



ARCHAEOLOGY OF COMMON PEOPLE IN THE PAST: THE JOURNEY OF SETTLEMENT ARCHAEOLOGY IN SRI LANKAN CONTEXT

Fernando M.J.R.S.^{1*}, Jayarathne S.D.Y.^{2,3} and Abeysekara S.J.P.⁴

^{1*}Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management,
Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education

²Department of Anthropology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

³Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

⁴Pathiraja Maha Vidyalaya, Ahungalla

rishini@sliate.ac.lk

Abstract

The thought structures of any field of study do not remain the same in a static way. Those change from time to time owing to different causes giving rise to paradigm shifts. Sri Lanka's archaeological thought has been no exception to this. The settlement archaeology project of Prof. Senake Bandaranayake and the team resulted in a different way of thinking during that time as they followed a concept highlighting 'commoners of past', who most likely supported the elite layer of the ancient societies. However, some scholars argue that the trend was not substantially carried out after Bandaranayake. Considering this fact, this study was carried out with the objectives of addressing the significance of Sigiriya Dambulla project in terms of archaeological thought, to assess whether it has not been really sufficiently established later on and looking for possible reasons behind the insufficient grounding of this concept in a contemporary social context. The researchers adopted a literature-based desk study to bring the existing literature together about the settlement archaeology establishment in Sri Lanka, and content analysis was used for data analysis. Findings include the comparison of archaeological thought before 1998 and the Sigiriya Dambulla project by following a model depicting a paradigm shift. Lack of opportunities and financial support, insufficient educational knowledge on the given discipline, conflicting perceptions of different schools, political intervention, tourism industry, and the social needs were identified as the main reasons for the scanty continuation of the given concept afterward.

Keywords: *Settlement Archaeology, Sigiriya Dambulla Project, Common people of the past, Sri Lanka*