

## WORLD HERITAGE LIST

### Lumbini (Nepal)

No 666 rev

#### Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha
<i>Location</i>	Lumbini Zone, Rupandehi District, Western Terai
<i>State Party</i>	Nepal
<i>Date</i>	2 September 1996

#### Justification by State Party

[The nomination dossier does not provide a justification for the inscription of this property on the World Heritage List, but proposes that it should be inscribed on the basis of **criteria ii, iii, and vi.**]

#### Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, Lumbini is a *site*.

#### History and Description

##### *History*

The Shakya Prince Siddharta Gautama, better known as the Lord Buddha, was born to Queen Mayadevi, wife of King Suddodhana, ruler of Kapilavastu, in 623 BC at the famous gardens of Lumbini, while she was on a journey from her husband's capital of Tilaurakot to her family home in Devadaha.

In 249 BC the devout Buddhist Emperor Ashoka, third of the Mauryan rulers of India, made a pilgrimage to this very sacred area in company with his teacher, Upagupta, and erected pillars at Lumbini, Gotihawa, and Niglihawa, as he did in many parts of India, to commemorate his visit. The inscription on the Lumbini pillar identifies this as the birthplace of the Lord Buddha.

Lumbini was a site of pilgrimage until the 15th century AD. Its early history is well documented in the accounts of Chinese travellers, notably Fa Hsien (4th century AD) and Hsuan Tsang (7th century AD), who described the temples, stupas, and other

establishments that they visited there. In the early 14th century King Ripu Malla recorded his pilgrimage in the form of an additional inscription on the Ashoka pillar.

The reasons for its ceasing to attract Buddhist pilgrims after the 15th century remain obscure. The only local cult centred on worship of a 3rd-4th century image of Mayadevi as a Hindu mother goddess. The Buddhist temples fell into disrepair and eventually into ruins, not to be rediscovered until they were identified in 1896 by Dr A Führer and Khadga Samsheer, then Governor of Palpa, who discovered the Ashoka pillar.

##### *Description*

The complex of structures within the archaeological conservation area that is the subject of this nomination consists of the following:

- The Shakya Tank, in which Mayadevi bathed before giving birth to the Lord Buddha, within the Mayadevi Temple enclosure. The original temple was built before the visit of Ashoka in 249 BC and probably consisted of no more than a platform constructed on the cross-wall system, later converted into a *shikara* temple. The 20th century temple has now been demolished, leaving on display the remains of brick structures dating from the 3rd century BC to the present century.
- The sandstone Ashoka pillar with its Sanskrit inscriptions, that of Ashoka in *brahmi* script and the later one of Ripu Malla in *devanagari* script.
- The excavated remains of Buddhist *viharas* (monasteries) of the 3rd century BC to the 5th century AD. The rectangular pool between them is of 20th century date.
- The remains of Buddhist *stupas* (memorial shrines) from the 3rd century BC to the 15th century AD.

The sacred area that forms the nominated property lies within a modern circular feature defined by a moat, and this in turn forms part of a modern monumental pilgrimage centre based on two monasteries.

Outside the nominated area but within the buffer zone there are other religious buildings of the 20th century and buildings in use by the Lumbini Development Trust (see below, "Management"), all of which are scheduled for demolition.

#### Management and Protection

##### *Legal status*

Lumbini is a national monument, protected under the terms of the 1956 Ancient Monuments Preservation Act and the 1985 Lumbini Development Trust Act.

##### *Management*

The sacred area lies at the heart of the modern pilgrimage centre, which is a major development

project financed by Buddhist communities and believers world-wide. The Development Plan upon which this is based was the outcome of a response by U Thant, then Secretary General of the United Nations, to a request for assistance made by the Government of Nepal in 1965. This Plan, the work of Kenzo Tange, is an elaborate scheme, covering a large area, but one that is in keeping with the sacred nature of the site of pilgrimage. It falls into three sectors - the sacred garden (the nominated area), the monastic village in the centre, and the village of Lumbini to the north. The middle zone is in two parts, for the Theravada and Mahayana monasteries respectively, and it is here that the cultural centre and facilities for study and meditation are provided. The whole area will be landscaped using sheets of water and natural vegetation. Some parts of the complex are now built, or nearing completion.

There is strict control over any form of development within the entire complex. In addition, a specific area around the nominated property is designated as a buffer zone.

Management of the entire complex is the responsibility of the Lumbini Development Trust. This is an autonomous, non-governmental, non-profit-making organization under Royal patronage and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other international and regional bodies. The Department of Archaeology shares the management of the sacred area, which is the property of His Majesty's Government of Nepal, with the Development Trust

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

After the discovery of the Ashoka pillar in 1895, some antiquarian research took place, and the Archaeological Survey of India carried out two campaigns of survey and excavation in the whole area. Less systematic excavation took place between 1932 and 1939, but since 1972 it has been the subject of systematic scientific excavation and conservation by the Department of Archaeology.

