

the premises of any monastery located within the area designated as "Sihagiri Bim" (Sigiriya lands). This pillar inscription is situated 11 km from the Sigiriya rock (Ranawella 2001, 13-15). This is an important indication of the vast administrative area belonging to Sigiriya.

A fragmentary slab inscription

A fragmentary slab inscription was found from the Sigiriya archaeological area. Its left section is completely broken. Though the right part of it is also broken it can still be deciphered. It measures 1 ft. 7.5 in. in length and 2 ft. 10 in. in width. The stone contains the left half of each of five lines of writing. The letters have been clearly incised and measure 6 in. to 2.5 in. in height

Chronology

The letters (fig. 2) of this inscription are similar to the letters of the Angamuwa rock inscription (Paranavitana 1983, No. 6) which belongs to the period of King Bhatikattissa and to the letters of At-vehera inscription (Paranavitana 1983, No. 17) of King Mahanaga. For instance the letters *ba, pa, ra, ka, ma, a* indicate that these letters belong to the first and second centuries A.D.



fig.2 Angamuwa rock inscription

Text

Sidha- Sa.....

Putā A(baya)....

Mruma (naka)..

Tapigala.....

Karita Thube..

සිධා- සා.....

පුතා අ(බයා),

මරුම(නක),

තපිගල.....

කරිත තුබේ..

Translation

Success! A stupa was built at Tapigala.....by grandson....of son a (baya) (fig. 3).

This inscription begins with a blessing word "Sidha " To begin an inscription with a blessing word was the practice from the 1st c. up to the 7th and 8th centuries A.D.

Avukana, Navakada, Ridiviharaya and Madawala inscriptions prove this fact (Paranavitana 1983). Alternative blessing words such as *Sa*, *Sidha*, *Siddha* and *Siddham* have also been used.

The 3rd line on the right part of the inscription is broken after the word "*Maruma*" it probably refers to the term "*Marumanaka*" which was used since the 3rd century B.C. (Paranavitana 1970, 1983). Galkandegama, Hittaragama and Kaduruwewa inscriptions are examples for this. *Marumakanaka*, *Marumakanakaha*, *Marumakane*, *Marumakanakasha* and *Marumakanake* are synonyms. In the inscription the term '*putha*' or son was used before the term "*Marumanaka*" or grandson. However in most cases the term '*putha*' follows the term '*Marumanaka*'. The inscriptions at Rajagala, Abhayagiriya and Tammannawa are examples for this. Although this inscription is broken, we can grasp its meaning without difficulty. We can presume that is a reference to the son's grandson.



fig.3 Fragmentary inscription

"*Thube*" is derived from the Sanskrit word "Stupa". In Pali the term "Tupa" was used since the 3rd century B.C. building of Stupas had begun. We can easily prove this by means of Situlpavuva, Sasseruva, Ridi-vihara, Bambaragala and Billavegala inscriptions. *Thube*, *Thuba* and *Thuhe* are synonymous. This inscription indicates that a stupa was constructed in the area named Tapigala.

Paleography

Some important factors about Paleography can be learnt from this inscription. Letters such as *Ka*, *Ra*, *Sa*, *Tha*, and letters such as *A*, *Ma*, have small horizontal line attached to them.

	<i>Sa</i>	<i>Ka</i>	<i>Tha</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Ma</i>
Conventional letters					
Sigiriya Slab inscription					

fig.4 Important factors

According to Abhaya Ariyasinghe, P.E.P Fernando, Bandusena Gunasekara and Jayasiri Lankage this feature can be seen in the Sri Lankan Brahmi alphabet and also the Indian Kshastrapa alphabet. Hence this is evidence of Indian Satrapa influence on the development of the Sinhalese alphabet (Ariyasinghe 1963, 75, Feranando 1949, 282-301, Gunasekara 1996, Lankagea 1996, 27).

Another important feature in this inscription is the extension of the vertical line in letters such as;



fig. 5 Vertical lines

And also in some instances this vertical line tends to curve to the left. This curving feature can be seen in post- Sathavahana period letters. Nicholas states that the Sinhalese alphabet was influenced by the early Sathavahana alphabet from 1 AD onward. Therefore we can conclude that the letters of this fragmentary inscription were influenced by western Shastrapa and Sathavahana scripts. This is a unique factor.

In addition several inscriptions of this period use punctuation marks to separate the 'blessing' phrase from the rest of the text. In this inscription the punctuation mark takes the form of a short horizontal line (-). This has been joined to the letter 'dha' of the word 'sidha'. Similar instances can be seen in the Viharegala, Kaduruwewa and Ratnaprasada inscriptions (Paranavitana 1983, 60-61, 54, 56, 58). In addition punctuation marks consisting of three short horizontal lines (a'') following the 'blessing' phrase can also be seen in inscriptions of this period (Paranavitana 1983, 48, 51). In some instances they are joined to the letter, at others they are not.

Conclusion

This fragmentary slab inscription, found within the Sigiriya premises belongs to ca. 1st and 2nd centuries B.C. Sathavahana and Kshasthrapa alphabetical systems have influenced the development of these letters. In addition this inscription provides vital information regarding ecclesiastical architecture, kinship, ancient place names, traditional modes of invoking blessings and social stratification.

References

- Aryasinghe, A. 1963 "Aksharamalava" (in Sinhala), Sinhala Vishvacoshaya, Vol. I, Department of Cultural affairs, Colombo, 75p.
- Deraniyagala, S. U. 1992 *The Prehistory of Sri Lanka an Ecological perspective Sri Lanka*, Part I, Department of Archaeological Survey, Colombo.
- Feranando, P.E.P. 1949 "Palaeographical Development of the Brahmi Script in Ceylon from 3rd Century B.C. to 7th Century A.D.", University of Ceylon Review, Vol, VII, No. 4, Apothecarie Co.Ltd, Colombo, 282-301pp.
- Gunasekara, B. 1996 *Sinhala Akshara sambawaya saha uhi vikashanaya* (in Sinhala), Chathura printers, Wellampitiya.
- Lankage, J. 1996 *Sinhala warnamalawe vikashanaya* (in Sinhala), Godage, Colombo, 27pp.
- Mahavansa* (in Sinhala) 1959 Buddhadaththa tero, P. Gunasena, Colombo.
- Paranavitana S. 1970 *Inscriptions of Ceylon, Vol. I*, Department of Archaeological Survey, Colombo.
- Paranavitana S. 1983 *Inscriptions of Ceylon, Vol. II Part I*, Department of Archaeological Survey, Colombo.
- Paranavitana S. 2001 *Inscriptions of Ceylon, Vol. II Part II*, Department of Archaeological Survey, Colombo.
- Ranawella, S 1984 "Epigraphy." First Archaeological Excavation and Research Report, UNESCO Sri Lanka Project of the Cultural Triangle Sigiriya Project, Central Cultural Fund, Colombo, 198-218pp.
- Ranawella, S. 2001 *Inscriptions of Ceylon, Vol. V, Part I*, Department of Archaeology, Colombo.