

Finding aid for Views of Sri Lankan archaeological sites by Scowen & Co. and Joseph Lawton 97.R.51

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Description is in English.

Special Collections

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Summary Information

- Repository:** Special Collections
- Creator:** Scowen & Co
- Title:** Views of Sri Lankan archaeological sites by Scowen & Co. and Joseph Lawton
- ID:** 97.R.51
- Dates:** 1870-1893
- Extent:** 1.5 Linear Feet (1 box: 24 albumen prints)
- Request Materials:** Request access to the physical materials described in this inventory through the [catalog record](#) for this collection. Click here for the [access policy](#).
- Language:** Collection material is in English
- Abstract:** The collection comprises views of structures and sculptures in Sri Lanka from the sites of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. The twelve photographs of Anuradhapura are by Charles Thomas Scowen. The photographs of Polonnaruwa were likely all taken by Joseph Lawton. The photographs were taken shortly after the rediscovery of these important Buddhist monuments, but before official excavations were begun by the Archaeological Department of Ceylon in the 1890s.

Preferred Citation

Views of Sri Lankan archaeological sites by Scowen & Co. and Joseph Lawton, 1870-1893, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 97.R.51.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10020/cifa97r51>

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Biographical / Historical

Charles T. Scowen (1852-1948) arrived in Sri Lanka as an assistant to R. Edley, a commission agent, in 1873. In 1876 he established his first photographic studio, Scowen & Co., in Kandy, and by 1885 he had opened a studio in Colombo. Scowen & Co., which was especially known for its flower and plant studies, was active until the mid-1890s when Colombo Apothecaries Co. acquired its entire negative

stock. Scowen, who appears to have become a proprietary tea planter for a time in Sri Lanka, died in Sudbury, England.

The British photographer, Joseph Lawton, who was initially employed in Kandy, Sri Lanka, by the trading company H. C. Bryde and Sons, established his own photographic studio in that town in the mid-1860s. In 1870 he was commissioned by the Archaeological Committee, which had been established by the Governor of Ceylon in 1868, to photograph the main archaeological sites in Sri Lanka. After working at the sites of Anuradhapura, Mihintale, Polonnaruwa, and Sigiriya during 1870 and 1871, where he was often actively involved in clearing the jungle so that the sites could be photographed and excavated, Lawton fell ill. He returned to England to recover, but died there in 1872. Lawton produced two sets of photographs from his photographic campaigns for the Archaeological Committee, one of which was retained in Sri Lanka and the other of which was sent to the Colonial Office in London, and is now in the British National Archives. Lawton's studio, under the direction of his wife Helen, continued selling his photographs to the tourist market. The studio was taken over by R. Charter in 1885 and Lawton's original negatives were scattered among many buyers and are now considered to be lost.

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Scope and Content of Collection

The collection comprises views of structures and sculptures in Sri Lanka from the sites of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa dating from the 10th to 13th centuries AD, with some components dating to the 2nd century BC. The photographs of Anuradhapura were all taken by Charles Thomas Scowen or one of his studio operatives. Structures depicted at Anuradhapura include the Issurumuniya temple, Lowamahapaya (the Brazen Palace) and Ruwanweliseya, the Buddha's relic shrine. Also shown are many sculptural elements and Buddha statues of the Abhayagiri Dagoba as well as the site's bas-relief sandakada pahanas or moon-stones.

The photographs of Polonnaruwa were likely all taken by Joseph Lawton. At Polonnaruwa sites include the Gal Vihara temple, Dalada Maligawa, Abhayagiri (Northern) monastery, and the Thivanka Pilimage (Image House) as well as various sculptural elements such as statues of lions, the Buddha, and the Gal Pota, or Book of Stone.

Two photographs are unidentified as to either site or photographer and include a view of a house or temple built under a large oblong rock and a colossal standing Buddha statue.

The photographs in the collection were taken shortly after the rediscovery of these important Buddhist monuments, but before official excavations were begun by the Archaeological Department of Ceylon in the 1890s. The sites have been extensively excavated, modified, and restored since the photographs were taken.

The 12 Scowen photographs have printed captions in the negative. Eleven of these also bear the photographer's printed name: Scowen & Co. Three photographs have both a printed name and "Scowen" written in the negative, and one photograph has only "Scowen" written in the negative.

Ten photographs by or attributed to Joseph Lawton have pencil captions on their versos with numbers apparently correlating to plate numbers in one of Lawton's publications. One photograph has "Lawton" written in the negative on the trunk of a felled tree.

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Arrangement

The collection is arranged in a single series: Series I. Views of Sri Lankan archaeological sites by Scowen & Co. and Joseph Lawton, 1870-1893.

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Administrative Information

Access

Open for use by qualified researchers.

Publication Rights

Contact [Library Reproductions and Permissions](#).

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Acquired in 1997.

Processing Information

The collection was processed in 2018 by Beth Ann Gynn who also wrote the finding aid.

Digitized Material

The collection was digitized by the repository in 2018 and the images are available online:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10020/97r51>

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Controlled Access Headings

Subjects - People

- Lawton, Joseph, -1872

Subjects - Corporate Bodies

- Ruwanweliseya (Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka)

Subjects - Topics

- Buddhist sculpture -- Sri Lanka
- Monuments -- Sri Lanka
- St#pas -- Sri Lanka

Subjects - Places

- Alahana Parivena Site (Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka) -- Antiquities
- Anuradhapura (Sri Lanka) -- Antiquities
- Sri Lanka -- Description and travel

Genres and Forms of Materials

- Albumen prints -- Sri Lanka -- 19th century
- Photographs, Original

Collection Inventory

Series I. Views of Sri Lankan archaeological sites by Scowen & Co. and Joseph Lawton, 1870-1893 24 Photographic Prints

[Views of Sri Lankan archaeological sites by Scowen & Co. and Joseph Lawton \(digitized version\)](#)

Arrangement:

Arranged alphabetically by site.

