

## PAINTING TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES OF CONSERVATION

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The technique of the ancient Sinhalese painter has basically been what is commonly referred to as SECCO. In the secco techniques of painting pigments mixed with a binding media is applied on a dry surface. However, there has been much debate over the technique used in Sigiriya paintings - whether it is fresco or secco. In the Fresco technique the medium mixed with pigments is applied on a wet lime plaster with no binding. The fresco painter depends on the fresco reaction (conversion of  $\text{CaOH}_2$  to  $\text{CaCO}_3$ ) for the fixing of pigments to the surface. A Sri Lankan chemist (Silva, 1966) threw light on this problem by proving the presence of a binding medium in the Sigiriya painting - thus suggesting that the technique at Sigiriya had been SECCO. However, there still remains many questions to be answered regarding the Sigiriya technique. Our present knowledge in the subject can be summarized as follows:

1. The paintings of the Early and Middle Historical periods had been usually executed on a lime paint receiving a thin layer in inorganic pigments mixed with a binding medium. Their pallet has been red (red earth) yellow, green, blue and black. The blue colour is absent in the Polonnaruwa period paintings.

2. The paintings of the late historical period have been executed on a white clay paint receiving layer in both organic and inorganic pigments mixed with a binding medium. These paintings are highly sensitive to moisture.

The rendering of the early periods consisted both lime and mud with a vegetable admixture while the rendering of late periods contained no lime.

Conservation of the paintings of the earlier period have relatively been easier due to the fact that they were sufficiently resistant to both aqueous and organic cleaning media while the paintings of the late period always constituted a challenge to the conservators.