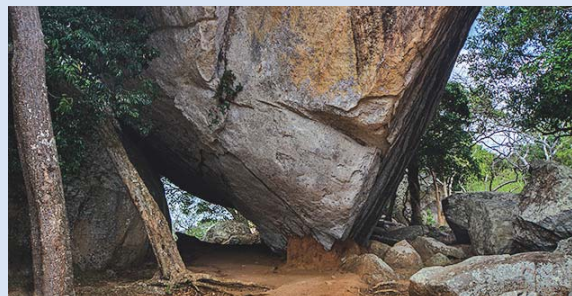


# Kantaka Chaitya Mihintale



## Kantaka Chaitya ▲

Kantaka Chaitya lies on a summit on one of the hills at Mihintale sacred site. It was known as *Kiribadapavu* in ancient time. It is considered one of the most beautiful architectural examples of its epoch (1st Century). When it was built it was much higher, probably twice as high. It has four *Wahalkadas* (altar-piece panels) with beautiful ornamental friezes of captivating dwarfs. These sculptures depict facetious dwarves frolicking in the midst of sacred geese, the incarnation of the *Bodhisatva*. One dwarf plays music while another walks on his hands. Some of them, with animal heads on their human bodies, make up a strange collection of beasts, the meaning of which escape us. The excavation work of the Chaitya was undertaken by the distinguished Archaeologist, former Archaeological Commissioner, Dr. Senerath Paranavitana in December 1934.



## Caves ▲

The sixty eight drip-ledged caves built by King Devanampiyatissa as dwelling for bhikkhus headed by Ven. Arahat Mahinda Maha Thera at the Mihintale mountain are around the Kantaka Cheitya.

## Wahalkadas ▲

Altars were placed at the four cardinal points of a *Chaitya*. These are mainly found in the structures from the first period of Anuradhapura. They can also be seen at the Kantaka Chaitya in Mihintale (2nd Century BCE) shown here. Most of them, built of limestone, have been damaged or even lost. This type of building is characteristic of Sinhalese architecture.



## Stelae ►

The *Wahalkadas* are flanked by stelae, the front and side faces of which are sculptured with floral designs. The stelae were surmounted by figures of beasts, elephants at the eastern *Wahalkada*, and lions, horses and bulls in the North, the West and the South. The *Wahalkadas* represent the earliest examples of Sinhala sculpture and its excellence.