maldives Islands**

Three images were also discovered from Maldives which can be identified as Bodhisattvas (fig 5.6.1 & 5.6.2). The features are not clear since the figures are damaged. But remnants of adornments can be seen at some areas. This shows that the cult of Bodhisattvas especially that of *Avalokiteswara* was very prominent in Mahayana Buddhism and suggest that the traders who sailed long distances showed a tendency to worship the *Bodhisattva Avalokitheshvara* before and after their voyages as he was considered as the great healer and the protector of the Sea (Chutiwongs 2002).



Figure 5.6.1 Bodhisattva figure from Maldives



Figure 5.6.2 Bodhisattva figure from Maldives



Figure 5.6.3 Bodhisattva figure from Maldives

Sculptures with demonic heads

Several sculptures with demonic features were discovered from these islands which points to the prevalence of Esoteric Buddhism in these islands (fig 5.7.1& 5.7.2).



Figure 5.7.1 & 5.7.2 Sculptures with demonic heads from Maldives islands

The noteworthy among them was a six faced stellae (fig 5.8) discovered from Aifaanu Magu in the Henveiru Ward of Male' during the early 1960's during the work of leveling and resurfacing of the road. In Buddhism, fierce deities are the wrathful or forceful forms of enlightened Buddhas, Bodhisattvas or Devas. These are the remarkable iconographic features of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. These types of deities first appeared in India during the late 6th century connected with Indian Tantric Buddhism by the late 10th or early 11th century CE. The presence of these sculptures easily corroborates the presence of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism in Maldives.



Figure 5.8 Six faced stellae discovered from Aifaanu Magu in Male

Gana Figures

Gana figures are very prominent in Art and Architecture of South Asia both in Brahmanic; and Buddhist context .They are considered as the attendants of Lord Siva and can be seen in the iconography as well as architectural membranes in temple architecture and later in Buddhist architecture as guardians of the monument. Gana sculptures are discovered from Maldives isalnds as part of the Buddhist monumental architecture (fig 5.8.1, 5.8.2, 5.8.3,5.8.4). They are shown as sitting with their hands upwards as if they are supporting something on top of them. These figures might have been a part of freeze in the Buddhist architecture in Maldives Islands.

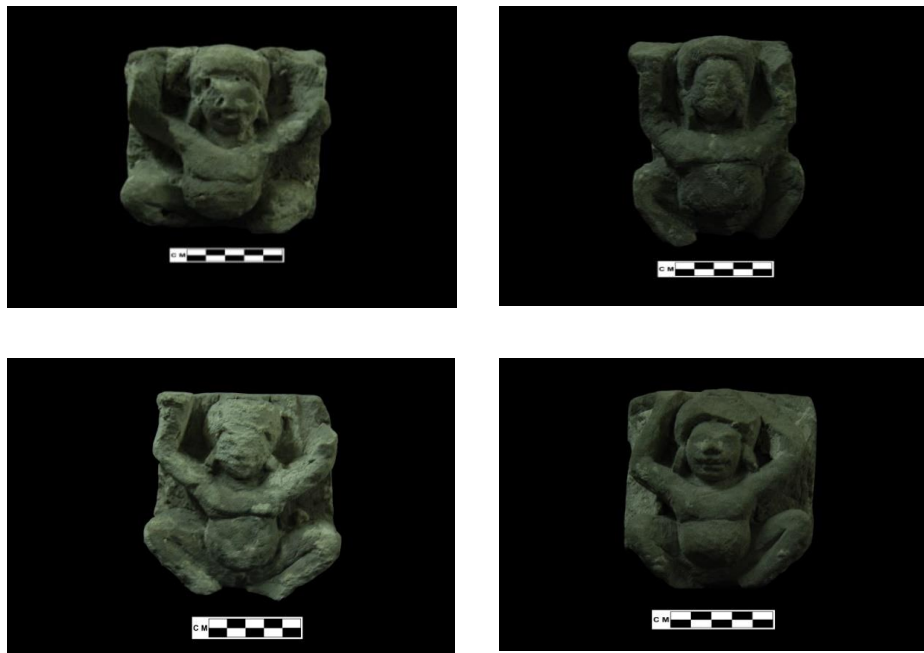


Figure 5.8.1, 5.8.2,.5.8.3 &5.8.4: Gana Figures from Maldives Islands

5.2.2 Zoomorphic figures

Zoomorphic figures include a variety of images like a dog (fig5.9) a *makara* (fig 5.10), tortoise (fig 5.11) and lion figurines(fig 5.12.1 &5.12.2).These were all found as surface finds from the Maldives islands whose provenance is unknown.Stylistically these figurines seems to be associated with Buddhist monastic architecture. *Makara* figures are present in the steps portion and lion figures are prominent in Buddhist architecture as guardians of the structure.The evidence of the tortoise sculpture is quite fascinating since tortoise is a symbol of wisdom and knowledge as per various mythologies.



Figure5.9 Dog Figurine from Maldives islands



Figure 5.10 Makara figurine from Maldives islands



Figure 5.11 Tortoise figure from Maldives islands



Figure 5.12.1 Lion figure from Maldives islands



Figure 5.12.2 Lion figurine from Maldives islands

5.2.3 Ritualistic objects

The main reflection in the ideology of Buddhism in the Maldives is the growing trend of mundane ritual activities. Existence of such cultic objects confirms the popularity and establishment of Buddhist tradition in the islands. As mentioned above, the archaeological evidence shows that ritualistic objects were used in the practice of this religion.



