

Sigiriya: a Re-examination

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Introduction:

Sigiriya is situated in the Inamaluwa Korale of the Matale District in the central province. It was also known as "Sihapabbata" and "Sihagiri" during ancient times (Culavamsa, 1925:93). As pointed out by Hocart and Paranavithana the Brahmi inscriptions found in caves on the western side of the rock belong to a period as early as the second century BC that establishes Sigiriya's antiquity (Hocart, 1928: 93; Paranavithana, 1956: V). According to the information given in those inscriptions, it is clear that there was a population of monks at the foot of the rock as early as first of second century BC (Hocart, 1928: 93-94). Nevertheless in the present state of our knowledge, there are no historical or archaeological data relating to Sigiriya that could be assigned to the period from the first or second century BC to the later fifth century. The main aim of this paper is to re-examine the elusive history of Sigiriya.

Historical Background:

Recent archaeological excavation carried out at Sigiriya also appear to indicate that there is not only a gap between the early and the later monastic phases, i.e. first, second centuries BC and sixth century AD periods which will be discussed later, but also that the monks of the early phase seem to have abandoned Sigiriya for reasons unknown- either due to demographic changes or due to the disturbances which occurred in the subsequent period (Basnayake, 1983: 3).

It is certain that Sigiriya came to be better known during the reign of the patricidal King Kassapa (473-491 AD) who shifted his capital from Anuradhapura to Sigiriya. According to the story given in the Culavamsa, King Datusena who ascended the throne of the island in the fifth century AD (455-473) had two sons, one named Moggallana, born of the anointed queen and another one called Kassapa by a consort

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