

SRI LANKA

Golden Temple of Dambulla

II.1 Introduction

Year of Inscription 1991

Organisation Responsible for the Report

- Archaeological Survey Department (ASD)
Sir Marcus Fernando Mawatha
Colombo, and
- Central Cultural Fund (CCF)
212/1 Bauddhaloka Mawatha
Colombo
Sri Lanka

II.2 Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C i, vi

Statement of Significance

- Proposed as follows:
“The ancient Buddhist temple at Dambulla is best known for its massive cave shrines and its great cycle of well-preserved 18th century paintings. It is probably the second largest cave temple complex in South and Southeastern Asia, after Ajanta in India, with the Buddhist mural paintings covering an area of 2100 square meters and 157 statues of various sizes. The monastery was established at Dambulla in the 3rd century BC and has remained until today as one of Sri Lanka’s major religious and historical sites with a continuing history of more than 2000 yrs. [...] The megalithic cemetery and the early inscriptions of caves are evidence that Dambulla has been in occupation from pre Buddhist times to date.”

Status of Site Boundaries

- The borders and buffer zone of the property are not considered adequate because they fail to include recently discovered archaeological remains.
- A redefinition of the site boundaries will be formally submitted to the Committee after the land in question has been acquired.



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II.3 Statement of Authenticity/Integrity

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage value is considered to have been maintained.
- Authenticity and integrity considered to have been enhanced by conservation measures and improvements to visitor infrastructure.

II.4 Management

Administrative and Management Arrangements

- The site is privately owned and protected under the Antiquities Ordinance. ASD and CCF carry out monitoring and conservation, and jointly with the Commissioner of Buddhist Affairs supervise development activities.
- There are site co-ordination meetings twice a month with representatives of concerned line agencies and the Buddhist communities.
- ASD, the National Physical Planning Dept. and the Temple Incumbent are preparing a development master plan.

Present State of Conservation

- “CCF has completed a programme making facsimile copies of the rock and wall paintings, amounting to 2,100 sq m, and has completed the conservation of the wall paintings. The area has been landscaped. The chapter house, monks’ residence, stairway and veranda have been conserved. A site museum has been constructed and is to be completed with facilities for display of copies of the wall paintings. Lighting and laying of a tile floor in the caves has been completed”.

Staffing and Training Needs

- CCF has an Officer in Charge and a technical team on site. The ASD makes routine inspection visits. The Temple employs security personnel.
- Staffing levels are considered adequate except for a shortage of mural conservators.
- Training needs identified include: mural and canvas painting conservation, tourism management, data processing, and photo archive management.

Financial Situation

- The Temple authorities collect an entrance fee from foreign tourists. CCF allocates funds raised from its other sites in the Golden Triangle. Funds are considered adequate except for major capital expenditure.
- International Assistance from WHF is acknowledged as follows: 1989 US\$9,171 Training Assistance, Conservation of cave paintings.
- Financial and technical support is acknowledged from the UNESCO Cultural Triangle Campaign, ICCROM, WFP, West Germany, Japan, and France
- * International Assistance from WHF: none.

Access to IT

- No PCs and no e-mail or Internet access.

Visitor Management

- No visitor numbers supplied.
- Basic tourist facilities such as refreshments, shops, toilets and parking are available.
- There is a need to upgrade signage and visitor information, and lighting inside the caves, and to develop an information centre.
- There is no visitor management plan but rules concerning dress and removal of shoes are applied.

II.6 Monitoring

Monitoring Arrangements

- No regular monitoring regime.
- Environmental monitoring was conducted in the caves for one year. Condition of the paintings is monitored by visits from ASD and CCF technical teams.

Monitoring Indicators

- Indicators are proposed according to the identified threats: (i) deterioration of paintings due to humidity, discolouration, and detachment of surface and plaster; (ii) flow of visitors; (iii) visual impact assessments of new structures.



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Dambulla Golden Temple from the outside

II.5 Factors Affecting the Property

Threats and Risks

- Development in the buffer zone is influenced by religious activity and requires careful co-ordination in order to preserve integrity.
- Increasing humidity during peak pilgrimage periods is identified as a threat.

Counteractive Plans

- There is no written plan but an understanding that the Temple authorities will contact ASD officials in the case of an emergency.
- Needs are identified as follows: (i) A monitoring system for paintings and statues; (ii) A fire alarm system; (iii) A security system with CCTV; (iv) An environmental monitoring regime.
- Proposed actions include: (i) Acquisition of land in the core and buffer zones; (ii) Control of unauthorised structures; (iii) A public awareness programme; (iv) Implement the development plan of the NPPD; (v) Further action on conservation of paintings and improving lighting.

II.7 Conclusions and Recommended Actions

Conclusions and Proposed Actions

- There should be a formal mechanism through which the Temple authorities take into account the impact of development on the heritage value of the site.
- There is a need for a heritage management framework.
- This action should be achieved within 2 years.
- Assistance from the WHF may be needed for training in archaeology, canvas and mural painting conservation.

* State of Conservation Reports

The authorities reported the 8 recommendations of the 1998 ICOMOS mission, which were reported to the Bureau in 1999.

1999 WHC-99/CONF.204/5 The Bureau received the ICOMOS report which expressed concern that no conservation work had been carried out at the Golden Temple since inscription. ICOMOS recommended immediate intervention. Eight recommendations were made including removal of the newly constructed temple at the foot of the rock.