

Significance of the research of documenting (documentation) artifacts

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It is difficult to think of a museum without artifacts. A museum can be seen rare, remarkable, and amazingly unmistakable items. The institution should have a permanent collection of artifact materials to fulfill the aims and requirements of a museum. Artifacts are bearing special value because they provide valuable researchable information about the past and present. The artifacts belonging to a museum can be regarded as the "heart" of the organization and can be identified as a means of providing information.

Documenting of such value artifacts is introducing as documentation. Simple meaning of the documentation is writing or glossing of information. Documentation is the most important thing among the main functions of a museum. Documentation of artifacts is not new to Sri Lankans. In the third century B.C., Sangamittā there carried the right south branch of the Bodhi-Tree on a ship. The Mahawansa mentioned some parts of that ship which called kupayatiya, palupatha and kenipatha were deposited by King Devānāmpiya Tissa in the 'Upasika Viharaya' in Anuradhapura. This is considerable as the documentation. We can take as examples for some sort of documentation which planting and maintenance of Sri Maha Bodhi tree and depositing and safe guarding of Sacred Tooth Relic.

Each museum should decide on the methodology of documenting it. It is necessary a method of documenting simple and inaccurate information about each item in the museums at fast and low cost. In this regard, museums maintain simple documents as well as various types of records.

The foundation of a museum is in it deposited artifact objects. Museum has several ways to acquire the artifacts. That is, collected from the field of artifacts, purchase, receives prizes, borrowing, to be transference on the testament, legal acquisition etc.

However, it is important to follow a methodology adopted internationally by each museum in order to documentation the objects in the museum. Documentation methods followed in acquiring artifact objects in Sri Lanka differ from one museum to other museums. The methodologies of other museums are different than followed by the National Museums. If every museum uses an internationally accepted documenting system, data can be readily available in academic and research proceedings.

From the time before the acquisition of an object of artifact, it follows the documenting sequences of documentation by the time it arrives at the museum's exhibition or the deposit of the artifacts in the storehouse. As before and after the acquisition of an artifact, the documented methodology and the documents used for the research are very important to the scholars who engage in research on artifacts.

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