### *Authenticity*

The authenticity of the remains within the sacred area is high, and will not be impacted adversely by the planned presentation activities.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Lumbini in December 1996. ICOMOS has also benefited from a report prepared by a UNESCO technical adviser (who is also a member of ICOMOS) with special knowledge of the site.

### *Qualities*

As the birthplace of the Lord Buddha, testified by the inscription on the Ashoka pillar, the sacred area in

Lumbini is one of the most holy and significant places for one of the world's great religions. The archaeological remains, although fragmentary, provide important evidence about the nature and intensity of the practice of Buddhist pilgrimage over nearly two thousand years (and now revived in the 20th century).

Moreover, the archaeological remains testify to a high standard of life that is in remarkable contrast with that of the peasant inhabitants of today. There is evidence of now disused trade routes having traversed this area in the past, and as such it is of outstanding archaeological importance.

### *Comparative analysis*

Since there can be only one birthplace for any individual, Lumbini cannot be other than unique, and so comparative analysis would be fruitless.

### *ICOMOS recommendations for future action*

The ambitious programme of the Lumbini Development Trust is still at an early stage. It has largely developed in isolation, and would benefit from the experience of comparable large projects of this kind. An excellent example is that of the Central Cultural Fund in the Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka, both in the mobilization of international resources in scientific and technical fields and in site management, especially with regard to ancillary services for visitors and pilgrims.

The original nomination of Lumbini, which was deferred by the World Heritage Bureau at its 17th Session in June 1993, included a number of separate archaeological sites associated with the life and work of the Lord Buddha. Two of these, Kapilavastu (Tilaurakot), where the Lord Buddha lived as Prince Siddhartha before his enlightenment, and Ramagrama, the only relic *stupa* not opened by Ashoka, now figure as individual sites on the tentative list submitted by the State Party, which has been advised by a former President of the World Heritage Committee to combine them with Lumbini as a serial nomination.

ICOMOS has no objection in principle to this proposal, but it is of the opinion that the current state of knowledge, conservation, and management of both is not sufficiently advanced to permit their being included in the present nomination. It recommends therefore that this should await the completion of the programme of non-destructive archaeological investigation, using geophysical techniques, during the coming biennium and the preparation of satisfactory conservation and management plans.

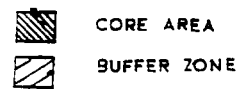
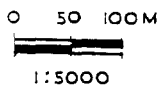
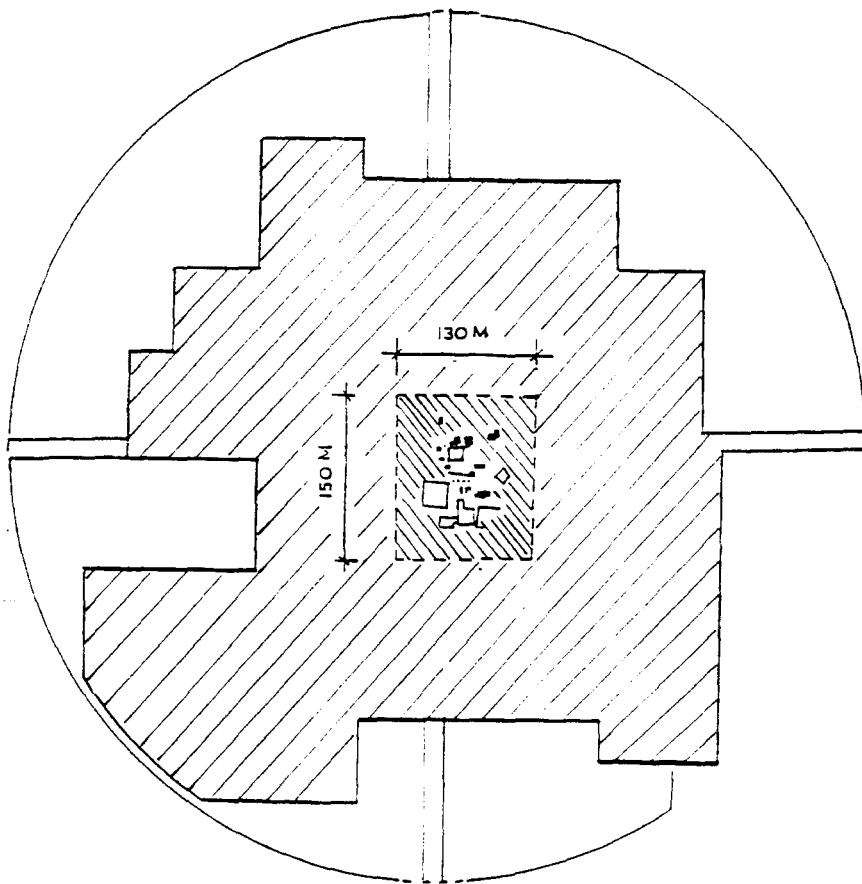
Once this work has been completed, the State Party should be invited to submit the two sites as extensions to an existing inscribed site of Lumbini, with a change of title indicating the association of all three with the life and work of the Lord Buddha. ICOMOS does not consider that the inscription of Lumbini should be delayed to await the completion of this work.