Title/Description	Containers
Anuradhapura, 1876-1893	
<i>Scope and Contents:</i> All of the photographs of Anuradhapura are by Scowen & Co. Titles and photographer's credit are printed in the negative. Except as noted, photographer's credit reads: Scowen & Co.	

97.R.51-1: Ruwanweli Dagoba, 182 Feet High, Anuradhapura	Box 1
<i>Scope and Contents:</i> View of Ruwanweliseya, the Buddha's relic shrine. Photographer's credit in negative: Scowen & Co. Ceylon.	
97.R.51-2: Ruins of the Brazen Palace...Anuradhapua [sic]	Box 1
<i>Scope and Contents:</i> Caption continues:...consisting of 1600 granite pillars standing 12 feet / out of the ground and covering a space of 232 feet square...	
97.R.51-3: Isurumuniya, Anuradhapura	Box 1
97.R.51-4: Stelæ at South Frontispiece of Abayagiri Dagoba, Anuradhapura	Box 1
<i>Scope and Contents:</i> With Fabrik marke wet stamp on verso.	
97.R.51-5: Stelæ at West Frontispiece of the Abhayagiri Dagoba, Anuradhapura	Box 1
97.R.51-6: Wing Stone to the Steps of the Pavilion between Thuparama and Ruwanweli Dagobas, Anuradhapura	Box 1
97.R.51-7: Wing Stone to Steps of Pavilion to West of Ruwanweli Dagoba, Anuradhapura	Box 1
97.R.51-8: Carved Terminal to Wing Steps of Monastery, Anuradhapura	Box 1
<i>Scope and Contents:</i> Signed in negative: Scowen.	
97.R.51-9: Anuradhapura. Sculptured Moon-stone	Box 1
97.R.51-10: Anuradhapura. Sculptured Moon-stone	Box 1
<i>Scope and Contents:</i> The moonstone is at the bottom of some steps. The image is printed upside down.	
97.R.51-11: Stone Figure of Buddha on Road Side near the Kuttam Pokuna, Anuradhapura	Box 1
<i>Scope and Contents:</i> With Fabrik marke wet stamp on verso.	
97.R.51-12: Wing Stone to Steps	Box 1
<i>Scope and Contents:</i> Title from annotation on verso. Signed in negative: Scowen.	

Polonnaruwa, 1870-1871

Scope and Contents:

Titles are from annotations on the versos of the prints. The "P" numbers written on the versos apparently correspond to the plate numbers for a publication, portfolio or

collection containing Lawton's images. See for example, a copy of Lawton's image of the the Gal Pota held in the Victoria and Albert Museum (museum number 82702), whose "P" number in the caption is the same as the print held in the present collection: collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O146350/polonnaruwa-the-gal-pota-stone-photograph-lawton-joseph/

Lawton, Joseph

Scope and Contents:

Included here are images that have been verified by the cataloger as being by Lawton.

97.R.51-13: Newly Discovered Ruins to the North of the Gal-Wiháré, Polonnaruva	Box 1
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Scope and Contents:

73p. View of the Thivanka Pilimage (Image House).

97.R.51-14: The Gal-Wiháré Rock Temple, Polonnaruva	Box 1
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Scope and Contents:

64p. Gal Vihara façade with three Buddhas - sitting, standing, lying.

97.R.51-15: Gal-Wiháré Rock and Recumbent Figure of Buddha, 46 Ft. Long, Polonnaruva	Box 1
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Scope and Contents:

65p. Gal Vihara. Fabrik marke wet stamp on verso.

97.R.51-16: The Daladá Máligáwa, Polonnaruva	Box 1
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Scope and Contents:

18p. Assembled group of statuary.

97.R.51-17: The Gal-pota (Stone Book), Polonnaruva	Box 1
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Scope and Contents:

Signed on fallen tree trunk, lower left side of image: Lawton.

The Gal Pota, or Book of Stone, in the form of a palm leaf book, lies just to the east of the Hatadage (Temple of the Tooth) at Polonnaruwa. The inscriptions on the stone list the achievements of King Nissankamalla (1187-1196).

97.R.51-18: Stone Inscribed Lion in the Audience Hall...Polonnaruva	Box 1
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Scope and Contents:

8p. Inscription continues: 7 ft. long & 6 ft. 6 inches high.

Lawton, Joseph, attributed

Scope and Contents:

Included here are photographs attributed to Lawton based on the annotations and "P" numbers on their versos, but which have not otherwise been verified by the cataloger.

97.R.51-19: The Abhayagiri-wiharé. Polonnaruva	
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Scope and Contents: Box 1
22 p.

97.R.51-20: The Dalada-Maligawa. Polonnaruwa Box 1

Scope and Contents:
17 p. This is possibly the Dalada-Maligawa at Anuradhapura.

97.R.51-21: [Collapsed Entrance Façade of a Temple] Box 1

Scope and Contents:
4 p.

97.R.51-22: The Jél#-Wanárána, Flight of Stone Steps 20 Ft. Wide, Polonnaruwa, Box 1

Scope and Contents:
57 p. Fabrik marke wet stamp on verso. Steps with a makara balustrade along one side and a naga stela at their base.

Location unidentified, 1870s?

97.R.51-23: Photographer unknown, Buddhist Temple Box 1

Scope and Contents:
Numbered on verso: 1014. Depicts a temple or house built into a large oblong boulder.

97.R.51-24: Photographer unknown, Buddah [sic] Box 1

Scope and Contents:
Also written on verso: Anadurapura or Polunnaruva. Depicts a colossal standing stone Buddha.

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