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Change of topography of Sri Lanka through time: an interactive web based tool

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The cultural landscape is one of the main sources when interpreting archaeological evidence. This means the knowledge of change of landscape through time plays a vital role in interpreting the archaeological evidence and events happened in the past.

The knowledge of topography during different times in past leads to identification of landscape of events happened in past. It helps to interpret the past events more accurately and understand the different landscape dynamics in past, which were contributed to these events.

The sources of the historical topography including inscriptions, ancient manuscripts, ancient maps and plans, cultural landscape, etc. The information in these sources are available in different languages, scripts and representation is based on the regional knowledge. These sources use same symbols and icons to represent the different objects or vice versa. This causes difficulties to Archaeologists as well as Historians to understand the historical topography as it needs knowledge of different domains to get a clear understanding.

The aim of this study was to develop a tool for researches in Archaeology and History to simplify the process of identification historical topography easily. The primary data was collected using ancient maps, plans, contemporary records, monuments and other relevant landmarks, inscriptions, ancient manuscripts and field exploration. During the field exploration, GPS coordinates of identified locations were recorded. The reference for these topography were identified after a literature survey. The information identified in the data collection process were recorded using a database. The data were captured into the database in a manner which allows users to query and fetch information easily and fast. They information is presented in different ways including an interactive map with timeline. This interactive map provides valuable information to researches on how the historical topography changed over the time.

A separate section of this tool includes the different symbologies and icons used in ancient maps with a description. The tool developed is a web based tool using open source technologies with open access to the information.

Key words: *Historical topography, Cultural landscape, History, Archaeology*