

Cave Temple Paintings Technology in Uva Province

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The research area has been identified as a part of Ruhuna, one of the principle politico-religious seats of ancient Sri Lanka. Among the other archaeological remains in the area, it was noticed that the temple paintings in Uva province have long been neglected. This research attempts to study and document them in a methodical way. Three major research questions are to be addressed: (a).How do these paintings reflect the contemporary Socio-Cultural sphere and why are they so? (b) .What are the criteria for defining such characteristics? (c) What is the relationship between cave paintings and technology?

Methodology in such research can have multiple approaches. The traditional methods of collecting secondary and primary data through literature survey will form the initial step of data collection. Documentation followed a number of steps. Compilation of an anthology on the subject, especially collecting published references on Sri Lankan Painting was the activity which was done at the outset of the project. A considerable sample was selected for field visits. These covered 10 individual locations that represent two administrative districts while enveloping one physiographic region in the country. Selected sample is 50% of the total number of sites recorded. The second major step followed was the photographic recording. Two professional cameras were used for this purpose under low light conditions.

The line and colour used to produce volume and solidity of figurative forms and natural objects in the classical style, underwent a transformation in the Kandyan period, where it served the purpose of ornamentation in creating a two-dimensional decorative art form. Vigorous, complex and expressive narration of the classical tradition was transformed in the Kandyan style into a method of simple continuous narration. Nevertheless Kandyan painting should neither be construed, as a mere postscript to the classical phase nor should it be elevated to the status of classical achievements, except on very rare occasions where the creative imagination of a genius has transcended the constraints of a style.

The Kandyan painter has used a tempera technique with a limited range of colours - white, red, yellow, black, blue and green. The pigments, made from earth or vegetable substances were mixed with the gum of the wood-apple tree and water. The materials on which paintings were done were plaster (on rocks and walls), wood (ceilings, partitions, boxes), cloth, earthenware, and paper. The rock and wall paintings were executed on a final coat of makul (magnesite). A line drawing of the composition was first done on the surface in red or black and the colours were added subsequently. The under-drawings which get covered in the final stages of the painting are more vigorous and spontaneous than the final outlines of the figures. Uva painters however use another four colours. There are Ash, brown, pink and off-white.

It should be stated that the paintings made in any part on this island during the period under reference fundamentally belong to one school. Neverthelessa closer and more critical study reveals that the paintings in the Uva province have some independent characteristics which make them a group apart from Kandyan paintings. These differences are noticeable in many aspects of these artwork, such as pigments, composition background and details in which Uva artists

display a considerable degree of freedom in contrast to the strict conventionality of Kandyan artists.

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