

Distortion of archaeological evidence

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I would like to emphasize the fact that most of the inscriptions of a Buddhist background, so far discovered in Sri Lanka, inscribed on the caves, rocks, pillars and slabs are notices that have been put up for the benefit of the people of contemporary society. They came down from the time Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century B.C. We have archaeological evidence to prove that Thera Mahinda, son of Emperor Asoka of India came to Sri Lanka to propagate Buddhism and lived in Sri Lanka until his demise.

We should not distort archaeological evidence to suit our whims. In the paper on Historical Evidence of Ramayana and Rawana in Sri Lanka, presented at a Symposium by the Chairman of the Ramayana Trail Executive Committee, Mr. N.C.K. Kiriella of the Ministry of Tourism, who is no authority on ancient inscriptions in Sri Lanka had misinterpreted some early Brahmi inscriptions.

The Archaeological Department takes impressions from the inscriptions by a method practiced from the time the Department was formed. The ink impression taken from the inscription in black and white is clear for reading. Former Archaeological Commissioner and renowned Epigraphist of Sri Lanka, Dr. Senarat Paranavitana, having read the inscriptions from the ink impressions had translated them into English and included them in Inscriptions of Ceylon Volume I, which is the Corpus of Inscriptions entirely on early Brahmi cave inscriptions published by the Archaeological Department.

In the paper read at the so called Symposium on the Ramayana Trail, the cave inscription from Wegiriya in Kandy has been misinterpreted and translated to suit the mythical story of Ramayana. The word *kubakara*, meaning potter in English and *kumbalkaru* in Sinhala is misinterpreted as kubakana and taken as a name and the name Dutaka is translated as pilot.

The early Brahmi cave inscription from Molagoda Vihara in Kandy District is totally misapplied to achieve the goal. By misinterpreting the word Brahmana as bimana in the inscription, the speaker has translated the word Brahmana to mean a pilot of an aeroplane. The cave inscription from Alulena (Rahalgala) in Aranayaka in Kegalle District has been changed by applying white ink on the letters and photographed and the phrase *Maha Rakdbaha Rawana puta* had been surreptitiously added to the inscription and translated as Emperor Rawana's son. This part is added at the beginning of the distorted inscription.

The historical site at Sigiriya, identified as the palace of king Kashyapa I has been branded by the speaker as the Chitrakoota Palace of Lankapura, the abode of king Kuvera, elder brother of king Rawana. He has misinterpreted the statement made in the Chronicle Mahavamsa, that king Kashyapa lived at Sigiriya like the Kuvera of Alakamanda. Isurumuniya in Anuradhapura is desecrated by making it a temple for king Rawana's parents Visravasmuni and Kaikali.