**Recommendation**

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria iii and vi*:

As the birthplace of the Lord Buddha, the sacred area of Lumbini is one of the holiest places of one of the world's great religions, and its remains contain important evidence about the nature of Buddhist pilgrimage centres from a very early period.

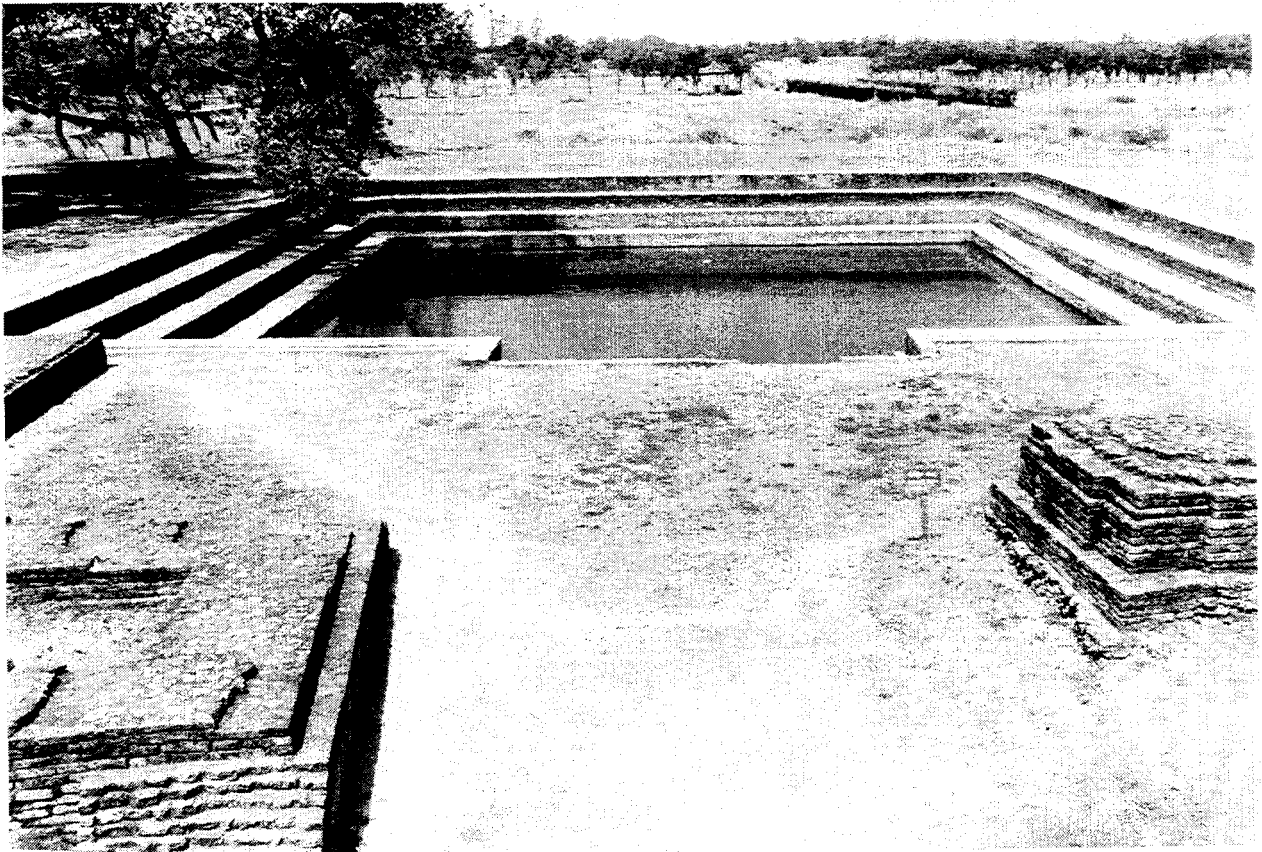
ICOMOS, September 1997



**Lumbini :**  
**Plan indiquant la zone proposée pour inscription et la zone tampon /**  
**Plan of nominated area and buffer zone**



**Lumbini :**  
**Site des fouilles du temple de Maya Devi et pilier d'Ashoka /**  
**Excavated Mayadevi temple site and Ashoka pillar**



**Lumbini :**  
**Bassin de Shakya /**  
**Shakya Tank**