Figure 5.13 *Buddhapada* from Vaadhoo Island

The most important one is a beautifully carved Footprint of the Buddha (***Buddha Pada***) found in Vaadhoo Island (fig 5.13) in South Huvadhu (Gaafu Dhaalu) Atoll by the team from the National Centre for Linguistic and Historical Research and the Kon-Tiki Museum in 1983-84. These are fragments of Buddha's Footprint which constitute a coral stone slab 30"x 30" square. It is an example of the relics used in Footprint worship in early Buddhism and contains the traditional symbols. Adoring the Footprints was one of the oldest forms of Buddhist worship. Only the obverse side of the coral stone has been worked, the other side having been left crude, indicating that this might have been attached to something else, such as a floor or a pedestal.

The features on the slab are engraved in low relief. A rim and a panel of lotus decoration constitute the frame of the slab. In the centre, an 18"x18" square is divided into two rectangles of 18"x 9" size. This part is separated from the frame by a deep narrow chilled cavity. The horseshoe of the relief in the lower part of the rectangles and the five digits marked with phalanges on the upper part of the rectangles are clear indications that this shows a pair of footprints. The use of coral as raw material, points to local execution, and shows early Maldivian art. The Swastika is marked on the bottom phalanges of all the toes. A *Dharma Chakra* symbol is found prominently on each of the heels. Seven symbols are found on the soles, between the *Dharma Chakra* and the toes. They are depicted in two lines. These are from left to right: *Chauri* (whisk), Conch, *Purnaghata* (Pot of Prosperity), Fish and *Ankusa* (Elephant Goad) in the first line: and in the second, line the Swastika and Mirror or *Dhamaruka*

The above symbols are repeated in the adjoining footprint, but, in reverse order, *Ankusa* being the first symbol on the first line. The *Srivatsa* symbol (symbol for the Goddess of Prosperity) is found at the bottom, below is the *Dharma Chakra*, on both the heels. Four more symbols are seen around the *Dharma Chakra*, the *Nandiyavarta* (Bull's Head) and *Triratna* (Three Gems) are seen clearly, the third could be an *auriole* and the fourth, with two circles within an ellipse, could not be identified. (Personal communication: Ragupathy)

Relic caskets

Two types of caskets were discovered from these islands. The first type is round stupa-shaped coral stone with a square raised portion at the top of the lid and a protruding ridge at the base (fig 5.14.1 & 5.14.2). The other variety is the square box shaped ones with lid (fig 5.15.1 & 5.15.2). The square caskets are seen as embellishments with relief symbols connected with Tantric Buddhism. These caskets were found from excavated sites at Kaashidhoo and Nilandhoo as well as a surface find. These types of casket shows some minor damages on the outer surface and are estimated to be from the 11th century CE.



Figure 5.14.1 & 5.14.2 Stupa shaped coral relic caskets from Maldives islands



Figure 5.15.1 & 5.15.2 Square shaped coral relic caskets from Maldives islands

Votive Stupas

Votive stupas typically surround the large stupa and are recovered from many Buddhist sites (Fogelin 2013). They exist to commemorate visits to the larger stupa and the earliest votive stupas have been dated stylistically to the first century B C E from Orissa in India (Chauley 2013). In Maldives votive stupas were recovered from Nilandhoo Foamathi and Bodu Havitha collected during the 1983-1984 expeditions. These are all made of coral stone. Two types of votive stupas were noticed- domed type (Fig 5.16) and tower types (fig 5.17)



Fig 5.16 Dome typed votive stupa from Maldives islands



Fig 5.17 Tower typed votive stupa from Maldives islands

5.2.4 Architectural fragments

Excavations and explorations in the islands discovered a considerable amount of architectural members made of coral stones (fig 5.18.1, 5.18.2 & 5.18.3). Very little contextual information these stones are available beyond associated features. But they were originally the part of ancient sites, *havithas*.



Figure 5.18.1 Architectural members from Maldives islands



Figure 5.18.2 Architectural members from Maldives islands



Figure 5.18.3 Architectural members from Maldives islands

On stylistic grounds, the Buddhist sculptures from Maldives reveal two different styles in terms of raw material used and features. Even if some of the sculptures and artefacts show similarity with the various schools of arts in the south Asian region, most of the early Maldivian coral-stone carvings which depict crude symbols of Buddhism suggest that they have been manufactured by craftsmen who were not attempting to replicate the intricate architecture present on the mainland.

Evidence of the prevalence of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism can be seen from the material culture. Mahayana Buddhism is mostly cult oriented and this characteristic may have motivated the booming merchant communities and vice-

versa. The statues made out of coral stone are slightly beyond human size but the proportions of the body and the equilibrium kept in the places of all those images replicate a strong firmness and expression. The artefacts resembling the *Buddha Pada* (Buddha's foot prints) have been recorded from Vadhoo Island. While analysing the sculptural art it is noticed that the earliest Buddhist sculptures are more refined while the later ones are crude in nature.